



Fun Day

## NMC STAFF NEWS

### A fond farewell to Jess

In May we said a fond farewell to Jess, our Events Manager. Although Jess had only been working at the NMC for 16 months she will very much be missed by all at the NMC. I'm sure you would join me in wishing her well in her new role as Sports Events Manager with the British Swimming Association, based in Lincolnshire.

### A warm welcome to Leanne

We extend a warm welcome to Leanne Marsden, our new Events Manager who joined the NMC just in time for our Jazz evening! Leanne previously worked on the fundraising team for The Children's Safety Education Foundation.

### New Support Service

As part of her new role, Sue Walker organised the first Information meeting, which focused on the subject of "Benefits". The first speaker, Edwina Perkins - regional care advisor for Muscular Dystrophy Campaign spoke on the Disabled Living Allowance, Disabled Facilities Grant and touched on Independent Living Funds and Access to Work. The second speaker, Helen Clark an advocate on direct payments for The Cheshire Disabilities Federation, talked about direct payments and how her role was to support applicants. An NMC physiotherapy client, Cera Radcliffe, a wife and mother, who uses direct payments, shared her experiences of working with the direct payments self-managed care scheme.

Everyone went away having picked up something that they did not know or had forgotten.

If you were unable to attend, but are interested, please share your ideas with Sue. She would like to have ideas for subjects that you would like covered in the future.

## Second Anniversary Edition

### Inside:

- Staff and Physio news
- Personal experiences of adapting your home
- Carers update
- Holidays
- Combating the fear of falling
- Enjoying your garden
- NMC Family Fun Day
- NMC Open Day
- NMC Note cards
- Motoring
- User profile
- Dates for your Diary

### NMC OPEN DAY

On 21st June, as part of our Open day celebrations, the NMC said a massive thank you to all the volunteers who help make the Centre the success it is.

"From Gardening and DIY to Marathon running and from helpers at Fundraising Events and Collections to Physiotherapy assistance, our volunteers are magnificent" said NMC's Executive director, Matthew Lanham. During our awards ceremony all our volunteers were presented with a very personal certificate and given a very public thank you.



Open Day

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Summer Edition of One Voice which celebrates its second anniversary. Yes, it's two years since it's inception and the articles just keep on coming! You will notice that One Voice has been given a face lift which we hope you will like.

We have been busy planning a second Complementary Therapy Day which is being scheduled for March 2008 (see diary dates for further information). We had hoped to have another one a bit sooner but the college students will not be fully trained until March. However, we are trying to organise various complementary treatment sessions such as reflexology, massage etc that might happen on a monthly basis at The NMC.

I was lucky enough to attend a Carers Day at Portal Golf and Country Club, organised by Cheshire Carers Centre which was a day of pampering and relaxation. I enjoyed a makeover and participated in a stress management workshop. It was useful to hear from others in a caring role and listen to their daily frustrations. Although in some situations we cannot stop something happening as it is outside our control, we can change how we react to that stress.

In June, my family and I enjoyed the NMC's first Family Fun Day at The NMC and despite some rain a good day was had by all. We also went to Liverpool to see the Tall Ships. It was wonderful to go on board some of the ships, particularly "Tenacious" which is accessible to all and funded by The Jubilee Sailing Trust.

I do wish you a great summer and hope that we get some sunshine soon! Best wishes.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES - ADAPTING YOUR HOME (Part Two)

### Home Sweet Home?

People say home is where the heart is but if you are unable to get about freely you can feel isolated in your home. Often, with the right adaptations and equipment your home becomes fully accessible and enjoyable to live in. Here another client shares his experience of making his home more accessible and how this has impacted on his life.

### Building An Extension by Stephen Clough

I read, with interest, the articles about adaptations in the last issue of One Voice and found that I could relate to a lot of the comments, particularly those about the benefits that accrue.

In late 1998 when I was still able to walk, I was finding it more and more of a struggle to climb the stairs. My house was a dormer bungalow with 2 bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs.

I contacted the Occupational Therapist at my local Social Services and we then went through the various options for adapting/convertng my home. We considered the following options: moving house, the possibility of convertng the lounge to a bedroom and the study into a

## PHYSIO TEAM NEWS

•Thanks to a grant from the Yorkshire Building Society's Charitable Foundation, the NMC purchased a new tilt table which has given extra capacity for treating clients.

