

BIG PICTURE





Claire's life, 9:53-10:42

Stamford, England, June. Photos by Claire's SenseCam. Does your work lend itself to a striking image? Get in touch on jon.sutton@dbps.org.uk

Dr Catherine Loveday (University of Westminster), one of Claire's neuropsychologists, says: 'A tiny detail amongst hundreds of images - a gesture, a sign on a wall - can trigger Claire's memory and spark a real emotional reaction.' Martin Conway, a Professor of Cognitive Psychology at Leeds University who also works with Claire, calls these 'Proustian moments', after Marcel Proust's description of memory as a 'rope let down from heaven to draw one up from the abyss of unbeing'.

Using fMRI, Dr Loveday and colleagues have shown increased brain activation when Claire tries to remember experiences previously reviewed on SenseCam. According

Six years ago, a viral infection called herpes encephalitis damaged Claire's brain. The toll on her hippocampus, where memories are formed and retrieved, left her unable to store the sights, sounds and feel of an experience. Enter the SenseCam, developed by Microsoft and used by neuropsychologists to help amnesiacs like Claire.

Worn around Claire's neck, the small camera automatically takes photos with a wide-angle lens when it senses movement or a change in lighting. Claire can download the sequences and review them, allowing her to bond with friends over shared experiences and stimulating her remaining episodic memory.

to Dr Loveday, there's so much more scope: 'as an effective memory prosthesis for the elderly, in providing objective material for therapeutic interventions (e.g. insight, CBT), or simply for "lifelogging".'