The Park

January 2026

Parkinson's UK
Guildford and South Surrey

The magazine of the Guildford and South Surrey Branch of Parkinson’s UK

* Cover is a picture from ‘The Glow at RHS Wisley’

The Committee of The Guildford and South Surrey Branch would like to thank Oakleaf Enterprises for their efforts in printing and distributing this Magazine

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SOCIAL MEETINGS

1:45pm for 2pm Start

Venue: Shalford Village Hall, King’s Road, Shalford, Guildford, GU4 8HB

All Members (and non members) and their partners, carers, and family members are welcome to attend these monthly social meetings. These meetings are free of charge to attend but we ask people to buy raffle tickets to cover the cost of tea and cake. They allow you to meet new friends, learn from each other's experiences and often hear a guest speaker while having light refreshments.

Date	**Event**
27/01/2026	Foundations Physio
24/02/2026	Branch AGM (supported by Jill Beaumont of Parkinson's-UK)
31/03/2026	Parkinson's Specialist Nurses (Amanda Dodson)
28/04/2026	Dr Shlomi Haar, Senior Lecturer in Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Surrey on "Why Supporting Research is vital"
26/05/2026	Dr Kathryn Harkup ‘Death by Shakespeare’
30/06/2026	Joy Poulter
28/07/2026	
25/08/2026	No Meeting
29/09/2026	Drumheads -"an exciting, all inclusive, Interactive rhythm workshop"
27/10/2026	Age Concern
24/11/2026	
29/12/2026	No Meeting

Introduction from the Chair

Merry Christmas and welcome to the latest edition of '*The Park*' Magazine, brought to you by the Guildford and South Surrey Branch of Parkinson's UK!

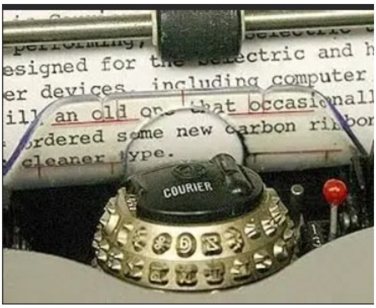
As always, we're here to keep you informed and entertained with the latest updates from the Branch.

I'm often applauded for my articles and stories, but certainly can't take all the credit. Behind the scenes I'm strongly supported by Steve, our ever-reliable Treasurer, and—if I'm honest—a shed-load of technology that keeps me grammatically correct and ensures my spelling is mainly in line with the dictionary!.

So what do I use, and what journey have I taken to get here?

If you're going to start, start big—and start at the beginning. Let's start with the printing press, a quantum leap in human communication. For the first time, knowledge could be duplicated, transported and preserved without a lifetime of painstaking copying. Each tool didn't just make life easier; it reshaped what it meant to think, to learn, and to share ideas.

Fast-forward a few hundred years and we meet David in 1990 at his first job with Logica (then the UK's biggest software house). I occasionally had to write bids, and this gave me my first experience of the golf-ball typewriter. A wonderful contraption with a little metal ball that danced around at remarkable speed, stamping out perfect letters. It was mechanical, noisy and oddly elegant.



Before long it gave way to my first AMSTRAD PC, where the monitor and base were integrated into one unit. It did nothing other than typing—but it felt like magic.

Then the personal computer truly arrived. My machine on my desk and no longer shared in a typing pool..

With my diagnosis of Parkinson’s came the need to look for additional support. Voice activation pushed things even further. Systems like Dragon NaturallySpeaking let me talk to my computer instead of typing—an extraordinary shift for someone whose fingers weren’t always willing to cooperate.

And now we’re in the era of AI. Not a tool that simply obeys instructions, but one that can integrate everything I need: voice dictation, grammar checking, spelling correction and even support for creating boiler plate text.

People sometimes worry that using AI is a kind of cheating—that it does too much, too quickly, and somehow undermines the purity of the work. But this isn’t the first time we’ve had this conversation. The same arguments were made when the spelling checker arrived. Some insisted it would erode our literacy, weaken our brains, or diminish the value of our writing. Yet today, nobody complains and we simply accept it as another tool that helps us communicate more clearly.

