

Changing lives: Mary Rose volunteering helps Neil recover

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In 1995, 28-year-old Neil Clements was near to completing a demanding course to be a Royal Navy Parachute Instructor. Then in a split second his life changed forever.

Embarking on a routine jump, Neil's newly purchased parachute failed to open and he crashed 400 feet to the ground, landing in the middle of a football pitch. He miraculously survived the impact of his fall but received life-changing injuries: a broken neck, pelvis, leg and back and severe damage to the back of his skull. Doctors anticipated him being in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

Twenty-three years on and after much hard work and intensive physiotherapy, Neil is an invaluable volunteer at the National Lottery-supported Mary Rose Museum in Portsmouth. He can now walk short distances and has embraced opportunities through its outreach and volunteering programme.

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Neil's role at the Museum includes meeting visitors and showing them a range of objects that were perfectly preserved on the 500-year-old sunken *Mary Rose*. He credits his time there as helping him get back his life, albeit a very different one to his days as a Royal Navy Petty Officer: "My favourite role is working on the handling table where you can actually touch a piece of the *Mary Rose*. Working at the Museum has helped me improve my social and communication skills, I can speak a lot more clearly to the public who visit."

Neil is a popular volunteer and member of the *Mary Rose* team. An inspiration to all who meet him, he says: "The *Mary Rose* was brought up from the deep and I'd like to thank National Lottery players for helping me recover and come up from the deep too."

Neil Clements in his Royal Navy uniform

After 14 years in a wheelchair, Neil Clements is now walking again

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