

Out and about on my tricycle

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Stewart and I were married in 2001. Stew was very active, played football twice a week, did loads of cycling, motor biking, DIY etc... A year later, he was diagnosed with relapsing/remitting MS, which became secondary progressive after only three years.

Stew can now walk very short distances and it got to the stage where he had to drive everywhere, even to the post office at the end of our road! With a growing family, we were finding increasingly that I was striding off with the children on my own and Stew was always left sitting on a bench somewhere (near the car) awaiting our return. This was such a stressful situation, especially when Stewart did try to come a little way from the car to maybe feed the ducks or get to a park. I would find myself supporting Stew, pushing a pram and hanging onto a 2 year old, whilst Stew would be focusing on the next bench as though his life depended on it. He was often left feeling totally demoralised. Family outings were becoming near impossible and certainly not enjoyable.

I am sure that most people who have mobility problems probably struggle when the day comes to accept that they need to start looking at alternatives to walking. Stewart was no different. We spent weeks trawling the internet looking at all sorts of mobility aids and alternatives, both practical and ridiculous. At one point we seriously considered a motorized skate board with

the idea that Stewart could stand on it and hold onto the pushchair as I pushed it along. Needless to say that idea came to us very late one evening following a few too many glasses of vino!

Eventually we came across the foldable pedal assisted tricycle that Stewart has today. Having been a keen cyclist, Stew was keen to keep his leg muscles working so this seemed perfect.

Before committing to ordering the tricycle we went to see it at a caravan show to make sure it was suitable. We were astounded at how easily it folded, and when the motor was switched on, how little you had to peddle to move quite a distance.



Stewart on the tricycle

The tricycle cost approximately £1,850 and we were extremely fortunate to receive funding from our local MS Society branch, the national MS Society and the Keith Brant MS trust. As it isn't categorised as a piece of disabled equipment we had to provide supporting letters from Stewart's occupational therapist and physiotherapist to ensure that the tricycle was suitable for his needs.

The day arrived when Stewart's tricycle was delivered and we couldn't wait to put it to the test. I will never forget the first time that we all went for a walk as a family. We packed the tricycle (and a picnic of course) into the boot of our car and off we went to a lovely big open (and very hilly) park. Just walking along together with our two children in tow felt incredible - we just kept looking at each other and laughing and our son was like a different child because Daddy was coming with us on his bike.

Stew kept the motor turned off on the flat so that he could exercise his leg muscles but switched the motor on to go up hill, at which point he left me behind!. You really do just have to touch the pedal for the motor to kick in and it is like someone is giving you a push.

Inspired by the ease and enjoyment of our trip out together, we didn't delay in booking a holiday in the New Forest, something that we wouldn't have thought possible before. My Mum and Dad joined us for a couple of days and we all hired bikes (my Dad's with a trailer for the children) and went out cycling for the day. I think we did 16 miles and Stew and his tricycle coped brilliantly.

For Stewart, having the tricycle has given him back some freedom and independence and also provides a valuable means of exercise. Getting out together is no longer stressful but totally enjoyable. We can wander off from the car without worrying about how far we go and Stew still has energy to play with the children when we arrive at our destination. When I think back to the year before we had the 'trike' and how claustrophobic we felt (especially Stewart), there is no comparison, it really has given us back quality of life.

The tricycle comes with a number of optional accessories including an orthopaedic seat with back rest. Stew opted for foot stops - his feet would fall off the pedals otherwise - and a carry bag that the folded tricycle fits into. The tricycle is fairly heavy; Stewart and I lift it in and out of the car together.

Stewart's tricycle is a Di-Blasi R34.