AI is no different. It doesn’t hand you a finished masterpiece—it only gives you something to work with. A useful way to think about it is as a sausage machine. You can’t turn a handle and expect perfection to pop out. You still need to choose the ingredients, define the flavour, and decide the order in which everything goes in. The quality of what comes out depends entirely on the care, intention and judgement of the person feeding the machine. AI merely accelerates the drafting; the craft still belongs to the human.

So while I use every tool or technique available, in the end it’s still down to me to decide what to say and to communicate it in a way that informs, educates and entertains.

David Lowther

PEBBLE GAME

When upon the surface of the earth
pebbles meet a pounding sea,
sit facing me and, eyes blindfold,
pick one and drop it in the space between
your pretty feet, my creaking knees.

We’ve played before, a simple game:
agree the duration of the hunt,
measured as the time it takes for, say,
three cycles of the breakers’ rush
from crashing crest to sucked-back
flush.

The aim: to find the pebble cast
relying on mere touch and feel to
favour one you held just moments
back;
no quackery here – just truth alone,
no stone has either twin or clone.

Our game has no conventional wins –
success a sideline to each play,
the pulsing sea the gauge of time;
and time the measure of intrinsic worth
in all the small things on this earth.

But twice the task confronting us,
when lessons quickly learned include:
with each crash of wave and swirl of brine,
the pebbles change, minutely smoothed,
so is the game now flawed or void?

So if, after casting down your stone,
game not won nor time yet done,
a wave should flood where we would play,
as no pebble washed remains the same,
is that game over as that stone has gone?

Thank You to Our Membership and especially Sally and Ferris Cowper

As we move into the new year, I want to pause and thank every one of you for the extraordinary support you continue to give our Branch. Late last year, we asked the membership for help. Specifically, we were looking for someone who could help us strengthen the way we present ourselves to the business community — a growing priority as we look to secure long-term partnerships and expand our fundraising base.

We advertised our need in a full page article and in my introduction in 'The Park'. As a stroke of genius, at the Jazz Afternoon, the Communications Team left notes on the table reiterating the request. Luckily for us, Sally Cowper nudged her husband, Ferris, and encouraged him to "throw his hat into the ring." We could not be luckier. Ferris brings with him a depth of professional experience that is, quite frankly, phenomenal. While the word "fundraising" never once appears on his CV, everything else does

It is early days, but the impact is already obvious. Ferris has begun reviewing what we do — and, more importantly, what we *don't* do — with a clear, fresh perspective. He is helping us think more boldly about how we speak to companies, how we present our work, and how we can build partnerships that genuinely benefit our members.

To raise the level of funding we need in order to reinvest meaningfully in member subsidies, we must start positioning ourselves as strong candidates for "Charity of the Year" partnerships and as compelling fundraising collaborators for local businesses. These opportunities don't just fall into our laps — they require us to show up, take part in joint briefings, support corporate collections, and demonstrate that we are an energetic, organised and visible branch.

David Lowther

Events and Volunteers!

The Branch relies on volunteers to support a wide range of activities, particularly fundraising events that generate the vital income needed to keep our services running.

These events do not happen by themselves. Each one depends on volunteers giving their time and energy to help make it a success.

Have you considered how you might help — even if it's just for a single event?

The table below highlights the fundraising events already scheduled for 2026. For each event, a Lead volunteer is named along with the number of helpers required. If you, or a member of your family, could lend a hand, please contact the relevant Lead to find out more.

Contact details for each Lead can be found on our Branch website: https://www.guildfordparkinsons.org.uk/committee/

2026 Dates	Time	Event
Saturday 31 Jan	19:30	Royal Surrey Hospital Choir
Saturday 7 Mar	19:30	Occam Singers
Thursday 25 Jun	16;00	Picnics and Pink Concert
Saturday 4 Jul	19:30	Occam Singers
Saturday 24 Oct	19:30	Occam Singers
Saturday 19 Dec	18:30	Occam Singers

For the Occam Singers events in particular, the ‘volunteer’ duties include:

- One volunteer to purchase wine, drinks and obtain loan glasses ahead of the event and transport to the venue. *(note, the cost wine purchased will be refunded by the Branch, unless someone wishes to ‘donate’ to the cost)*
- Two volunteers to run the interval bar and then clear away/ wash loan glasses.
- One volunteer to collect any interval or end of concert donations

Please contact Steve Heron if you can volunteer

This Table will be updated as additional events are scheduled.

