

Paul's Story

I had my operation at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital in February 2010. I had a replacement tissue aortic valve, root, ascending aorta and hemi arch of the aorta – I think that's how you say it.

The first couple of days after surgery are a complete blank, which with hindsight, I was relieved at. My worse nightmare was not the surgery but coming around on the ventilator in post-operative care. The thought of pipes down my throat just freaks me out, I gag on my toothbrush.

The next few days were quite a shock to the system. Two or three days after surgery I was struggling to walk the length of my bed not because of pain, I just had zero energy. My eyesight was disturbed, I seemed to have a permanent migraine aura without the headache and I was also hallucinating until my tablets were changed.

As the days past my walking range grew slowly. After 3 or 4 days I remember finding the TV room, I managed to get inside only to find I couldn't pull open the door, so I sat there watching the television until a nurse came and said "I wondered where you had got to."

I thought the removal of the chest drain pipes and wires were the most unpleasant things to deal with whilst in hospital.

I thought the nursing staff were excellent. Overall, from admission to discharge I was in hospital for 10 days.

I felt my initial recovery of the first couple of months was poor, I don't know why because my wounds healed well but physically I was very weak. I had targets of walking to the end of the road by the end of the first week and to the park by the next week and so on, but I couldn't achieve these at first. With help from my wife and friends however I kept walking further.

About three months later I started cardiac rehabilitation. It was enjoyable & definitely helped me improve. Although after a few weeks I got into trouble for walking to class, the cardiac nurses said it was too much to walk the couple of miles round trip and do the class as well, I should get the bus or get a lift the next time. So next time I didn't walk, I went on my mountain bike.

I did continue with my regular walks but once the mountain bike was back in action there was no stopping me. I attend the 'Cycle for Heath' scheme, which organise weekly rides throughout our area. I now probably average 20/30 miles a week - all

off road. Occasionally, I also go up Rivington with my mates but I still struggle to maintain their pace over that terrain.

At six months my goal was to drive a Kart. I have raced Karts for many years and it is a very physically demanding sport. So I entered my first race; an endurance race, the plan was just to see how far I could go. Well the adrenaline kicked in, I went the full distance and won! I have now entered eight races in the past year and have won all but one.

Over the past year I have been yachting, zip lining, rock climbing, flow riding and indoor sky diving. Two months ago we were in Orlando doing all the big roller coasters when my mate said. " you're not supposed to be on here, it says, no heart conditions". "It's okay," I said, " don't have a heart condition - I'm fixed".

So as you can see I have made a good recovery, not perfect. I still have visual disturbances and I still feel I have a way to go on my fitness, but I feel well, I feel great and I am leading a relatively normal life.

And that's what I said to [Mr.Field](#), my Consultant; I didn't want any restriction on my life after surgery. I wanted minimal medication and to be able to lead as normal a life as possible, even if that means additional surgery at some future point.

Because to me it's what's life all about, living it.

I would like to thank everyone again at LHCH.

Paul Massey