The Park

May 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 is Unstead Lock, River Wey Navigation

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

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 or perhaps Jigsaw etc. 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
28/04/2026	Dr Shlomi Haar, Senior Lecturer in Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Surrey *'Why Supporting Research is vital'*
26/05/2026	Dr Kathryn Harkup Superspy Science - *"get answers to all your Bond villan questions"*
30/06/2026	Mahan Heydari Clinical Research Practitioner *"How members can make simple steps to aid research"*
28/07/2026	No Meeting
25/08/2026	No Meeting
29/09/2026	Drumheads *'An exciting, all inclusive, Interactive Rythm workshop'*
27/10/2026	Age Concern
24/11/2026	TBA
01/12/2026	Christmas Dinner
29/12/2026	No Meeting

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

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 aim to keep you informed, connected and perhaps occasionally entertained with news and updates from across the Branch.

One of the advantages of being an unpaid volunteer is that it allows you to be your better self. It gives you the freedom to be the person you want to be. For me, that means trying to approach the role and the people around me with honesty, thoughtfulness and transparency.

One of the sayings I have always liked is: ***"A smooth sea does not make a skilful sailor."*** It reminds us that challenges are often the very things that help us grow, learn and develop resilience. As Chair of the Guildford Branch of Parkinson's UK, and also as someone living with Parkinson's myself, this phrase feels particularly relevant.

Over the past few months the sea has, at times, felt a little choppy. Within the Branch we have had some difficult conversations about fundraising: how it should be done, where our efforts should be focused, and what expectations are reasonable. It is an understandably emotive subject. Some feel that the membership could support the Branch more actively by engaging more in fundraising activities. I can see some sympathy in that view. For example, more than a thousand tickets for last year's Annual Raffle were distributed but never sold or returned, which suggests a level of disengagement that can be difficult for volunteers to understand.

At the same time, there is an equally important perspective. We should not make assumptions about the financial circumstances of our members. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that "everyone in Surrey is well off," but that simply isn't the case.

People live with Parkinson's in very different situations, and as a Branch we must ensure we are able to support everyone—without assumptions about what individuals can or cannot contribute financially.

Like many people, I sometimes wonder whether I am expressing the challenge clearly enough. The reality is that, of roughly 300 members, around 180 are not currently engaged in Branch activities. That leaves about 120 people who regularly take part in exercise classes, therapies and social events. If we are honest, it is from this active group that much of the Branch's energy and fundraising potential naturally comes. Even within that group, not everyone will wish to take part in every activity — and that is entirely understandable. In practice, if even a third of those 120 people choose to support a particular initiative, that would already represent a very significant and positive contribution.

The difficulty sometimes arises when we talk about expectations. When discussing what we hope the membership might achieve, conversations often drift back to the full figure of 300 members, rather than the more realistic number of perhaps 40 or 50 people who may actively engage in a particular activity. I have tried on a number of occasions to explain this distinction, but I do not always feel I succeed in getting the message across clearly. Understanding the difference between theoretical numbers and genuine engagement helps us set realistic expectations and plan more effectively for the future.

I hope I have been open and honest about how the current situation feels from my perspective. With that in mind, I would like to make a few requests, which I hope you will consider in the spirit in which they are intended.

First, if you are one of the members who does not currently take part in activities, it would be enormously helpful if you could write to me every few years with a brief update about how things are going for you and how the Branch might support you. Staying in touch helps us ensure that the Branch continues to reflect the needs of all its members.

Second, if you are an active member of the Branch, I would ask you to consider whether you might occasionally be able to help with some of the more practical aspects of our events — perhaps helping at a fundraising event with refreshments during an interval or assisting with a retiring collection. If that is not something you feel able to do, you might consider supporting the branch in other ways, such as making a donation or joining the 100 Club.

Finally, if you are not in a position to support the Branch in any of these ways, please do not worry. Many people are dealing with significant pressures and challenges in their own lives, and the last thing we want to do is add to that. The Branch exists to support you, not to create additional burdens.

Our aim is, and always will be, to create a supportive community for people living with Parkinson's and those who care for them. The sea may not always be smooth, but with goodwill, understanding and a willingness to help where we can, we can continue to navigate the journey together.

David Lowther

GUILDFORD AND SOUTH SURREY BRANCH

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - MINUTES 2026

Tuesday 24 February 2026

in Shalford Village Hall

Present: Mr David Lowther, Chair; Mr Steve Heron, Treasurer; Mrs Myra Newnes-Smith, Carers Support; Mrs Sharyn Grenville Support Groups Mrs Margaret Westwood, Minutes & Meetings Secretary.

