



**Erb's Palsy Group**  
024 7641 3293

# Erb's Blerb 134

Magazine of the Erb's Palsy Group Early Summer Issue 2026

## Hello and welcome

### to this issue of our newsletter

Hello and welcome to this issue of our newsletter. We have some excellent articles written by our members for this issue, **David** tells us of his initial irritation with buying new gloves, to how AI turned this tedious job into something rather good! **Sam** shares the story of how his spur of the moment trip to USA helped renew his spirits and give him a brighter outlook on life.

In addition to these great articles, we have details of the next **Family Fun Day** – and how you can book yourself a place, and our usual selection of your achievements – this issue has something for everyone – so sit down with a cuppa and take a few minutes to read what we bring you – you won't be let down!

**Karen Hillyer**

### STUDY DAY

The Trustees are very sad to report that we took the difficult decision to cancel the Study Day event we had planned for May 2026. Just 4 weeks before the event was due to take place, we had only one confirmed delegate booked, so with much reluctance we decided to cancel this event and we hope to try and run it later in the year. Several of our Trustees work within the NHS environment and told us that in their Trusts there had been an embargo on staff being able to book conferences and study days until after April 1st 2026, and we believe that this might have resulted in the lack of take up. However since we cancelled, we have had several enquiries about the day and so we are confident we can run this soon and achieve our usual result of being oversubscribed.

### PLANS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

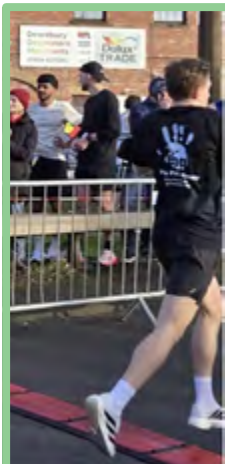
As I am sure most of you know the cost of Royal Mail postage is rising almost on a monthly basis and the cost of posting our newsletters is becoming an increasingly difficult cost to justify. With this in mind the Trustees are hoping to be able to move the majority of subscribers to an email version by 2027 – we will give you full details of how to do this further on in this issue – but for those who are unable to access email's or steadfastly prefer a paper option – that will still be available for you – likewise if your child is featured in an issue and you would like a paper copy as a keepsake – we will try our best to offer that option to you.

## FAMILY FUN DAY

You can find information on our family fun day in October on page 17 – we really have the most brilliant venue this year – all in one hall, with a great selection of activities for everyone – if you haven't ever joined us at one before – why not come this year? The event is a fantastic day out for ALL the family and gives you the chance to share experiences with other families and to realise how spectacular our children and young people are and just what they can achieve. It's a day for celebrating our members and once you have been to one, there will be no stopping you from coming again.



# Donations



This is our brilliant supporter **Ben Lee** finishing the 1st of a series of runs he is undertaking for the Charity – this was the Dewsbury 10k in January which Ben finished in a personal best time of 48.42 - well done Ben!

Our Thanks to Charity member **Richard Leatherday** who completed the Doncaster 10K and raised **£190** plus Gift Aid for us – well done Richard.

We have received a donation of **£60.35** in memory of the late **Julie Hawkes** – many thanks to Michael and the family for thinking of us during a sad time.

**Phillip Hadden** also passed away recently, and his family also asked for donations in his memory for our Charity. We received **£294.69** and again, huge thanks go to the family for thinking of the Charity at such a sad time.

**Bob** and **Christine Wild** are grandparents of Connor. Bob recently celebrated his 80th birthday with friends and family. Instead of presents Bob kindly asked people to donate to our Charity instead. We had donations totalling **£120** from them. Our Thanks to Bob and Christine, who have supported us for many years now.

Our Thanks to **Karen Bartlett** and all her customers at Hoptons the Butchers in Chester, once again their donations from the sale of carrier bags and the on the counter donation tin has resulted in a fantastic donation of **£395** – Thanks to all their lovely customers and to Karen and the team for their wonderful support over many years.

Thanks to the family of **Phillip Hadden** who recently passed away we received a donation in his memory - our condolences to the family on their sad loss.



Big Thanks to Casper's dad **Andy Bull**, who recently went on a lads golf holiday in Turkey. They had **£80** left in their kitty on their return, so they kindly donated it to our Charity. Thanks to **Andy** and **Ramesh Rao** for sending the donation.

The family of the late **Douglas Lees** (one of our most senior members) who died in January have asked for donations to our Charity in Doug's memory – there is a current online process in place but as of this issue we have also received a wonderful donation of **£48** plus gift aid from **Rosemary Hedinsson**.





If you are coming to the family fun day this year - look out for this beauty - knitted by the lovely **Brenda Farmer** who is a friend of **Julie Jones** who so kindly knitted the wonderful range of gifts we gave away at last years fun day. Another of Julie's friends **Ann Kilner** also sent a lovely donation of **£20** after Julie spoke at her knit and knatter about the Charity. Thank you so much ladies, we really appreciate your kindness.

Charity No: 1157720

Friday, 2nd October 2026



## Erbs Palsy Charity Golf Day!

Farleigh Golf Club, Warlingham, CR6 9PE

Tea/coffee bacon rolls from 10:30am.  
Shotgun start at 12pm. Holes will be allocated to players on the day via the registration desk.  
One course meal post golf at 17:30.  
Raffle prizes and auction post meal.

Show your support for charity, contact one of the hosts below to register:

**George Groves (07734358214)**

**Andy Bull (07951732515)**

Non-members £75\* Members £40\*

\*cash preferred  
(£10 straight to charity)



# ERB'S PALSY GROUP ANNOUNCES TRANSITION TO DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

The Erb's Palsy Group has announced an important change to how its newsletter will be distributed, as part of a wider effort to make better use of the charity's resources and maximise support for its members.

For many years, the charity has provided a printed newsletter to keep members informed, connected, and supported. However, rising printing and postage costs – combined with concerns that some copies may be sent to outdated addresses or received by those who no longer require them – have prompted a review of this approach.

By reducing unnecessary printing and mailing, the charity aims to redirect valuable funds towards initiatives that directly benefit members. These include the training of midwives, community fun days, and grant funding to support individuals and families affected by Erb's palsy.

As a result, the Erb's Palsy Group will now transition to email as the default method of newsletter delivery. Members will continue to receive the same updates and information digitally, and the newsletter will also be made available via the charity's website.

A printed version will still be available for those who prefer it. Members who wish to continue receiving a physical copy are asked to request this by emailing [karen@erbspalsygroup.org.uk](mailto:karen@erbspalsygroup.org.uk).

The charity is also encouraging members to get in touch if they no longer wish to receive the newsletter at all, so that records can be updated accordingly.

This change reflects the Erb's Palsy Group's ongoing commitment to ensuring that its resources are used as effectively as possible – prioritising meaningful support, engagement, and opportunities for its community.



For those members happy to receive the newsletter via **EMAIL**, please send us an email from the address you want us to use, to: [epgblerb@hotmail.com](mailto:epgblerb@hotmail.com). Please include your name and current address so we can remove you from the postal database as soon as possible.



# Tribute to Douglas Lees

**Doug, as we called him, was born with Erb's Palsy in July 1931 and died in January 2026 aged 94 years.**



He was born in North-East London and considered himself a Cockney saying you could hear the Bow Bells across the Hackney Marshes, and he died in York, an adopted Yorkshireman.

He was the third son of James and Isabel and had five siblings altogether. He was a large baby and born at home, a process that resulted in a left arm Erb's Palsy. All his life Dad was explaining to people about Erb's. He was fortunate to have some early physiotherapy at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

In 1939, when he was 8 years old, he and his younger brother Ronnie, were evacuated to Cornwall for the duration of WW2, where they were looked after by a very kind Cornish family who he kept in touch with all of his life. He used to give talks to school children about being an evacuee.



