

COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE SUPPORT GROUP NEWSLETTER

February 2013



Our latest meeting – held on Sunday 3rd February 2013 at Exhall Old School Community Centre



Catherine (CA) and her husband Paul, Kieran (FA) and his family, Neil (FA) and his mum Jayne and step-dad Steve, me (FA) and my aunty Monica, Matt (FA) and his PA Paul and Dave (CA). Lorraine Emily and Robin, Kate and Sarah sent their apologies.

Matt and Paul drove all the way down from Surrey in Matt's wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV). He picked me up on the way in my powerchair (Paul clamped it down in the back of the vehicle) and then we all went to Mc Donald's for a bit of energy ahead of the meeting. When we got there I met my aunty Monica who managed the coffee-making and refreshments. I also met Dave – it was great to see him as it had been a while. He told me about a boat ride along the Thames which he'd done recently and really enjoyed. I've done this and loved it too and the boats are very wheelchair friendly to boot – we'd recommend it to anyone (including any wheelchair user).

When Matt, Paul and I pulled up in Matt's WAV, Neil and his family pulled up next to us in his WAV. It was especially nice to see Neil's mum Jayne, who came to the Christmas lunch but had never been to a meeting before. Jayne spent a lot of time talking to Kieran's mum Sue – I'm glad these mums of people who have ataxia got to meet. Jayne is a friend on Facebook and one of her recent statuses said how Neil was attending a lecture at Cambridge University (he already studied a PhD in Mathematics here) and ran into (not literally) Professor Stephen Hawkins' PA who was going to arrange a meeting with Neil and the man himself!! I'm so proud to be associated with people like this!

Neil triggered an interesting discussion within the group about holidays. He's going to spend a week with Vitalise Respite Care at the end of March (which is why the next meeting is mid-March, see below). Vitalise is a national charity providing short breaks (respite care) and other services for people with physical disabilities, visually impaired people, and carers (see <http://www.vitalise.org.uk/>). Matt told the group about his villa in the south of Spain, which he adapted himself so it meets his needs perfectly and subsequently other disabled peoples' needs too. He now rents his villa out and what's more offers a discount to other Ataxia UK members – see <http://www.wheelchairfriendlyholiday.co.uk/>. I'm staying here for a third time later this year – it's a lovely place.

Matt came to the meeting modeling his new cut-especially-for-wheelchair-users jeans which he got from Able2Wear who make adaptive clothing for disabled people and wheelchair users – see <http://www.able2wear.co.uk/>.

Kieran's leaving college this year. I've spoken to him before about how to go about finding a job; there are job brokers out there who work specifically with disabled people (like the Shaw Trust – see <http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/>) so there are opportunities out there. I was able to work for many years and I worked with The Shaw Trust to help me find my last job which I loved. I'd say when you start work is when you start becoming a person.

Catherine was telling the group how she's used electrodes on her legs for many years to help her walk which she got from her physiotherapist. I found the following information on Google: "Physical Therapists are helping people with central nervous system disorders learn to walk again. A wireless computer-enabled device aids those suffering from a condition called foot drop, which happens when someone cannot raise the front part of the foot to accommodate a smooth gate. When an individual swings his or her legs forward, a sensor in the shoe signals a microprocessor, which sends an electrical pulse to the nerve that controls the foot, lifting it, and allowing the patient to walk smoothly."

Christmas lunch – held at Mount Pleasant – Hungry Horse, Coventry on 8th December 2012

Following the success of the two other pub lunches we've had at the Mount Pleasant – Hungry Horse, we had a Christmas lunch there in December. 21 members came along and everyone had a great time as you can see from the pictures below.



Our next meeting

**Sunday 17th March 2013 at 2 – 4pm
Exhall Old School Community Centre,
Exhall Green, Exhall CV7 9GL**

Please put this date in your diaries now – it would be great to see you there! The community Centre is off School Lane in Bedworth. Type the post code into Google for a map (see enclosed map if you received this newsletter in the post). Buses 20 and 48 go here – get off at the Baylon Road stop.

Money

We had £26 left over from money donated by members when the group first began in September 2011. At the Christmas lunch I raffled a Tigger soft toy which I bought all the way from Walt Disney World in Florida last year – this raised £45. We also have £17 given towards the cost of refreshments and a £10 donation from Dave – thank you very much!

So that's £26 + £45 + £18 + £10 = £99. Of that we spent £28 on hiring the room for the next two meetings, so we now have £71.

I'm asking everyone who comes to meetings in future for £1 towards the cost of refreshments.

I'm pretty sure we have enough money to keep the group going for at least another year. Thanks to everyone who's given money in one way or another.

I'd welcome any suggestions of anything specific you'd like to see in future newsletters and meetings – please get in touch! I hope to see as many of you as possible at our next meeting on 17th March!

Who I am and how to contact me:

I am Katie Henderson (you can find out more about me at <http://ohbother.co.uk>) and I am the named contact for the group. You can contact me by e-mailing katie@ohbother.co.uk or phoning 07565 247 183. I am also on Facebook and so is the group; search for "Ataxia UK Coventry". For news on group events and to download previous newsletters etc visit <http://ataxiacoventry.co.uk/>.