

Happy February,

January Park Magazine – status update

It's nearly the end of January as I write this, and I find myself in a slightly odd position. Normally, *The Park* magazine comes out in January, May and September and provides our longer-range forecast of what's coming up over the next few months in the Branch. In between, *The Park Bench* is meant to zoom in on the nearer-term detail; what's happening soon and what you might want to put in your diary now as 'save the day' entries.

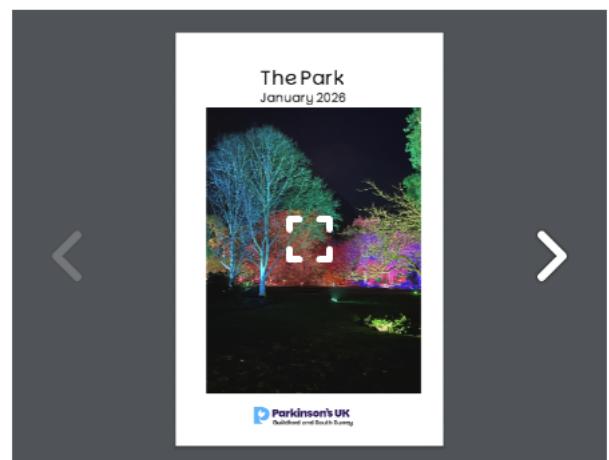
This time, however, many of you still won't yet have had the paper copy of the January edition of *The Park* drop through your letterbox at the time I issue the final version of this to 'The Printers'. That means we are already talking about February and March activities in *The Park Bench* before some of the January announcements in *The Park* have even been read. I'm sorry that we've been later than usual with printing and distribution, but I hope the explanation helps make sense of the strange timing.

The good news is that this delay has also brought a real benefit. It has given us time to include an insert listing 'local voluntary car schemes' that has been properly checked and fully updated. We hope this will be genuinely useful to many of you and, hopefully, worth the wait.

If you don't get a paper copy of this edition of *The Park* but want one then contact me at chair@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk

Finally, if you just can't wait and can access the internet – either yourself or through trusted friend/relative then you can find the latest version on the Branch main page (<https://www.guildfordparkinsons.org.uk/>) – see image below – just click on the square in the middle to be taken to a virtual book environment – or in simple words it looks just like a book but on the computer!

The Park – Latest Edition



New Distribution models

We are also starting to change how we distribute our printed material. There is strong evidence that paper newsletters really do get read, help build a sense of community, and importantly can be passed on. Our plan is therefore to distribute mainly (though not exclusively) through our larger face-to-face activities: Surrey Hills Rehab and Foundations Physio exercise classes, our Newly Diagnosed group, the Wednesday evening meetings, and the Tuesday Shalford Social events.

Please don't worry if you are one of our valued readers who does not attend any of these activities. We will continue to deliver to your letterbox by Royal Mail or other means. As I have said before, *"If by reading our magazines and newsletters you get even a small crumb of comfort in what can be a challenging life, then we will move heaven and earth to keep writing and delivering them to you at your door."*

I also hope that in 2026 we might create a distribution model that becomes a catalyst for members to pass copies on to neighbours and friends. I've already heard one real-life example where this has happened and the people involved now meet regularly for coffee and a catch-up. This was organised entirely between themselves, outside any Branch structures, and is exactly the kind of community connection we want to encourage.

Diary dates

February will see our Branch AGM on 24 February at 13:45 at the Shalford Upper Hall. While AGMs are no longer mandatory, we believe they remain an important part of good governance and transparency. Parkinson's UK will be joining us, with Jill Beaumont attending alongside Chris Broderick, who lives locally and is Legacy Marketing Manager.

It is also, of course, the one formal meeting of the year where the membership is technically allowed to get rid of me – so do come along, if only out of curiosity.

Looking a little further ahead, our meeting at Shalford on 31 March will be a particularly significant one for our Branch. It will be the last meeting before the retirement of Amanda Dodson after many years as our Parkinson's Specialist Nurse. Amanda has been a constant and much-loved presence for so many of us, and her support, knowledge and kindness have made a real difference to countless people and families over the years.

Finally, in terms of dates, we are already looking ahead to Saturday 7 March, when the Occam Singers will be performing at Holy Trinity Church. As documented in *The Park*, this is a fundraising concert in support of our Branch, and we will need a small team of volunteers to help run the interval bar. It's a simple but important role, and events like this make a real difference to our ability to fund local activities and support. If you think you might be able to help, even for a short time, please do get in touch – your support would be very much appreciated.

Tell me what you want

I also want to say something about *Park Bench* itself. My constant aim is to make it as relevant and useful as possible, while recognising that there will always be many different views about what that means. Some people have told me they find a newsletter about Parkinson's can feel "too Parkinson's-focused" at times – and that they don't always want to be thinking about it. I completely understand that, and it creates a real challenge for me in trying to strike the right balance.

As a person with Parkinson's myself, I also carry my own worries about what the future might hold. I would never write or include an article that I felt might add to that anxiety or make it worse. And I am very fortunate to have a great and experienced committee around me who will – and do – let me know if I stray too close to the edge. That shared sense of care and responsibility is something I value enormously.

Reminders – things that we might have put to one side but deserve our focus



You may remember I write about the importance of research, and the simple truth is that without new data, science cannot move forward. One of the ways people with Parkinson's can help shape future understanding and treatment is by taking part in projects that look carefully at how the condition affects daily life over time.

The **Living Lab study** is one such opportunity. It involves non-invasive data collection carried out in London, focusing on real-world movement and everyday function. Transport to and from the study site is provided, so taking part does not depend on being able to travel independently.

If you are interested in contributing to research in a practical way, this could be a valuable chance to do so. Taking part does not directly benefit you personally, but it may help improve knowledge and care for others in the future – something many people tell us they find meaningful.

For more information, or to express an interest, please contact:
ukdri.crt@imperial.ac.uk

Respite Care Grants- 2026

We are again offering ten £1,000 Respite Care Grants in 2026. These are for Carers who feel they would benefit from a period of Respite Care for their loved one. . More details and application forms are available from

Myra Newnes-Smith, email mnsmith@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk

Become a Movie Star

The final topic of the month comes from a simple email that landed in my inbox and really needs very little explanation. It's one of those "you never know unless you try" moments, offering someone the chance to become our next star – or at least to enjoy their fifteen minutes of fame.

Subject: BBC's Sort Your Life Out - 2026 Series

Hello,

I hope you're well.

My name is Anthony a Senior Casting Producer working on BBC One's *Sort Your Life Out* and I was hoping you might be able to help us spread the word to your network.

In case you're unfamiliar with the programme, Stacey Solomon and her team of organising experts help families declutter their homes and transform their spaces in just 7 days. You can find our previous series on BBC iPlayer here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m00116n4/sort-your-life-out>

For the upcoming series, we'd especially like to reach and help households affected by Parkinson's, including families navigating progression, long-term changes, and the ongoing impact on day-to-day home life.

Stacey and the team would help declutter and transform the home, an experience many previous families have described as genuinely life-changing. Would this be something that may be of interest to families within your network?

We'd really appreciate it if you'd be happy to share the copy below and the attached flyer via a newsletter or social media post. Just let me know if you have any questions. I'm always happy to jump on a call I'm on 07925565953.

Apply now: www.optomen.com/Sort-Your-Life-Out 

Best wishes,
Anthony

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