Apologies: Mr Keith Black, Ms Debbie Gaskell, Mrs Clare Price, Mr Nick and Mrs Edith Hetherington.

The Chair, David Lowther, welcomed the Members of the Committee and some 35 Branch members and friends to the Annual General Meeting 2026. Unfortunately both Chris Broderick and Jill Beaumont (both representing PUK) were unable to attend, but since holding a Branch AGM was no longer mandated, their absence did not invalidate the meeting. The Minutes of the last AGM held on 25 February 2025, which were published in The Park in May 2025, were formally approved.

The Treasurer, Steve Heron, tabled his Financial Report for the year ending`2025. The Branch was in relatively good health although, as predicted at the previous AGM, the reserves were down by about 10%. The final £30K donation from the Vernon Ely Charitable Trust had been received. Without this annual cushion we will have to be more careful with our expenditure. As the Branch has formal contracts with our class providers we can exercise control over budgeting. With prudence in mind, we will reduce the level of subsidy for the main exercise classes in 2026 since they account for more than 50% of our total £74,000 expenditure. We are also reviewing the distribution of the printed Park and The Park Bench to minimalize the cost of postage. Steve Heron then presented his Budget for 2026.The Committee has been successful in raising (potentially) some £20,000 of new income for 2026 which will help to off-set the lack of an Vernon Ely donation. The Branch has been chosen as a beneficiary of Chilworth Manor's 25th Picnic and Pinks music evening. If total expenses are kept down to approximately £68,000, the reserves will be depleted by about £15,000, leaving us one year's worth of "spend" in the Bank.

Finding new sources of income is the No 1 priority. All and any fundraising ideas are welcome! Volunteers are also needed at events –such as car park marshals and ticket collectors at Chilworth Manor on 25 June, and bar tenders for the concerts listed in The Park on 7 March, 4 July, 24 October, & 19 December 2026.

The Meeting accepted the Financial Report and approved the Budget for 2026 by a show of hands

The Chair's Report. David Lowther acknowledged the challenge this Report presents. The Treasurer has already covered the current range of the Branch activities and the Budget needed to finance them on into 2026. What was left for the Chair to say? That he was driving the branch forward on a route that might meet a financial road block - perhaps the need for a diversion? This inspired a motoring analogy. Imagine Parkinson's to be a standard vehicle – usually reliable and predictable. When you press the accelerator it responds; you turn the wheel and it follows the line. Then something happens that is unsettling. The engine splutters and the steering feels a lot heavier. You take it in for an MoT. When it comes back with a Parkinson's diagnosis, you are full of doubts as to what to do for the best. You may decide to go off the road and withdraw into comparative isolation. Or you may seek out others with Parkinson's and engage in a rally, where you can meet socially, share concerns and take some action to help keep the engine running. That, said David, is what our Branch offers.

David is navigating his own journey with Parkinson's and is only too well aware of the limitations but he is also charged with steering the Branch in a direction of travel that offers members, their carers and families the will and encouragement to "keep going". He concluded by thanking the Committee and all the unpaid volunteers who help with events, serve the tea, run the raffles and work hard at fundraising. He urged all members to support each other by actively engaging with the Branch.

Note : this is a precis of the Chair's report. The complete text will be published in the May 2026 edition of The Park and on the Branch website. The members of the Branch Friendship Group and the Newly Diagnosed Group will also receive copies of the Chair's Report and Financial Report.

The Members warmly applauded the Chair and endorsed the strategic direction proposed for the Branch by show of hands.

Members were invited to endorse or reject nominations for the Committee. The Minutes Secretary confirmed that none had been received. The Chair, the Treasurer and other Committee members were declared re-elected

The following Members will serve on the Branch Committee 2026.:Mr David Lowther, Chair. Mr Steve Heron, Treasurer. Mrs Margaret Westwood, Minutes and Meetings Secretary ; Mrs Sharyn Grenville, Support Groups Mrs Myra Newnes-Smith, Carers Support Mrs Clare Price, Fundraising Co-ordinator.

The Lead Volunteer for Fundraising is currently vacant and also the roles of Communications and Membership Secretary following the resignations of Keith Black and Debbie Gaskell. Both had served the Committee well for a number of years and are to be presented with token gifts for their valuable contribution to the Branch.

