

On April 12th 1986 something happened to me that reset the course of my life. I was looking at quite a bleak, painful future and suddenly a change happened, wiping that gloomy prospect away.

It's a story of a miraculous healing from a severe physical injury for which I have medical and police documents describing the events that led to the incident causing the injury, the damage to my spine, the operation that was proposed to help stabilise the damage and the sudden healing that meant the operation was never carried out and how I returned to work in full health. For three decades now I have been living without any sign of the damage and no recurrence of the pain or other physical symptoms.

To tell the story I need to go back to August 3rd 1983. I was a Police Officer serving in Derby at the Peartree Police Station. At about 23.30 we'd all been in the nick for a cuppa when a shout came up that someone had reported people with stolen pushbikes making their way along the railway line near the Peartree railway station. Apparently one bike had been thrown onto the tracks.

Peartree railway station was then a derelict platform unused by passengers for many years. It was down in a steep, overgrown cutting below the Osmaston Park Road, part of Derby's ring road. That road was on a high bridge very near the end of the platform below. There was a footpath down to the platform from the ring road but it was fenced off. I knew the area well.

Although we usually patrolled singly on foot in those days (and nights), when the call came in, as we were together, the four of us took a couple of patrol cars out to the area. Chris drove one and I went with him to the playing field on top of the cutting. Jim and Tom went to the ring road end using the other car. Arriving in the playing field I got



Photo from Police file showing gap in fence

out and went straight to a gap in the fence, onto the top of the bank above the railway cutting. This was very overgrown but there was a worn path where the kids played. Chris got out of the car and heard me shout 'Stop!' as I climbed through the gap in the fence. Chris took the tarmac footpath down to the railway and found a black gents pedal cycle lying on the Derby bound track which he placed to one side. Then Chris saw activity on the railway

embankment and saw me lying on my back, apparently semi-conscious and injured with Jim and Tom with me.

Jim's statement adds another point of view of what happened, *"On our arrival PC Gaskin (Tom) went immediately to the railway line, whilst I went down the footpath onto the station in an effort to trace the offenders, however, as I had gone approximately 100 yards down the footpath to the station, when I heard a crash and a sound of branches breaking. Upon investigation I found Police Constable Kelsall among the undergrowth adjacent to a large bush. He appeared severely injured and barely conscious. I requested an ambulance to attend the scene. Seconds later I was joined by PC Gaskin. We comforted Police Constable Kelsall until the arrival of the ambulance."* [sic]



Photo from Police file showing the drop

These brief statements sum up an incident that took around an hour during which I was lying tangled in the lower branches of a tree and a bush, set back from the station platform, some sixty feet (18m) below the top of the railway cutting. It was pitch dark and the bushes and trees made it even more difficult to reach me. The British Transport Police brought a vehicle to the scene with bright lights to help the ambulance crew see clearly to build a spinal recovery stretcher around me and eventually get me up to the road and to hospital.

I remember nothing of the accident. I can tell you the story from what my colleagues later told me and from the records in the police file I have. I have two vivid memories from when I was in hospital. One memory is of a voice asking me, "Peter, what's your wife's telephone number?" and a female face looking down on me as I lay on my back. The ceiling was made up of large white tiles with a dimmed light on in one of them. I remember being puzzled as to why someone would want my wife's phone number. I wondered why it was not the same as my phone number. Then I realised I couldn't remember anything. I couldn't remember my wife's name or even if I was married. I wondered if I had been married and was now separated, that would be why my wife had a different telephone number. Then I realised I didn't know my name or where I was or what was happening. The woman had called me Peter so I thought that must be my name but I remembered nothing. I then felt pain in my back, my neck and all across my face. I remember screaming loudly and that's all. Recalling that few seconds still unsettles me somewhat.

FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE
 TO THE DIVISIONAL COMMANDER ALFRETON
 LOG (COPY FOR THE POLICE FEDERATION OFFICE)
 HQ SERIAL 04/0305/AUGUST

OFFICER INJURED ON DUTY AT DERRY.