He was also in the Scouts and loved to take part in hiking and camping competitions. Most of all he liked being treated the same as everyone else. Learning to drive a car was a challenge but one he accepted and achieved in the 1950s, later going onto an automatic car which was a bit easier.

In the 1950s he trained as an architect, and during the 1960s contributed to the design of a number of new towns in England.

He was always doing art and we are fortunate to have many of his lovely paintings and drawings which show the whole range of his talent. He also enjoyed travel and photography.



Erb's Palsy did not define him, although in a way it did contribute to the pride he had in himself and his achievements. He was married for fifty years to my mum, Anne. Looking after himself after Anne died was one of his most challenging assignments, because he missed her a great deal. Although he managed to cook for himself, washing up seemed to elude him. He loved to receive Erb's Blerb and see what you were all doing. He is survived by his two children, three grandchildren and one great grandson.

**Janet Lees**  
Doug's Daughter



# A New Beginning:



## A Parent's Perspective After an Erb's Palsy Diagnosis

**Hearing that your child has Erb's palsy can feel overwhelming. For many parents, those early days are a blur of emotions - shock, worry, guilt, confusion, and an urgent need for answers. You may still be recovering from birth yourself, while trying to process what this diagnosis means for your child's future.**

It's important to know that you are not alone – the EPG is here to help support and guide you through peer support and advice, to discuss treatment options, practical information and tips to help you every step of the way.

### **The Early Days: Processing the Diagnosis**

Erb's palsy is a birth injury affecting the nerves in a baby's arm, often resulting in weakness or reduced movement. In the early weeks, uncertainty can be one of the hardest parts. You may be told to "wait and see," while starting physiotherapy and attending multiple appointments.

During this time, it's completely normal to feel anxious about your child's recovery, question what happened during birth, compare your baby's progress to others. These feelings are shared by many parents. Connecting with others who understand can make a huge difference.

### **Finding Support Early**

One of the most valuable steps you can take is reaching out to organisations like ours. We are here specifically to support families like yours – offering guidance, connecting you with other parents, and providing trusted information on treatment and a range of other things.

Sometimes, simply hearing "we've been there too" can ease the sense of isolation.

### **Accessing Treatment and Therapy**

Early intervention is key. Most babies with Erb's palsy will be referred for physiotherapy within the first few weeks or months.

Common treatment pathways include:

- Physiotherapy exercises to improve movement and prevent stiffness
- Regular monitoring by local practitioners such as health visitors, paediatricians and physios



- Referral to specialist centres if need. There are only 4 specialist centres in the UK – Leeds, Glasgow, RNOH London and Liverpool.
- In some cases, further interventions such as surgery may be considered, depending on progress.

Parents often become an essential part of therapy - learning exercises to do at home and building them into daily routines like playtime or nappy changes.

## Understanding Financial Support and Benefits

Caring for a child with additional needs can bring unexpected financial pressures. The good news is that support is available.

In the UK, you may be entitled to:

- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children** – financial support for children who need extra care or supervision
- **Universal Credit (with a disability element)** – depending on your circumstances
- **Carer's Allowance** – if you spend significant time caring for your child
- **Blue Badge Scheme** – for easier parking if mobility is affected

These benefits are not based solely on diagnosis, but on how your child's condition affects their daily life. It's worth applying early, even if you're unsure – you can always seek advice to help with the process.

## Looking After Yourself as a Parent

It's easy to focus entirely on your child – but your wellbeing matters too.

Research shows that raising a child with a disability can bring emotional and psychological challenges for parents, including stress, anxiety, and even feelings of guilt. Acknowledging this is not a weakness – it's part of the journey.

Simple steps can help:

- Accept support from family and friends
- Speak openly about your feelings
- Take breaks where possible
- Connect with other parents who understand

You don't have to carry everything on your own.

## Looking Ahead with Hope

While the early days can feel uncertain, many children with Erb's palsy make significant progress, especially with early treatment and support. Every journey is different – but progress, in all its forms, is worth celebrating.

As a parent, you will become your child's greatest advocate, cheerleader, and source of strength. And along the way, you may discover resilience you never knew you had.

## Final Thoughts

A diagnosis of Erb's palsy may not be the path you expected – but it is one that many families walk together. With the right support, information, and community, it becomes a journey of adaptation, growth, and hope.

**And perhaps most importantly - one you don't have to face alone.**



# THE NEW GLOVES:

## *An AI Adventure*

**Readers of my article on the horrors of handshakes in the last Erb's Blerb might have noticed my brief mention of the full-size Dalek I'm building in my garage. I'll be honest, progress has been slow, and Doctor Who will be quite safe for a good while yet. Apart from a half-finished skirt full of holes for those trademark domes, the most significant result of this somewhat random project is a growing set of new power tools. I have collected quite an array of Dewalt equipment, and a few weeks ago I decided to buy two pairs of Dewalt gloves.**

As a person with Erb's Palsy affecting my right hand, gloves can be a bit of an issue. Putting a glove onto my disabled hand is a fiddly process involving careful coaxing of the individual fingers of my right hand by my left. Removing a glove from my left hand often requires use of my teeth. I'm used to this sort of thing, and I doubt I would have even bothered to describe these minor challenges to anyone else were it not for my recent coming to awareness as a disabled person. My brachial plexus injury is from birth, but I have just, 'got on with it' so to speak, and it is only recently that I've come to acknowledge my disability as something to be shared openly with others.

So, it was with a fresh perspective on my disability that I went to Screwfix to buy two pairs of Dewalt gloves. I decided to buy a medium size. My disabled right hand is smaller than my left. The fingers are more slender, the little finger significantly shorter, and the width of the hand a good centimetre or two less than my left. The medium size was perfect for my right hand, but the gloves were too small for my left hand.

Given that I've lived with Erb's Palsy for over half a century, you'd think this glove issue would have presented itself before. And of course it has. My last pair of Rigger gloves were large, and the right glove used to just fall off. But you get used to things, and they barely register after a while. Gloves don't fit my right hand. There it is. Why even mention it to anyone?

With my new disabled awareness however, I decided I would drop an email to Dewalt Customer Services and describe my predicament. Of course, I told them, I could buy another two pairs of gloves in the large size, and wear one large on my left, and one medium on my right. But these two pairs of gloves were over £18. Was there anything they could do to help?

Dewalt Customer Services were not as helpful as I would have liked, initially at least. They referred me several times to a subsidiary called Dewalt Workwear, who referred me back to Dewalt Customer Services as they didn't deal with gloves. Sigh.



In a moment of mild disappointment, I asked the AI tool in my internet browser, 'who should I contact about Dewalt gloves?' AI asked for more details about my problem with the gloves. So, I explained. Even AI commented that being bounced around by Dewalt Customer Services was a common experience. Then AI advised me I would be much better off contacting the retailer, Screwfix. AI offered to write me an email and send it to Screwfix. Again, AI was even able to comment that Screwfix customer service had a good reputation. This is part of the email that AI wrote for me:



## AI CHAT

**Dear Screwfix,**

**I am writing regarding two pairs of DEWALT gloves I recently purchased...**

**I have a disability (Erb's Palsy), which affects the size, dexterity, and sensation of my right hand. As a result, my right hand fits a medium glove, while my left hand requires a large. I purchased medium gloves to accommodate my right hand, but the left gloves in both pairs are unfortunately too small.**

**I am requesting a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. Specifically, I would be grateful if you could assist by either:**

- Exchanging the left-hand glove in each pair for a large, or**
- Providing a mixed-size pair (medium right, large left), or**
- Offering another suitable solution that avoids me having to purchase two additional full pairs just to obtain the correct left-hand size...**

**Kind regards,  
David**



Say what you like about AI. I am just as ambivalent as the next person about the new dawn it ushers or the dark night it threatens. In this case though its value as a tool to address my problem and offer a relevant and detailed solution was incredible. It was quick too. Just a few minutes of dialogue produced the required email, highlighting my rights under the Equality Act 2010.