The Meeting was opened for Members contributions. Sharyn Grenville drew attention to Saturday 11 April 2026 which is Parkinson's Awareness Day, and welcomed ideas for marking the day.

Amanda Dodson, Parkinson's Specialist Nurse, is about to retire. She will be sadly missed by many "Parky People", their carers and their families. She will be attending the Branch Social Meeting at 2 p.m. on 31 March in Shalford Village Hall., and all members are urged to come and join in the farewell to Amanda.

The Chair declared the Business Meeting closed – and now it was time for tea and cakes and the draw of lucky raffle tickets!

Margaret Westwood (Minutes Secretary) 1.03.2026

Peter's Poem - I Write to Remind You

Many of you may not consider yourselves to be poets waiting in the wings, yet may surprise yourselves by reading a poem which you like (or dislike) to the end. What has happened here is that both you and the poet have together conspired to produce a piece of work which is truly unique: the original poem has been changed by the appreciation provided by you. Congratulations.

I write to remind you that
the barrel organ wired to your heart
is of no common kind, no ordinary sort;
it plays for every listening ear
no less (sometimes a little more)
than passers-by will halt to hear;
for all of which there's nothing to repay –
your grace extends a thousand times
a thousand holidays.

And that your smiles (yes, those cheeky ones,
not coarse nor cruel nor wintry-warm)
do lighten loads, tend gently the forlorn,
showering on fresh acquaintances
the choice of reasons to be born.
Is there a message I sense coming through?
Has any resonance pierced your shining pate?
Yes and yes; but can you manage
yet another spinning plate?

And that you and I will always share
a friendship more than real; it's one that
daubs on our backdrops all the world might throw,
from a bottle or so of a favourite red
to the razing of a fine castillo
Our castillos are now under siege, my friend;
if you're alarmed about the scenes that you see,
be sure that as you speak the words
I'm with you religiously.

Peter Taylor

If Parkinson's were a Car...

One of the big challenges of this part of the Branch AGM is that Steve, our amazing Treasurer, will already have covered most of the activities and in a manner much better than I could. So, all I get is some ‘fluffy bits’ around the sides…never mind, I can make something up…

You may remember that last year, I did an interactive presentation where I left out various words to keep you, the audience, fully focused. In order not to be repetitive, I’m not doing that again.

Instead, I’m going to acknowledge that 60 to 65 percent of those diagnosed with Parkinson’s are male and deliver this in the wording of motorsport!

If Parkinson’s were a vehicle, most of us probably assumed we were driving something fairly standard, reliable and predictable. You press the accelerator and it responds; you turn the steering wheel and it follows the line you expect. Then, gradually or sometimes rather suddenly, something changes. The timing slips, the response is no longer what it was, the engine hesitates and the steering feels heavier. Things that were once automatic now require thought and concentration. You begin listening more carefully to every rattle, watching every warning light and noticing even the most subtle shift in performance.

Luckily, these vehicles still have value. Some vehicles prefer to spend the rest of their time in isolation while others are collectively garaged in a place called a Branch. Here individual vehicles come together, as one combined fleet, to take part in Car Shows *(aka Social Activities)* and races *(aka Exercise Classes)*. Within that shared garage, every vehicle is different. Engines vary, bodywork varies, mileage varies and the level of maintenance required certainly goes up and down. Yet together, those differences are precisely what give the branch its character and strength.

I find myself in the slightly unusual position of being both a passenger in my own vehicle and, at the same time, the notional driver of this larger fleet — our branch. Like many of you, I am navigating my own journey with Parkinson’s, adjusting to the quirks and limitations of my own engine. But I am also helping to steer the direction of our collective garage. The question, therefore, is not simply how each of us travels individually, but where we might choose to go together.

I don’t know how many of you have seen the 1985 film Back to the Future. It stars Michael J. Fox, widely recognised, especially in the U.S. as a leading figure in the Parkinson’s community. Can you remember what powered his DeLorean? While some will argue it’s the electricity from lightening or a banana in a blender in a sequel; the answer I’m looking for is the famous ‘flux capacitor’.

In much the same way, I, and the committee, are fuelled by the positive affirmation we receive from the vehicles in our garage - our members – YOU!. Knowing we’re making a real difference keeps us going. Even if some feel isolated physically, you can still take part by sharing updates on how you’re doing—whether through letters or any other way they prefer.

