

# BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY BRANCH



# MS

## Multiple Sclerosis Society

WINTER NEWSLETTER

Issue 3 of 2007

### Inside this issue:

Adventure Holi- 2  
days

Coffee at Cotils 2

Gary Denoual's 3  
experience

Chairman's 4  
page

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# Merry Christmas



**From**

**Rob, Chairman**

**Liz, Secretary/Support**

**Ron, Treasurer**

**Committee Members**

**Dani, Tony and Hazel**

**MS Nurse ,Debbie**

**Physio, Susi**

**and new member  
Debbie Smith**

All the views expressed in this Newsletter are individual and not necessarily the view of the charity or its supporters. UK Charity number 207495



## ADVENTURE HOLIDAYS FOR ALL ABILITIES AND AGES

The Jubilee Sailing Trust organises tall ship sailing holidays for people of all physical abilities, and aged between 16 to 70.

The aim of the Jubilee Sailing Trust, a registered charity, is the integration of able-bodied and physically disabled people through sailing a tall ship together. There are two specially designed and built tall ships, the Lord Nelson and Tenacious which enable 40 people, half of whom may be physically disabled, to sail as the 'voyage crew' on as near equal terms as possible.

Everyone is involved in all the activities needed to sail the ship including sail handling and setting, helming, being on watch, helping with mess duty and cleaning the ship. Climbing the mast is strictly optional! Many people make new friends, gain in confidence and have increased self-esteem as a result of going on a Jubilee Sailing Trust voyage.

The voyages appeal to those who enjoy active working holidays with like minded people of all ages and physical abilities. Most of the voyages are a week in length, although some are longer than this, and in

the winter they sail in the Caribbean and Canaries and in summer around the UK and Europe. Absolutely no sailing experience is required, just enthusiasm and a willingness to be part of the team to sail the ship.

The voyages are very reasonably priced starting from just £399. Travel to and from the port or insurance is not included. There is also some funding available to help towards the cost of a voyage thanks to the generosity of the team's supporters.

If you want to do something different, meet new people, and have fun then come tall-ship sailing! To date over 30,000 people have taken up the challenge.

For more information please see the website [www.jst.org.uk](http://www.jst.org.uk) or telephone the Voyage Department on 023 8044 9138. The brochure can be downloaded from the website or one can be sent to you. They look forward to hearing from you.

If you would like to have a go at this, we may be able to assist with travel to and from the UK.

## AFTERNOON COFFEE AT THE COTILS

The Thursday sessions continue with a happy band of regulars. Chat can be about anything you wish and laughter is plentiful.

Debbie often arranges topics which affect day to day living and you can discuss with others how you cope, and perhaps suggest something they hadn't thought about .

If you would like to attend and are finding it difficult to get there, please contact, Liz and she can either pick you up or arrange for a taxi. Please don't miss out on a fun afternoon because of transport problems.

Next dates are: 20th Dec. Festive Fun  
17th Jan., 21st Feb, and 20th Mar.

Details will be on [www.guernseyms.org](http://www.guernseyms.org)

# GHOST WALKS, DISABLED ACCESS AND OTHER MYTHS

## GARY DENOVAL'S EXPERIENCE

In October, we planned a visit to England so that my fiancée's daughter could visit Universities.

I went with Condor Ferries on the overnight boat to Portsmouth and returned on the fast ferry from Weymouth. The sea was calm on both trips so there was no trouble getting to the cabin or to the seat once directed by cabin staff. At the start of our trip I was travelling just with my 14 year old son, so it would have been helpful if ferry staff had offered assistance. The staff were helpful if asked a direct question, but were not forward in asking whether or not we needed help. This has not put me off travelling on ferries, I just know what to expect now!

Driving the car was ok as we had satellite navigation, but I also printed out AA routes, which helped as these tell you which signs to look for. When Ros, my fiancée, joined us later, she did the refuelling and paying at garages, so I didn't need help with this.

The service station disabled toilets were hit and miss. The disabled toilets were often doubling up as baby change units and, with large nappy bins in the way, it was hard to transfer from chair to toilet. All the toilets had very strong door closers on them so I would have found it difficult to do by myself. In a couple of service areas I needed a RADAR key to access the toilet. [Guernsey have these keys—contact Liz ]

At Gatwick Airport, when picking up Ros and her daughter and son, the disabled toilets in the section I used had push plates which automatically opened the door,

which was very useful.

Winchester and Warwick universities were very wheelchair friendly and most doors had electric push plates.

We stayed at two Holiday Inn Expresses. Even after telephoning ahead, staff do not truly understand the requirements and although the rooms may comply to the letter of the law, steps up into showers, and not enough space to put wheelchairs alongside toilets, meant these facilities are not truly wheelchair friendly.

It was a nice day when we got to Canterbury and we walked into town (about 25 minutes). We must have crossed about 25-30 side roads and a couple of main roads, however every pavement had a drop curb both sides, and we had no problems. Nearly all the shops in Canterbury are wheelchair accessible. We also went on a "Ghost Walk" for an hour and a half. This was great fun and again no problem with drop curbs everywhere.

I visited the Blue Water shopping centre which I had telephoned ahead of time to hire an electric buggy—saved Ros pushing for a change! We had dinner in a Pizza Hut, the food and service was fine however the disabled toilet was at the back of the restaurant and, without clear access to it, I had to ask all the people sitting on one side of a large table to move for me. Also more large bins in this toilet!

All together I enjoyed getting away, but it was only with Ros's help that we had a good break. It has taught me to ask more specific questions!

# CHAIRMAN'S PAGE



“Equal rights for the disabled”, is a shout that goes up quite regularly in the Bailiwick, sometimes followed by a flurry of activity. Then, faced with a few natural barriers and “more urgent” distractions for our politicians, such initiatives often seem to lose the will to live and fade away.

However, one of our members, Gary Denoual has been taking up the challenge and getting results.

Gary's story about his recent trip to England is reproduced earlier in this newsletter.

Gary, who at the moment relies heavily on his wheelchair, undertook a trip to the UK with his family so that his daughter could visit universities. At every step of the way, or should I say turn of his wheels, Gary assessed the facilities available for the disabled traveller. More than this, he then wrote to each organisation responsible for these services in an effort to improve things.

## **Guernsey Disability Forum**

Emanating from the State's 2003 Anti poverty review, a new Disability Forum is being formed.

The main forum will meet twice a year to approve important matters to be put to the States. A number of subgroups are being formed and these will each represent either users or providers and will meet more frequently. It is envisaged that many of these groups will be directly represented by people with disabilities. MS Guernsey Branch

What so impressed me about Gary's approach was the tone of his writing—his background in planning was evident in the factual and constructive way he made his comments. Any one faced with such a letter would find it hard to ignore! Gary wrote to various departments within the States about facilities at the Airport and about general wheelchair access in town. He wrote to Condor Ferries, he wrote to the hotels and he even wrote to Pizza Hut and the motorway service stations.

Gary's letters have already produced changes for the better at the airport, at the motor service stations (throughout the UK) and, promises of changes to facilities at one of the hotels he visited. In addition Gary has been told that his letters have prompted a review within Pizza Hut.

For many people with MS, the sheer effort required to attempt such a trip would be exhausting enough; to then doggedly follow this up with a single handed campaign is very impressive. Well done Gary.

has become involved in the “Voluntary Organisations Group” and I am to chair a first meeting of this group in the New Year.

I am hopeful that the new forum, arising as it has from a States review, will enjoy levels of authority and influence never before attained by the disabled community on our Islands. I don't expect rapid change as the challenges are many and complex but I am cautiously optimistic!