The response? Screwfix sent me two pairs of gloves in the large size, free of charge, free of postage. They arrived at my house within 24 hours of my email. Faultless customer care from Screwfix!

And then things took a further positive turn. After a very supportive sequence of emails from a Dewalt representative in Canada, I ended up speaking with the Managing Director of Radians Worldwide who supply gloves and other Personal Protective Equipment under the Dewalt brand. It turns out it is their supply relationship with Screwfix that enabled Screwfix to respond so effectively. Given there was of course nothing wrong with the gloves themselves,

which I've been using happily ever since, it was encouraging to find individuals behind the brand prepared to listen with kindness to my somewhat protracted tale. Further, I understand Radians Worldwide (Dewalt gloves) will be sending something to me which I might be able to pass on to members of the Erb's Palsy Group, so I'll keep you posted on that.

And so, a happy ending: I have two perfectly fitting gloves and no excuses when it comes to working on that Dalek. There remains only one problem: I now own two brand new pairs of Dewalt gloves in medium left and large right which are of no use to me or anyone I know. So, if you think they might fit you, I will send them free of charge to the first person who sends me their address (send an email to chairperson Karen Hillyer and I'm sure she will pass your address on to me).

*David*



# Sam & Dan's Manchester Marathon

We decided to run the Adidas Manchester Marathon in support of the Erb's Palsy Group as our close friends John and Beth's daughter, Lyla, was born with Erb's palsy in 2019 following complications during childbirth. The support they've received from EPG has been incredible, and we felt it was really important to give something back, while also helping raise awareness of a condition that isn't widely spoken about.



The marathon itself was easily the toughest challenge we've taken on. We've previously done half marathons and a number of 10Ks – including fundraising for Mind – but this was on another level entirely. It really pushed us both physically and mentally, but crossing the finish line made it all worthwhile. It's an amazing feeling and something we're incredibly proud of. We then celebrated with a meal and drink with our friends, including John, Beth and Lyla (and little Freddie) as well as our own daughters Ada and Evie.

So far, we've raised **£1,587** for EPG and the total is still growing, which we're absolutely delighted with.

Many Thanks

**Sam Bradley-Green** and **Dan Burrell**



# Hi Everyone...

It's so good to see you again! The sun is finally coming out to play and I hope you have been enjoying getting outside. In Spring I love to go out and take notice of all the changes in nature, the leaves growing, the flowers start to appear, I love seeing baby animals too. But this spring has been out of this world.....



## SPRING STARGAZING

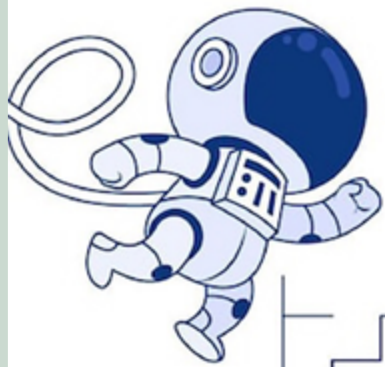
I have been so inspired by the recent Artemis II Space Expedition, where a crew managed a spectacular lunar fly by, on their 10 day flight. It got me thinking, that spring is a great time to get outside and look up! There is so much happening in the sky. See if you can spot any star constellations on a clear night. Make it extra fun with a blanket, hot chocolate and a playlist of calming space music. You might even spot Venus, a satellite, a plane or a shooting star!

### Stargazing tips:

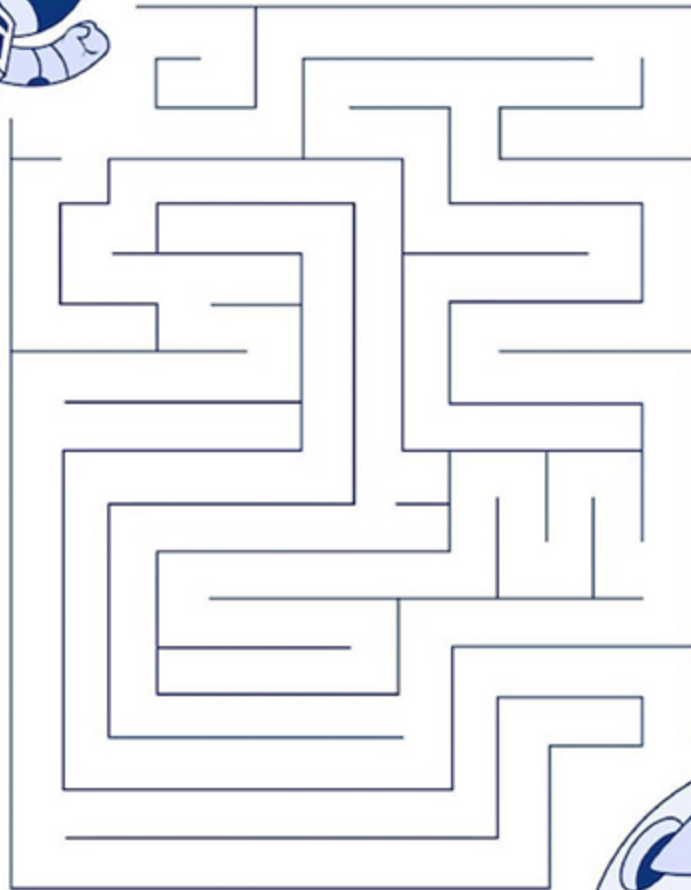
1. Best to not do it when is a full moon as there is too much light in the sky
2. Turn off house lights for a clear view
3. Download a mobile app to help you locate constellations

### Constellations to find:

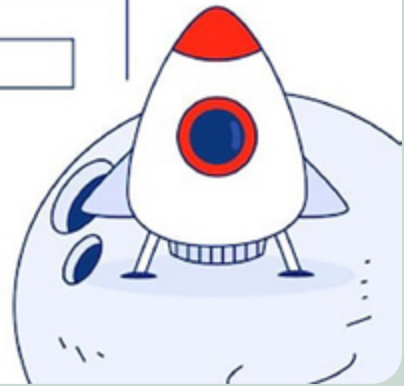




← **HELP THE ASTRONAUT**



**GET BACK TO HIS SHIP** →



### JOKE CORNER

What is space money called?

**Star bucks!**

How do you organise a party in space?

**You planet!**

What does an astronaut listen to on the radio?

**Nep-tunes!**

Ha Ha  
Ha Ha  
Ha Ha



# My name is Frankie Allen and I am a Rower

**My interest in rowing started with my family - I grew up surrounded by the sport and wanted to follow in my uncle and cousin's footsteps.**

Despite being told as a child that I wouldn't be able to row because of my Erb's Palsy, it only made me more determined.

I took my first strokes aged 12 in a boat attached to a rope held by my uncle! I instantly fell in love with the sport, continuing through my school, Pangbourne College, and later at Oxford Brookes whilst studying Physiotherapy.

In 2021, I was invited to classify for the GB para rowing team. That year, I was invited to train with the squad full time at the National Training Centre.

That same season, I was selected for major international events, winning gold at World Cup, Europeans and 2 golds at the World Championships in PR3W2- and PR3Mix4+, setting a world record in the PR3Mix4+ and making history being the first female, alongside my pairs partner, to win 2 world titles in 1 championship. Since then, I have remained on the GB rowing team, competing each year including at the 2024 Paralympic Games.

Since joining the team, I have become Paralympic Champion, 4x World Champion, 3x European Champion, 3x World Cup winner and 3x World Record holder.



I was also awarded an MBE in the 2026 King's New Years Honours list for services to disability sport and improving access to sport for young people.

I'd encourage anyone with a disability who loves sport to not let it put you off chasing your sporting dreams.

*Frankie*



# Achievements



**Theo** competed at regional level in trampolining after getting through the first 2 rounds. He came 1st and has now qualified to train with team GB and compete in the national competition in May. Keep up the good work, Theo!



