

## Forever a smiling angel

### Celebrating the life of Karen Tyson

Karen was a beautiful baby – always smiling like she did for all her short life. When I praised her for doing something by saying “Good Girl” and she would repeat “goo goo” as a baby – she often described herself as being a good girl as she got older. After she was born it soon became apparent that she was behind other children in her development and consequently she attended the Special Unit at St Luke’s primary school. I then put Karen’s sister Helen and brother Stephen in the main part of the school so that they were all together. Everybody loved Karen. She was prone to occasional tantrums at home but I know this was due to her learning difficulties and a result of frustration because normally she was a lovely person but also because she was so trusting she was very vulnerable.

As a toddler Karen played with her brother and sister and the other children in Pinfold, Hadfield, which was a safe cul-de-sac that was ideal for children and as everyone moved in at the same time there were many children to play with as they were all close together in age. When she got older she went to many activities including swimming, dancing and judo. She found many of these activities difficult but managed very well and everyone was very helpful and understanding.

After she was placed in the Special Unit at Glossop Comp she moved on to High Peak College and then into Community Care where she was very popular and kept her friends from there for the rest of her life. When she was picked up from the day centre she always ran out with a big smile on her face. She did a few “Supported Employment” jobs. One was at Gamesley Café which she loved and got to know the women well who worked there and whom she liked. She really enjoyed the job and learnt lots of things and made lots of friends. She had her own jobs at home which were washing and ironing and nobody was allowed to interfere with them. When I peg out now I’m reminded of Karen – lots of just ordinary things remind me of her.

She was always friendly and had lots of friends – amongst them were Louise, Anthony, Nicolle and Hazel. Hazel was a friend from school but even though Hazel moved to Ashton they kept in contact. After she was moved to Alderbrook she made lots of new friends including renewing and old friendship with Gail who used to be her grandma’s neighbour. Karen loved cats which we always kept as pets. We had a big chair which the children used to sit in together often with a cat in tow! The cats would often hide from her because she wanted to carry them around when they didn’t want to be! She had lots of cat books that she would read and copy from. Karen loved nature and as a

family we went walking every week and she took a great interest in the plants and animals she saw. She loved lambs in the spring and loved butterflies and often took photos of them on her camera. That is why the theme in the church is that of butterflies. Eventually I joined her in the Butterfly Society and she received magazines and booklets which contained lovely butterfly photos.

She lost her Dad four years ago and three years ago circumstances led to her being lost to me but I kept contact with her by sending her letters, fruit, presents and letters and presents from Hazel and the Butterfly Society. I was unable to see her again but I know she is in a better place now because she was a good, innocent, beautiful person who will always be my little girl who never grew up – a smiling angel.