•The department has welcomed students from Manchester Metropolitan University. The students have enjoyed and valued their experience in treating NMC clients. With the exception of one short break we were fortunate enough to have students from January through to July.

•Manchester Metropolitan University have secured funding for a research project at the NMC. This will look at the reasons why the NMC is such a special and unique centre of excellence.

•Social Accounting. Thank you to all clients who contributed by completing the questionnaires. Thanks also to Simon Birchall for collating and analysing the data. Feedback will be available in due course.

•Lynne has had a blitz on assessments since she has returned from sick leave.

•AMNESTY! The physio team have declared a months amnesty for all equipment leant to NMC users. Gordon is carrying out a stock control check of all physio equipment, so he needs to know where it is. Please ring Gordon T 01606 861766 if you have anything belonging to physio.

### NMC FAMILY FUN DAY

On 16th June, the NMC held the first Family Fun Day. The aim of the day was to promote the Centre and what we are about to the local community. Despite the weather the event was well supported. There were lots of attractions, wheelchair slalom, circus skills, a bouncy castle, plants, jewellery, and some delicious food. Local radio station Cheshire FM brought a sensational atmosphere to the day with a live broadcast. In addition to increasing awareness amongst the local community the event also raised £940. So thank you to everyone who supported the event.

## Each had its associated cost and its advantages and disadvantages.....

- 1) I had a look at a number of bungalows, but the lack of space in the corridors would have made manoeuvring a wheelchair a bit tricky. Another downside was the cost of moving, and the thought that this money would be better spent elsewhere.
- 2) Converting the lounge and study was the cheapest option, but would have restricted my living accommodation and made it more difficult to entertain friends. It would also make the house less saleable if I needed to move at a later date.
- 3) Converting the garage was a definite possibility, but as it was single skinned it would have been difficult to insulate and I would lose my garage.
- 4) Knock down the garage and build a new extension.

So, I went with the final option which was the most expensive, but it was like having a blank sheet of paper. Furthermore, Social Services recommended an architect who had experience of designing accommodation for wheelchair users.

Plans were drawn up for a ground floor extension and comprised the following: a large bedroom, a large en-suite bathroom, an attached garage with remote control door and a corridor to join the extension to the rest of the house. The plans were sent out to tender. I used a firm of builders who had done some previous work on my house and they started in March 1999. The work progressed very smoothly and I was still able to use the rest of the house without any problems. The workers were very obliging and always tidied up in the evening.

Once the building work was completed I turned to the interior, with most of the emphasis on the bathroom. It is a 'wet room' with shower, Clos-O-Mat (free from Social Services!), a height adjustable sink and a bath with a seat. More importantly there is plenty of space to move around when in the wheelchair. The bedroom is spacious with an adjustable bed. An unseen advantage of the extension is that it is much better insulated than the rest of the house and it maintains a very even temperature throughout the year. I moved in at the start of 2000, less than 10 months since they knocked down the garage, and I haven't been upstairs since!

All in all it was a very worthwhile project even though it seemed terribly extravagant at the time. But now I can drive up to the garage, press a remote control and drive in, get out of the car and go straight into the house from the garage. Turn right and I'm in the old part of the house, turn left and I'm in the new bedroom and bathroom. If anything, it has added to the value of the house and if I need a carer in the future, then the two bedrooms and bathroom upstairs could well be used as virtually self contained accommodation.

I haven't regretted it one bit and I still live independently. If I could sum up my experience, it would be as follows:

- Don't put off the decision just because you're OK at the moment.
- Think long term. Try and think about what you might need in ten years time rather than now.
- You might not be eligible for a grant and hence may have to self-fund the project. However, cosf aside, the advantages are that you are in control of the project and as such, things often happen more quickly.
- Try and join all the pieces together, e.g. bedroom, bathroom, garage, living space, doors, etc.
- Try and see what others have done. (To that end please feel free to contact me if you'd like to have a look at my adaptations).
- Use an architect who has experience of wheelchair friendly designs.
- Go for as big a space as possible.

## MOTORING

### Drivers Blue Badge Guide to Europe

The "Using the Blue Badge in 29 European Countries Guide" produced by the AA motoring Trust, provides a language translation to show foreign police and parking authorities that a driver or passenger is entitled to the parking concessions available to disabled residents. The guide can be downloaded from the IAM Motoring trust website at [www.iam.org.uk](http://www.iam.org.uk). Just click on Advice and Information, look under parking and you will find the link.

