# How a night out with police colleagues left Mairead Clabby battling life-changing injuries and inspired her to run for recovery



An ordinary evening spent socialising with colleagues took a devastating turn for Mairead Clabby, altering her life forever. Back in December 2012, the then 23-year-old volunteer police officer was enjoying drinks with her team at a pub in the Wirral, Liverpool, when their night took a chaotic twist. A violent altercation erupted between a couple, prompting Mairead and her colleagues to intervene. In the fray, a woman was knocked unconscious and, as Mairead attempted to summon medical assistance, the situation escalated dangerously.

In a moment of selflessness, Mairead moved to protect the woman from returning to her partner, who had been taken into custody. Unfortunately, the woman reacted violently, attacking Mairead. "It took three officers to restrain her in the end," Mairead recalled. The violent clash left her with serious injuries, which she initially attributed to muscular damage in her neck and shoulder. However, despite years of physiotherapy, her condition continued to deteriorate.

The physical toll became increasingly severe, robbing Mairead of her previous vitality. As she struggled to perform mundane tasks, including lifting objects or even typing, she sensed that something more serious was afoot. Her GP's initial recommendation for more physiotherapy proved insufficient. Seeking a second opinion, Mairead’s persistence led to an MRI scan that ultimately revealed a grim diagnosis: four herniated discs in her neck coupled with a chiari malformation—a neurological condition where brain tissue extends into the spinal canal. This condition typically arises from severe whiplash, resulting in debilitating symptoms like severe headaches, neck pain, and balance issues, impacting one's quality of life significantly.

Describing the moment she learned about her diagnosis, Mairead said, "At that point, I was the illest I'd ever been." Her health continued to spiral, causing her to gain weight and limiting her mobility drastically. "I had been a competitive athlete before the assault," she lamented, "but I was struggling to do walks around the block." This stark transformation from a spirited youth to someone grappling with significant health challenges left a profound impact on her psyche.

After consulting with specialists at the Walton Centre, a renowned neurology hospital in Liverpool, Mairead was offered surgical intervention—removal of one of her affected disks and replacement with a graft. The operation proved to be a pivotal moment in her recovery journey. Post-surgery, she experienced a remarkable turnaround: she quickly regained her mobility and began shedding excess weight, revitalising her body and spirit. Within just three months, she lost around three stone through a renewed commitment to moving again.

With ongoing support from the Police Treatment Centre, Mairead gradually returned to a semblance of her former self. Now 36, she is not only participating in fitness activities but also tackling the Great Manchester Run, seeking to raise funds for the Walton Centre that played such a crucial role in her recovery. "Things are so different to how they were," she reflected looking forward to the event. She is particularly thrilled about sharing the starting line with regional athletic talent Keely Hodgkinson.

While Mairead's experience highlights the potential for recovery through medical intervention and personal resolve, it also raises awareness about the complexities surrounding conditions like chiari malformation, which can significantly disrupt lives. As she steps into the running shoes that once seemed far from her reach, Mairead embodies a testament to resilience and the indomitable human spirit. She hopes that by sharing her story and raising funds, others experiencing similar hardships may find hope and support.

Every step she takes during the run not only serves as a personal victory but also as a rallying cry for those facing their own battles—reminding them that through perseverance and the right assistance, transformation is possible.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[3]](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chiari-malformation/symptoms-causes/syc-20354010)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[3]](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chiari-malformation/symptoms-causes/syc-20354010)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[4]](https://www.childrensdmc.org/about/our-stories/all-our-stories/our-stories/marissas-successful-brain-surgery-for-chiari-malformation)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[4]](https://www.childrensdmc.org/about/our-stories/all-our-stories/our-stories/marissas-successful-brain-surgery-for-chiari-malformation)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102)
9. Paragraph 9: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102)
10. Paragraph 10: [[1]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102), [[2]](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/i-pub-mates-next-minute-35242102> - An article detailing how Mairead Clabby, a 23-year-old volunteer police officer, intervened in a pub fight in Liverpool in December 2012. During the altercation, she was assaulted by a woman, leading to severe neck and shoulder injuries. Despite initial physiotherapy, her condition worsened, resulting in her diagnosis of four herniated discs and a Chiari malformation. After surgery, she experienced significant recovery, losing weight and regaining mobility. Now 36, Mairead is preparing to participate in the Great Manchester Run to support the hospital that aided her recovery.
3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chiari-malformation/symptoms-causes/syc-20354010> - An overview of Chiari malformation, a condition where brain tissue extends into the spinal canal. The article discusses the three types of Chiari malformation, their symptoms—including headaches, neck pain, and balance issues—and potential causes. It also covers treatment options, which may include monitoring, medications, and surgery, depending on the type and severity of the condition.
4. <https://www.childrensdmc.org/about/our-stories/all-our-stories/our-stories/marissas-successful-brain-surgery-for-chiari-malformation> - A story about Marissa, a 17-year-old musician from Michigan, who underwent successful brain surgery for Chiari malformation. After experiencing severe headaches and vomiting, Marissa was diagnosed with the condition. She underwent suboccipital decompression surgery, which relieved her symptoms and allowed her to return to playing the clarinet in her high school band.
5. <https://www.luederlaw.com/alleged-traumatic-brain-injuries-causation-issues-with-chiari-malformations/> - An article discussing the challenges in establishing causation for traumatic brain injuries in cases involving Chiari malformations. It highlights that symptoms of Chiari malformations, such as headaches and neck pain, can mimic those of concussions or mild traumatic brain injuries, complicating legal cases. The article also mentions that Chiari malformations are often associated with other conditions like syringomyelia and scoliosis.
6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10380265/> - A critical update on the classification of Chiari and Chiari-like malformations. The article discusses the different types of Chiari malformations, their associated conditions, and the clinical distinctions between them. It also explores the pathophysiology and potential causes of these malformations, including genetic and environmental factors.
7. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8876886/> - A case report and literature review on the diagnosis, management, and return to sport of a 16-year-old patient with a Chiari I malformation. The article discusses the challenges faced by the patient, the surgical decompression performed, and the considerations for returning to sports post-surgery. It also reviews existing literature on managing athletes with Chiari I malformations.