**Matt** took part in the Paralympics in the Banked Slalom race on the 13th March, he came 11th in the world, a personal best position for him!! You are an inspiration to all of our members, Matt, well done! And also congratulations on your recent engagement too!



**Max** has graduated from Cubs having earned his Silver Award, the highest Award a Cub can be awarded. He has worked hard for the last 2.5yrs



**Evie** started dancing at 3.5yrs old. She is now dancing at Grade 4. She recently took part in a charity show with her dance school which featured headline act Flavia and Vincent from Strictly Come Dancing! It's a 10 from us!!



Well done to Charity member **Abbie Birmingham** for her achievement as small business owner of the month! Abbie has worked hard to achieve her dream role!

ERB'S PALSY GROUP

*Family*

**FUN DAY**

11:00AM - 3:30PM

**SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2026**

WX WAKEFIELD EXCHANGE  
UNION STREET, WAKEFIELD WF1 3AD

FORMULA 1 RACE SIMULATORS, AEROBALL,  
ARCHERY, INDOOR KURLING, SOFT PLAY, AI SKETCH  
BOT, ARTS & CRAFTS PLUS LOTS MORE FOR KIDS OF  
ALL AGES! \*PICNIC LUNCH INCLUDED\*

ADULTS: £10 | CHILDREN: FREE | ADULTS WITH ERB'S PALSY: FREE

ONLINE BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL  
PLEASE VISIT [WWW.ERBSPALSYGROUP.ORG.UK](http://WWW.ERBSPALSYGROUP.ORG.UK)

This event is supported with grants from The Worshipful Company of Innkeepers, The Souter Trust, and Jane Tomlinson Appeal



# TOZERS

## COULD YOUR CHILD'S OR YOUR DAMAGES AWARD BECOME PART OF A FUTURE DIVORCE SETTLEMENT?

At Tozers, when we settle a claim for anyone, our focus is on the fact that the settlement is usually once and for all. As such we work to get the best damages award (compensation) based on all the facts that are known at the time of the settlement.

Whether a settlement is for a child or an adult, we advise that a Personal Injury (PI) Trust should be considered. The usual reason is so that the Claimant's damages are ring-fenced when their means are tested in future for entitlement to Benefits but there may be other reasons why a Personal Injury Trust should be considered depending on the Claimant's individual circumstances.

Another way to help preserve the Claimant's right to damages awarded is to try to settle the case with part of the damages being awarded under a Periodical Payments Order (PPO). The damages settlement needs to be relatively high for a PPO to be considered alongside a lump sum award. The PPO can be expressed to start at a date in the future, when the Claimant is much older and has greater needs. Defendants try to resist such an Order, as it ties them to the case for as long as the Claimant is alive. However, from the Claimant's point of view, it is extremely attractive. This is because a PPO will ensure that they can continue to receive monies they need for things like their future care and future

therapy every year for the rest of their lives.

Birth injury cases are often settled when the Claimant is still a child. Fast forward a decade or two...

### **What happens when a Claimant marries and unfortunately the marriage breaks down?**

If a Claimant's marriage breaks down, does the Claimant's spouse (husband or wife) have any right to the Claimant's damages as part of the divorce settlement? The simple answer is 'yes', but this is very case specific.

The court will decide which assets and income pre-date the marriage and will only be used for a divorce settlement if the needs of the parties and their children can't be met by sharing assets they acquired during the marriage.

For the divorce settlement the parties must give a full financial disclosure to each other. In a divorce where there has been a damages award to one party, it is important to give details of how that award is broken down because in deciding the divorce settlement, the court will also consider the circumstances in which the Claimant received damages, the Claimant's ongoing needs and the amount of the damages.

However, if no assets were acquired during the marriage and the only funds available are from the damages award, the court will have the difficult task of balancing the Claimant's needs (including those needs arising from the negligent treatment they received) against the needs of their spouse and children. Typically, needs will mean things like accommodation, transport, furnishings, income and pensions, particularly where one parent is primary carer for the parties' children. Depending on the circumstances of the case, meeting these needs could deplete the Claimant's award quite significantly.

On the other hand, if plenty of assets were acquired after the marriage, the court will be able to 'ring-fence' that award from the divorce settlement.

### **Can anything be done to protect a damages settlement in the event of a future divorce?**

As explained above, the damages award will be taken into consideration by the court. A PI Trust and a PPO will help but will not necessarily be enough to protect a Claimant's damages in a divorce settlement.

When we think about the sad statistic that over 40% of marriages end in divorce, it is important for someone who has secured a damages settlement (which was 'full and final' and never to be repeated) to try to protect those damages. This can be done using a Nuptial Agreement which can be signed before the marriage (a 'pre-nup') or after the marriage (a 'post-nup').

Over the last few years Nuptial Agreements have become more accepted. They will be binding on the parties provided:

- The parties have obtained independent legal advice; and
- There has been full financial disclosure by both parties; and
- The agreement ensures that in the unfortunate event of a separation and divorce, the financial needs of both parties and their children can be met from the settlement the agreement describes.
- In the case of a pre-nup the document should be signed no less than 21 days before marriage.
- There should be no pressure by either party on the other to sign the Nuptial Agreement.

If the assets consist mostly or entirely of a damages award which was carefully crafted to meet the Claimant's personal needs arising from a childhood medical event, it is very important to consider a Nuptial Agreement when the Claimant decides to marry or if they are already married because it presents them with an opportunity to define their award as 'separate property'. This is property which is treated as outside the marital 'pot' for division between the Claimant's and their spouse. Whilst the rule referred to above that the 'needs' of the Claimant's spouse and children must be met still prevails, a Nuptial Agreement can be used for the Claimant and their intended/spouse to decide what represents 'needs' and to ensure that those needs are interpreted more modestly, but still fairly. This has four important



consequences: –

1. It avoids future dispute;
2. It ensures that the Claimant's needs are recognised (whilst also meeting the needs of their spouse and children in a way which remains fair);
3. Even if the agreement is not fully upheld, provided the above conditions are observed, in almost all cases, it will still have a beneficial impact on the settlement for the Claimant; and
4. It avoids incurring unnecessary legal costs.

The following are some questions and points for any adult claimants or adult members who have had successful claims to consider. They may seem bleak but are part and parcel of the reality that is modern relationships. Also, should you need this advice, it may be at a time when neither you nor the lawyers that helped you bring your claim for damages still have the reports to justify your claims for future care and assistance, equipment and the like. So please read on and help your future self or your child.

### **What happens if I live with my partner in an unmarried relationship?**

Your unmarried partner will not have any claim against your damages award except in the following limited circumstances:

1. If you decide to buy property in your partner's sole name or your joint names using your damages award. The best advice is to protect your damages award by keeping it entirely separate. However, if you do

choose to invest with your partner, you should always ensure that the conveyancing solicitor handling the purchase prepares an agreement which accurately reflects the sums you have each invested and how you can get your investment back (i.e. how and when could you force a sale).

2. If you agree with your partner that they will invest in property which you own (e.g. property forming part of your damages award) and they rely on what you say by putting in their money or substantial physical labour to improve or renovate the property, your partner may have a claim to a share of the property.
3. If you live with your partner for more than 2 years and they are financially dependent upon you, they may have a claim against your estate on your death even if you did not make provision for them by your will.

### **What if I have a child with someone to whom I am not married?**

A potential claim will arise under Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989 for financial provision from you for the benefit of your child(ren). This applies whether you lived with the child's parent or not.

The court will consider your damages award in the same way as it will in divorce and the award will take account of your child(ren)'s needs and will consider your own needs and the purpose for which the damages were awarded to you. However, it is important to bear in mind that an award to an unmarried former partner



used to purchase a home for your child is 'loaned' to your former partner and will revert to you when your child reaches majority. Money advanced for other purposes is not a 'loan' but must be for your child's capital needs although it often has incidental benefits to the other parent (e.g. a reliable car to transport your child(ren)). As with a settlement on divorce, the award will be based on an assessment of the child(ren)'s 'needs' which typically includes accommodation, furnishings, transport, education and medical treatment.