Finally thanks to all the technicians, mechanics and lovers of our Classic Cars. Let me remind you that the committee and all the event helpers, tea makers etc are all unpaid volunteers. We’re not experts with special skills or a secret map so feel free to provide details of where we can improve.

In particular I’d like to call out Keith and Debbie who have done so much for our Garage.

If anyone wants to get their overall on then I’d be delighted to hear from you (*aka Join the Committee*).

David

I AM *enormously grateful* to everyone who has patiently waited.

We are modifying the distribution mechanism such that we

REDUCE THE OVERALL POSTAGE OF THE PARK AND PARK BENCH.

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	Where	Volunteer Requirements	Funds Raised
Saturday 31 Jan	19:30	Royal Surrey Hospital Choir	Holy Trinity, Guildford	Lead: Sharyn Grenville 4 Volunteers required to collect donations	£4,182
Saturday 7 Mar	19:30	Occam Singers	Holy Trinity, Guildford	Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar	£1,018
Sunday 17 May	12:00	Fernhurst Revells	Recreation Ground GU27 3HY	Valerie Box	
Thursday 25 Jun	16;00	Picnics and Pink Concert	Chilworth Manor	Lead: Clare Price: 16 Volunteers required to check entry tickets, guide car parking etc	
Saturday 4 July	19:30	Occam Singers	St Mary's, Guildford	Lead: TBA 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar	
Saturday 11 July	13:30	Trad's Army Dixieland Jazz	St. Catherine's Village Hall	Valerie Box	
Sunday 2 Aug	15:00	Abba Stars	Godalming Bandstand	Joy Poulter / Sharyn Grenville	
Sunday 13 Sept	11:00	Branch Publicity at PDUK Walk	Alice Holt	TBC- We need branch members to publicise the Branch's Exercise Classes and Social Events	
Saturday 24 Oct	19:30	Occam Singers	Holy Trinity, Guildford	Lead: David Lowther 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar	
Saturday 1 Nov	09:00	Chancel Fayre	Holy Trinity, Guildford	Sharyn Grenville	
Saturday 19 Dec	18:30	Occam Singers	St Nicolas, Guildford	Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar	

EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT DIET AND PARKINSON'S

Over my tenure as Chair, I’ve talked widely about the mantra for living well with Parkinson’s: staying physical active, socially active, and finally intellectually active. These three pillars have clearly resonated with many of you—to the extent that they are often fed back to me, sometimes even better expressed than when I first introduced them. However, as these conversations have developed, there has been growing support for expanding this mantra to include two further elements: sleep and diet. Both are frequently mentioned—often passionately—but with less clarity around their relative importance and the strength of the evidence behind them.

To help bring some expert perspective to this, I approached the dieticians at the Royal Surrey Hospital, who very kindly gave their time to review the current thinking and help appraise what we know—and, just as importantly, what we don’t. What follows is a summary of that discussion, aimed at helping us all make more informed choices.

The Surrey & South Guildford Branch of Parkinson’s UK covers members whose consultants are based at Royal Surrey and Frimley Park. Does your team support both Trusts, or is there a parallel/mirrored team structure?

The dietetic departments of Royal Surrey Hospital (RSH) and Frimley Park hospital (FPH) are separate but we regularly communicate about patients. Our dietetic approach will be similar as we are regulated by law and follow evidence-based guidelines to provide consistently excellent patient care. You may see the dietetic team here at RSCH or Frimley Park depending on where you live.

How is someone referred to the dietetics team?

Someone can be referred to the dietetics team here at RSH via their GP, Consultant or specialist nurse. We would usually see someone with PD if they were at risk of malnutrition; if they were not able to eat enough and started to lose weight. This can happen when there are issues with swallowing, motor symptoms such as tremors increasing energy requirements and other issues such as taste changes. We would usually see someone in our outpatient clinic, either in person, over the phone or via video call and would work closely with them to create an individualised dietetic plan for their specific needs.

Could you outline the main roles within your team and roughly how many people are involved?

We are a team of 46 dietitians here at RSH with a range of different specialties and expertise, for example medical, gastroenterology, diabetes and paediatrics. If someone with Parkinson’s Disease (PD) were referred to us, they would likely see a member of the medical dietetic team,

How can diet influence the progression or management of Parkinson’s symptoms?

Eating well can play a supportive role in managing PD and helping you feel healthier day to day. While there isn’t one specific ‘Parkinson’s diet’ that can cure or prevent the progression of PD research shows that eating a balanced, nutritious diet can have a positive impact on overall well-being and help with some common symptoms.

