

AUTHOR ELAINE REVEALS SECRET OF HER SUCCESS



Elaine Rhys-Davies celebrates her miraculous recovery from a serious brain injury — and her writing group's win — at home in Ballea Castle.

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Picture: Ger Bonus

'Writing helped me overcome a brain injury'

WHEN Elaine Rhys-Davies from Carrigaline suffered a serious brain injury three years ago, doctors feared she might never recover.

But the Belfast-native claims that writing has helped her to lead a normal life once more.

The 51-year-old, who lives in the historic Ballea Castle with her husband and five children, broke her back and did serious damage to her brain after a skiing accident in Andorra in February 2004.

She spent several weeks in hospital undergoing neuro scans and rehabilitation and still meets with neurological consultants and physiotherapists regularly.

By **LYNDA FOLEY**

A psychology lecturer by profession, Elaine was temporarily paralysed, lost a large percentage of visual memory, and still has difficulty doing daily activities like watching the TV and reading.

"It's only now I realise how close I came to death. I had extensive injuries, most significantly head trauma, which means my co-ordination is off, I can't do more than one thing at once and I can't process information as fast as I used to.

"After the accident, I could not talk or move. I had serious difficulty reading and recognising people. The only thing I could do was write. I kept diaries of

my recovery and found it the only way I could continue with some degree of normality," she said.

Elaine is now the facilitator for the Ballea Writers Group in Carrigaline, who recently came second place in the National Writers Group of the Year Awards.

"I'll never be the same as I was. The accident has changed the way I live my life but writing has allowed me to express myself in new ways and has without doubt been key to my recovery," she said.

"Doctors are amazed. They can't believe I had progressed but I put it down to writing. It has been hugely therapeutic for me," she added.

Honours for Ballea writers at Longford literary contest

ELAINE'S path to recovery through writing has also earned her writers group some plaudits.

The Ballea Writers Group in Carrigaline, of which she is facilitator, has been awarded second place in the National Writers Group of the Year Awards.

The 20-member literary

group submitted a portfolio made up of a poem, a short story and a group profile to the competition, which is run by the Longford Literary Project.

Out of hundreds of entries from all around the country, the Ballea writers came second, narrowly beaten by the Airfield Writing Club in Dublin.

Elaine said: "We're absolutely delighted. We are a very young group, just over a year old, and this was our first major competition. To come second was a great achievement and has given the group even more confidence to plough ahead with other projects," she said.

Representatives from

the group will travel to Longford later this month to collect their award at the Longford National Writers Group Festival.

For more information on the Ballea Writers Group contact club secretary Mike Brady by phone on 086-8120465 or by e-mail at balleawriters@gmail.com.