

## OUR RESPITE STAY AT ROTHBURY HOUSE, NORTHUMBERLAND.

I feel I need to share with you the wonderful experience we had recently when we stayed at Rothbury House Hotel.

Rothbury House is one of the RAFA hotels that the Alan Bott Charity uses for some of its patrons. The hotel on first sighting wasn't what we expected. The word hotel conjures up glitzy entrance, flags and bright lights, not Rothbury House; in fact, it's quite dour. However, once inside what a difference. The welcome was almost overwhelming; the staff were waiting for us and made us feel at home straightaway.

Chris my wife is wheelchair-bound now, but it didn't make any difference; the staff treated her just as they would a normal person.

Allen, the Alan Bott driver, and Billy his mate, both of them carers during our journey, were wonderful, they tended to all our needs before, during and after our journey to Rothbury. Once they had handed us over to the hotel staff, they went on their merry way, presumably back home. We are so grateful for the help and caring that the Alan Bott Charity offered us; we could never have ever dreamed of going on a holiday without their help and kindness.

We were taken to our rooms, in Chris's case Room 1, which was decked out with all the conveniences that a paraplegic will need just to cope with their daily needs. All the doors were automatically opened with a touch pad and in every room, there was a call button, which we were encouraged to use; nothing was too trivial for them to come and help us. It usually happened that if you called, one carer would turn up within seconds and if the job was more than one person could cope with a second one was called for and soon appeared. They were wonderful!

The hotel itself was beautiful, not only inside; the gardens at the rear of the hotel were fantastic. Some of the rooms in the hotel had kept their Victorian character for all the years since it was built in 1856, very charming, warm, and cosy. The dining room was also very welcoming, light and airy, with pristine white table cloths and nothing was too much trouble for the staff to care for our needs. Chris's food has to be puréed as she can't swallow easily; she can manage however to feed herself left handed, and again the staff were so helpful. Whilst we are talking about food and drink, meals were as you might expect, breakfast (full English), light lunch and dinner. However, morning coffee was at about 11 am, afternoon tea at about 3.30 and supper at 9.30-ish.

The thing was that the staff found you at these breaktimes and offered you refreshment. Wherever you were in the hotel, they'd search you out; fantastic!

Every day there were trips out in the 'bus'. Not all the people went on them but when you did it was usually to a place of interest, very refreshing. We went to Rothbury in April when the weather was poor. (When we returned in August, it was bright and sunny; we were able to sit out in the garden on any of the numerous seats or in one of the summerhouses.) What a wonderful place. The hotel is a respite centre for the carers as well as for the patient; we had wonderful relaxing time.

Allen and Billy came and picked us up at the pre-arranged time and transported us back home, in their usual caring manner. I thank the Alan Bott Charity and Rothbury House for their kindness and patience with us; we did have a marvellous holiday.

John Dowell.

