

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE OXFORD BRANCH

We're writing about an amazing offer.

Have you heard about the European Parkinson Therapy Centre?

It's in a lovely spa town near the Italian Lakes, it offers a week of personal One to One therapy and it's run by an Englishman, Alex Reed, who has Parkinson's and really understands our needs. Sally Bromley and Paul Mayhew-Archer have been and both loved it.

Here's a link:

<http://www.terapiaparkinson.it/en/our-parkinson-therapy-programs/>

And here's the amazing offer.

The Oxford Branch have been fortunate enough to receive a further legacy which enables the branch to offer a subsidy for this trip of £300. This subsidy is available until the funds from the legacy are all used. It is for those who have not yet been to the Centre. You can download an application form from our website at <https://oxfordparkinsons.org.uk/documents/forms/eupath-grant-application.pdf>. Complete the application form with supporting documents as detailed in the form and the branch treasurer will confirm whether funds are still available shortly following receipt of the attached application form.

Memories of their visit by Sally and Paul...

An Experience Extraordinaire (Not being an Italian speaker I ask you to forgive the French title!)

I have had the good fortune to spend a week in the European Parkinson Therapy Centre in northern Italy. This was a remarkable week having somewhat gruelling physiotherapy, challenging my fellow Parkie to walking more steps, surrounded by stunning scenery, eating Italian food and tasting the finest ice cream nearby!

The physiotherapy was unavoidable, and you were unable to hide behind someone else as it was one to one. Eyes never left your gait, how long your steps were, how long it took to walk a distance, yet there always seemed to be that encouraging smile offered to give reassurance. The relationship with Daria, my physio, built up till I actually looked forward to the next guidance she gave me. On leaving the centre I felt bereft without her chant..."You can do better Sally". It was my mantra.

My fellow Parkie was Paul Mayhew Archer. Between us we found laughter in most things we did; from my failure to get the key out of the door to my room, to seeing Paul fall asleep through the relaxation session, searching for proper Italian ice cream shops only to discover it was directly opposite the hotel entrance, and riding down the flume ride in the park.

We visited an area to see amazing Celtic rock carvings nearby, and we went by train to the northern part of Lake Iseo.

I left that Parkinson stoop behind and returned to UK feeling taller and a more confident walker.

Sally Bromley

SOME MEMORIES OF MY PARKINSON'S WEEK IN ITALY WITH SALLY BROMLEY.

PEDOMETERS

At the start of the week we were both given pedometers and every day I was proud to announce I had completed 10,000 steps. Then dismayed to discover that Sally was doing at least 3,000 more. "Well done Sally," everyone would say "You must do better Paul. Why can't you do as many steps as Sally?" "Because she takes smaller steps! She's a girl," I would shout pathetically. But it was no use. Sally was the gold medallist and I was the hopeless Brit who trailed in last. Then - in a revelation to equal the discovery of the Russian Federation's systematic cheating at the London Olympics - we discovered the sordid truth. Sally Bromley, Golden girl, put her pedometer in her dressing gown pocket every morning. And Sally Bromley, pedometer Princess, has shaky leg syndrome so she was doing 2000 steps over breakfast.

BOARIO TERME

The Parkinson's Centre is in a spa town called Boario Terme. There are so many elderly folk taking the waters the entire town is like a massive old people's home. I'm now 62 and I loved the relaxed atmosphere of the place where nobody jogged and everyone strolled and afternoon tea dances took place in the park. Also - this being Italy - there was always a very elderly Catholic nun sitting in the hotel lobby. Was she a real nun, we wondered, or a prop?

And the hotel was conveniently close to the Therapy Centre. A gentle stroll of 200 steps - or if you're Sally Bromley - 400 steps.

AGATA

Then once I entered the therapy centre there was no more strolling, there was no more enjoyment of the relaxed atmosphere, there was only Agata.

Agata, the 25 year old, tiny pocket tyrant who would order me to run, run faster, run even faster, walk sideways on the treadmill (you try walking sideways on a treadmill!!), pedal harder on the exercise bike and put more power into my power exercises. For ninety minutes every morning she would make me work like I have never worked in my life. And I loved her for it.

TWO TIPS

If you are going, go with someone you know with Parkinson's. If you are going with your partner go with another couple so your partner has someone to go around with.

Go to the ice cream shop opposite the Hotel Sorriso. Order a cone and ask for a squirt of liquid chocolate. Then chocolate ice cream. Then cream. Then another squirt of liquid chocolate. O yes. (*Did you have to tell everyone, Paul? – Sally*)

ALEX

The centre is run by Alex who designed the course. There is a simple reason why the course works as well as it does and why it made me feel so much better and more in control of my condition. Alex has many qualities as a designer and manager of a course, but he has something more important - he has Parkinson's.

THE MOMENT

We ended a session on handwriting with some breathing exercises. We all closed our eyes and breathed inand breathed out.

There was a very elderly Italian man on the course who could barely move. Every time he breathed out he suddenly started moaning. It was such a loud and distinctive moan that Sally and I could not help but open our eyes and give each other a "is-that-the-weirdest-moan-you've-ever-heard" look. Then when he moaned again I'm afraid we giggled.

The man then whispered to his wife in Italian and she smiled and translated "My husband says he is moaning because he is dreaming of cake".

And we all laughed. And then he laughed. And then she cried a little because it had been a long time since she had heard him laugh.

That simple moment - a man hardly able to move, laughter and tears - that's Parkinson's.

Paul Mayhew Archer

Getting there:

We went by air with Ryanair from Stansted to Bergamo. We then took a taxi from the airport to Boario Terme. Alex arranged for the taxi to collect us. You could get the little train if you like and it stops in the middle of the town so most convenient, but for both Paul and I not being Italian speakers we relied on the taxi. Hiring a car might be useful.

Other nearby airports include Verona and Milan (both airports).