Where	Volunteer Requirements
Holy Trinity, Guildford	Lead: Sharyn Grenville 4 Volunteers required to collect dona-
Holy Trinity, Guildford	Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar
Chilworth Manor	Lead: Clare Price: 16 Volunteers required to check entry tickets, guide car parking etc
St Mary's, Guildford	Lead: Ferris Cowper 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar
Holy Trinity, Guildford	Lead: David Lowther 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar
St Nicolas, Guildford	Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar

Our Branch Finances as we go into 2026

We start 2026 with what sounds like a healthy amount of cash reserves of £77,000. However this is the second year running that our cash reserves have dropped, each year by £8,000. We spent just over £70,000 in 2025 on all the exercise and other classes, and events but only had income of £62,000. This included the **last** generous £30,000 donation from the Vernon Ely Charitable Trust, (the Trust has now closed). Our 'own' income from donations, raffles, fundraising, etc. was £32,000, including a magnificent £4,000 from our Annual Raffle. So a big thank you to all who sold and bought tickets!.

I will present my usual financial analysis report on 2025 at our AGM at the end of February, along with our 2026 budgets.

For 2026 we must identify new sources of 'income' for the Branch: do not hesitate to come forward with any fundraising ideas or opportunities. The Branch Committee have already been active and:

1. We will be the beneficiary of the immensely popular **Chilworth Manor 'Picnic and Pinks'** event on 25th June. These events are always a sell out and we will receive both the proceeds of the event, plus a substantial donation from Chilworth Manor owners. This may boost our coffers by £20,000! Whilst it may appear to be 'free money', we do have to provide volunteers for this evening event for duties such as checking tickets, car park marshalling, etc. If you can volunteer please to contact Clare Price (cprice@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk).

2. We are again the **Charity of the Year for Occam Singers**. We will be at each of their four 2026 Concerts to receive donations and also provide the interval bar with the profits coming to us. When we were last supporting them in 2023 we raised over £2,000. Again, we need several volunteers for each evening event to serve drinks, etc.

More details of these fundraising events are listed on pages 8 and 9 in this Park edition. We also plan to run an Annual Raffle this year, so if you or any of your family and friends can donate a substantial first prize (e.g. a week in their holiday cottage, or similar) please contact myself.

Steve Heron

Treasurer

Have you Registered your ANPR at RSCH?

In May 2025 the Royal Surrey County Hospital instituted a new scheme for collecting parking fees: Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR). Any unregistered vehicles will be **fined** for illegal parking (presumably also automatic). As someone who visits the RSCH as a Blue Badge patient, I was rather alarmed to discover that the old system of FREE parking in disabled bays with BB displayed no longer applied. Thanks to *The Park Bench* I was reassured that a Blue Badge holder would still qualify for free parking – but only if their car was registered with ANPR.

Next question: How to Register? I was advised to “go on line”. I phoned the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS); they were very understanding and said that anyone finding the internet a “challenge” could complete a paper registration form at the Parking Office. There are no other options.

Two choices: I would either have to drive to the hospital, park illegally, and just hope that someone in the Parking Office would be able to effect the ANPR car registration. Or have a go at “on line”. It was, they said, quite simple. Just click on the link.

I am not familiar with clicking, I do not have smart phone, and even dealing with the *invite code* proved demanding. The task of filling in all the little boxes with personal and vehicle details, then waiting for an OTP to appear was tedious. I gave up when required to type in the 16 digit serial number of my Blue Badge. Fearing an error, I went to lie down with a headache.

The next day I sought help from my daughter – she drove 50 miles to come and “sort me out”. She too found the system tiresome with repetition and had she not had a smart phone with a camera, the exercise would have been aborted for a second time. Despite the fact that **all** the Blue Badge details had been entered on the form – the system required a photograph! Eventually after some 45 mins. on the computer, my car and my B.B were duly registered.

I can park at RSCH provided I drive in the registered car. But what if I am unwell or unfit to drive my own car and a friend offers to give me a lift? It seemed they might have to go through the whole palaver of ANPR registration as only one car can be registered at one time.