AT APPROXIMATELY 23:00HRS ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 1983, TOGETHER WITH OTHER OFFICERS, CONSTABLE 158 KELSALL ATTENDED PEARTREE RAILWAY STATION, OFF OSMASTON PARK ROAD, DERRY, IN RESPONSE TO AN EMERGENCY CALL.

THE TEXT OF THE CALL WAS REGARDING A PEDAL CYCLE BEING THROWN FROM A ROAD BRIDGE ONTO THE RAILWAY LINES BENEATH BY THREE YOUTHS.

CONSTABLE KELSALL LOST HIS FOOTING ALONG A PATH CRESTING THE STEEP RAILWAY EMBANKMENT AND FELL HEADLONG 14YARDS DOWN THE EMBANKMENT COLLIDING WITH A TREE EN ROUTE. ON REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS HE IMMEDIATELY COMPLAINED OF PAIN IN THE LOWER BACK REGION. HE ALSO SUSTAINED CUTS AND ABRASIONS TO HIS FACE AND HANDS.

HE WAS REMOVED TO DERRYSHIRE ROYAL INFIRMARY BY AMBULANCE WHERE, AFTER EXAMINATION AND X-RAYS, A SPINAL INJURY INVOLVING COMPACTED VERTEBRAE AND CONCUSSION WAS DIAGNOSED. IT IS NOT REGARDED AS BEING TOO SERIOUS.

CONSTABLE KELSALL HAS BEEN ADMITTED TO WARD 20 IN THE D.R.I.L. FOR TREATMENT AND WILL BE IN HOSPITAL FOR APPROXIMATELY SIX WEEKS.

INSPECTOR BARLOW AND OTHER OFFICERS AT THE SCENE WHEN INCIDENT OCCURRED, BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE ALSO ATTENDED. THE PEDAL CYCLE SUBJECT OF THE COMPLAINT WAS RECOVERED FROM THE RAILWAY LINES AND RAIL TRAFFIC THEN ALLOWED TO RESUME. THE PEDAL CYCLE HAS BEEN LOADED AT GOTTON LANE POLICE STATION. THE OBSTRUCTION TO THE RAILWAY LINES HAS BEEN CRIMED BY SGT. 1547 SEDDON, BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE - VIDE G/02/00320/83.

THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE ON BRITISH RAILWAYS PROPERTY ALTHOUGH THE PATH WHERE THE OFFICER WAS WALKING IS SOME 70FEET ABOVE AND 20YARDS FROM THE RAILWAY LINES.

INQUIRY ON DUTY FORMS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED.

AUTHORISED BY INSPECTOR BARLOW

MESSAGE ENDS
 TDD...0318
 D. J. HILL

Telex sent to Police HQ the morning afterwards

The only other memory from that night was that I remember opening my eyes and realising I was lying in a bed. I couldn't move much and I was in a lot of pain. I could turn my head to the right and there, standing at the head of the bed, watching me was a person. I felt this sense of real reassurance that someone was taking care of me and I drifted off. That experience repeated several times over the next couple of nights.

Meanwhile, as the night shift ended at 6 o'clock one of my colleagues phoned Anne and told her I was in hospital. They had a car already waiting outside our home to bring her to the hospital and one of the worst days in her life

began.

I don't remember anything else about those first three days in hospital. Absolutely nothing. As I became more aware of where I was and what had happened I realised I had no memories at all of the night of the accident, no memories of the days before and I had no idea about how long I'd been in hospital, who had visited or what had been done to me.

I had x-rays and other tests which showed that I'd fractured three bones in my spine between my shoulder blades, done an amount of damage to the 'soft tissues' of my neck and had double vision which was clearing quite quickly. My face was badly cut by all the branches I'd fallen through and I had a stitch at the side of my left eye.

After three weeks of being kept flat on my back on a bed in hospital, the medical team decided to begin to get me up and in plaster. It took a couple of days. At first, as soon as I was sat up, I passed out with a combination of rush of blood from the head and pain. Eventually I could sit and a large amount of plaster of Paris was used to form a hip to neck full torso jacket complete with shoulder pieces. It was heavy and awkward to try to sleep in, but did the job of keeping my back still.

