

KENDAL ORAL HISTORY GROUP INTERVIEW 307F

Kendal Flood December 2015 project interview

Kayleigh & Tom Birkett, both born 1986
Interviewed April 2016

307f/ Summary Sheet, page one

Track 1, p.1

The couple with young children have lived on Mintdale for three years.

This an 'older generation' street. Their house has never flooded in over 40 years.

Track 2, pp.1-5

On the afternoon of 5 December there were excited to see the river so high as they travelled round town. It was so wet the family decided to 'camp in' over the weekend. Went to Morrison's for supplies. As there were no taxis they drove a distraught and vulnerable man home to top Sandylands.

Description of this difficult journey and the flooding they saw.

Tom dropped off the family at home & then took the car to higher ground.

He knocked on the doors of their street to tell people to move their cars.

As water kept rising fears of flooding increased. But there were NO emergency services to be found at all.

This was all very different to the evacuation for the 'nearly' flood in November 2015.

An evacuation of houses on Mintdale was led by Tom. He brought a large number to his house which was higher up the street.

A detailed description of Tom's evacuation efforts.

Kayleigh stayed in the family home with large numbers of adults, children & pets.

Their home flooded so Tom walked everyone to the cricket club for safety.

Track 3, pp.5-7

Family set off in the car to try to get to Windermere Rd (to be with family).

They had a three-year old and a baby. Tried various routes and couldn't get through.

Description of problems on Paddy Lane. Both were drenched and scared.

Stayed in an aunt's house on Shap Road overnight.

Kayleigh had phoned the fire brigade whilst still at home asking for rescue for themselves and guests. Details taken but there was no response or offer of help from anyone during the evening.

No emergency services in their area at all. 'Drain Doctor' very active.

Track 4, pp.7-8

Went home on Sunday morning. Shap Road was like a scene in a disaster movie.

The water had left the house but left a dreadful smell.

Tom went to his workplace (Travis Perkins on Mintsfeet). A scene of devastation.

Rescued a goldfish.

(see over)

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Track 5, pp.8-10

Family stayed at mother's house on Windermere Road until their home was ready for return. No suitable offer of accommodation was made.

Details of making insurance claims, damage to their belongings, etc. Everything was destroyed. It was a very difficult and emotional time.

Track 6, pp.10-12

Details of the clear-up operation at Travis Perkins.

Details of the difficulties they had with the insurance company.

Got permission to undertake the clear-out operation themselves.

Listed and photographed all belongings.

Did all the building work and decorating themselves.

Back in the house in April 2016.

Heavily out of pocket despite having insurance.

Their three-year old is so traumatised that he is having counselling.

Track 7, pp.12-14

The family received no help from anyone at any time, including the clear-up operation. Neighbours who had not been flooded did not offer help (notably tea/coffee) when they were clearing and repairing their home.

They lost many personal items and children's toys.

It was all very, very difficult.

Problems with utility companies threatening to take them to court for late payment of bills.

At time of interview the family were still struggling from the emotional side of things.

Mintdale in April 2016 was a very sad street.

Tom is seen by those he rescued in December 2015 as a hero.