A QUESTION: are the powers-that-be unaware that a Blue Badge is issued to a **named person -** the vehicle they travel in is irrelevant?

I appreciate that the hospital management looked for a way to continue providing free parking for disabled patients/visitors with special needs, but the ANPR system does not adapt well. Furthermore the means of accessing registration is daunting even to people more at home in the technological world than I am. Surely it should be possible to devise a way for a phone call to *negate* parking fees for registered BBs?

I have made my point.

Here is the response from the Car Parking Team :

*"If you attend the hospital in a different vehicle to the one already registered you will not need to repeat **the full** registration process. Simply display your Blue Badge on the dashboard **and bring a copy of your Blue Badge photo together with the vehicle registration number** to the Parking office. Our staff will then register the vehicle for the day ensuring parking remains free of charge."*

I hope I remember all that in an emergency.

Margaret Westwood

Hook Eagle Morris – Keeping Tradition Alive

We're always delighted when familiar local traditions return
On **1 January**, the side launched their much-anticipated **"World Tour of Hook II"**, bringing music, movement and good cheer to mark the start of 2026 in true Morris fashion. As ever, their performances combined energy, humour and a real sense of community spirit — a wonderful way to blow away the festive cobwebs.
The celebrations continued on **9 January** with the **Hartney Witney Wassail**

Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People

QEF Enters Administration

A Sad Loss for Our Community

Many of you will already have heard the sad news that the Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People (QEF) has gone into administration. This is not just a loss for the wider disability community, but a particularly painful moment for our Branch.

For over 90 years, QEF have provided care and rehabilitation services to the disabled community in Surrey. Employing around 250 staff the charity was able to provide a range of services. The principal connection between QEF and the Branch was the independent driving assessment service — one that many of our members have relied upon. Whether it was helping someone regain confidence behind the wheel, assessing how Parkinson's affected reaction times, or simply offering impartial advice, QEF played a crucial role in supporting independence and quality of life.

Their team understood the anxieties people can face when navigating driving-related decisions, especially when symptoms fluctuate. The assessments were fair, constructive, and centred on helping people find safe, realistic solutions. For many, the service offered reassurance at a time when that reassurance mattered most.

To lose such a trusted resource is deeply saddening. We extend our thanks to everyone at QEF for the professionalism, kindness and independence they offered over so many years. Their work made a real difference, and it will be missed.

David Lowther

Foundations Physio

“Providing Life changing programmes for those with Parkinson’s Disease”

The above quote comes from one of our members, and I’m pleased to say that I fully share their view. I’m a firm believer in the “exercise is the new medicine” paradigm, and I try to practise what I preach by attending the Monday 9am Group Exercise Class in Witley, run by Foundations Physio. Because this class is such an important part of my own routine and wellbeing, I felt it was only right to speak directly to ‘the boss’ aka **Adam Poulter**…

Let me set the scene with a history lesson. At short notice, just before Christmas 2019, the committee was faced with the closure of some of our valued exercise classes from January 2020. A quick but thorough search for a suitable candidate in the area was made which resulted in Adam being interviewed. In the course of the interview it quickly became clear that he and his team had the skills and the capacity to take on the work, and that it would sit comfortably alongside the work of other existing providers. We were delighted with how he managed the smooth transition and continue to highly value his services for the branch.

I’ve always been interested in the company name, specifically whether one has a single Foundation or more than one Foundation needing physio, What can you tell me about the name choice?

Foundations Physio was born out of something I say in my practice quite a lot. I like to use analogies as opposed to medical jargon to help make things more accessible. I firmly believe that by knowing why I’m asking you to do all these weird exercises you are more likely to do them! Often people want to improve the use of their arms/legs/ balance, no matter what condition they are diagnosed with. I have always found that if people don’t have a stable base to work from, it is *much harder to move efficiently. I still often find myself saying "to build a house you need strong Foundations", referring to your "core" or postural muscles.*

One of the things that is often said about Foundations Physio is the brilliant empathy that your neuro-physios show to their exercise-goers. Why do you think that is? Is it down to training, your selection process, or something else?