### RADAR'S Get Motoring 2007

Get Motoring is the guide to everything the disabled motorist needs to know about finding, financing and maintaining a car. For more information contact RADAR 020 7250 3222 or download a free copy at [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)

### Adaptations on the Motability Scheme

If you are about to change your car on the Motability Scheme and you are thinking about adaptations to your vehicle then it is worth bearing in mind that a range of adaptations are now included in the Contract Hire Package at no additional cost. They include; hand controls, left foot accelerators, pedal transfers and steering wheel balls. Wheelchair stowage systems have also been lowered in price. Before choosing an adaptation it is worth having a personal assessment, which is free of charge. To register your interest call 0845 456 4566 and a representative from Motability will contact you. A copy of the Guide which gives details of what to look for when selecting adaptations can be ordered via the website [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)

# PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING A CARER.... (Part two)

## My role as husband and carer - Peter Higson

When my wife was diagnosed with myotonic dystrophy ten years ago it was the start of my role as a carer.

At first I really didn't have to do much because my wife was still able to move around and do things pretty much as before. However, as time went on she became weaker and after a number of falls, sprains, broken bones and visits to various accident and emergency departments my caring role started to step up a gear, to the extent that I am now a full-time carer.

Although for most of the last ten years I had been able to have a full-time job and still do my caring role, I found it increasingly difficult to do both, as I was getting older and my caring responsibilities were becoming greater. It was a strain to do both. So, last year, after much discussion with my wife, I decided to give up my job and become a full-time carer.

I am glad that I made that decision. It has reduced my stress levels and worry and now I have more time to do all the everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning, ironing etc. More importantly however, I am very close at hand should my wife be unfortunate to have a fall.

I don't really class myself as a carer, I am just a husband who has to do a little bit more than I did before.

At times I do get frustrated and a bit annoyed at our circumstances but I think it's only natural.

It soon passes. I'm sure lots of carers have similar feelings.

I am involved with Cheshire Carers Centre and it is a valuable source of help, advice and support to both myself and others in a similar caring role. I am also a member of the Carers Panel who distribute the Cheshire Carers Fund to those carers who apply for the grant. This can be used for various things such as taking a short break away from their caring responsibilities, pampering days, help with gardening and, or decorating or purchasing essential household items. Relaxation vouchers are also available and these can be used at local colleges. More details are available from The Cheshire Carers Centre.



## YOUNG CARER

.. A Young Carer is defined as a person under the age of 18 carrying out a significant amount of caring tasks and assuming a level of responsibility for another person which would normally be taken on by an adult.

Very recently, there was a case reported in the national press where a young carer had successfully overdosed and killed herself by taking her mother's painkillers. It is a sad reflection of the increasing role that young carers can often take on.

Young carers, just like other carers need need access to financial support for breaks in caring in order to manage the impact of caring on their lives. They can often take on huge responsibilities for example, caring for a disabled parent, constantly checking on a sibling with special needs or not being able to go out with their friends as they have to care for their parent. The young carer may be the healthiest person in the family but also the youngest. They often grow up too soon as they have additional responsibility.

## The Young Carers Net

(called YCNet) [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net) is primarily aimed at young carers but also has pages for parents and teachers. Therefore it is vital that teachers and professionals are educated in ways that they can help young carers. Often the things they can do to help are very simple but effective. For further information T 020 7480 7788

**NMC  
NOTE CARDS FOR  
ANY OCCASION**  
Designed by our team of  
Designers at the NMC, priced at  
£3.50 for 8 cards with envelopes.  
You can choose from a retro design  
or traditional. Available now from  
the Katia at the NMC T 01606  
861733 (a charge of 50p will  
be made for postage).

## **NEW - The Young Carers Fund**

Set up by The Cheshire Young Carers Advisory Group, the fund was established to support young carers in Cheshire. A one-off amount can be applied for up to the value of £150 to support a young carer in their caring role. It could be used for an activity or to help them develop an interest or hobby so that they can have some time away from their caring responsibilities. Applications can be requested from Cheshire Carers Centre T 0800 085 0307.