Changes like choosing whole-grain bread, rice, and pasta, adding more fruits and vegetables, including lean meats and fish a couple of times a week and reducing added sugars can all support better energy levels, digestion and general health.

Recent research has shown that diet may have an effect by reducing oxidative stress, lowering inflammation and supporting the gut microbiome. Foods rich in antioxidants such as berries, fruits and vegetables containing vitamin C, E and polyphenols may help to protect brain cells from oxidative damage and overall diet quality can have a positive impact on non-motor symptoms such as constipation.

Are there particular dietary patterns (for example Mediterranean or ketogenic diets) that show promise in Parkinson's?

There is lots of interest and research into different diets and PD. The Mediterranean-style diet is the eating pattern with the most encouraging evidence for people living with PD. It emphasises plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole-grain carbohydrates, olive oil, fish and only small amounts of red or processed meat. This way of eating provides antioxidants and healthy fats that support overall health. Research in PD has shown mixed but generally positive findings, with some small studies suggesting improvements in thinking skills and overall symptom management. While more long-term research is needed, the Mediterranean diet is considered a safe and balanced way of eating that may offer benefits.

The ketogenic diet, which is very low in carbohydrates and high in fat, has also been studied. Some early research suggests it may help with certain symptoms, such as cognition or voice quality, but the evidence is still very limited. It can also lead to weight loss and may worsen some symptoms for certain people, which is important to consider because unintentional weight loss is already a risk in PD. We also don't yet know enough about its long-term safety in PD and therefore it is not recommended as a way of eating to support PD management.

Overall, the Mediterranean diet currently shows the most promise, while the ketogenic diet requires much more research before it can be recommended. If you're thinking about making major changes to your diet, it's best to discuss this with a healthcare professional who can help you choose an approach that supports your health and symptoms.

What role does protein play in potentially affecting the effectiveness of Parkinson's medication?

Protein rich foods like meat, fish, yoghurt and eggs can affect how well certain PD medications work. This is because both protein and medications such as Levodopa use the same transport system in the body. When you eat protein, the amino acids from the food can compete with the medication, making it harder for your body to absorb it properly.

To help your medication work as well as possible, it's usually recommended to take it 30–45 minutes before eating a meal. This gives your body time to absorb the medication before protein is introduced.

It's important not to cut out protein or reduce it too much. Protein is essential for keeping your muscles strong and preventing malnutrition, which is especially important for people living with PD. Instead of eating less protein, many people find it helpful to have most of their protein later in the day, so their medication can work more effectively earlier on.

If you're unsure how to balance your meals with your medication schedule, a dietitian or Parkinson's nurse can help you find a routine that works for you.

Are there specific vitamins or supplements commonly recommended for people with Parkinson's? There is increasing discussion about creatine — what is your view?

It's important to note that most supplements are not routinely recommended for people with PD as you should be able to get the nutrients you need from food (with the exception of vitamin D). This is because there isn't enough strong scientific evidence to show that they make a meaningful difference. Below is what we currently know about some of the more commonly discussed supplements.

Vitamin D

People with PD are more likely to have low vitamin D levels, partly because reduced mobility can mean spending less time outdoors in sunlight. Vitamin D is important for keeping bones strong, especially as falls and fractures are more common in PD. Because of this guidelines suggests that vitamin D supplements may be helpful for some people. Your GP or healthcare professional can check your levels and advise on whether you need a supplement and what dose is right for you.

Creatine

Creatine is often talked about as a supplement that might support muscle or brain energy. Although it has been studied in PD, large, high-quality research studies have shown that creatine does not improve symptoms or slow the condition. The biggest study, completed in 2015, found no benefit, and more recent reviews have reached the same conclusion. For this reason, guidelines do not recommend that creatine for the treatment of PD.

Probiotics and constipation

Constipation is very common in PD, and probiotics sometimes called “good bacteria” have been studied to see if they can help. Some research suggests they may improve constipation for some people, but the evidence is still limited. More studies are needed before we can say for certain whether probiotics are specifically helpful for constipation in Parkinson’s.

How does hydration affect Parkinson’s symptoms, and how much fluid intake is typically recommended?