That's lovely to hear; we work very hard on that particular element. We often meet people on the back of bad news, or when their life has been turned upside down. I see our job as helping people rebuild self confidence in movement and in their own capabilities, physically, emotionally and socially. I think without empathy it is quite impossible to build the relationships needed, we work very hard on that as a team both in terms of training and recruitment. I am a firm believer you can teach anyone anything, but it's much harder to "teach" attitude/empathy so we often recruit people based on passion and personality! The rest comes with training.

I know that Amado is setting up an additional class exploring martial arts techniques and Tai Chi to further enrich your programme. Can you explain the motivation behind this—and also why it's important that members understand a certain level of capability is required to take part?

Many of you will know Amado, he is the most dynamic and positive person I've ever known, and of course our class guru! It was actually his idea, given his passion for martial arts and our understanding that boxing is the most popular exercise in the classes (with the exception of *the Blazepods) we felt it was a natural progression. We are both passionate about getting people into sport and physical activity and don't feel having a long term condition should be a barrier. We decided to make this class a "step up" from our other classes, working with Malin Martial Arts gym in Liphook Amado underwent further training to deliver martial arts lessons. Sessions may include burpees, star jumps, press ups, sit ups, punching and kicking work and we have a mix of people with different conditions attending. You'd be hard pressed to know the difference between our class and the ones afterwards so it's not for the faint hearted! For that reason we complete a thorough assessment for suitability for the class before anyone joins.*

Kim Wilson of Surrey Hills Rehab gave an insightful description of her relationship with you. Can you share how you see the reverse relationship—and why you believe it's so important that you work together rather than compete over exercise members?

Kim and I go back a long way, having worked together in the NHS (she was my manager at the time) and I owe a lot of what I have learned to her and some of my other colleagues. We still regularly meet to support each other through business and clinical decisions and look to support each other in any way we can. I firmly believe, as I know Kim does, that there is room for everyone and that we all have a much stronger voice and impact when we work together for the good of our communities. I think it's important to seek out and support those businesses that have a good heart at the centre and I know that Kim and the Surrey Hills Rehab team share that ethos.

I understand that Foundations Physio has made a conscious effort to keep pricing level and I believe that's been done for philanthropic reasons. Can you explain your overall philosophy around group exercise classes for people with Parkinson's?

When I started Foundations Physio some 10 years ago my primary reasons were not financial. I wanted to do a better job for the people I was trained to support. I wanted to be able to *professionally develop at my own pace and I wanted some flexibility in how decisions were made that would benefit the service (less red tape)! We work with a variety of charities and always aim to keep costs as low as possible for members. It is a challenging financial environment and as a company we do have significant overheads so it is not always possible, but when it is then I do aim to maintain prices, especially for charities as I know resources are finite.*

I'm aware that Foundations Physio has hosted a number of work placement students from the University of Winchester's physiotherapy programme, and from my perspective it's been a great success. What's your take on it?

We love having students and developing the next generation. We feel we can give a positive outlook on what rehabilitation and exercise can look like for those living with long term conditions. They always add a fresh take to the classes and often come with different approaches and ideas. A new face every so often always keeps members on their toes too!

Finally, I've seen first-hand how tricky you can be during ball-throw exercises—especially when the ball comes from an unexpected direction! Can you share a bit about your basketball background, so the audience knows what they're letting themselves in for if they try to take you on?

Well I have to keep you on your toes! I played basketball since I was 8, as did the rest of my family, unfortunately at 5 ft 9 my career didn't quite take off and I stopped for a while at University. I have recently re-discovered it and now play in a local competitive men's league, so if you see me hobbling into class you'll know why!

Adam Poulter

Foundationsphysio.co.uk

01252 411 058

07817 495 791

Parky Charter petition: Parliament hears the Parkinson's community

Real progress on Parkinson's will only happen if we engage politically, because meaningful, long-term change depends on decisions made in Westminster and within government. When we speak up, contact our MPs, share our experiences and support national campaigns, we make it impossible for policymakers to ignore the realities of living with Parkinson's — ensuring the condition stays firmly on the political agenda where genuine action can finally be taken.

