

Happy February,

In the life of a 'rambling madman' February represents the month that Christmas presents are assessed (aka. rubbish donated to the Charity Shop).

Accordingly, following a review of key Branch dates and key information, you will find ramblings about my Christmas presents which includes:

- A pilfered DIY tool
- The very first cream egg to leave the Supermarket
- Flash Cards from the well-known game "Name that bumhole"
- The importance of 'purpose' in life
- My joy of having 'Honorary Counsel'

### **AGM – Tuesday 25 February 2025 – 2.00pm Shalford Village Hall**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is an important event for reviewing the Branch's progress over the past year, sharing its financial standing, and discussing future plans. During the AGM, the committee will provide a summary of the main activities and achievements. A detailed financial report will highlight the end-of-year position, offering transparency on income, expenditure, and reserves. Looking ahead, the committee will outline plans for the coming year alongside a proposed budget to deliver these initiatives. This meeting is a vital opportunity for members to engage with the committee, ask questions, and contribute to the Branch's direction.

As part of the AGM proceedings, members will also be asked to approve key roles, including the Chair and Treasurer. Members who are unable to attend in person but wish to have a say are encouraged to send their feedback and vote by contacting Margaret Westwood ([westwood.m@talktalk.net](mailto:westwood.m@talktalk.net)) in advance of the meeting.

### **The ramblings begin...**

This Christmas brought a wonderful mix of thoughtful and creative gifts that truly made the festive season memorable. Some presents were tangible treasures, while others represent moments of joy that will be remembered for years to come. I'm especially grateful to my sister and family for their knack of coming up with inventive and unique ideas

One standout was a rather unconventional item: a tape measure, 'borrowed' (let's say pilfered) from a local furniture reseller. I won't name the culprit, but let's just say it came from someone older than me and responsible for half my genetic makeup.

My niece, who works at Morrisons, contributed to the festive fun by giving me the first Creme Egg of the season—everyone else would need wait for them to hit the shelves by New Year's Day.

The pièce de resistance was probably a flashcard game centred on the amusingly niche topic of animal bumholes. Yes, you read that right. This game brought endless frivolity. Should you feel left out then it's still available at Amazon and other similar outlets - <https://www.amazon.co.uk/BUBBLEGUM-STUFF-Bumhole-Playing-Christmas/dp/B096MXC6R8/>

I'm beyond grateful for my family's thoughtfulness, humour, and creativity. These gifts, each in their own way, were a perfect reflection of the warmth and connection that make Christmas so special.

Christmas gifts do not have to be given by anyone, sometimes they are simply understanding gained in a period of reflection that the festive season provides. For me, the first is **the importance of 'purpose'**.

I believe I've expressed this sentiment before, but I think it's important to acknowledge that people's identity statements often change significantly before and after a Parkinson's diagnosis. For example, most individuals' identity statements prior to Parkinson's often focus on work—roles, titles, and professional importance. Post-diagnosis, some may retain this identity, but others might shift towards a more people-focused outlook.

With hindsight, I now realise that having a sense of 'purpose' is the key to successfully transitioning from work to retirement. 'Purpose', whether it's playing golf to an excellent standard or serving as the Chair of a Parkinson's UK Branch, provides a sense of direction and fulfilment.

This insight was reinforced by a recent minor hernia correction operation I had just before Christmas (20th of Dec). The consultant who performed the operation was outstanding and fully understood my concerns—chiefly, that I was more worried about losing my ability to exercise than the operation itself. As many of you know, I am a fundamental believer that Exercise is critical to slowing the progression of Parkinson's.

What surprised me, however, was the impact of two factors:

- a) the natural lull in branch activities and emails over the Christmas break
- b) the inability to exercise for three weeks following the operation.

These combined to leave me with a loss of purpose and a sense of time drifting. I came to realise that my normal life is very much dictated by the structure of my week, which revolves around exercise and therapeutic activities. Without those scheduled activities in my daily routine, I felt lost and purposeless.

Fortunately, Christmas passed quickly, my recovery went well, and I was able to return to my usual schedule with no lasting damage. However, I now recognise how lost I felt without purpose and how easily that could have led me into sedentary behaviours, such as watching TV for hours on end.

Of course, everyone should do what feels right for them. But, if your life primarily revolves around watching Homes under the Hammer, adverts for funeral plans, then—without meaning to be judgemental—I think it might be time to get out more.

Finally, I received one of my most important gifts after Christmas. Some of you might know that the person to whom I feel most connected in terms of Parkinson's outlook is Hilary Austin. We just seem to see eye-to-eye on all aspects of Parkinson's. The gift she has given me is to accept my offer that she remains as a committee member in the role of "Honorary Counsel to The Chair". While Hilary may no longer have the energy to attend meetings or address emails she still has lots to offer in terms of understanding and history. Knowing she will tell me if it looks like I am going to make a bad decision is such a reassurance.

Have a great 2025.

**David**

**P.S.** Have you noticed that Parkinson's UK have introduced new branding in January? The 'P' has a tulip symbol, representing the tulip named after Dr James Parkinson who published 'An Essay on the Shaking Palsy' in 1817, which recognised Parkinson's as a medical condition for the first time.

**Out with the old:**

**PARKINSON'S<sup>UK</sup>**  
CHANGE ATTITUDES.  
FIND A CURE.  
JOIN US.

**In with the new:**

 **Parkinson's UK**  
For every Parkinson's journey