

Happy March,

I have been told that some people don't want to spend every minute thinking about Parkinson's. Accordingly, there is limited reference to it in this month's *Park Bench*. Instead, I'm going to focus on the recent Winter Olympics — to which I was thoroughly *stoked*. Did you see the guy doing a 'Double Crippler?' I'll come back to the 'Switch backside double cork 1080 mute grab' later, but first, the key dates for this month:

- **7th March-The Occam Singers concert** to be held at Holy Trinity Church, Guildford. **Details - <https://www.occamsingers.co.uk/March2026>**. The Branch will be fundraising with an interval bar, as well as collection buckets. Anyone wishing to volunteer to support the event contact our Treasurer Steve, sheron@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk
- **10th March – The Newly Diagnosed monthly meeting** at The Grantley Arms, Wonersh, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0PE from 7.00 pm. The Branch Committee will share AGM materials at this meeting and answer any questions.
- **31st March – Shalford Village Hall monthly afternoon meeting**, starting at 2.00pm. Presentation by Parkinson's Nurses and Amanda Dodson's retirement.

Now back to my ramblings of a mad man. I'm not very good at foreign languages — unlike my daughter-in-law, who's a natural. She speaks Polish, her native tongue, but also Italian, Norwegian and English completely fluently. On top of that, she knows some Russian and Japanese. She works in HR and once interviewed a poor chap who had boldly claimed "complete fluency" in Italian on his CV. Let's just say that turned out to be an unfortunate exaggeration.

So I limit myself to English. Even that is increasingly a challenge as new, typically 'youth' concepts are incorporated into the language. The latest Oxford English Dictionary update includes words like 'binge-watch' (watching episode after episode) and 'hangry' (being irritable when hungry). While I have never knowingly used these, I am happy to embrace them — if only to give contestants on *Countdown* some extra words.

That reference to *Countdown* sends me off on a tangent. How long do you think it takes to read and digest nine random letters? And how much longer to spot the hidden word — the infamous conundrum? The gentleman to the left in the photograph saw the nine-letter word with the clock showing just one second — and got it correct. I'll reveal the answer at the end. There have been serial conundrum solvers on *Countdown*. Clearly, they possess cognitive powers far beyond the norm.



Back to languages —it seems that in extreme snow sports, the commentary team speak one entirely of their own. Picture this: it's 2026, the Winter Olympics. You're comfortably watching people on snowboards hurl themselves down a giant frozen semi-circular pipe and call it sport. It's extraordinary. Halfpipe is a spectacle where riders launch into the air performing spins — 720s, 1080s — numbers that sound more like encrypted passwords than athletic manoeuvres.

Take, for example, a **Switch backside double cork 1080 mute grab**:

- The rider approaches riding *switch* — in their unnatural stance, like writing with your “wrong” hand.
- They launch and spin *backside* — rotating away from the wall as they take off.
- They complete a *1080* — three full 360 degree rotations.
- It's a *double cork* — meaning two off-axis flips, not neat somersaults but tilted corkscrew rotations.
- Mid-air, during all this airborne mayhem, they grab the board on the toe edge between their feet — the *mute grab*.
- Then, ideally, they land cleanly and continue as though this were perfectly reasonable human behaviour.



The whole thing is so complex that I have no idea whether they have executed it flawlessly or accidentally downgraded the spin. What amazes me even more is that they often soar over five metres above the lip of the pipe. That's roughly the height of a London double-decker bus.

The commentary team are effortlessly cool. I've learned that everyone is “stoked” — meaning extremely excited — and that “pigeons get chased by cats,” which apparently refers to the way competitors increase the complexity of their tricks after seeing others raise the bar. Escalation is inevitable.

Finally, I've concluded that this is very much a sport for the young, currently dominated by the Japanese. I suspect this may be because their bones mend more quickly. The commentators never seem happier than when reciting, in forensic detail, the catalogue of previous injuries and broken bones a contestant has acquired — moments before they descend the hill at 50mph or more.

David

P.S.- The answer to the Countdown conundrum is Newspaper!