Any UK resident can create or sign an official e-petition on the Parliament website. Once a petition reaches 10,000 signatures the Government must issue a formal written response, and at 100,000 signatures it becomes eligible for a debate in Parliament—ensuring the issue is placed on record and considered by MPs.

On Monday 17 November 2025, MPs gathered in Westminster Hall to debate e-petition 713714: *"Increase funding for people with Parkinson's and implement the 'Parky Charter'."* The petition, launched by the *Movers and Shakers* podcast team, secured 113,439 signatures across the UK, easily passing the threshold for a parliamentary debate and underlining the strength of feeling in the Parkinson's community.

The petition asks the Government to adopt the five practical steps of the Parky Charter:

- Faster access to specialists
- Clear and instant information at diagnosis
- A"Parkinson's passport" to streamline support
- Properly coordinated multidisciplinary care
- Renewed investment in research for a cure.

Initially, it looked like the debate would be struck with outrageously bad luck as Shabana Mahmood (the Home Secretary) simultaneously delivered a major statement in the main House of Commons setting out what she described as sweeping reforms to the UK's asylum and returns policy. This however never materialised as the Minister later recorded 18 back-bench speeches plus numerous interventions from a genuine cross=party

The debate was opened by Paul Davies, Labour MP for Colne Valley, who described Parkinson's as "one of the fastest growing neurological conditions in the world" and stressed that the petition represented a "collective voice" demanding meaningful action. He and other speakers drew heavily on the lived experience of people with Parkinson's, citing long waits for diagnosis, patchy access to specialist nurses and therapists, and the financial and emotional strain on families.

Across the debate, MPs highlighted the crucial role that physical activity plays in building community and improving long-term outcomes for people with Parkinson's. Initiatives such as **walking football** and even **judo-based balance programmes** were praised not only for improving strength and stability, but also for the way they build friendships, reduce isolation, and ultimately **save money** by preventing avoidable health crises.

A recurring theme was the need for joined-up, lifelong support. The **Parkinson's Passport**—a simple but powerful concept—was strongly endorsed as a way to ensure that people are not repeatedly reassessed for a condition that is both lifelong and degenerative. The message was unambiguous: repeated reassessments waste time, cause distress, and serve no clinical purpose.

Several national initiatives were referenced, including the **RightCare Toolkit**, **Get It Right First Time (GIRFT)**, and the **Neurology Transformation Programme**, all intended to improve consistency and reduce postcode inequality. However, these aspirations are hampered by the UK's position near the **bottom of the international league table for neurologists per capita**. Parkinson's UK's 2022 audit made the situation clear: only **44%** of people with Parkinson's had access to Occupational Therapy, **82%** to Physiotherapy, and **40%** to Speech and Language Therapy—figures that underscore the gaps in multidisciplinary care.

In the interest of time, several speakers turned their focus to **PIP**, where a decade of evidence shows a system that copes very poorly with fluctuating neurological conditions. Members of the Work and Pensions Committee described repeatedly hearing from people denied support despite living with some of the most severe and life-limiting conditions. Data suggests that people with Parkinson's are **more likely to be inaccurately assessed than those with any other condition**. One MP told the story of a constituent from Horsham who had lived with Parkinson's for 30 years yet was still denied PIP. Nationally, over **430,000 people are stuck waiting for PIP reviews**, delaying at least **£24 million a month** in essential support. With **302,000 PIP decisions overturned on appeal in just two years**, MPs argued this was not the occasional error, but a **system failing on an industrial scale**

Financial pressure was another major theme, with Gareth Thomas MP highlighting the burden of prescription charges. England remains **the only part of the UK** where people with Parkinson's still pay for their prescriptions because the NHS medical-exemption list has barely changed since **1968**. As he put it, "That was the year 'Hey Jude' topped the charts—and before Neil Armstrong walked on the moon." Medical understanding has transformed since then, yet the exemption list has not. He warned that some people who cannot afford their prescriptions are forced to **reduce doses or skip medication**, risking severe deterioration, hospitalisation, and irreversible harm.

Further contributions—including a strong intervention from Greg Stafford—stressed the need for truly **integrated services** and expanded training pathways for specialist Parkinson's nurses, often delivered in partnership with Parkinson's UK.