As with a claimant considering marriage, it would be prudent to invite any long-term unmarried partner to enter into a written agreement with you. In this case, it is known as a 'Cohabitation Agreement'. These agreements have no requirement for 'needs' to be met for your unmarried partner on separation and indeed, a Cohabitation Agreement can be used to prevent your unmarried partner from acquiring any interest in your assets unless and until you/they enter into a separate written agreement to the contrary. Where you are considering mixing your finances with your unmarried partner a Cohabitation Agreement can be used as an opportunity to define what (if anything) is to be paid or repaid to your partner on a separation, to define contributions to outgoings and limit or exclude claims on death.

Where there are children of an unmarried relationship, a Cohabitation Agreement can be used to define your children's needs on a separation (your unmarried former partner's

needs are not relevant). As with a Nuptial Agreement this presents an opportunity for you and your partner to define what fairly meets your child(ren)'s needs in the unfortunate event of a separation in a way which will still be accepted or mostly accepted by the court with the attendant savings in terms of preserving your damages, avoiding dispute and legal costs.

The matters discussed in this article are not straight forward and it is recommended that you seek legal advice if you need help with any of the topics mentioned. The lawyers at Tozers will be able to assist you, if you need further help.

### **How can we help?**

If you would like to discuss a claim, please contact us or visit our website for more information:

[www.tozers.co.uk/expertise/personal/medical-negligence/erbs-palsy-claims](http://www.tozers.co.uk/expertise/personal/medical-negligence/erbs-palsy-claims)



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Travelling to the

# States

(With Erb's)

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Since graduating and last doing an article, my life has been full steam ahead on getting to grip with life and especially with stating out in my 20s, they say this is the decade to **“build your career, go travelling, find yourself”** and all of that malarky and especially with the good old saying of **“oh your 20s are the best years of your life, you should go and enjoy them as much as you can.”**

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There is some truth in that aspect but there is also the flip side of it being one of the hardest decades of your life with society pushing you in the deep end and telling you **“right that's me off then”**. You've had people guiding you and telling you what you should do in your life and being surrounded by people who are being told the same thing and now you gotta go and swim by yourself, nobody is going to do anything for you, you gotta go out and do it all yourself. This certainly is something I'm still getting used to, trying to navigate my own life on a trajectory of telling myself “you have to do it for yourself, nobody is going to come and save you” is how I'm currently living.

Still, with the economy not being very kind to people like me, it's extra pressure. With having one of those things already ticked off or so I thought, being in a relationship with somebody which ended suddenly. So with a broken heart I and a crazy idea of booking a last minute holiday for a week to United States of America in what was 2 weeks was the perfect way to get over a breakup.

Even with no job and being unemployed, and applying for the bog-standard entry-level retail role, what was there to worry about? What was there to stop me? It's a simple **“If you don't, you'll only regret it.”**

So there I was in my local spoons having pints with my mate because it's someone who can split all the hotel and transport prices with!

He felt that going with a mate would be a cool idea, but getting the cost of the hotel slashed by half would be more amusing. This trip was a chance for him to meet a friend in Florida he'd known for 4 years, since he hadn't seen him since his wedding 2 years ago, which he was the best man at.

I was hesitant to go at first because I didn't want to intrude, but after a few messages, he was cool with it. The good old classic intrusive thoughts came back to me as I didn't know what we were doing for an itinerary, my normal brain hit back at me, I kept telling myself a quote from the classic film *Night at the Museum* franchise where Ben Stillers character was speaking to the late Robin Williams' character where 2 lines were said **"I don't know what I'm gonna do tomorrow" and Robin replied with "How exciting!"** Obviously, the context is entirely different, but the thought of being in a different country on one's own should be clear.



Furthermore, being in the state of Florida made me want to go even more. I was close, very close in fact, to going until my subconscious stopped me for the final time after knowing what we were doing, stopping me from spending money and spending money for a day trip to Walt Disney World. I gave up listening to my head. A few days later, I booked the flights without even thinking it over, went straight to a hotel booking website, and we booked a room. A few days after that, my mate got a text saying he had 2 free tickets to Walt Disney World for me and him. A week later, I realised my suitcase was broken, so I had to buy a new one for a couple of days while I was at home. I wanted to go home, but I was on the fence about it because I needed to save up for spending money. Regardless, I went home to tell my family the exciting news, as I prefer to share news with people close to me in person rather than over text. Doing it over text, you don't get the satisfaction of hearing the joy in someone's voice or even seeing it in their eyes. And with a good few goodbyes and a train journey back up to Manchester, it was time to do the laundry, buy travel items and panic that my visa would get disapproved just days before I flew to Orlando International Airport. And so came the few days; excitement was building, but the brain still wasn't clocking it, still not engaging with the fact that a bucket-list travel item was going to be ticked. New suitcase brought along with a few new clothes to come with me and a certain toiletry item; it was slowly starting to clock, but it wasn't until the packing, the double-checking, and the night before that I rang up the parents. I said my final goodbyes till my brain clocked that I was about to go on an adventure. With every adventure, there comes fear, and out of amusement, I decided to do a farewell video, just in case I did pop my clogs off somehow. Needless to say, thankfully, that video wasn't needed, of course. Even though I left instructions on how I wanted my funeral and wake to be, I also mentioned where I wanted my money to go and left some pretty good secrets in there, too. Before I even knew it, it was time to get to bed, with only about 4 hours of sleep. It was certainly needed, as I hoped the adrenaline would keep me going and that I would get even the slightest bit of sleep.



And so the sun never arose, with the Manchester skyline still very much blue and black with lights twinkling of peoples lamps, bedroom lights and all sorts going off, I was getting ready to start the day, the first day of the holiday, with the bed changed me being showered and almost ready to go, be up at half 3 in the morning whilst the world is still asleep is such a beautiful feeling. Dead silent outside, calm, peaceful and zen, until we got onto the road where my flatmate and I drove to my other mate's flat to pick him up and off to the airport we went! Not only was this the start of the holiday, but also the start of the documentary, with taking a DSLR camera and camera gear over the pond and going to the Atlantic. Really should've ended up in Hollywood, but that is for another adventure down the line. Terminal 2 was upon us, but with one last tune on the aux, we had to play the classic song from Cars, Life is a Highway by Rascal Flatts, to get us in the mood and say goodbye to the Isles of the British! But fast-forwarding into the queue for check-in (not that anybody voluntarily joins a queue, unless you're at the pub, but who queues

at the pub?!) A sunken heart of mine falls to the floor with realisation that my passport is not where I put it, I go pale and don't say anything until my mate asks, to which I reassure him not to panic, which made it the worst 120 seconds of the whole holiday, only to realise that I moved it to a different pocket without realising. With one slightly annoyed friend, we were through check-in and security within a jiffy, with the next stop being World Duty Free!

Though with WDF, the way I see it is this: you get world exclusives that, for the most part, aren't even on British supermarket shelves, meaning to pass up on an opportunity such as this, especially as it's alcohol, would be rude not to buy something or somethings... With that being said, 2 bottles of 50% vodka, which isn't even allowed to be sold in a Tesco or Sainsbury's, are brought! Next stop was the all-important next stop, as no holiday would be complete without it, the classic airport pint! It doesn't matter how old I get, whether I'm going to an airport or even on holiday, the airport pint is a tradition, not a trend. The taste of a lovely cold British, locally brewed pint, whilst onward to the Americas, tasted exactly as you would think it would at 6 am. Onwards we went to explore Terminal 2 of the Manchester airport, with a quick look at the new Lego store, and to the gate, where all my mind was drifting off to was what would be the worst things to say in an airport whilst awaiting to board...? Bearing in mind, I absolutely love the turbulence and when it all goes up in the air... (I'll let that one sit for a mo...) With the first joke being about going to see the Titanic in the Atlantic Ocean, then followed by a Sully landing in the river repeated. But it was straight onto the plane and saying goodbye to the country that we all love, the land of Greggs, Coop meal deals and Bukayo Saka.

