

Revolutionary treatment saved my life

By **ANDY DAVIES**

GLENYS Watkins was left unable to eat or drink after a severe brain injury but has now had her life transformed by becoming the first ever person in the UK to undergo a revolutionary treatment.

The retired teacher from Dyserth suffered a massive brain trauma after falling down stairs at her home back in September 2006.

Now the 64-year-old has been given her life back and instead of facing the "horrible" prospect of being fed through a tube for the rest of her life, she's able to look forward to eating again.

Following the fall, the mother-of-two was unconscious for a week and underwent an emergency life-saving operation at the specialist neurology in Liverpool.

Ex-teacher recovers after brain trauma

intensive care and a further six weeks on a ward at the hospital.

But even after treatment and rehabilitation she was left unable to swallow with a condition called dysphagia.

Doctors advised she be fitted with a tube in her abdomen that would transfer food directly to her stomach.

Glenys, who is married to John, said: "It's been one hell of a thing to happen.

"I never dreamt it would happen to me. I was so fit and on the go, then to end up in hospital with a bump on my head, it just ended my way of life."

She was unable to eat for a year until she started treat-

in August 2007. The treatment uses small electrical pulses, transmitted through pads placed on the skin, to stimulate the swallowing muscles so that they relearn how to swallow.

Her turnaround was remarkable and after 17 sessions she was able to start swallowing again.

Glenys, a former history and special needs teacher from Dyserth, said: "It's transformed my life, even saved my life. It is absolutely great to be able to eat again, it was like being a normal person again. It's brought back my life."

Speech and language therapist Sumathi Sinnappan, who treated Glenys, says her case could now help provide a breakthrough in treatment for up to 1.5 million people in the UK.

It is not currently available to NHS patients but is being provided in the US.

Ms Sinnappan said: "Glenys,



ROAD TO RECOVERY: Dyserth resident Glenys Watkins is enjoying meal times again with her husband John. She is the first patient to be treated with Vital Stim in the UK.

phagia, had a very poor quality of life, she was poorly motivated and depression can set in. This can mean a slow decline and the condition can become life limiting. But now she's really perky and cracking jokes."

Newsfile

New education role

HYWYN-Williams has joined Denbighshire County Council as its new Corporate Director for Lifelong Learning.

Originally from Aberdaron but now living in Ruthin, Mr Williams joins Denbighshire from Wrexham County Borough Council where he was Chief of Learning and Achievement Office. His previous roles included Head of School Improvement and Inclusion at Wrexham County Borough Council and Deputy and Acting Headteacher at Ysgol Morgan Llwyd.

Mr Williams said: "I'm really looking forward to working with councillors, staff, headteachers, governors, students and parents across the whole county to further develop education in the county.

"A lot of work has taken place following the Estyn inspection in 2007 and we acknowledge there is more work to do, as we continue to work towards our goal of providing a first class education service in Denbighshire."

Winning caravans

A **ST ASAPH** firm which creates caravans for pick-up trucks has been given a prestigious gong in a nationwide contest.

Fifth Wheel Limited, based in Rhualt, scooped a Caravan Club Design Award for the fifth time at the end of last month, beating off more than forty rival products from companies across the globe.

"It's a real testament to the outstanding quality, design and build of our tourers," said Adrian Parry-Jones, the firm's Company Operations Director.

The award was announced by the Caravan Club at this year's Boat, Caravan and Outdoor Show, held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham between February 17 and 22.

■ For more information about Fifth Wheel Limited contact 01745 583000 or visit the firm's website at www.fifthwheelco.com