Responding for the Government, **Health Minister Ashley Dalton** referenced the **Elective Recovery Plan**, committing to the target of **92% of patients receiving treatment within 18 weeks by March 2029**. She also pointed to the forthcoming **10-Year Health Plan** as the strategic framework intended to address chronic-condition management, workforce shortages, and the pressures within neurology.

David Lowther

Parkinson's in the NEWS

exposing stories you may have missed

Did you see this news article from BBC News October 2025

The Soham, Cambridge Branch in collaboration with Parkinson's-UK decided they need **expose** the profile of the condition by creating a Calendar Girls style calendar. Parkinson's UK *[ed. I believe equally bemused what to say]* thanked Mrs Butler and her friends for launching the fundraiser.

Christmas Lunch

Once again members and guests assembled in the cheerful welcoming Bar of the Guildford Rugby Club in eager anticipation of the annual Christmas Lunch. This is a great opportunity for members, some of whom rarely get together, to “catch-up” on news (and health bulletins). As guests enjoyed their pre- lunch drinks they were encouraged to “guess the weight” of a sizeable, home-made Christmas cake donated by Lorraine Cotton. At £1 a go, a goodly number of members registered a “guess” – but it was Debbie Gaskell (herself a proficient baker) who won the contest and took the cake home!

It was a bright winter’s day; the pavilion Dining Room was beautifully decorated and the wine glasses sparkled in the sunshine. Some 75 people enjoyed an excellent Christmas meal that was served with

panache by a team of experienced waiters. It was generally agreed that the new caterers (Vanilla Bean Catering) had done a splendid job – with special praise for the individual Christmas puddings topped by a mulled pear and spiced vanilla cream – delicious!

After the main course came **The Big Draw**. Over 2,200 raffle tickets had been sold and the star 1st prize – a week's holiday in a Cottage in the Lake District – was won by **Bill Hayhurst**, a Branch member. The 2nd Prize, a £100 Festive Hamper, was won by **Pauline Goodyear** and the 3rd prize – the Silent Pool Gin Distillery tour – went to Jane **Bickerdike.**

As in previous years we were challenged by a *Christmas Quiz* compiled by our Treasurer, Steve Heron. (No prizes – just a bit of fun!). There were some easy Qs which misled us into a sense of achievement, only to have our expectations dashed by *googlies* that led to puzzled frowns (and some table disputation).

Amanda Dodson, our loved and respected PDS nurse based at Milford Hospital, is shortly retiring; Sharyn has opened a book of "Good wishes on Your Retirement" for members' contributions. Amanda will be presented with a farewell gift at the Branch Monthly Meeting on 31 March 2026.

Warm and appreciative thanks are due to everyone who ensured that the 2025 Christmas lunch was such a huge success.

Margaret Westwood

Did you see this article from BBC News -29 November 2025………

Ex-BBC Presenter Mark Mardell Barred From Flight Over Parkinson's Requirement

Former BBC journalist **Mark Mardell** says he was left **stranded and humiliated** at Istanbul Airport after being *refused boarding* on a **Turkish Airlines** flight to London because he could not produce a **doctor's letter confirming he was fit to fly** due to having *Parkinson's disease*. People.com

The 68-year-old broadcaster, who has lived with Parkinson's for several years, had travelled to Turkey with his son and was due to return home when staff allegedly told him that without a GP's fitness-to-fly certificate he could not board — even though he had previously flown without such paperwork.

Mardell described the experience as deeply distressing, saying it left him feeling vulnerable and upset. After being denied boarding, his luggage was removed from the plane and he spent **around seven hours alone in the airport** before arranging a hotel and rebooking a flight home with another carrier the next day.

Following Mardell's complaint, Turkish Airlines said it was saddened by the misunderstanding and has since **removed the requirement** that passengers with Parkinson's disease must present a medical report before flying — a policy that appeared to single out the condition.

The ordeal highlights continuing challenges that some people with neurological conditions face when travelling, and has sparked calls for clearer, more inclusive airline policies to ensure that people with long-term health conditions can travel without unnecessary barriers.

Our Branch 100 Club

This is a great way for you to support the Branch whilst having a bit of a monthly flutter! It is over 4 years since we launched the Club, and we are always keen for more participants.

