

## *The Saltburn Profile* by Rosemary Nicholls

### **Nick Murray**

“Saltburn must be the nicest town in the borough, without a doubt,” says Redcar and Cleveland Mind worker, Nick Murray. “You can guarantee you will meet someone you know as you walk down Station Street.” He has met a lot of Saltburn people as an East Cleveland Day Service Organiser during the last ten years.

Nick was born in Redcar and has two sisters. One lives in Saltburn with her family and the other lives in London. He went to Sacred Heart School and St Mary’s College and to Bristol to study Environmental Health. But he found it wasn’t for him and returned to Teesside to study business and marketing.

His first job was in Loftus as an Oral History Recorder for the East Cleveland Employment Agency. He helped write two books: ‘Voices’ and ‘More Voices’ for this Community Programme project. Next, he joined British Telecom in Middlesbrough and worked for seven years in business sales and admin. “My job was kept open, while I studied for a postgraduate diploma in personnel management at Teesside, but on my return, I took voluntary redundancy,” he explains. “Then BT organised a part-time job for me with Manpower, while I converted the diploma to an M.A. by distance learning with De Montfort University, which they also funded.”

Following this, Nick became an Education and Training Adviser at Darlington College of Technology, but when the contract finished, he took stock and decided he wanted to move away from big organisations. He has enjoyed volunteering for many years with the Grenfell Club for people with learning difficulties in Redcar and wanted a caring role in his paid work. For four years, he worked for United Response, becoming a Deputy Manager for one of their residential homes for learning disabled people. Then he decided to move into mental health and worked for Creative Support, at a hostel in Coatham Road for people with mental health difficulties. This led on to his current role at R&C Mind.

“It’s really rewarding,” he says, “I feel I’m helping people. My colleagues are great; with only thirteen staff, we get to know each other very well. We provide a variety of activities and no two days are exactly the same. We’re out on walks, we have lunch clubs and are currently working on an animation project with Teesside University.” A couple of years ago, the partnership produced ‘Diversity Dave’, which is still viewable on YouTube. The current project is based at Destinations and consists of six sessions with Steve Thompson.

Since 1987, Nick has had his own two-hour radio programme ‘At Your Leisure’, on the radio station ‘Southside Broadcasting’, which serves the James Cook University Hospital. He presents the magazine programme monthly now, inviting three people to talk about what they’re involved in. For instance, he has recently interviewed Vici of Saltburn’s Dragonfly Bakery about her cupcake making business. “In the past, I’ve also featured Saltburn’s Tony Lynn, the people from ArtsBank, Nick Noble and Glenn Humphrey,” he remembers and adds: “All the shows are on my website: [www.nick.org.uk](http://www.nick.org.uk) and [www.saltburn.org.uk](http://www.saltburn.org.uk). It’s probably the nearest thing Saltburn has to its own radio station.”

Nick likes to travel and this year went to Krakow in Poland with [traveleyes.com](http://traveleyes.com), a company specialising in



holidays for the blind and partially sighted. Half the group has a sight impairment and they are accompanied by sighted people, who guide them through the holiday and explain what can be seen. It was set up by Amar Latif, a black, Asian, Scottish man who lost his sight when he was twenty. Nick finds him inspirational and has already booked a longer holiday with [traveleyes](http://traveleyes.com) for 2011.

Nick continues to volunteer once a week with the Grenfell Club, probably the largest in the country for people with learning difficulties. In October he helped organise the third fundraising night with singer Brian Dales at the club. For a time, he was the Chairman and has also served as an ordinary committee member. In 2009-10, he facilitated two weekend breaks for around fifty people to the Jonas Centre in Redmire, Wensleydale. They slept in log cabins, shared a communal kitchen and took trips on the Wensleydale Railway, to Bolton Castle and to Leyburn for shopping.

“I ought to mention my second job too,” remembers Nick. “I work for the Digital Villages Network Research Project, which aims to find out how people use or don’t use the Internet and computers.” The project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and works through Destinations and Teesside University. Having given people hour-long semi-structured interviews, Nick will be helping to provide the data for a report to be presented to policy makers. “The Government has an interest in getting people to carry out more transactions online and our project is one of several up and down the country to get a national picture,” he explains. He is pleased to be part of this.

Nick believes that we have a very vibrant community here in Saltburn. He values the way in which things are always happening in the town; businesses are thriving. “Just look at how Chocolini’s, Podology and Real Meals are expanding,” he says. “We don’t need virtual shop fronts here!”