Love Islander Paul Knops reveals dementia heartache after opening Alzheimer's Society Memory Walk with TV star Ruth Langsford

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Love Island star Paul Knops has opened his heart over his "devastating" personal experience of dementia after taking part in the Alzheimer's Society Surrey Memory Walk on Sunday.

Speaking for the first time about the impact of dementia on his family, Paul says he was left "heart-broken" by the loss of his beloved Swedish grandmother, Ingbrit Olsson, when she developed Alzheimer's disease.

And after admitting he is "scared" of developing dementia himself, he said memories of his grandmother, who died when he was 16 years old, have inspired him to help scientists find a cure for the condition by throwing his weight the Alzheimer's Society flagship Memory Walk campaign.

He got the walk under way by cutting a start-line ribbon with television star and Alzheimer's Society ambassador Ruth Langsford, who whose dad Dennis sadly passed away in 2012 after living with Alzheimer's for 13 years.

Paul, 32, was joined on the Memory Walk, which took place in the picturesque grounds of Painshill park, near Cobham, with partner Arabella Drummond, whose own father, Al, is living with dementia.

Paul said: "Sadly, I know from personal family experience just what a devastating disease Alzheimer's can be and so I thought it only right that I support Alzheimer's Society Memory Walk campaign.

"I've been inspired to help because my Nan had Alzheimer's disease and that really hurt me. It was a slow deterioration and the difficult thing is that because she lived in Sweden and we were in England, I didn't see her every week so when I did I was quite a drastic change and that hit me hard.

"There'll always be a special place in my heart for my Nan - I was really close to her and I count myself lucky because her grandkids were her world.

"I adored her. I used to go back and forth to Sweden to see her and it was devastating for us all when we lost her when I was 16. It's a shame she never got to see us grow up but I'd like to think she'd be proud of me for supporting Alzheimer's Society.

"Dementia is something that's really close to home still because my girlfriend, Arabella's dad has developed dementia which has been really tough to take. It's been really upsetting.

"It's heartbreaking for both us but it makes us realise it's incredibly important to fight dementia because I know it's affecting more and more people and there's still no known cure for dementia.

"When you're younger you think you're invincible but the older I get the more it scares me. I do think if my Nan and loads of people around us have developed dementia, what's stopping me from developing it as well. That's why it's important to help fund dementia research."

Addressing Memory Walk fundraisers from the stage, Ruth said: "We are all united in love here because we're taking part in Memory Walk for our loved ones.

"Whether they're still with us and living with dementia or sadly dementia has taken them away, remember all the good times you had with the person you loved and that you still love.

"We're also walking to raise money for research, because I truly believe if we can fund that research, one day we will find a way to either cure or to certainly prevent dementia, so other families don't have to go through what we've had to.

"I really believe that but it takes a lot of money and as we know Government funding is woeful and that needs to change as well but that will only happen with heightened awareness."

Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive Officer at Alzheimer's Society, said: "Families like Paul and Ruth's are being cruelly torn apart by dementia, and we urgently need more funding to help us find a

cure so others no longer have to face its heart-breaking impact.

“Until the day we beat dementia our researchers are working tirelessly to find ways to make quality of life better for people living with dementia in the UK and their carers too.

“That’s why we need people everywhere to follow their lead, and sign up now to take part in one of our night-time Glow Walks taking place nationwide in March.”

To register for an Alzheimer’s Society Glow Walk, go to: ***memorywalk.org.uk.***

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