

Memoir with warmth and honesty



Ruth Cotton's new book, *A fragile hold: Living with multiple sclerosis and other uncertainties* will be published this month

When Ruth Cotton came to live in Newcastle in 2012, she quickly immersed herself in discovering the history and heritage of Hamilton, the suburb she had made her home. A blog, *Hidden Hamilton*, was followed by two popular books and a heritage walk. Ruth continued writing for print and social media, as well as collaborating with others to bring Hamilton's stories to light through street art and distinctive blue-and-white heritage plaques.

What is less well known is that during this time, Ruth has been struggling with a chronic, disabling disease. She had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1997, at the peak of her career and with three children still at home. All she could think of then were the

uncertainties – especially whether she'd become wheelchair-bound.

But Ruth continued her full, active life and it wasn't until her retirement in Newcastle that multiple sclerosis exacted its greatest toll – slowly taking her balance and mobility. In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic confined Ruth indoors, news came that her husband's cancer – melanoma, diagnosed years before – was accelerating.

Overwhelmed by a sense of life's fragility, Ruth turned to writing to make sense of it all. The result is her fifth book, *A fragile hold: Living with multiple sclerosis and other uncertainties*.

This is the first time Ruth has written about the impact of chronic disease on her life, and

her memoir reveals with warmth and unflinching honesty the daily, intimate scenes of a life with multiple sclerosis.

Carol Duncan, City of Newcastle Councillor and founder of Lost Newcastle has said of Ruth

“If we're lucky, some of us will meet someone like Ruth Cotton. If we're really lucky, we'll pause our own busy lives long enough to listen.”



A fragile hold: Living with multiple sclerosis and other uncertainties will be published on 15 March by Lightleaf Press.

It will be available in paperback and digital formats at all good bookstores. It can also be ordered from Amazon, Apple Books and other online shops.

The Local has two copies of *A fragile hold: Living with multiple sclerosis and other uncertainties* to give away to a lucky reader. To enter the draw text the words 'Fragile Hold' and your name to 0455 210 000 by 17 March. The winner will be advised by telephone.