I was on a regular dose of strong painkillers and went to the hospital every week until, in late September the plaster was cut down to form just a back plate which was held on

with strapping. I then started going to physio and they soon changed the plaster for a lighter removable plastic jacket that was moulded to my back. It did the same job but made life so much easier.

During the next month I attended Occupational Therapy twice a week and got stronger and more mobile. At the beginning of February, the doctor said I could go back to work. I went back to full patrol duties with the same team on February 9th 1984, six months after the accident.

I still had a lot of pain most of the time but I could function well enough to start with. However, within a month the pain was much worse, I couldn't concentrate at work and had to resume the strong painkillers and I was signed off sick again in April 1984.

The doctors took some more X-rays and found that the middle of the three bones that had been broken was slightly twisted which was putting pressure on the nerves which in turn created muscle spasm and a great deal of pain. They sent me back to physiotherapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy, heat treatment and kept prescribing me painkillers.

After some months one of the physio team had the idea of trying a TENS machine. This consisted of a battery pack with a couple of sticky pads on wires. I could stick the pads on my back in the area where the pain came from and turn the power on. Small electrical pulses had the effect of numbing the pain. After some experimentation it was possible to set the intensity and frequency to provide quite good pain relief for several hours at a time.

The physio and the TENS machine helped a lot and in the autumn of 1984 I went back to work and this time I was moved to the cell block and front desk team at the police station. For the next ten to twelve months I coped. There were times when I had to take a day or more off work because of the pain but, on the whole, it was OK.

In September 1985, after nearly a year of coping, the bouts of severe pain were more frequent and, due to the muscle spasms, my left shoulder was by now noticeably higher than my right. I saw the doctor again and was signed off as unfit for duty. At the hospital I was referred to see a different consultant who decided to start a series of examinations to work out what

The two significant injuries which continued to be of concern were those of a soft tissue injury to the neck requiring a collar for some months after the accident and a crush fracture complex in the mid thoracic spine involving anterior and lateral angulations of the involved bones.

He was in hospital for some three weeks before being mobilised with a plaster which he retained until 29th September 1983 when it was reduced to half a plaster and mobilisation was commenced in the physiotherapy department.

On 27th October 1983 he was taken out of his plaster and given a support which he gradually had removed over the ensuing weeks.

He was still wearing a collar in November 1983 although he subsequently dispensed with this.

He gradually mobilised and returned to work on 9th February 1984.

Unfortunately in April 1984 he has a relapse and x-rays showed, as he was told a further slight deformity at the level of damage in the mid-thoracic spine and the increase in symptoms led to a further six months off work.

He continued with intermittent physiotherapy and continued with the use of a transcutaneous nerve stimulator device, which is a small electrical stimulator which stimulates the skin reducing the pain perception in the deeper tissues.

He returned to work again in late 1984 only to come off work on 27th September 1985 with further pain in the back.

Extract from medical report

could be done to help reduce the pain in the long term. The doctors prescribed powerful pain killers and they left me feeling 'doped up' most of the time from then onwards.

Within a couple of months, I had seen a Police surgeon and was told that they would begin the process to sign me off as permanently unfit for police duties and terminate my job. This was taken up by the local branch of the Police Federation who began proceedings to get me some compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB).

In December 1985 I saw Mr Quinnel, the consultant and he put me on a list for 'pain reproduction studies'. This took until March 1986 to come up and, the day before my 28th birthday I went through a gruelling session in the X-ray department with the consultant sticking probes into my back around the bone that was slightly out of place

It is therefore planned now to denervate the painful facet joint with a small probe producing a little burn in the tissue.

If this is successful further reduction of symptoms will be anticipated and this may allow him to return to work in the longer term.

Unfortunately success is by no means guaranteed and if this treatment which is planned fails then it would be appropriate to press on with the final level of treatment which would be to consider a fusion of the crushed and deformed vertebrae in the thoracic spine in order to reduce the discomfort that has been emanating from the joints between them

Extract from medical report outlining a future treatment plan

to work out where the pain was coming from.