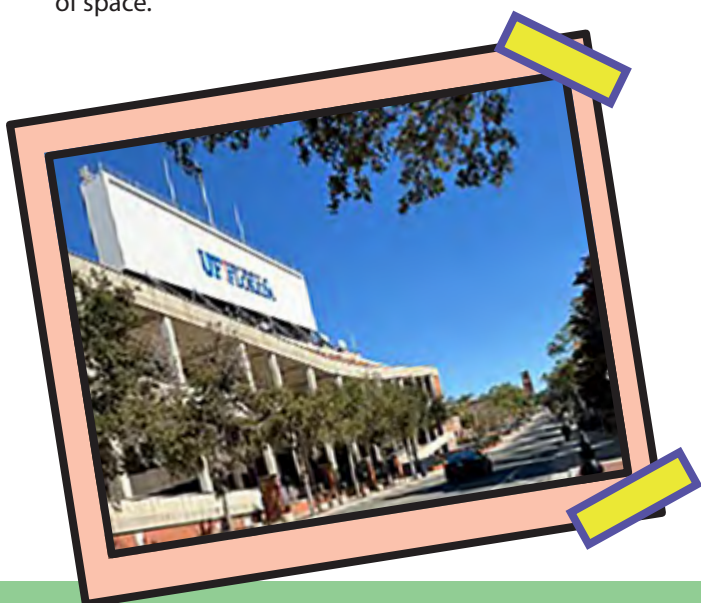
The plane journey was long but exciting nonetheless. A 20-minute nap and a free meal on board got me through a bit of it, but the main highlight was that the in-flight entertainment screen, needless to say, yes, it's just a 7-inch tablet on the back of the seat, but what it had on there at 50 thousand feet was endless. There were games, a bit of history about Aer Lingus (with whom we flew), radio station podcasts, and the best bit. These endless amounts of films had to be logged onto Letterboxd (a social media platform for reviewing films), but 9 hours later, across the pond and views of NYC, Manhattan, and the east coast, we safely touched down in Orlando with a hit of 20 degrees of warm, clean air. It was up until then, it really hit, bucket list

moment ticked off. Bags picked up, phone call to the family and being extra friendly with security, and it was time to meet Connor's friend, Kyle. Who took us to dinner at an Olive Garden in Orlando before we set off to where we were staying for the week?

So Connor and Kyle have been mates for a few years now, met on the Xbox game Forza and a couple of years into their friendship, Connor was best man at his wedding, and that was their first in-person interaction, with this being my first. So nerves were in order on my end as I didn't wanna make a fool of myself. Another thing to mention is that Kyle is a veteran and has a service dog named Candice, who, safe to say, adored me every time we met, leaving me covered in kisses.

Now, The Olive Garden is a chain of Italian restaurants in the US, best known for its unlimited breadsticks, essentially a doughy baguette covered in garlic sauce. Oh my, it was tremendous, a proper welcome to the USA, those were, they were delicious, I even found the recipe online to make back home too. My main meal was spaghetti and meatballs, not that exciting but American portions are massive, it was like a size of a salad that you'd stick in the middle of the dinner table at home where your mum would deliberately make too much of it for a Sunday roast sorta size, even the drinks, a large would be around 1 and a half litres! Either way, the 2.5-hour ride to the hotel was a mix of my body wanting to get some kip, my heart keeping me up and wanting to live in the moment, and my head still in dreamland.

After arriving at the hotel, it was about midnight, even though it felt like it was only just the start of the evening, with the jet lag only starting to kick in, but it was straight to bed for the first night in our 2 massive queen-sized beds, which, needless to say, was a lot of space.



The next morning, the first full day, waking up and realising I was in America hit me hard. I felt a rush of calm and peace within me, along with a beaming smile, as if I had made it in life. Once we got ourselves ready, we needed food, and, after the night before, I was still stuffed but determined to try everything I could. We wanted something ambitious, exciting and most of all, new. After a 10-minute walk, we ended up at an IHOP, an American diner that had a special deal on unlimited pancakes now these were the size of a small plate from back home, and they served 3 at a time, and as you gotta do, you gotta try everything! Syrup and cream all on top, and even to this day, I still can't understand why those portions are so big. It also cost us only \$15 each, with a drink, so not too shabby.

After this, we went into town, and Kyle gave us a tour of the University of Florida, where he worked. When I say this university is massive, I mean it's that big that they have a sports field for every sport, an American Football stadium, our football, softball, basketball stadium, baseball, you name it, they've got it, oh. They also own a lake, filled with hundreds of Alligators. We also met his work friends and were casually told that we were standing over a sinkhole that could've collapsed at any given point, of which thankfully didn't.

Still, once that was over, he also drove us around Gainesville, which is in Alachua County. To detox, Connor and I went to one of the bars in town and had a local IPA to cool down. Whilst we got a drink, we got chatting to the barman, who noticed we were British and loved football, so we all got nattering. Time passed, and before we knew it, it got dark and we decided to get some snacks in for the night, as this was a Friday night, we were still shattered from the jet lag so we decided to stay in and not go on a night out, which was on the top of my things to do, a night out in America. Publix was the store that we went to, safe to say to understand the pricing of items on the shelves is confusing as there was no fixed set price like there is back home so when I first saw, \$16 for a pack of Oreos, I was in disbelief, I thought I was back home in Waitrose, in Winchester surrounded by boujee people and items but apparently its all done by per pounds. No tax was even added to the label, either, which only

made things more confusing. Once we got back to the hotel, we needed to order dinner, safe to say America loves a delivery, there were thousands and thousands of restaurants to choose from for takeout, we were quite literally spoiled for choice! We ended up going for a burger king of which the main highlight of that was you can get a side of onion rings AND fries as one side, I would absolutely adore this in the UK but as food was ordered, I **"rested my eyes"** next thing I know, Connor was shoving me telling me my food was here... that was then eaten. Within minutes, I headed to the Bedfordshire and drifted off into the second full day.

Saturday was a nice chill one, kept it lowkey and energy dropped where I met Kyles family for the first time, We went for breakfast at a Cracker Barrel which was really nice and light hearted I think the main takeaway for that was that I ordered a cup of English breakfast tea and with the waitress also noticing my accent and fancied me a bit which was cute and quite frankly made me want to come back over the pond again soon. But we went to different shops around town and even into a classic American mall, they sadly aren't what they once were from back in the day, as it's all gone online basically, but managed to go to a Game Stop and a few department stores via a pit stop to the Chick a filet to get a drink, now Chick a filet is famous for not only its chicken but also for its drinks with one of the drinks being a frozen lemonade, simple amount of ingredients, lemonade, juice and ice cream, needless to say, I fell in love. It tasted phenomenal. But onward it was to Kyle's place, where we stopped off at another Publix, the one by his place, it was the perfect time of the season, as outside there was a stock of Girl Scout cookies. Now I always thought these were only a fictional thing, like in the first Despicable Me film, but no, they are genuine products, and of course, these had to come home with me. By the time we got back, Kyle's lovely wife had made us tacos for dinner. Now, I never liked tacos growing up, as I was always, and I guess still kind of am, a fussy eater, but my mind got quickly turned, and now I am a big fan. Something to mention is that they both have kids, and they asked Connor and me some cute questions since this was their first time meeting people from Britain. With dinner over, we played a board game called Catan, which is one of those strategic games where you gotta claim the whole board to win. I miserably lost. Time went by, and it was time for bed. I was gutted not to get a night out, but it gave me a strong argument and a strong reason to come back to the USA, definitely.