Staying hydrated is important for everyone including people with PD. Dehydration can cause fatigue and headaches amongst other symptoms. Some PD symptoms such as swallowing difficulties can make it hard to drink whilst some medication can increase fluid losses such as vomiting and diarrhoea. Luckily there are some easy ways fluid intake can be increased:

- Drink 6-8 glasses/mugs of any fluids such as tea, water, juices, sugar-free squash
- Consume foods with high water content, such as melon, berries, cucumber or ice lollies
- Keeping a glass or bottle of water on your bedside table can encourage you to start hydrating as soon as you wake up, helping you begin the day with a positive habit
- Carrying a water bottle can make it easier to stay hydrated by ensuring you have access to water throughout the day
- Setting an alarm can remind yourself to drink
- Adapting to personal needs, such as using a straw or using an easy sip cup to drink fluids

How can dietary changes help address common issues such as constipation?People with PD often manage constipation in much the same way as anyone else. Gradually increasing fibre from foods like fruits and vegetables can help, along with staying well-hydrated. Fermented foods and probiotics may also support more regular bowel movements.

Because PD can slow down gut movement, adding large amounts of insoluble fibre (such as wholegrain foods) without enough fluid can sometimes make constipation worse by creating very dry, hard stools. For this reason, guidelines for constipation in Parkinson’s emphasise soluble fibre, which absorbs water and forms a soft gel that’s easier to pass. Good sources include beans, fruit and psyllium husk. Research also shows that eating two kiwifruit a day may support regularity.

Keeping regular meal patterns can also help to keep bowel movements regular too. Having a morning meal can sometimes help wake up the gut and support more predictable bowel movements.

People with PD often have changes in their gut bacteria, including lower levels of bacteria that produce short-chain fatty acids, which are important for healthy bowel function. Adding fermented foods like kefir, live yoghurt or fermented vegetables like kimchi can help support a healthier gut environment. Probiotics have been shown to be safe and may improve stool frequency, stool consistency and reduce the need for laxatives in people with Parkinson’s.

Staying hydrated is also important for bowel movements. Dehydration is a common contributor to constipation, and some Parkinson’s medications such as anticholinergics can make dehydration more likely. Regular fluid intake is therefore especially important for maintaining healthy digestion.

SUMMARY - TOP TIPS

Eat a balanced diet

- **Try to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables everyday**
- **Swap white pasta and bread for wholegrain options**
- **Have some dairy or fortified dairy alternatives every day (such as soya drinks)**
- **Eat some beans, pulses fish, eggs, meat and other protein**
- **Limit saturated fat intake**
- **Stay hydrated – aim for 6-8 glasses of fluid per day**

Protein and Levodopa:

- **If you take levodopa do so 30-45 minutes before a meal to maximise absorption of the drug**
- **It helps some people to eat more of their protein later in the day**

Speak to your doctor
If you notice any of the following:

- **Weight loss**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Problems swallowing**

A LIFE SPENT "BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE."

David Lowther writes....

Well, on the whole, there's very little to celebrate about having Parkinson's. However, one of the things that has genuinely amazed me since my diagnosis is the people you meet along the way. Individuals from all walks of life, each with their own story to tell.

I find myself drawn to these stories. More often than not, their backgrounds have helped shape the strength and character they now draw upon to face Parkinson's—enabling them not only to manage its challenges, but to remain interesting, engaged and valued members of the community.

One such person I've met recently is Mark Wallis, who attends the Monday Foundations Physio Exercise Class at Witley. This is the first of what I hope will be many contributions from Mark, offering a glimpse into a world that feels quite alien to me, yet is undeniably fascinating.

Here, then, is the first chapter of Mark's story.

Like many of us I guess I found history at school to be a boring, endless procession of dates and facts. But the one bit of history that I did respond to were my grandfather's tales of his time in the trenches. This sounds trite but, aged 7, I understood that there was a time before my time of the Beatles, a time of Charlie Chaplin and glorious songs and dances - a very different world.

I've always been able to draw so I spent my boyhood obsessing over military uniforms and model soldiers before the red letter day came when, pocket money carefully collected, I splashed all £6 on an actual uniform, the tunic worn by a Victorian officer in the rifle volunteers - and it fitted a treat! There was no going back...

At art school in the seventies I joined a re-enactment society covering the English Civil War as my collection of antique clothing (now including civilian attire) grew apace. In those days I could buy an embroidered Georgian waistcoat for a few quid, so my grant money soon disappeared in a cloud of old clothes. And I graduated as a costume designer.

