

“I never drank on Sundays so I thought I couldn’t be an alcoholic.”

“I lived fast. I was married at sixteen. I had my own business at nineteen. I was an alcoholic at twenty-two. I was almost dead at twenty-eight.

And if you think that sounds like a short life and a merry one, read on. Maybe you’ll think again.

I started drinking at fourteen, out of bravado. I continued drinking because I could drink more than other people, and I was proud of it.

I drank shorts, never beer. And although I drank more than usual for my age, I never got drunk. My friends did, but not me.

I joined the family business at fifteen, and my father set me up on my own at nineteen. Cash was never a problem, so I drank in the pub for hours.

When my friends had had enough, I’d always want just one more. That last one.

At the age of twenty I was onto a bottle and a half a day, and I was known as the Vodka King”

Sneaking in the extra drink between rounds, secret drinking, feeling that your friends don’t drink fast enough – all are warning signals of danger ahead.

“My friends couldn’t drink as much as me, so they made excuses and went home. Me, I was too busy to go home. I was living too fast. I was the big spender, the hard drinker. I was really going to go places.

Then my family started harping on about my drinking. I promised them I’d change. I was the greatest promise maker in the world. But they insisted I went into hospital.

I’d show them I could come off the booze! I wasn’t an alcoholic. The alcoholic is the guy at Glasgow Green with the coat tied up with string and the wellies.

I only had to go into hospital because of the pressure of work. Because I’d been pushed into too much responsibility at such an early age. Because I’d been running about too much doing this, that and the next thing. It was never the booze.

You take a right good bevvy, I said to myself. But you’re not an alcoholic.

I came out of hospital, took my scrap business to Hawick, and cut back on the drinking. But not for long.

My friends started to leave me alone in the pub, only drinking with me for a while. Then I started suffering from loss of memory.”

Alcoholic amnesia (temporary “blacking out”) is when the alcoholic wakes up in the morning and does not remember what he has done or where he has been. He has not passed out or lost consciousness through drink. He simply has no memory at all of what happened during the drinking bout.

“I think I knew then that there was something wrong. But even when things were really getting bad I blamed everyone and everything, except myself except the booze.

There’s not really anything wrong with me. I still dress well, I always wear a shirt and tie, I shave every morning.

Whisky lies in the house and I don’t touch it. It can’t be the booze, I told myself.

Take Sundays. I was out every single night, bar Sundays. I didn’t drink at all on Sundays, and it was hell. I’d pace up and down all day long, praying for Monday to come.

That was how I kidded myself on: I never drank on Sundays, so I couldn’t be an alcoholic. I just took a good bevvy. I was getting older, that was all. I’d lived a fast life, and it was catching up on me.”

The alcoholic does everything in his power to avoid facing up to the truth, to avoid coming to terms the fact he cannot do without alcohol. He sees himself as the innocent victim of circumstances.

“I got myself a job. It was the first time I’d ever worked for someone else.

Then I started having arguments with the wife. I’d come in on a Friday, sit down, take the jacket off, pick up the paper just bursting for her to ask me for the wages. As soon as she did, that was it!

You’re always on about money! I’m sick of it! I’m away out! And that was my excuse to get down to the pub instead of staying at home like I’d promised.”

Drinking eventually becomes the most important activity in the alcoholic’s life, and everything else revolves around it.

“I chucked the job in. I was bevvying then, day and night. Real bad benders.

I tried to commit suicide with the booze. I was too scared to do anything else. I was scared of dying. I was scared of living.

Everything broke up. Everything. My wife left me. I was one step from the gutter. I just drank and drank and drank. Somehow I managed to get home to Glasgow.

I was really sick. I’d stopped eating, but I was getting heavier and heavier. At the end I was 15 stone. I could hardly walk.

I thought it couldn’t get any worse than this. But it did.

My legs gave way. I got the shakes. I was imagining things. I was seeing people, speaking to them. There was nobody there, but I could see them.



The doctor said if I didn’t stop drinking immediately, I’d be dead within a month.”

The whole of the alcoholic’s is affected by his drinking.

Sometimes it takes a social catastrophe or a really serious bout of illness to make him face up to the truth. But the signs will have been there for years, if only he had chosen to see them.

“I got help then. I went along to Alcoholics Anonymous. I met some of my old drinking pals there, and that made it easier for me to admit my problem, and made me more determined than ever to dry out. It was hell, it really was hell.

But it was worth it. Since I’ve been sober, I feel I’m just starting to live. I live a better social life than ever before. I’ve never felt as good or as happy. And I’ve had nothing stronger than coke and ice for the past four years

Sometimes I get regrets. An awful lot of money went through my hands. I could have been a rich man by now. But it doesn’t bother me too much. I’ve got my own business, and it’s doing very well.

If you, or someone close to you, has a drink problem, perhaps my story will help persuade you to get help. I hope so, because that’s the only reason I’m telling it.”

Very few alcoholics can be placed in the “skid row” category: most have homes, jobs and families.

“You can write to the address below in complete confidence. They’ll send you some useful information and a list of addresses where you can get knowledgeable, practical help. Either alone, or with a group.

Or contact your local Council on Alcoholism, or your Alcoholics Anonymous Group. They’re in the phone book.

Whatever you do, do something. And do it now. Believe me, you’ll never regret it”