I saw the Mr Quinnel the following week and he told me he intended first to try a denervation process which would burn away nerves between the damaged vertebra inside my back with the hope that this would stop the pain. However, he was not all that hopeful that it would and the next option after that was to operate and fuse the bones of my back together.

So it was, that I went to our church family weekend away in early April 1986 feeling very low. I was facing the prospect of losing my job, the CICB had turned down my claim for compensation and the surgeon was warning that I was going to have to have a serious operation that would reduce my mobility forever.

Over the previous two and half years, whilst I had been suffering with this back problem, several Christian friends had prayed with me for my back to be healed. Our Methodist Church weekend away was an annual event, a good time for fun and fellowship and some good teaching. This year the minister leading it offered to pray with people who wanted physical healing after one of the teaching sessions. I went forward and knelt. This minister (whose name I cannot remember) and our regular

minister and maybe one or two others laid a hand on my head and prayed for God to heal the pain in my back. I felt something. It's difficult to describe what I felt but it was warmth and a 'touch' deep in my back. I became a bit alarmed to be honest. In a split second I thought "Oh, no, it's going to get healed and I'll have to explain that to people!" and with that, the warmth went and the 'touch' went, despite the fact people were still praying over me.

I went back to my seat, still in pain and very confused. I was annoyed at myself for my reaction. I wondered why, if God had started doing something, it had stopped.

The following week, Anne & I went to the Spring Harvest conference as we had done for several years. This was a Christian event that had started in a holiday camp in Prestatyn for a couple of weeks around Easter and thousands of people from churches all over the country went along. This year, 1986, Spring Harvest expanded by taking place simultaneously in Prestatyn and at Butlin's in Minehead, Somerset. We went to the Minehead event. The weather was pretty terrible and the chalet was... well, 'basic' would be a generous description.

The main meetings in the morning and evening were held in a Big Top circus tent but, towards the end of the week that blew down. Such was the weather. On the last evening there, it was Saturday, in one of the rearranged venues, we went to hear the preacher and join in the worship. As the event began it was announced that the theme of the talk was to be 'Fear no Evil'. I remember thinking how ironic that was, as the previous weekend I had been frightened of God's healing power and still felt I'd thrown up the opportunity to be healed. I remember feeling very contrite and deeply sorry that I'd been frightened of being healed that previous weekend. I remember praying that I would not be so stupid in the future.

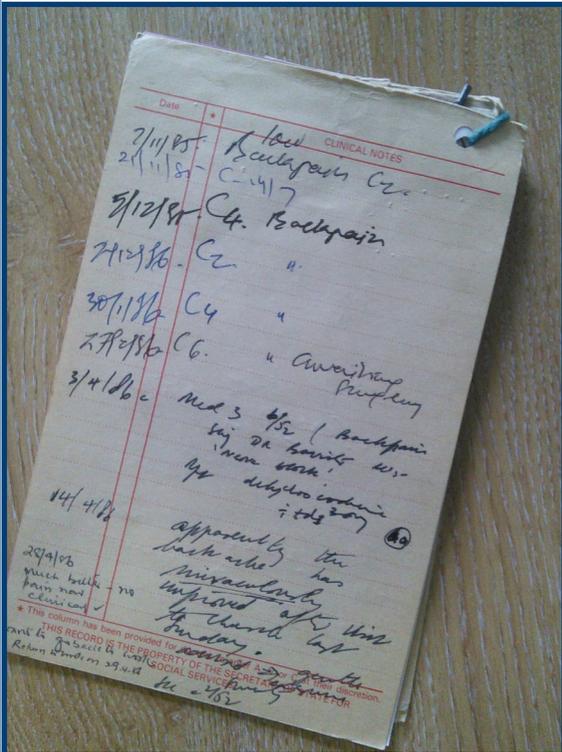
I couldn't get these thoughts out of my mind as we stood and sang the first few worship songs and I suddenly felt 'odd'. I felt a bit dizzy and off balance. Then I realised that my back no longer hurt and my shoulders were level. I could bounce up and down on my heels without pain. I would never have dared do that with the pain I had been having; even going downstairs had been painful.