Sunday morning, silent, it felt like the world was turning and resetting itself for the week, but at the same time, it felt like it stopped for us. A Sunday wouldn't feel like a Sunday if it didn't feel like the world was at rest. The day was all about recreation. We went to a state park where we found a lake that travelled underground for many miles, and we went on a 5-mile round-trip walk, so 10 miles total to follow it upstream. That view of the lake did not disappoint. To put it into perspective, it was as if someone was saying, **"Don't worry about life, it'll all work out, stop stressing, life is bigger than that, no need to make mountains out of a molehill, as there is much more positivity than negativity in the world"** It was the O Leno State Park and also the River Rise Preserve State Park that we went to and after that we went back to spend a lovely evening back at Kyles where we watched the Superbowl and made plans for Monday as Monday was the big day, the day that I was waiting for, for the whole holiday, Disneyworld Florida.





Monday was it. The big one. The day that had been sitting in the back of my mind ever since the tickets came through. Not just another day on holiday, but the day. The one that, for a lot of people, is the reason you even come out to Walt Disney World in the first place.

We started at EPCOT, and straight away, it didn't feel real. You walk in, and that massive golf ball structure, properly known as Spaceship Earth, is just there, like something out of a film. Naturally, that was the first ride of the day. A slow one to ease into it, travelling through time, but it set the tone. One of those **"yeah... I'm actually here"** moments.

While we were there, EPCOT was hosting the EPCOT International Festival of the Arts, which runs in January and February. It's basically Disney turning the whole park into a mix of food, art, and performances, loads of food stalls, live shows, artwork everywhere, and different countries leaning into their identity a bit more than usual. We wandered through it properly, and the best part was how each country presents itself. We ended up in the "British" section, which, honestly, was a joke. It's like Britain through an American lens, tea everywhere, countryside vibes, that slightly posh feel as we all sit around drinking tea all day. You could even go into a café and meet Winnie the Pooh and friends, which looked classy, but we didn't do that.. Then we went over to the American section, watched one of their shows, and yeah... patriotic is the only word: big energy, flags, music, no subtlety whatsoever. We grabbed a Mexican lunch while we were there and just took it all in, no rushing, no pressure, just existing in the moment, which is rare. From there, we jumped on the Disney Skyliner over to Disney's Hollywood Studios, and I'm not even exaggerating, the views from up there were unreal. Seeing everything from above, the water, the parks, people moving around below, while you're just gliding across the sky... It's one of those moments that sticks with you without you realising at the time.

Hollywood Studios is where things picked up. Connor went on The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, which I very happily avoided after past trauma at Alton Towers. I'd done Oblivion before, and it scared the life out of me, then went on Thirteen and nearly got kicked out for swearing too much, so I wasn't taking any chances here.

We then went on Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway, which was chaos in the best way, before heading into Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge. Seeing Kylo Ren and Chewbacca just casually walking around like it's normal was surreal.

Toy Story Land followed, and more importantly, Toy Story Mania!, which I won, just putting that out there.

Then came Rock 'n' Roller Coaster.

Now this was the one I didn't trust myself on. It launches from 0 to about 60mph in a few seconds, throwing you straight into loops, and after what happened at Alton Towers, I was fully expecting to hate it and embarrass myself again.

But I did it anyway.

And weirdly... I loved it. Properly loved it. That feeling of the launch, the speed, everything—it just made me feel alive again. Like adrenaline actually meant something instead of just fear. By the time it finished, I wanted to go straight back on. Somewhere along the line, I'd gone from avoiding rollercoasters to actually enjoying them again.

But that's where things started to get tight. Because suddenly, we realised we might not make it to Magic Kingdom in time for the fireworks.

And that hit more than I expected. Because for me, seeing the castle wasn't just another thing; it felt like the thing you're meant to do at Disney. When it started to look like we weren't going to make it, I'd already half accepted it. I even googled it at one point, like **"right, that'll have to do."**

Caitlin saw that and wasn't having any of it. She clocked my phone and made it her mission to get us there. Proper determination. Meanwhile, I'd already settled into the idea that it wasn't happening. Then it turned into a rush. Speed-walking, weaving through crowds, jumping on transport, we were trying to claw back time. We just about made the bus, and when I say just about, I mean Disney sprinting levels. Bus doors shut. Silence for a second. That shared thought of **"have we actually done it?"**



We got there, rushed in, and within minutes, we were walking down Main Street. And then there she was, Cinderella's Castle. And it got to me.

Not in a loud way, just quietly. Properly. After everything the past few weeks, the breakup, feeling lost, not really knowing who I was, it just hit. Standing there, I felt like I deserved to be there. Like, I actually am a good person. Like maybe everything hadn't fallen apart, it was just changing. We grabbed hot dogs and found a spot just in time. The music started, the castle lit up, and then the final speech played, and for some reason, that stuck with me more than anything. It genuinely sparked something in me again. That belief I'd lost. For a few minutes, everything just made sense again.

Just before it all kicked off, we got a proper photo together, one of those you don't realise the value of until later.

After the fireworks, we headed over to It's a Small World, not for the thrill, but for something personal. It was my nan's favourite ride, and after losing her in 2024, it felt right to do it for her. Sitting there, it was quiet, simple, but it meant a lot. I genuinely felt close to her again in that moment.

We then went back to the castle when it had all calmed down and took photos with barely anyone around, a completely different atmosphere: peaceful, still, like the park had finally exhaled.

On the way out, we did what everyone does, through the gift shop. I picked up a mug and a t-shirt with the year on it, something to prove to myself that it actually happened.

We got back to the hotel at around 2 am. And the next morning? I was out cold until 11. But honestly, after a day like that, I'd earned it. Disney isn't just rides or characters or fireworks. Sometimes, if you catch it at the right moment, it gives you something real. And for me, that was feeling like myself again.



After the chaos of Disney, Tuesday was always going to be a slower one.

It was a late-morning start, which, after getting back at 2 am the night before, was more than enough. One of those wake-ups where you're a bit disoriented for a second, then it clicks again, you're still in America.

We kept it easy. No big plans, no pressure. Just a day to reset.

We headed into town on the bus, which turned into an experience in itself. Three different drivers, machines not working properly, a bit of confusion all round, it felt like a slightly chaotic version of back home, just with American accents. First proper stop was Chick a filet, but this time, it wasn't just about the drink. It was actually time to try the food. Safe to say, it lived up to it. Properly simple, but done well, and of course, the Chick a filet sauce made another appearance, which at this point had fully won me over. After that, we headed into Target, which was genuinely just fun to walk around. It's basically what everyone says it is, a nicer, cleaner, slightly more aesthetic version of what we're used to back home. While we were there, I picked up a Stanley Cup for my mum. She'd wanted one for a while, so it felt like a good shout, and of course, when she got it, she was over the moon.

Then it was onto Walmart, which had an opposite vibe. Bigger, louder, a bit more chaotic, but you can find anything literally. Including, importantly, more Chick a filet sauce, which had now become a bit of a mission. One of the more random but funny moments of the day was finding a 42nd Street road sign. It doesn't sound like much, but back home in Manchester, there's a club called 42's, so I'd actually





brought my loyalty card with me. Naturally, I had to get a photo of the two side by side, one of those little things that probably means nothing to anyone else, but made it for me. By the evening, we headed back to Kyle's, which had started to feel like a proper base rather than just somewhere we were visiting. Dinner was hibachi-style steak, veg, and rice, simple, but unreal. After that, we played Ticket to Ride, which, as expected, I lost. But not completely. I did get the longest train route, 29 cars to 28, so I'm claiming that as a win, whether it officially counts or not.

It wasn't a big, standout day like Disney. But it didn't need to be. It was just easy. Calm. Exactly what was needed.

Although, as the day went on, there was that slight shift in the back of my mind, the realisation that the next day was our last full day. That this wasn't just something we were in anymore, it was something that was starting to come to an end.

And I don't think any of us really wanted to admit that just yet.



Wednesday had a different feeling to it from the start.

