

## 'Finding my twin, Edward James Crowley'

My mum found out she was expecting early on in 1982. Being her second pregnancy she knew what to expect this time around, only she grew much faster and bigger than previously. With twins (both identical and not) running in both families my mum had her suspicions. During her check-ups she was told she was carrying a very active baby because the heartbeat one minute on one side of her tummy and then the other side. My mum expressed to the midwives that she believed she was having a multiple birth but was declined a scan to confirm it as the midwives thought differently. My mum reluctantly took their word for it as they were the experts, despite the fact that my grandmother said she could see a clear line down my mum's abdomen being the separation of myself and my brother lying side by side. My mum went into labour on 2nd August 1982. I was born pretty quickly and my mum was given the afterbirth injection to speed up the placenta being expelled from her body. It was at that moment chaos broke out. My dad was forced from the delivery suite and my mum vaguely remembers being told there was another baby that needed to be delivered immediately as the oxygen supply had been cut off due to the afterbirth injection being administered.



Sadly it was too late. After starting the caesarean section and looking for my brother in my mum's womb, they discovered he was already partly through the birth canal. He was born naturally and on delivery it was confirmed he was stillborn. He had been without oxygen for too long. My twin brother who would have been named Edward was taken from my mother never to be seen again. Something my mum never recovered from. The guilt of not knowing what happened to what would have been her full term healthy baby boy. At the time we were born, a stillborn baby did not qualify for a funeral because he never took a breath. Regardless of the fact his death was due to a hospital error.

Mum would rarely talk of Edward because of the pain she felt, but when she did, she would cry and torture herself. She had questions like... Why didn't I push for a scan at the hospital? Why could I not see him for one cuddle before the nurses took him? And what happened to Edwards's body after he was born? Mum approached the hospital when I was about 11 as she finally decided she wanted to face what happened but they were no help and gave mum no information at all. Mum tormented herself believing he had been cremated in the hospital incinerator which only added to her heartache.

Not knowing what happened to Edward is what mum found most difficult to cope with. As time went on mum got worse, by the time I reached my late twenties mum talked of Edward more and more and seemed to be breaking down more than ever. I'd had my own thoughts and questions too which I never really wanted to ask in case it upset mum too much, and my dad never spoke of what happened so I never asked. I turned thirty in 2012 and having two cherished children of my own I grew more curious as to what happened to Edward. It was at this point I made the decision to do my best to find out what had happened. I scoured the internet and came across the 'Brief Lives - Remembered' website. I wasted no time in emailing Paula with all the information she needed to start her search for Edward. I tried not to get my hopes up as finding him

seemed so out of reach, but I thought to myself 'At least I can say I've tried'. Paula explained there was a good chance because he was my twin which might make the search easier.

On 30th January, only two days after contacting Brief Lives - "Remembered", I received an email from Paula asking me to contact her. It was the news I had been hoping for. Edward had been laid to rest in a nearby cemetery on 23rd August 1982 with another baby aged 4 days old. This was the best outcome we could have hoped for. Edward had a burial in a beautiful cemetery and was not alone. I felt comfort in knowing he had someone with him all this time.



On breaking the news to my mum that day the emotion was overwhelming. My mum had no idea I had decided to find him. She cried for days and felt like she could finally grieve properly. Mum explained it had all felt like a bad dream that never happened and now she feels entitled to mourn Edward who would have been her only son.

Since initially finding out what happened to Edward, mum now feels closure and like a weight has been lifted, she feels a sense of relief. Mum no longer cries and is just happy we have a place to visit Edward James Crowley. We will be forever grateful for Paula and all those at "Brief Lives - Remembered". Our lives have been changed and no words can describe the gratitude we have for Paula.

By Natalie Crowley-Harrington

Edward James Crowley - Stillborn 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1982  
Loved and never forgotten.