

Happy November!

In my role as Chair of the Guildford & South Surrey Branch of Parkinson's UK, I take part in a monthly regional video conference call with **Zoe Sole** (Parkinson's UK Local Volunteering Officer) and other Lead Volunteers from across the South East region. These meetings bring together branches and groups from areas such as **Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Surrey**—collectively known, rather affectionately, as *"The BOBS."*

While the content of each meeting varies, the format is usually quite familiar: we start with an icebreaker to get everyone into a positive and lively mood, followed by updates from Parkinson's UK headquarters, and then a discussion around a chosen topic.

This month, I found the icebreaker particularly challenging — the question was, *"What do you see as the positives in the change of season?"*

I gave the obvious answer: the beautiful change in the colour of the trees. But I also admitted that, in general, this time of year can feel more demanding — it's colder, wetter, and it takes a bit more motivation to make the most of each day.

You might be itching to remind me that I often say my role in writing *The Park Bench* is to **inform, educate, and entertain**. So you'd be quite right to say, "Go on then, educate me — tell me how to thrive in winter!" Unfortunately, this is one of those problems I can't solve. If I could, I'd write a *Times* best-selling self-help book, make millions, and be living in Sandbanks or Malibu by now.

What I do know — or at least firmly believe — is that coping well with winter has a lot to do with **feeling part of a community**. For me, that sense of belonging comes from my **PD-Fit** colleagues at the Monday 9:30 session in Witley. They know that if I miss a week, I'd better have a good reason — because they'll ask! While that might sound a bit stressful or controlling, I know it comes from a place of love and concern. It does, however, rule out the excuse of skipping a session just because there's an inch of ice on my windscreen.

Our Branch welcomes everyone into our community and offers plenty of opportunities to build those vital support networks for the colder months through the following activities.

- **Christmas Lunch , Broadwater Pavilion, Tues, 2 Dec.** For those of you planning to attend please remember to send your menu choices and payments to our Treasurer, Steve Heron by **7 Nov.**
- **Annual Raffle Tickets .** If you haven't already, please remember to sell your Raffle tickets (they were enclosed with the PARK Magazine September edition), and ensure

the stubs and monies are sent to our Treasurer by no later than [21 Nov](#). Remember, the Branch is relying on your help to fundraise, so let's all make this Raffle a success.

- **Shalford Village Hall Social Meeting, Tuesday, [2.00pm 28 Nov](#)**. This is the last SVH Social Meeting this year. We will have a Pilates Demonstration by Sue Buckland who provides the weekly pilates classes for us at West Clandon.

Ramblings of a Madman

This month, I thought I'd ramble on about a film I saw at the cinema this week called *I Swear*. It tells the true story of **John Davidson**, a Scottish campaigner who grew up in Galashiels and has lived with Tourette's Syndrome since his teens.

The lead role is played by **Robert Aramayo**, whose performance is absolutely outstanding. He captures the frustration, humour, and raw emotion of John's experience so convincingly that, at times, it's almost painfully uncomfortable to watch — which I guess is exactly the point of the film. It gives a powerful and honest insight into the daily challenges of living with Tourette's, and into how society reacts to something it often doesn't understand.

I must admit, before Googling it, I wasn't entirely clear on the underlying cause of Tourette's. From what I gathered, while Parkinson's results from a **lack of dopamine** in the brain, Tourette's appears to be linked to an **excess** of the same chemical.

The film also made me reflect on how we judge or understand the *degree* to which someone "shows" their condition. I, for example, am fortunate to have practically no tremor, and as a result I can blend into the world without too much difficulty—unless my medication isn't doing its job and my stuttering gait decides to make an appearance.

There are, however, several people I see regularly who have a very pronounced tremor. I believe they face a much greater challenge in blending in, simply because their symptoms are so visible.

As we know there are two distinct groupings:

- **Ideopathic Parkinson's**, which means there is no clear genetic or environmental cause for them developing the condition.
- A much smaller number of people have **Familial Parkinson's**, which means they have inherited the condition through their genes

Within these grouping there are sub conditions. Additionally, there are also several other conditions which feature Parkinson's-like symptoms, such as tremor (shaking), muscle stiffness and slowness of movement (also known as bradykinesia). We call these conditions **Parkinsonisms**

This got me thinking. I would like to show moral leadership. So it is correct that I feel some people have a more challenging condition or are all conditions equal?

What do you think?

Regards, David

PS. A shameless shout out to my #1 fan Maureen!