## **Carers Week 2007 11th - 17th June**

The theme for Carers Week 2007 was "My Life As A Carer". The objective was to promote and highlight the impact being a carer can have on your career, your finances, your health and on your relationships with friends and family. Carers nationwide, whatever their caring role and circumstances were encouraged to take time out for themselves. Activities in the Cheshire area included a canal boat trip, bowling, a visit to Tatton Park, shopping trips and numerous coffee mornings.

## **New Factsheets For Carers**

Launched last year and covering a range of topics including; carers allowance and other benefits, young carers, carers assessment, parent carers and much more. To receive a pack call 0800 085 0307

## **Parent Partnership**

An organisation set up to help parents and carers of children who have special educational needs. For further information T 01829 742997 or e.mail [parentpartnership@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:parentpartnership@cheshire.gov.uk). Please note their new address: Cheshire Parent Partnership Service, Children and Families, Tarvin Centre, Meadow Close, Tarvin, Chester, CH3 8LY.

## **Older People's Project (Cheshire based)**

Run by Cheshire Carers Centre, this project was set up to address the needs of carers who care for somebody over the age of 65. If you would like to meet other carers in a similar position or need further information please ring 01270 257331.

## **COMBATING THE FEAR OF FALLING**

How many of us decide not to go out or do something because we are worried about falling? Probably quite a lot of us. It might be because the weather is icy or because it is very wet. This is understandable and in these circumstances we have a right to be worried and have to be careful. But if we have a more lasting fear of falling then it can stop us doing things and enjoying life. A fear of falling might lead to us not participating in an activity and thus staying at home more. In turn this could lead to isolation and loneliness. This is when it can have a fundamental impact on our lives.

When we are anxious we can experience physical body sensations such as shaky legs, irregular breathing and/or a churning stomach. We may also feel mental anxiety fearing the worst eg: "I will not be able to get up if I fall". We also tend to focus on the negative rather than the positive things and this in turn can make the anxiety worse. We might also use avoidance behaviour. We might possibly take action to make us feel safer eg: if we feel that we might fall then we may choose to sit down. This is known as a "saftey behaviour". We may also avoid similar situations in the future. A vicious circle can result. We only get confidence by doing things and so by avoiding a situation we really are not helping ourselves.

### **How can you help yourself?**

If you are able to tackle the anxiety then you may find that walking becomes a little easier and you rediscover your confidence. The physical anxiety could be addressed by tuning in to your breathing. By taking a few slow, deep breaths, this will calm you down. To deal with the mental anxiety you could try to think of positive things, such as I managed to walk 10 steps today. This in turn will help you feel more confident. To deal with avoidance try setting yourself smaller, more manageable goals. This will help restore your confidence.

### **When you are moving about it is worth remembering the following -**

**Getting ready.** Get up only when you are ready. Do not rush. Think about your breathing.

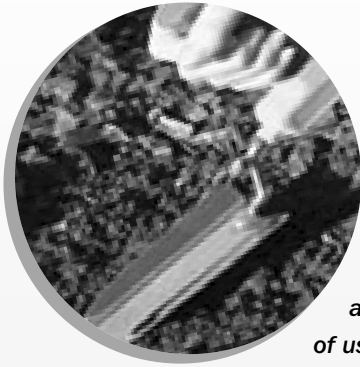
**Walking.** Think, "What do I need to do first?", "What do I need to next?" Just take one step at a time. Go at your own pace. Should you feel tense or panicky just stop and take a few slow deep breaths. The anxiety should pass.

**Afterwards.** It is important to remind yourself of your achievements.

**Preparing for next time.** You have done it once so you can do it again. Build on your success with small achievable goals. For example once you are fairly confident at walking 10 steps then extend your goal to 20 steps. It will give you a confidence boost.

Even when you do think positively it can't stop you from falling, as there may be factors outside your control such as a slippery floor that caught you unaware. However, by being positive, you will successfully overcome the incident and regain your confidence. Remember that breathing and relaxation techniques can help you cope with any physical anxiety.

# ENJOYING YOUR GARDEN



Now that summer is here why not have a dabble in the garden? Here, we look at how gardening can be made accessible and enjoyable for all of us no matter what our disability.

With the right equipment and an accessible garden everyone can enjoy gardening, whatever their age or mobility level. It is therapeutic, relaxing, rewarding and gives you the chance to enjoy some fresh air and exercise.

