

Happy April,

I make no bones about this being my favourite Park Bench as it covers April's Fool's Day and I get the opportunity to see how many made up stories I can get past you.

Before we get to that, we better disseminate messages from the Branch Committee.

Branch AGM. This was held at the end of February **Shalford Village Hall** Tuesday afternoon meeting. We shared an update on the Branch finances, our current thinking, and some of the ideas we are exploring for the future. These sessions are as much about listening as they are about informing, and we are very happy to offer the same briefing to other social events. We have since repeated the AGM material with the **Newly Diagnosed group** evening meeting, which proved equally valuable in generating discussion and feedback. If you feel your Branch group would benefit, please do let us know.

100 Club - Potential Changes. The 100 Club continues as a simple and enjoyable way of fundraising. It generates a modest £1,000 p.a. contribution to our ongoing £70,000 annual fundraising need to support all our subsidised activities. With the Vernon Ely Charitable Trust major donations now ended, we must explore every opportunity to raise more funds. We are reviewing whether we can increase fundraising from the 100 Club by increasing the per number cost, whilst also making it more attractive by increasing the prize funds.

Our current 100 Club costs £1.00 per number each month, with prizes -1st=£60, 2nd=£20 and 3rd=£10. Other similar clubs often charge £5.00 per number each month (*cost of a takeaway coffee*) with higher prizes such as 1st=£150, 2nd=£75 and 3rd=£25, or similar. Any updated 100 Club must be financially viable for the Branch and deliver increased fundraising. We calculate that offering higher prizes like other clubs (above) with say a number cost of £5.00 per month requires at the least 100 numbers sold each month, preferably more. 100 sold numbers will raise £3,000 for the Branch. 200 sold could raise an amazing £9,000!

Before we make any changes we need your opinions to understand how many would be willing to join a revised Club. **Could you please email our Treasurer, Steve on sheron@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk** with your views and willingness to join a revised Club.

Chilworth Manor Picnic and Pinks Charity concert - Thursday 25th June. This is a major fundraising opportunity for this year. We will benefit from the evening proceeds and in return we have committed to assist their events team during the evening with volunteers for a range of roles including car park marshals, supporting the bar, collecting and moving glasses to the dishwasher, and even monitoring facilities such as toilet cleanliness. This support is required for the whole evening (4.00 - 11.00 pm) in their fabulous but challenging walled garden venue - lots of grass slopes and steps! Many of our regular volunteers will simply not be mobile enough to cope with this event so we are looking for several new, strong and capable supporters to step forward. **Please contact Clare Price cprice@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk**

Chilworth Manor have also kindly offered our members early access to a total of 20 tickets for their **Picnic and Pinks** event, priced at £50 per person. These will be available ahead of general release on 14th April, with priority booking closing on 10th April. As numbers are limited, tickets will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, offering a fantastic opportunity to enjoy a unique social occasion in a beautiful setting. To register your interest, it would be prudent to contact Clare by 8th April.

Now the “ramblings of a mad man”. This month’s topic is the humble onion:

It’s my Onion and I’ll cry if I want to.

How many folks like me have done cognitive tests whereby you have to list as many items as you can beginning with a specific letter. For example, how many vegetables can you think of beginning with the letter S? Now I don’t know about you but I find my mind goes blank after the first few... spinach, swede, squash...then suddenly some neuron fires and I think of another...sunions. What do you mean you’ve never heard of a sunion? A sunion is a sweet onion bred to make them tear-free and available at Waitrose and all other quality supermarkets.

For those who are more organic-focused then there are goggles you can purchase that you wear when you’re cutting onions. While it may not be the most glamorous kitchen look, it is a practical and reliable solution for tear-free chopping.

My personal choice is to chew on a wooden spoon while cutting onions. The theory is that the wood helps absorb or divert some of the irritant compounds released by the onion before they reach your eyes. While the science behind it is debated it does work...try it for yourselves.



Onions throughout history

Onions have an important place in history. The wise Egyptians worshipped the onion, believing that its spherical shape and concentric rings symbolised eternal life. They even used them in burials, believing that the strong scent of onions would bring life back to the dead.

Ancient Greek athletes ate large quantities of onion in the belief that it would ‘lighten the balance of blood’ while Roman gladiators were rubbed down with onion to firm up their muscles.

In the Middle Ages onions were such an important food to the Europeans that they were used as currency to pay for essentials such as rent and were even given as gifts. In Siberia onions were still used as a form of currency up to the mid-18th Century.

Sexy onions

The onion has a reputation as a potent aphrodisiac and has been referenced in many classic Hindu texts on the art of making love. In ancient Greece onions were commonly used as an aphrodisiac remedy, while in the days of the Egyptians Pharaohs celibate priests were forbidden to eat onions because of the potential effects on their libido. Even in France, it was once a custom for newlyweds to be served onion soup on the morning after their wedding night.

Now, you will need to wait for the forthcoming May edition of The Park to see what’s true and what’s made up....till then...