

NEWS LETTER - JULY 2007



PUB LUNCH

Our pub lunch this year was held inside at the Red Lyon as, unlike last year, we were not blessed with wall to wall sunshine. There was a good turnout (sorry if I didn't get you in the picture) and I think we all managed to get home without getting soaked - didn't it rain!

We were especially pleased to welcome Dennis back (left of centre) who suffered a stroke at the beginning of the year and is making a good recovery.

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NEWS.....NEWS.....NEWS.....NEWS

The committee are progressing towards changing the group into a Branch of Ataxia UK. Although it will make little difference to our meetings, it will mean that we can officially raise funds, both for our branch and for Ataxia UK, and we will be able to use our funds for the benefit of our members, such as providing transport to events or awarding grants to assist in the purchase of specialist equipment. We are already working on ideas for Ataxia Awareness Day, 25th September, and we will discuss these and fund raising ideas at our meeting on 1st September.

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MEMBERS NEWS

Hello. Let me introduce myself. My name is Elspeth Pelton (Ellie), and I've had ataxic symptoms (shaking, loss of balance, incoordination, increasing difficulty walking) for (approximately) 16 years. I have loads of hobbies, but a main one is card-making. I make many different types of cards: 3D decoupage, iris folding, tea-bag folding, shaker, concertina, pop-up to name but a few of the types. I also make cards for a range of occasions: birthday, love, marriage, baby; passing driving test, passing exams, and cards that are suitable for virtually any occasion. It keeps my hands functioning, and my mind occupied, and above all, is tremendous fun and extremely satisfying! I have decided to start selling my cards in order to raise money for (amongst other things) an Electrically Powered Indoor Outdoor Chair (EPIOC) to help me get around easier, especially travelling over distances, or on days out. (I also want to get an assistance dog, and a power-chair would help no end with "walkies" lol!).

Please take a look at my website:

www.craftmarkets.co.uk/crafty-rock-angels to view my cards - hopefully you might even want to buy a few!

I will be adding other hand-made products in the future, if cards aren't your thing. Also, please feel free to contact me at: craftyrocks@aol.com if you have any questions about my products/suggestions for new products.

Ellie

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HOTELS & WHEELCHAIRS



So, how do you find a wheelchair friendly hotel? Phone and ask, you say. We did just that when booking a short break in Torquay.

"We have ground floor rooms, accessed by a short ramp, with walk-in showers" OK, so we booked and ignored the hotel's history (it had previously given John Cleese the idea for Basil Faulty when he stayed there, only to be confronted by an extremely rude manager). But all that has changed, very pleasant staff, very accessible ground floor with a large, comfortable lounge, excellent restaurant serving delicious food way beyond its 3 star rating and coupled with faultless service. There was a wheelchair accessible toilet and the sheltered sun-trap terrace surrounding the outside pool was easily accessed.

That was the good news; now for the bad

The 'short ramp' to the downstairs rooms had been achieved by filling in four steps, resulting in a slope of about 40 degrees. There was no way I could propel myself up this and, as I weigh $13\frac{1}{2}$ stone and my wife weighs $8\frac{1}{2}$, there was another problem. A member of staff came

to my aid and, with some difficulty, pushed me onto a small landing which then required a sharp left turn to be confronted by another short ramp. Only one step high but at 40 degrees again. A sharp right turn led into a narrow corridor, just wide enough for my 'chair, and on to our room. Would you believe the doorway was too narrow for a wheelchair!!!

We returned to reception, skidding down the ramp with both wheels locked, and asked to be given another room. We were shown a much better room on the 2nd floor, accessed by a small lift which, initially, I could only get in by removing the footrests. Eventually I found that I could enter backwards and, provided I tucked my feet in, the doors could close without amputating my toes!!!

When we finally checked out, we were asked if we would be coming back. I said "no" and explained why only to be told that they have many guests in wheelchairs. "No surprise" I replied, "when you tell them it is wheelchair accessible, but how many come back"?

We were not alone, another guest who used a small scooter was heard having an almighty row with the manager. Apparently he had also been assured by telephone that there would not be a problem. Perhaps the ghost of Basil Fawlty lives on!!!

Bob



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1st September, 2007: Meeting at Knowl Hill village hall. This will be the inaugural meeting of the new Thames Valley Branch of 

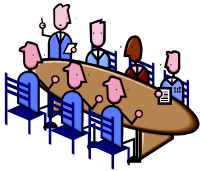
15th September, 2007: Ataxia UK National Conference, Leeds.

25th September, 2007: Ataxia Awareness Day.

3rd November, 2007: Meeting at Knowl Hill village hall.

15th December, 2007: A Christmas lunch to look forward to.

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YOUR COMMITTEE



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