Here's how it works…

1. Once a month, usually at the Monthly Shalford Village Hall Social Meeting (*the last Tuesday in the month*) there will be a draw from all the numbers subscribed, with the 3 numbers drawn winning a cash prize:
    - The first number drawn will be £60
    - The second number drawn will be £20
    - The third number drawn will be £10

If you win, we will pay the prize amount to your bank account. Alternatively a cheque will be posted to your home address.

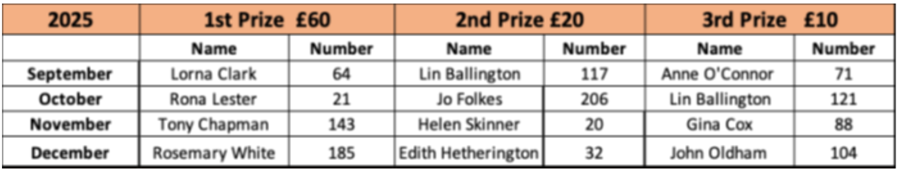
The names of the winners will be published in the Branch's regular communications.

The remaining monies in the 100 Club after prize payments go into the Branch accounts to fund the various social and exercise or therapeutic activities.

How to become a member of the 100 Club and participate…

1. You must be over age 16 to participate.
2. There is a small amount of paperwork to be completed. We recommend that you make contact with the 100 Club Coordinator, Nick Hetherington, who will be delighted to assist you in becoming a member and ready for the next draw.

Recent winners are…..



2025	1st Prize £60		2nd Prize £20		3rd Prize £10	
	Name	Number	Name	Number	Name	Number
September	Lorna Clark	64	Lin Ballington	117	Anne O'Connor	71
October	Rona Lester	21	Jo Folkes	206	Lin Ballington	121
November	Tony Chapman	143	Helen Skinner	20	Gina Cox	88
December	Rosemary White	185	Edith Hetherington	32	John Oldham	104

Branch A

Activity	Where	When
Carer's Group	Inn on the Lake	1st Monday of Month
Committee Meeting	Samson Centre	2nd Monday of Month 2pm to 4pm
Friendship Group Meeting	Squirrel, Hurtmore	3rd Wednesday of Month @19:00
Loud and Clear Speech Therapy	Online	1st Monday and Wednesday
Newly Diagnosed Social Meeting	Grantley Arms Wonersh	2nd Tuesday of Month @ 19:00
Tuesday Social Meeting	Shalford Village Hall	Last Tuesday of Month @14:00
Dance for Parkinsons	Godalming United Church, Godalming	Weekly on Wednesday
Parkinsong Voice Classes	Busbridge Village Hall (and Online)	Tuesdays 11.45 - 12.45
PD Warrior type Exercise Class	Witley	Weekly
PD Warrior type Exercise Class	West Clandon	Weekly
PD Warrior type Exercise Class	Cranleigh Youth Centre, Snoxall	Weekly
Pilates	West Clandon	Weekly on Wednesday

ctivities

Comments	Contact
Share with others Carers	Carers@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
volunteers always welcome	Chair@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
All welcome Option to eat or not	Membership@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Improve your speech in fun format	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
All welcome Option to eat or not	Secretary@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Guest Speaker, Refreshments and Camaraderie	Secretary@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Work on breathing	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Multiple sessions on different days	Foundations Physio
Multiple sessions on different days	Foundations Physio
Multiple sessions on different days	Surrey Hills Rehab
	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk

Key Email Addresses for Branch

Chair	David Lowther Chair@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Treasurer	Steve Heron Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Communications Manager	Deborah Gaskell Comms@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Keith Black Membership@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Carers Support	Myra Newnes-Smith Carers@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Support Groups	Sharyn Grenville SupportGroups@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk

National Website www.parkinsons.org.uk

Local website www.guildfordparkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson’s Nurse Specialists (NHS)

Amanda Dodson Dawn Rowson	Rose McKinley Jenny Honey
Milford Hospital	*Farnham Hospital*
01483 362020	*01483 908183*
rsch.gw.ms.parks@nhs.net	**vcl.parkinsonnurses@nhs.net**