Often we inherit a garden when we move house and therefore are not able to design the garden from scratch to meet our needs. However, with some careful thought and planning, small alterations can make a huge difference. For example you might consider releveling a path or putting in raised flower beds. There are also a variety of tools on the market that are designed specifically for disabled people including easy-grip secateurs and light weight trowels.

These can often be found in garden centres. It is important to make sure that your garden tools are easy to use so that you reduce pressure on your joints and maintain a good posture. An "arm-support cuff" is helpful

for those with limited upper body strength. This clips onto your gardening implement and gives you better leverage of your tools. (around £6, from Peta UK).

Long-reach tools are another good option and very useful when you are pruning. If you only have the use of one hand then you might like to think about using "cut and hold" secateurs. If you are weak down one side then there are several lightweight tools available eg: the Wilkinson Sword "Swoe". You will also need to think about transporting tools around the garden.

Your garden may be small but you could consider window boxes or hanging baskets. To make it easier to reach your hanging baskets why not consider using a pulley system which enables you to bring your baskets to a suitable height for watering. The HiLo hanging basket system can carry up to 20lb in weight and the cord extends to three feet in length. These cost around £9 and are available at most garden centres. Containers are another good option as they are easily accessible.

When you are gardening do remember to think about what you are going to do, collect all the tools you are likely to need, take regular breaks and stop before you get too tired!

So, no matter what your level of mobility or the size of your garden, gardening can be enjoyed by everyone. Go on have a go! It really is a stress-reliever and increases your self-confidence as you can see the fruits of your labour. The perfume from some flowers is wonderful, just like that from the roses outside the NMC!

## Further information available from:

- Carry on Gardening - [www.carryongardening.co.uk](http://www.carryongardening.co.uk) - T 0118 988 5688
- Thrive - [www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk) A charity that improves the lives of disabled people through gardening and offers a number of gardening projects around the country.
- Independent Living Centres - [www.assist-uk.org](http://www.assist-uk.org)
- Peta UK Ltd (easy-grip and long-reach tools) - [www.peta-uk.com](http://www.peta-uk.com) T 01245 231 118
- For DIY raised garden beds which give instant results see the Rock Lock System. T 01372 811978
- Spiritual Garden Design. T 01963 220794 or visit [www.spiritualgardendesign.co.uk](http://www.spiritualgardendesign.co.uk) for information on the healing and sensory properties of plants.
- Gardening For Disabled Trust. An organisation that helps disabled people to continue to enjoy their hobby by giving advice on design, tools, and where necessary financial assistance. [w.gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk](http://w.gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk) T 01424 882345

...and here's our Ken with a quick reminder! Need a bird table or nesting box? Contact Ken Hester, T 0151 632 1029 a physio client of the Centre who will make one for you, in return for a donation to the NeuroMuscular Centre.



# HOLIDAYS

## My experience in Portugal by Paul Cardwell

I am 32 years of age and have duchenne muscular dystrophy. When I was much younger, travel was no problem – after all my parents could always carry me. However, as I have got older, travel has become much more difficult due to all the extra equipment that I need – to the extent that I would not consider going on holiday unless the accommodation was fully accessible.

A couple of years ago I was looking for adapted holiday accommodation on the internet and came across a company called 'Wheeling around the Algarve', a small travel company, based in Portugal, set up by a wheelchair user. WATA rent out adapted 'villas' to disabled people and their families. Not only do they provide accommodation but also adapted vehicles and other equipment you might need.

On arrival in Faro we were met at the airport in an adapted van and driven to our villa 'Casa da Eira' which was about 20 minutes drive away. There was a hoist, shower chair and electric bed, which we had hired from the company.

The villa had level access throughout, with 3 large bedrooms, all with wheel-in shower.

There was also a large swimming pool with an electric pool hoist. If I had to find fault with anything, it would be the 1.5km drive along a dirt track, which was, at the very least, uncomfortable! However, the house more than made up for it.

The people working for the company all speak English and are very helpful with advice on where to visit, restaurants etc.

I would definitely recommend 'Wheeling around the Algarve' to anybody who is looking for a relaxing holiday in the sun, without having to worry about how accessible it is. This was our second visit to the Algarve with WATA, and, as with the first, the accommodation was of a high standard. It would, however, be worth checking on the access roads before booking.

