

Olympic Torch arrives at Edinburgh's Sick Kids' Hospital

Youngsters at Edinburgh's Sick Kids Hospital received an unexpected treat today when former patient Katie Ford arrived with her Olympic Torch which she carried in London on the penultimate day of the festivities.

The 26 year-old community fundraising officer spent time with the excited children in Ward 7 explaining about the significance of the torch and also allowing them to hold it.

Edinburgh born Katie is a familiar face to staff in the hospital as she suffered frequent seizures whilst growing up. At the age of nine, she collapsed as her body was overwhelmed with her first full blown seizure, a petit-mal. She underwent a number of major surgical procedures as she progressed into adolescence, including electrode surgery which focussed on recording manifestations inside her brain.

Recalling her time as a patient at the hospital, Katie said:- "I can't describe how a seizure feels. It completely takes over your body and I was overwhelmed with fear. It's a non-specific and terrifying feeling. At a young age, I would repeatedly suffer tonic-clonic seizures, my muscles would go stiff. I would shake; pull at my clothes, all whilst remaining conscious, yet not remembering anything about the episode.



Now, ten years on, Katie wants to thank the charity for funding the equipment that was responsible for improving her quality of life.

Katie continued:- "It is a real honour to come back to the

hospital to thank the staff and the Sick Kids Friends Foundation for their support throughout my illness. The SKFF funded video telemetry, and without this I would not be sitting here enjoying life at two years seizure free. Doctors used the video telemetry equipment to investigate my seizures, after a series of different drug trials failed to make any noticeable difference. I was in bed set up with the video telemetry in Ward 7, so I want to thank the SKFF for funding this fantastic piece of equipment as it establishes where the seizures are triggered, in my case by the right temple lobe in my brain.”

Following the in-depth investigation of her illness, Katie was admitted for a major surgical procedure to remove the lobe.

The surgery gave her a new lease of life, and she immersed herself in her favourite hobby, sport, and she went to study for a degree in the subject. After completing her studies, Katie joined Strathclyde Police for a brief spell but was medically discharged due to her illness.

She now enjoys a career campaigning for Epilepsy Action and is on the board of the Olympic velodrome trust and is the youngest trustee on the board for interactive sports advisers for disabled people in London.

In 2008 when she was 22, she undertook an amazing 3,000 mile cycle challenge in ‘Race Across America’ with four team mates to raise awareness for epilepsy.

On 26 July, Katie had the honour of carrying the torch through the London Borough of Camden, although to this day she still does not know who nominated her. She said:- “It was an amazing experience. I was due to run about seven o’clock in the morning so I expected that there would only be a few people there, but the crowds were four or five deep on the pavements. I would love to thank whoever nominated me but I still don’t know who it was.”



Maureen Harrison, Chief Executive of the Sick Kids Friends Foundation said:-“I am delighted to welcome Katie back to the hospital, only this time not as a patient. Katie is an inspirational young woman with a fantastic story of how she overcame obstacles to enable her to live with an illness and go on to do great things.

“I would like to offer her my sincere congratulations for being nominated as a torch bearer.

“We were delighted to be able to fund the video telemetry equipment for the children’s hospital and hope it will continue to make a difference to patients like Katie who have lived their lives with epilepsy and suffer from reoccurring seizures.”