

THAMES ATAXIA VALLEY

NEWS LETTER



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SKY DIVE



New member, Hannah, whose family has been stricken by Ataxia, raised £3000-00 for Ataxia UK by jumping out of an aeroplane (yep, the in-flight service can be pretty bad!)



MOBILITY SCOOTERS



Mobility Scooters come in all shapes and sizes (and prices!). The most basic are the small, usually three wheel models, that are either light enough to be folded down and lifted into a car, or quickly taken apart for easier lifting and stowage. They have a limited mileage, up to about 10 miles, and are ideal for visiting the shops.

Next comes a wide and most popular range of both three and four wheel scooters. They usually have larger wheels and are capable of travelling up to twenty-five miles on a single charge. Some can be dismantled for loading into a car but the various parts (especially the batteries) can be very heavy. They have a maximum speed of 4 mph and are for pavement use only.

Controlling them is very easy, speed is controlled by a thumb or finger operated lever, usually by the right hand and reverse by a similar control for the left hand. Braking is automatic, let go of the controls and it stops. Maximum speed can be set by a twist knob to suit various conditions so that, for instance, speed can be reduced in a crowded shopping area for safety.

A driving licence is not required, even for the road legal models, and neither is insurance. As mentioned above, prices vary enormously so don't be tempted by the adverts in the national press as their 'offers' rarely mention cost (funny that!).

Try to locate your local specialist dealer. For those in the Hertfordshire area, I can recommend Classic Mobility on Stevenage 01438 861732. Their family has suffered more than their fair share from Ataxia and, as they also give an excellent personal service, deserve our custom.

Class three scooters are a much heavier model, weighing about 100kgs (2 cwt), and have a top speed of 8 mph. This can only be used on either private land or on public roads. They are road legal, having lights, indicators, rear view mirror, horn and an independent brake. However, the speed can be switched to a maximum of 4 mph for pavement use.

Having larger wheels than the other models, they have a 'go anywhere' capability giving the user the possibility of exploring further afield, woodland tracks, cross country etc(mine is always mud-splattered!) They have a range of at least 25 miles and, with heavy duty batteries, should achieve distances of 35 miles or more.

Bob



HASSLE FREE AIRPORTS

Jackie writes of her recent experience

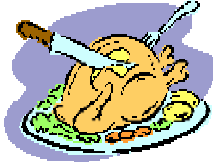
I recently returned with my husband from a trip to Spain during which I decided to ask for some assistance during the flights to and from Alicante. I have found that often the departure gates are situated some distance away and there is quite a long walk to the plane which can be very problematic for disabled people ~ everyone else seems to be in a great hurry ~ anxious to begin their holiday I'm sure.

We flew by Easyjet from Gatwick and asked for some assistance to get on the plane when we checked in. The assistance came in the form of a motorised buggy which ferried us as near as we could get to the awaiting plane, followed by a wheelchair ride to a waiting bus, which catered for wheelchairs, and onto a special motorised ramp which took you into the plane (so I didn't have to use the steps). During the flight, the Flight Assistants were very conscious of any help I required and when we arrived in Spain, a wheelchair was waiting to escort me to the baggage consol. It was a great help even though the Spanish chap pushing the wheelchair drove at breathtaking speed!!

I have never asked for assistance with travelling before but it is becoming a necessity. Those of you who, like me, have struggled with travelling on planes because you were slightly embarrassed to ask for help, just ask for assistance. I was really grateful for the help and surprised at how good the service was. There will undoubtedly be hiccups ~ nothing ever runs smoothly all the time! I'm sure that many of you will also have stories to tell about your experiences when asking for help at Airports. However, my experience was a positive one and I will no longer be too embarrassed to ask for assistance!

I would just add that the assistance itself came from both Gatwick and Alicante Airports rather than the airline you happen to be flying with. However, don't forget to book it when you check in.

Jackie



CHRISTMAS LUNCH

It was just great to see so many members at our Christmas lunch and so many new members came along. I just hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did and I look forward to seeing everybody again at our next meeting and, just in case I haven't already mentioned it:-

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

Bob



10 LAWS ON COMPUTERS

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When computing, whatever happens, behave as though you meant it to happen.2. When you get to the point where you really understand your computer, its probably obsolete.3. The first place to look for information is in the section of the manual where you'd least expect to find it.4. When the going gets tough, upgrade.5. For every action, there is an equal and opposite malfunction. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. To err is human...to blame your computer for your mistakes is even more human, it's downright natural.7. He who laughs last, probably has a back- up.8. The troubleshooting guide contains the answer to every problem except yours.9. A complex system that doesn't work is invariably found to have evolved from a simpler system that worked just fine.10. A computer program will always do what you tell it to do, but rarely what you want it to do. |
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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

There will be another meeting in February and our AGM will be held in April. Both events are to take place at Knowl Hill Village Hall. Dates will be posted on the Thames Valley page on the Ataxia UK website and, of course, everyone will be notified in good time.