I gained my Master's in the States in the eighties and started working for California's Living History Centre, which produced a bi-annual costumed recreation of Elizabethan England (well, sort of!) - all very goodhearted but their accents rather gave the game away, 6,000 miles from the source, they gave Dick Van Dyke a run for his money. I was the assistant entertainment manager and the only Brit there, getting to portray my great hero Sir Walter Ralegh. Bliss! And my collection of antique menswear was now joined by gentlemen's jewellery and accessories.

Fun as the Californian adventure was it wasn't believable, unlike my next posting, working for the deeply serious and prestigious Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, which was underpinned with Rockefeller's money. A few years there as a costumed actor then later as artistic director saw me return to England, buzzing with belief in this new American way of bringing museums to life and making sense of their collections.

Luckily the charity body that manages most of London's Royal Palaces was seeking a new way to do just that - it was the right place at the right time. So for 33 years my company Past Pleasures Ltd held Europe's largest contract for delivering costumed schools programmes and daily costumed events at the Tower and Hampton Court, amongst other sites. My ex-wife and I had a large group of historians, actors, musicians and teachers working for us in accurate reproduction period attire.

And then Covid struck. No visitors meant no income and therefore no need of a contract. And no regular income meant selling some of my collection. And then I was diagnosed with PD. But being a pretty upbeat chap I try to deal with it as we all must. The main way its affected my life/work is that it takes me ages to get into costume when I perform (as I still do on occasion): buttons, buckles and boots are a hard slog, but worth the effort. And I still love to meet people and hear their stories - so I thank you for listening to mine!

....and did I say, I've performed to most of the royal family - meeting King Charles as I was portraying Charles 1st.....but that's a story for the next time...

Mark Wallis MA FAHI

THE APRIL EDITION OF THE PARK BENCH -

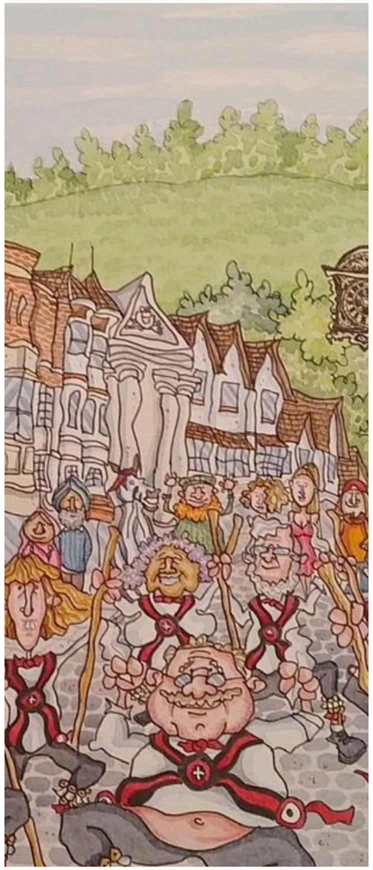
WERE YOU FOOLED

You may recall the "ramblings of a madman" in the April edition of The Park Bench, where I turned my attention to the humble onion.

I spoke about the so-called "sunion", bred to make them tear-free. I mentioned onion goggles and the curious trick of biting down on a wooden spoon. I even touched on how the Egyptians and Greeks once worshipped the onion, and—perhaps most intriguingly—its reputed aphrodisiac qualities.

So, which of these were true, and which were simply made up

Well… it turns out they were **all true**.



PILGRIM MORRIS WILL ENTERTAIN YOU!

As I've said on numerous occasions, one of the unexpected outcomes of a major diagnosis is that it prompts you to re-evaluate your own identity. Things that once felt hugely important can shift in perspective, making space for new experiences.

For me, it's become an opportunity to try new things. Recently, I had the pleasure of seeing the Surrey Hospital Choir — a brilliant performance with a fantastic choice of songs. Properly toe-tapping stuff.

And another opportunity presents itself. John Pesterfield, one of our members, is part of the Pilgrim Morris. They will be performing at the White Hart in Farncombe on **15 July**, the third Wednesday in July (the date of the Friendship Meeting) — well worth coming along if you fancy something a little different.

SUPPORT FOR ALL - CARERS AND PARTNERS GROUPS

Carers Group

As a carer myself, I know how important it is to have the right support around you. The carers support meetings run by Myra Newnes-Smith have been a vital resource for me, offering a welcoming and understanding space where carers can connect, share experiences and support one another. It's a relaxed and friendly environment where you can talk openly with people who truly understand the challenges and rewards of caring.

