

As you will see, we have new Parkinson's UK-style branding on this version of The Park Bench, including the funky '**Parkinsans**' font. That aside, everything else is similar in that I will provide a mixture of useful information, alongside the 'ramblings of a madman' for those who want a little break from reality.

Now, I suspect many of you might argue this is not useful information, but you're getting this education anyway! "Sans" in fonts refers to the term "sans serif," which means "without serif" in French. Serifs are the small decorative strokes at the ends of letters. So, Parkinsans refers to a font that appears clean and modern, with simple, straight lines instead of flourishes.

The topic of the month is **driving**. This has been selected purely because a fellow member made what I thought was an incredibly witty retort to something I said. I shared it with others, who seemed to enjoy it, so I thought I'd expand the audience to include all of you. The rest of this article is just padding and preparation, leading to the main quip.

Branch News

- **World Parkinson's Day** is celebrated on **11 April** each year to raise awareness of Parkinson's disease. This date recognises the birthday of James Parkinson, who first described Parkinson's as a medical condition in 1817 with his Essay on the Shaking Palsy. As a Branch Committee, we're currently deciding what (if anything) we'll be doing to celebrate it (I'll be on holiday). Keep an eye out for details on how you can get involved!
- Parkinson's-UK change of address. It was noted at the AGM that some members had missed the change of Registered Office. The new address is 50 Broadway, London, SW1H 0DB.

Chester Bridge, Ash

February was an interesting month for those living in Ash. Ash, which used to be a small village about 10 minutes' drive west of Guildford, has now become something of a building site. It also has the quirk of a level crossing. While this might not sound fascinating to those of you in Surrey—where there are quite a few level crossings—such sights are a rarity for many outsiders. Parents often bring their children to watch the trains and the barriers going up and down.

Guildford Borough Council, in its wisdom, decided that the level crossing caused too much delay during the morning rush hour. Accordingly, they have now built a bridge over the railway line. The project, sponsored by house builders, came in phases. The first phase involved constructing a housing estate to which the bridge would later be connected.

Now, *The Park Bench*'s not a political vehicle, so I won't comment on the rights and wrongs of the bridge, but it would have been helpful if Google Maps had been updated before opening the bridge and closing the level crossing!

Interestingly, some buyers of the new houses didn't realise that what appeared to be a quiet cul-de-sac was actually the main road connecting the bridge to the rest of the road network. As one resident pointed out: "We didn't know before we moved in that there was going to be a main road. I didn't know there would be a bus stop outside." (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce9npm8py1jo>)

On a recent Saturday morning, the road leading to the level crossing was closed, but with no reference to the bridge on Google Maps, drivers were left aimlessly circling, looking for a way out. I'm sure you, like me, have been in that frustrating situation where the satnav fails to find an alternative route, and you end up back at the same point again—ah, the joys of technology!

Cycling to School

When my children were of school age, I remember some parents cycling them to school in trailers hitched behind their bikes. The message was clear: "It's good for the environment, it's healthy exercise..."

The other day, I found myself stuck behind one of these setups. It was too wide to overtake easily, so I settled in for what I thought would be a slow ride. To my surprise, the cyclist zipped along at 25+ mph! As it turned out, they were on an electric bike.



This got me thinking: how is this different from taking the children to school in an electric car? I raised the topic at our newly diagnosed meeting, which sparked an interesting debate. What are your thoughts?

Smiling at Death!

On a completely different note, those of you who attend the Monday 9:30 a.m. exercise class at Whitley will know that afterwards, we gather in the kitchen of Chichester Hall for coffee and a biscuit. This social time lets us check in with each other and chat about both Parkinson's and non-Parkinson's topics.

Recently, during one such gathering, I found myself and two friends (both named Andrew) discussing the rather grim topic of death. As you may know, Parkinson's itself rarely causes death but can exacerbate other conditions.

In an attempt to lighten the mood, I joked, "*You never know, I might crash and die on my drive home.*" To which one Andrew replied, "*Just don't block the entrance!*" What a star—I smiled for the next 15 minutes

Enjoy March!

David Lowther