Organising the holiday itself was the easy bit, whereas finding Travel Insurance that would cover me specifically for my condition, was not so easy. I eventually found a company called En-route, who find suitable insurance from different insurers.  
<http://www.enrouteinsurance.co.uk> T 0800 783 7245.

I am now looking for similar travel companies in other areas, but as yet, I have not been successful.



## Susan hits London! In memory of our colleague and friend Susan Walsh

London was a big challenge for me but so much fun! It was the first time I'd been away from home without family or my own transport. I went with two friends who very kindly helped support me.

We travelled by Virgin trains and used the Journey Care Service, which I would highly recommend. They can arrange mobility assistance, reserve seats and wheelchair spaces and provide help getting on and off trains. As soon as we arrived at the station a member of staff was available to help. We were taken to the platform and shown where to wait for our train - the ramps were already there. Again on our return journey assistance was readily available.

We stayed at the Copthorne Tara, Kensington. The Tara has 10 accessible bedrooms; two with ceiling track hoists - I stayed in one of those rooms. In addition to the ceiling hoist there was a portable hoist with slings and in the bathroom a bath seat and raised toilet seat. I was very impressed. The staff were so helpful; the doorman in particular, he hailed taxis for us and even helped with the ramps that we needed to get in and out of the taxi.

Whilst in London we went to the theatre to see Mamma Mia, the show was hilarious! We were assigned an usher who showed us to the bar and then to our seats. He even helped us through the crowd when the show was over.

On the Saturday we went on the London Eye. WOW!!! The queues were very long and one of the security guards let us straight on without tickets. The views were spectacular.

On the Sunday there wasn't any time to do anything but head for Euston station. Whilst we were waiting for a taxi outside the hotel, Tom O'Connor was checking in. He walked past us a couple of times and said "hello girls". We were at Euston station waiting to find out what platform our train was leaving from, when he walked past us again. He stopped and said hello again. He chatted and posed for a photo with me. You can't take me anywhere!

I was really surprised at how friendly and helpful people were in London especially the taxi drivers. Whilst planning my trip I discovered that two other London hotels now have ceiling track hoists; the Holiday Inn - Kensington Forum and the Inn - Bloomsbury.



## Holidaying in Scotland, by Liza Grzadzielewska

This was our first holiday in Scotland. We stayed at a place called Crathie Opportunity Holidays, in a beautiful, scenic and peaceful place called Ballater. It was right next door to Balmoral, so we had royalty as neighbours! We had the river Dee running very close by to the cottages too. Although we went early in the season, the weather was very good and we were particularly lucky because during the previous weeks parts of the area had been closed due to snow!

Our cottage was one of four. They have been very well designed and were equipped with a ceiling track hoist in the master bedroom. You could also hire any other equipment that you might need such as mobile hoists, shower chairs etc.

There were lots of good places to visit; castles, museums, heritage centres and of course distilleries, where you can take a tour and have a wee dram!

# USER PROFILE

This is a new feature that was suggested by Matthew Lanham. Each edition we will focus on a person that has an association with the NMC. You may be volunteer, a physio user or a member of staff. This edition we have the pleasure of sharing in the life of William Morris, a regular Thursday morning client.

Andrea has asked me to write something about myself because she says I have had an interesting life!. I recoiled from this because we have all had interesting lives. If you talk to anyone long enough, no matter how insignificant that person might appear to be, you will find an absorbing life story lies behind the apparent insignificance. We are all important and no-one can ever fill the space we occupy. We disabled people need to realise and to believe that. One of my most firmly held beliefs throughout this life is that I am equal to everyone else, no-one is "above" me and no-one is "lower" either. I have also found that if you respect everyone, almost inevitably, everyone comes to respect you.

I often say I have had several lives in that I have had at least three careers as I have stumbled through my 78 years. The luckiest factor in my life is that I had good parents in a good home and a few dedicated teachers. They saw that I had something worth nurturing. Without them, I would have undoubtedly gone to work on a farm or in some office. At the age of 17, I took what we now call A-levels and at the age of 18, a scholarship to both Cambridge and Oxford. My father's praise was a brief pat on the head at a time when other kids were given a new bike for passing the 11-plus! Yet, years later when my father died, the Vicar told me that my father was always talking about his able son but said he ought not to show his pride to me in case I became "big-headed". In those days, excellence was expected of children but in my experience, few reach high levels of academic success except through hard work. Obviously, natural intelligence plays a part but dedication and work are more important.

