Changing lives: rewinding history reconnects



The last time Gloria Pullen saw her father was when she was 19. He died suddenly whilst cheering her on as she took part in a sporting event for deaf players.

However, viewing forgotten film reels recovered from a skip years later has made it possible for Gloria to see her father once again.

When the British Deaf Association (BDA) got in touch with Gloria, now aged 72, to help identify people in archive footage found in a skip in south London 12 years ago, little did she know what she would discover.

Gloria, who was born profoundly deaf, viewed the film reels at her local Nottinghamshire Deaf Society (NDS). The footage, which dates back to the 1930s, shows the deaf community socialising, competing and talking politics at nation-wide BDA meetings, sports events, and local gatherings.

It was in this footage that Gloria spotted her father Arthur King as a young man: “When I saw him I said hang on, can you just rewind it – I just couldn’t believe it was my father!” said Gloria.

“It was incredibly emotional, particularly for my own children and my grandchildren as they had never met my father,” explains Gloria, “It was like he was in the room with me”.

The BDA received an HLF grant in 2013 to recover the film reels and compile the footage into a documentary called *Power in our Hands*. The film is about the recognition of British Sign Language and Deaf rights, and it was released this year as part of BDA's 125th anniversary.

"Thanks to National Lottery players the BDA was able to create the documentary and it gave us, the deaf community, more strength, more belief in ourselves, and a reminder of where we've come from," said Gloria.

Gloria has a strong family tradition of involvement in the BDA and the deaf community and she became interested in campaigning for Deaf rights from a young age: "My father was a leader. He was chairman of the deaf club in Bristol. I always looked up to him," remembers Gloria, "I learnt a lot from my parents in terms of standing on my own two feet."

Gloria was a researcher in deaf studies at Bristol University before working as an employment advisor at Nottinghamshire Deaf Society (NDS). Her work has seen her travel to Africa and America to research and explore issues facing the deaf community, whilst also sitting on the board of the BDA.

"I learnt a lot from my dad and I would have loved to tell him what I've achieved and for him to see what I've achieved," says Gloria, "In a way I've almost had that opportunity through this film."







Ashley Franklin photography

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Man using British Sign Language BDA Archive



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Changing lives: from biscuit tin to archive – photo reunites family