It wasn't rushed, it wasn't packed, it just had that underlying sense that this was it. The last full day. The final stretch before everything flipped back to normal. We started with breakfast at McDonald's, but not just any breakfast, a McGriddle. For anyone who hasn't had one, it's basically a breakfast sandwich with the "bun" being two soft pancakes infused with maple syrup, and bacon, egg, and cheese in the middle. It sounds

a bit wrong on paper, but it works. Properly works. Sweet and savoury in a way that shouldn't make sense, but does.

Elite tier, no debate. After that, we had to head back to Walmart to return the wrong coffee pods we'd picked up earlier in the week. One of those slightly annoying, admin-type jobs you don't expect to be doing on holiday, but it turned into something better. The woman at customer service clocked my accent straight away, and it genuinely made her day. Properly lit her up. She was a sweet old lady, and for some reason, that small interaction stuck with me. It made me feel weirdly proud to be British, especially with how things can feel back home sometimes, one of those small moments that stays with you. While we were there, I ended up picking up a ring and a few extra bits, nothing major, just little things to bring home.

Next stop was Krispy Kreme, but not just any one, this was one of the original-style stores where everything's made fresh in-house. You could see it all happening, which made it feel a bit more special. Coffee and a cream-filled doughnut, simple as that, but it just felt right for the day.

The original plan was to do something a bit more eventful, but in the end, we didn't bother. It felt right to go back to McDinton's instead, grab a pint, and sit and chat. No pressure, no trying to force anything out of the last day. That's kind of how the whole day went.

Later, we headed to Bev's Better Burgers for dinner with Kyle and his family. It felt... nice. Properly nice. Not in a big, dramatic way, just in that simple, genuine way where you realise how comfortable everything's become in a short space of time. It felt like one of those moments you know you'll look back on. And it didn't feel like a goodbye forever. Just a **"see you again at some point."** A matter of when, not if. The sunset that evening just added to it all. The whole day had a soundtrack running underneath it, like one of those scenes in a film where everything slows down for a second. If I had to put a song to it, it'd be Eulogy from Stranger Things. That calm, slightly reflective, almost surreal feeling, it just matched perfectly. The night itself was pretty chill. A bit of doomscrolling, a lot of laughs, just sitting in that space where you know

it's coming to an end but don't really want to say it out loud. Eventually, it came to packing the suitcase. Always the worst part. That moment where everything you've been doing all week suddenly gets folded up and put away. We said goodbye to Caitlin that night as well, which made it all feel a bit more real. Not dramatic, just one of those quiet goodbyes.

Pickup was set for 7:30 am. And yeah, it felt like it was about to be over.

But we still had one more day.



Thursday didn't feel like a travel day. Not really. It felt like a final chance to hold onto it all for just a bit longer. We were up early for pickup, and before setting off, we grabbed one last breakfast at McDonald's, this time a bagel meal and a coffee. Nothing special on paper, but it felt like part of the routine by that point. One last bit of normality before everything changed again.

From there, we drove out towards Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, just outside Daytona Beach. And yeah... the climb was no joke. Worth it, but brutal on the legs. Step after step after step, and it just keeps going. Then you get to the top, and the view hits you. Proper panoramic, coastline stretching out, the ocean just going on forever. One of those views that makes you stop for a second. But getting down? Horrible. Spiral stairs, looking straight through the middle, legs already gone, it's one of those where you don't look down and hope for the best. After that, we headed to the beach and walked out along the jetty. And this is where it really slowed down. The air had that proper salty feel, the kind you only get by the sea, and everything just felt calm. No rush, nowhere to be, just being there. Then we spotted sharks.

Not far out. Properly close. Just a few feet from where we were standing on the jetty, you could see them moving through the water. It wasn't panic, it was more surreal than anything. Like, **"that's actually happening right there."** Then, almost straight after, dolphins.

A completely different energy. Smooth, calm, just gliding through the water like it was nothing. One of those moments that you don't plan, you get lucky with. And then, out of nowhere, F-16 fighter jets overhead. Loud, fast, cutting across the sky, it genuinely felt like something out of Top Gun. One of those moments where everything lines up, and you stand there taking it in. That whole stretch of time felt different. Peaceful, reflective... and if I'm being honest, not something I wanted to leave. On the way back, we stopped at Publix and grabbed a meatball sub, which felt like the most American way possible to round off the experience. Then it was time. We got to Orlando International Airport, and that's when it properly hit.



The goodbye.

Not loud, not dramatic, just one of those where you're holding it together, saying what you need to say, knowing it means something. You don't really process it fully in the moment, you... go through it.



Sunglasses on, head down, keep moving. We wandered through duty-free, killing time more than anything, before one final stop at Chick a filet for a frozen lemonade. It was right to end it on something that had become a staple over the week. Then the flight. We left at around 5:30 pm, heading back across the Atlantic. A meal on board, a 20-minute nap that didn't really do much, and somewhere in between, I managed to spill a full cup of tea all over myself, which pretty much summed up the **"back to reality"** part of the trip. And just like that, it was over.

We landed early Friday morning, back home, back to normal life. But it didn't feel the same. Because somewhere between the last-minute booking, the chaos, the castle, and everything in between, something shifted. I went out there to get over something. But I came back with a bit more than that.

A clearer head. A bit of belief again. And the reminder that sometimes, the best thing you can do is say yes and see where it takes you.

We landed back in Manchester at around 6:30am.

No big moment, no dramatic shift, just that quiet, slightly numb feeling of being back. At passport control, bags were collected and returned to the routine, as if nothing had really happened. Dan picked us up. There was a bit of traffic on the way, and before I knew it, I was back at the flat around 9:10 am. And that was it. Straight into unpacking. Everything into the wash. No delay, no pause, just straight back into normal life mode. Then the tiredness hit. Not all at once, but in waves. A few hours' sleep. Wake up. Back asleep again. Then again. Something like 4 hours, then 8, then another 4. Body clock completely gone. It didn't feel real yet. Not fully. Like part of me was still out there somewhere, not quite caught up with the fact that it was over.



Looking back, the trip was almost split in two.

The first few days, I was overwhelmed. New place, new people, different pace, it all felt like a lot. Like, my head was still catching up with where I actually was. But then something shifted. And if I'm being honest, it started at Disney. From that point on, everything

just felt different. I was more present, more switched on, actually enjoying things properly instead of overthinking them. The last few days weren't about trying to make the most of it; they just happened naturally. Somewhere along the way, I went from being a realist who leaned towards the negative... to a realist who could actually see the positive again. Not mindlessly optimistic. Not pretending everything's perfect. Just... better. More balanced. More open. More willing to believe that things can work out. And that's probably the biggest thing I've taken from it all. I left feeling lost. A bit unsure of who I was, where I was going, and how things were meant to pan out. But I didn't come back the same person. And maybe that's the point of it all. Sometimes you don't need a plan. Sometimes you need to say yes and trust that something along the way will bring you back to yourself.

It's been a pleasure reliving this holiday, and I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did writing it. Don't stop believing in yourself, the Disney magic is real, don't let anyone say so otherwise, and never lose faith. Till next time,

*Sam!*



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## information

We have a wide range of fact sheets and leaflets available – please check the website for full details [www.erbspalsygroup.org.uk](http://www.erbspalsygroup.org.uk) all of our leaflets can now be e mailed to you for ease of sending. All requests should be sent to Karen Hillyer (details as above)

In addition to these fact sheets we have a wide range of Information booklets available to post to members or health care professionals. These Include the following;

- **Erb's Palsy, A comprehensive guide for professionals and parents on the prognosis, treatment and support of Erb's Palsy**
- **Care of a baby with Erb's Palsy**
- **Rights in the workplace and education – a guide to your rights under the Equality Act 2010**
- **All About Me book – a booklet for you and your child to complete for use in school and other external settings**

These can all be obtained by contacting Karen Hillyer.

*Bye for now!*  
x