When I left school I was immediately conscripted into the RAF where I was trained as a pilot and flew mainly the beautiful Mosquito fighter but I also flew the Hunter jet. I spent almost three years in Egypt and my job was dealing with the submarine activity in the Mediterranean. I was about to be released from the RAF when the Russians became difficult over Berlin. Instead of returning to my academic work as expected, I found myself flying back and forth to Berlin supplying our erstwhile enemies with their essential needs in what became known as The Berlin Airlift. The RAF released me 6 months later, but ruined Berlin is something that I will never forget.

So, finally when I was a little over 21, a mature man by then and not a pimple-faced youth of 18, I arrived in Cambridge to take up my scholarship. I had a thirst for learning and a vivid red scar from my right ear to my mouth, which I picked up in Egypt. My hard-won maturity gave me a better understanding and a more serious approach to my work,

## SNIPPETS..

### Accessible Kitchens

For ideas on designing your accessible kitchen contact DESIGN MATTERS. Adam Thomas, a qualified designer and a wheelchair user since 1981, has 20 years experience of access issues. The company provides a comprehensive design, supply and installation service. For further information T 01628 531584 or visit [www.dmkbb.co.uk](http://www.dmkbb.co.uk)

### ...Do you suffer from leg cramps in the night?

Try eating a banana or drinking a glass of orange juice before going to bed. It should help ease the discomfort.

which in turn, brought heightened success in my degree work. Before I knew it, I was a recognised scholar and in my own right, moving between Oxford and Cambridge jobs as it suited me.

Then, when I was 42 I was told I had SMA. I carried on working for a while but, as we all know, our energy levels cannot sustain that for long and I had to retire. However, there is no point in being idle so I simply carried on with my research at home and I still do that. My work is mainly in philosophy but I also engage in serious work in mathematics, physics and astronomy too. My main mathematical interest is in formulating new structures for mathematics. In physics and astronomy my work has always been on the first fraction of the first second of time. Better than all that, however is my life long absorption with birds and things natural. As I live in the country, I couldn't be better placed to do that and I am contented with my lot in life. So maybe, in an unguarded moment, I could possibly be heard to say that SMA has had beneficial effects on my life. I might even look forward to my next career. Maybe I'll take up mountaineering!

## William Morris

### A good read.. - "Special Brothers and Sisters"

Stories and tips for siblings of children with a disability or serious illness. Edited by Annette Hames and Monica McCaffrey, ISBN 978 1 84310 383 7 £10.99. This book tells the siblings' stories, discussing the good times and the difficult ones they have with their sibling. To know that there are others out there who experience embarrassment, jealousy, fear, anger, helplessness, and or sadness can come a sense of relief.

..."Different Dads" is a practical, down-to-earth and often moving book advising fathers on how to enjoy life with a disabled child to the full. The disabilities of their children vary widely as do the reactions and needs of their dads. Dads can so often feel left out of important decisions. The book shows that although living with a disabled child can be challenging and at times frustrating, with patience and support, it can also be rewarding. Different Dads, edited by Jill Harrison, Matthew Henderson and Rob Leonard, published by Jessica Kingsley -£12.99.

### ...The Strawberi !

Do you end up chasing a straw around a glass whilst trying to take a drink? Try the Strawberi Straw Holder (a small, smart clip) that holds a straw securely against the side of a glass or cup. It can also be used at the top of a bottle. It is discreet and ideal for use at home, at work or for leisure. A pack of two costs £1.99 plus £1.50 postage. Available from Such and Such Designs, T 020 8123 8274 or visit [www.strawberi.co.uk](http://www.strawberi.co.uk)

..Travelling Abroad? Remember, 112 is the European emergency telephone number that should work like 999 in EU countries.

..Irtton House Farm - Holiday breaks in the lakes near Keswick. Self-catering apartments, especially designed for wheelchair users. No steps. Beautiful views, friendly owners. Open all year. For further information T 01768 776380 or visit [www.disabled-holiday.net](http://www.disabled-holiday.net)

### ..Last Minute Offers

Not booked a holiday yet? For last minute offers check out [www.accessatlast.com/disabled-holiday/offers/](http://www.accessatlast.com/disabled-holiday/offers/)