I turned to Anne and told her something had happened and my back felt better. As we sat through the rest of the event, I don't think I paid much attention. At the end, as people were invited up to the front for prayer, I went and spoke with the guy who had been preaching. I briefly told him what had happened and he prayed with me. There was no longer any pain at all in my back.

That was April 12th 1986. I have had no pain from that back injury since then. I never had the operation or any other treatment and I stopped the painkiller medication the

day my back was healed.

On Monday 14th April 1986 I went to see my GP and told him what had happened. The doctors at my GP surgery knew me fairly well as I had been going there every two weeks for a repeat of the painkiller prescription. There was some restriction on how many I could have in my possession at any one time. On one of the previous, recent visits they had noted on my record that I was awaiting surgery.



GP's record card from April 1986

back into some exercise and enjoying feeling well again. This GP gave me a thorough check. He twisted my arms, hammered my back made me jump, bend and twist; he prodded and poked and finally agreed there was no pain. He then wrote on my record card "*much better – no pain clinically [tick] wants to go back to work. Return to work on 29/4/86*"

I rang the Mr Quinnel's office later that day and told his secretary what had happened. Some time later I had a call from Mr Quinnel. He expressed some caution but said he had heard of things like this happening. He said I would not be on the list for surgery any more but I could contact him if the pain returned and I would go back on the list without any comment or 'loss of face'. I have never needed to speak to him again.

The surgery was just down the road from the Police Station where I was based so I dropped in straight away. I saw one of the Inspectors there and we had a chat about my return to work. On Friday May 2nd 1986 I went back to work with my previous shift at

the police station. The procedure was that I had to write a report explaining my period of sickness and my return to work. I took that opportunity to explain what had happened and the report ends with these two sentences "*Since 12th April I have had no recurrence of back pain, and have enjoyed increasing fitness. I take this opportunity to state that I attribute this to the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

I submitted that report to my Sergeant who called me into his office and asked if I really wanted to submit it with those last two sentences. I said I did. So he stamped it and sent it on to the Inspector. He called me in and asked the same question and got the same answer. So it was stamped and sent to the Chief Inspector. He was a lot harsher and told me I was all sorts of stupid [he used stronger language] to make such a claim and told me to change the report which I said I would not do. So the report went on. Over the next few days I saw a Superintendent, a Chief Superintendent and an Assistant Chief Constable.

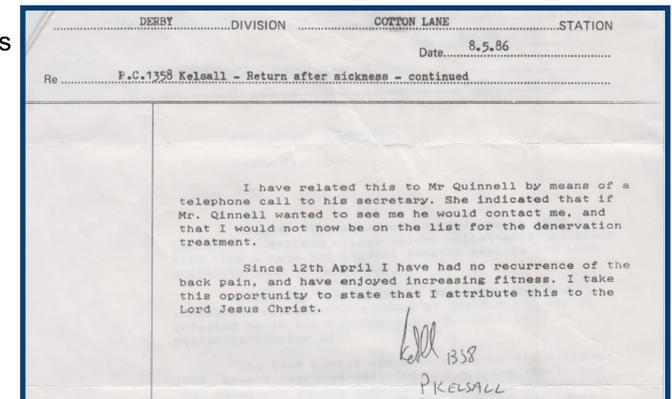
I remained in the police, moving back to patrol duties, then to rapid response and finally to the road traffic section. Eventually I left the police to work for a church but that's another story.

There's a whole raft of documentary evidence in my possession to support the account of how the injury was caused and how bad it was. I have reports and photographs from police and medical records made during the period between the injury and the healing. In April 2016 I made arrangements with my current GP's surgery to see my old medical records and they made me some copies of the relevant reports and letters and I took a photograph of the medical card from the GP in Derby.

If you're reading this on my website you'll find links to several pdfs and photographs of original documents that support all the above.

I know I was healed of the pain and the deformity in my back as a direct result of prayer and I still attribute that to the work of my Lord, Jesus Christ.

Pete Kelsall
May 2016



The conclusion of my report submitted on return to work