

Angie Ward - Storyteller for Scarborough Stories

Angie's story is about her move to Scarborough and finding a love for sea swimming with new friends.

I grew up by the sea.

I grew up in Worthing, not many people have heard of it. It's a lot like Scarborough. Let's just say I grew up near Brighton, for ease.

But my connection with Yorkshire happened in the early 90s when I turned on the TV, and I heard Sean Bean talk for the first time. Oh, that accent, that Yorkshire accent, I thought was the sexiest thing I've ever heard.

I spent many an evening roller booting along Worthing promenade, by the sea, fantasising that Sean was holding my hand, that he's going to whisk me off into the moonlight, dancing.

And I spent a lot of time in my imagination as a kid, as a young person, because I found, and I still do find, real life really overwhelming, really hard. So, I often go into my imagination, and it's a really good coping mechanism for me.

So fast forward a few years, and I find myself in Somerset out at a Christmas do when I was a plus one for a friend.

And I meet my now husband. I fancy him immediately. But the icing on the cake was he opened his mouth and he had a Yorkshire accent.

Yeah, he's from Scarborough. He grew up here. I felt like all my Christmases have come at once. And I married him almost immediately for that reason, the accent

But also because Sean Bean was unavailable at the time!

Fast forward again 15, 20 years. We live in Somerset, and we've got three children. And life's good, it's good, we've both got careers, we've done well. We've got a lovely home.

But we're in that daily grind, you know, we have days out at the beach, but we've got to drive an hour, and we both hanker over the thought of living near the sea again. But we've got that dilemma -

Scarborough? Brighton? Scarborough? Brighton?

Have you seen Brighton Beach? Yes, really cool. It's a really cool place to live. But the pebbles make it shit. You burn your feet. And if you do make it down to the shore, without breaking your ankles, it's a miracle,

or Scarborough. And a picture paints 1000 words, doesn't it? It's beautiful.

Fast forward again, and it's the pandemic. And there is nothing like a worldwide pandemic to make you wonder why are you waiting?

Why are we waiting? So, we didn't.

We moved to Scarborough in mid lockdown, December 20/20. 300 miles away from everything we knew. And I'm not gonna lie to you. It was hard. But there were lots of plusses, connecting with family, exploring a new area spending, lots of time together as a family and visiting the sea every single day, and I did.

But as lockdown lifted, I realised that there's only so much connection you can get on Zoom with your work colleagues. I'd worked for a year and a half on Zoom. I missed my girlfriends, I missed being part of something, that sense of belonging. And so I thought I'd get out there, I'll join some clubs in Scarborough, meet people.

And I've got to be honest with you, it didn't go well.

I realised that, you know, having a different accent, not speaking like local people, made it hard. I didn't find Scarborough to be a warm and welcoming place and it started to impact on my mental health. I started getting really anxious.

And it really impacted on me and so, obviously, I thought, well, I'm, I'm gonna take up paddleboarding.

This really made my family laugh because I'm very dyspraxic, and I'm clumsy. And so it wasn't the best idea I've ever had, and I'm absolutely shit at it. But I love being in the sea.

And I've now got to get over my dilemma of finding a wetsuit that fits me because of all the COVID pounds that I put on. Put all my measurements in to the internet and they sent me a men's Extra Large.....

a MENS EXTRA LARGE!!!

and ironically it fits me like a glove.

So, I kind of fashioned a way of getting about on my paddleboard, on the occasional uses it gets. I kneel down, I have to put volleyball knee pads on because, you know, my knees are shot, it's called being old and all that.

I get out there and I have a real moment of like, this is amazing. The sun is shining down on me, the waters glistening, it's peaceful, but I also have a realisation that it's not enough.

Visiting the sea every day is just not enough,

I'm lonely.

It's eating away at me. I need to have a crew, a tribe.

Then, one day as I head back to shore and wipe out spectacularly on my paddleboard, I see a woman and she's chatting away 10 to the dozen, and I can't hear a word she's saying, but she's chatting away anyway, and her name is Carina Pelucci.

And she's an amazing person. She knows everybody. She's like the key to the kingdom that is Scarborough.

My life has changed since meeting that woman, she has introduced me to so many people and so many things. I don't mind saying, she was an absolute godsend.

So, we had an amazing chat on the beach. And then she said to me, you need to come Sea swimming. There's a group of us come at 6am in the morning.

And although I'm delighted to be invited, I've got two dilemmas now:

1 - six o'clock in the morning, rude!

and 2 - a group, and my anxiety levels are high.

So, my husband, who is just such a delight, he drives me there, at 6 o'clock in the morning, to make sure I get there. like a child.

I'm looking for this group of people in the sea. And they were there. And I heard Carina's voice and all is well, and they were a lovely group.

As I go deeper into the sea, in my extra-large wetsuit, I start to panic a bit because I actually can't swim very well.

So, I think do I tell them?

you know, do I tell them?

No, we're all right, they stopped. And they start swimming along. So, I think I'm more I can just sort of belong in the water.

And my imagination kicks in

And I think, start fantasising that I'm a ballerina, in the water, I love dancing.

So, I do a tentative fondu and it feels really good.

And then I do more, and I start a whole routine. And I take my ???? through all the bottom legs. And it feels wonderful. And I change it to a waltz. Now every day I go swimming, and I'm doing a different dance routine, under the water. And nobody knows, because they're just swimming, getting on with their own lives and their own experience.

At one point, I even did a tango, under the water. Amazing, I'm dancing with Sean of course!

I had a realisation. Another one that, you know, everybody's there. And I was listening to people's stories. And I've met some amazing people whilst in the sea. And I've heard about their recovery and their, their transitions and their, their hopes and dreams.

And the sea is an amazing space to talk because it just takes the words and yeah, somehow makes them lighter and freer.

And I'm part of this tribe, this tribe of wonderful warrior women who swim in the sea most days.

And they say amazing things like "have your tits frozen off yet?". Oh, and it's just, they're really fun and they're really people that I can connect and be myself with.

So, I suppose my story has really, really impacted on the way that I see people in the world.

And so, I try and pay Carina's kindness forward. And if I see somebody who's looking a little bit unsure of themselves, or they're on their own, I talk to them. And I'll tell them, and I invite them to come sea swimming with us, knowing full well that they either will or they won't.

And that's okay because it's the invitation. It's the warmth of that, you know, you can come into our group that is so special and so underrated.

So, my message to you is, if you can be anything, be kind and pay it forward. I'm paying it forward.

When I see people who are on their own, I give them a smile. I give them a little wave because I remember what it was like to be me and not knowing anyone here.

and it was hard.

So, if you take anything from this story, apart from hopefully having been entertained for eight minutes, please take that forward and be open and warm and friendly because it can really make a difference to somebody.

Thank you