The group usually meets on the first Monday of each month at the Inn On The Lake in Godalming, and I would warmly encourage any carer to come along - whether you're looking for advice, reassurance or simply a friendly conversation.

Hilary Carter

Partners Group

A new group has been formed for partners of members who are newly diagnosed or in the earlier stages of the 'Parkinsons Journey'. This is also held at The Inn on the Lake, Godalming and is on the third Monday of the month. New members welcome.

For more information on either group please contact Myra Newnes-Smith

on 01483 422440 or email
Carers@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk

100 CLUB

We are approaching the 5th Anniversary of the launch of our 100 Club in July 2021. The Club has served us well and generates about £1,000 income for the Branch annually.

This is a very small contribution to our ongoing need to raise around £70,000 each year to support all the Branch's subsidised activities. Having now lost a major donation that has helped the Branch over recent years we need to explore every opportunity to raise funds. Your Committee are now considering whether we should revise the existing 100 Club design to make joining more attractive by increasing the prize amounts whilst also increasing the subscription price for each number.

Currently each number costs £1.00 per month, and the prizes are 1st=£60, 2nd= £20 and 3rd =£10. Quick research of other organisations '100 Clubs' indicate that a number often costs £5.00 per month (roughly the cost of a coffee outside) whereas their prizes may be something like 1st=£150, 2nd =£75 and 3rd = £25, or similar. To make such a revised plan financially viable would require at very least 100 numbers to be bought each month, and preferably more.

Before we make any changes it is important that we canvas opinions both from those who are 100 Club members and our wider Branch membership and gather how many members would be willing to join such a revised Club.

Could you please email our Treasurer, Steve on sheron@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk to provide him with your views and whether you would be willing to participate in a revised 100 Club.

2026	1st Prize £60		2nd Prize £20		3rd Prize £10	
	Name	Number	Name	Number	Name	Number
January	George Thomson	17	Charles Folkes	90	Tim Bracher	138
February	Lyn Ballington	115	George Thomson	12	Jane Harding	51
March	Jane Harding	61	Ian Baker	38	Ian Robinson	173

Branch Activites

Activity	Where	When		Comments	Contact
Carer's Group	Inn on the Lake	1st Monday of Month		Share with others Carers	Carers@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Committee Meeting	Samson Centre, Waterside Centre, Riverside, Guildford	2nd Monday of Month 2pm to 4pm		volunteers always welcome	Chair@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Friendship Group Meeting	White Hart, Farncombe	3rd Wednesday of Month @19:00		All welcome Option to eat or not	Membership@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Loud and Clear Speech Therapy	Online	1st Monday and Wednesday		Improve your speech in fun format	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Newly Diagnosed Social Meeting	Grantley Arms Wonersh	2nd Tuesday of Month @ 19:00		All welcome Option to eat or not	Secretary@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Tuesday Social Meeting	Shalford Village Hall	Last Tuesday of Month @14:00		Guest Speaker, Refreshments and Camaraderie	Secretary@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Dance for Parkinsons	Godalmin United Church, Godalming	Weekly on Wednesday			Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Parkinsong Voice Classes	Busbridge Village Hall (and Online)	Tuesdays 11.45 - 12.45		Work on breathing	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
PD Warrior type Exercise Class	Witley	Weekly		Multiple sessions on different days	Foundations Physio
PD Warrior type Exercise Class	West Clandon	Weekly		Multiple sessions on different days	Foundations Physio
PD Warrior type Exercise Class	Cranleigh Youth Centre, Snoxall	Weekly		Multiple sessions on different days	Surrey Hills Rehab
Pilates	West Clandon	Weekly on Wednesday			Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)	Samson Centre, Waterside Centre, Riverside, Guildford	To Be Agreed		Sessions avaiable most days	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk

KEY CONTACT DETAILS

Chair	David Lowther Chair@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Treasurer	Steve Heron Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Communications Lead	Position Vacant
Membership Secretary	Position Vacant
Fundraising Lead	Position Vacant
Fundraising Co-ordinator	Clare Price CPrice@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Carers Support	Myra Newnes-Smith Carers@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Support Groups	Sharyn Grenville CSupportGroups@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk

National Website:	www.parkinsons.org.uk
Local Website:	www.guildfordParkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's Nurse Specialists (NHS)

Dawn Rawson **Georgina Kelly**	**Rose McKinley**
Milford Hospital	Farnham Hospital
01483 362020	01483 908183
rsch.gw.ms.parks@nhs.net	vcl.parkinsonnurses@nhs.net