

The Park

September 2026



The Magazine of the Guildford and South Surrey Branch of Parkinson's UK

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* Cover is a picture of Debbie Gaskell at the Picnic and Pinks Fundraising event
I would like to thank all those who have contributed to production and distribution
of 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 a 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.

The schedule - The Truth

Identifying and scheduling speakers is a complex and time-consuming process. We are confident about the programme for the remainder of this year and have secured several speakers for 2027, although the order has yet to be confirmed. We will therefore not include detailed information in this edition of The Park. A fuller and more reliable programme will be published in the January edition.



INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR COUNT BINFACE

Before anyone starts writing letters to the editor, I should rigorously deny that I have become politically influenced. It is entirely coincidental that this edition begins with an introduction from Count Binface. Unlike some novelty candidates of years gone by—such as those whose policies included renaming Clacton “Eric”, abolishing gravity and creating a “Clacton Peer” in the House of Lords—Count Binface occasionally ventures into the realm of common sense. Indeed, I find myself in complete agreement with one of his flagship manifesto commitments: imposing a 99p price cap on an ice cream with a Flake. At last, a policy I can wholeheartedly support.



Wresting control back from the Count, I would like to welcome everyone who has joined the Branch since the last edition of *The Park*. The magazine is produced three times a year and aims to inform, educate and keep members up to date with the activities being organised by the Branch over the months ahead.

Recent editions of *The Park* have begun to develop a recognisable structure:

- An interview with one of the groups involved in Parkinson’s care—in this edition, our specialist Parkinson’s nurses from Milford.
- An article intended to inform, whether or not its subject is directly related to Parkinson’s—in this case Andrew and Jane’s visit to the European Parkinson’s Therapy Centre in Italy.
- A selection of other articles, news and notices.
- Details of forthcoming talks and fundraising events.
- Tables listing the exercise and therapeutic classes available across the Branch.

In addition, some editions may contain one or more of what I would call a “Dave Explains” topic. My approach is simply to read as much reliable material as I can, make sense of it, and then describe my own summary understanding in the hope that it is useful to others. If it helps members understand a subject a little more easily, then it has achieved its purpose.

In the crosshairs for this edition are Paraquat and other pest control products.

As this could become litigious, I draw you to the following clear legal statement which summarises my stance.

The contents of this work are intended to further general scientific research, understanding, and discussion only and are not intended and should not be relied upon as recommending or promoting a specific method, diagnosis, or treatment by physicians or any particular patient. The author make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work, and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. This is in view of ongoing research, equipment modifications, changes in governmental regulations, and the constant flow of information relating to the use of medicines, equipment, and devices. The reader is urged to review and evaluate the information provided in the package insert or instructions for each medicine, equipment, or device, among other things, any changes in the instructions or indication of usage and for added warnings and precautions. Readers should consult with a specialist where appropriate. The fact that an organisation or website is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the author or the publisher endorses the information the organisation or website may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that internet websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. A warranty may be created or extended by any promotional statements for this work.

I hope you enjoy this edition of The Park. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed, in whatever capacity, to bringing it together. I am particularly grateful to Steve, our Treasurer, who guides me through the process and provides a much-needed sanity check on everything I produce.

David Lowther

UPDATE: USEFUL AIDS AND OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE WITH PARKINSON'S



[Now on website](#) (useful for those who have joined us since 2024 and those who have mislaid their copies).

The Outside Clinic provides home visits for free NHS eye and hearing tests. For further information or to book an appointment online visit www.outsideclinic.co.uk or Telephone 0800 605 040.

IS THERE A CAUSAL LINK BETWEEN PARAQUAT AND PARKINSON'S?

The precise causes of most non-genetic Parkinson's remain unknown. Nevertheless, a growing body of evidence points towards environmental influences—including exposure to certain pesticides—as possible contributing factors.

Paraquat is one of the most prominent suspects. It is a powerful weedkiller that has been associated with an increased risk of Parkinson's in numerous studies. However, an association does not necessarily establish that paraquat directly caused Parkinson's in any particular person.

Paraquat is also extremely poisonous. Swallowing even a small quantity of a concentrated formulation can be fatal; an estimated 10–20ml of a 20% solution may cause severe lung damage and multiple-organ failure.

This has been a particularly difficult article to write because the situation continues to change. In fact, I have completely rewritten it to incorporate the latest developments.

Let us begin with some background.

Animal studies have shown that exposure to paraquat can produce biological changes and symptoms resembling aspects of Parkinson's. One 2020 study found that mice inhaling low concentrations experienced changes in the brain and a loss of smell—something that can be an early feature of Parkinson's. Epidemiological studies have also reported an increased incidence of Parkinson's among some agricultural workers exposed to paraquat and other pesticides.

The difficulty is establishing causation in people. It would clearly be unethical to conduct the sort of controlled experiment in which one group of healthy people was deliberately exposed to paraquat over many years while another was not. Researchers must therefore rely on animal experiments, laboratory work and observational studies of people whose exposure has already occurred. These studies can identify patterns and increased risks, but they cannot easily isolate paraquat from genetics, age, other pesticides and the many environmental influences accumulated during a lifetime.

This allows the manufacturer to maintain that no peer-reviewed scientific analysis has definitively proved that paraquat causes Parkinson's. That statement is technically important, but it should not be misunderstood as meaning that no evidence of a connection exists. Parkinson's UK concludes that the evidence suggests exposure to certain pesticides may increase the risk of Parkinson's, while acknowledging that it is not yet strong enough to say that pesticides directly cause the condition.

Meanwhile, Syngenta has moved towards settling thousands of legal claims in the United States brought by people who allege that long-term paraquat

exposure contributed to their Parkinson's. The company continues to deny that paraquat causes the condition and says that settling claims does not amount to an admission of wrongdoing.

On 3 March 2026, Syngenta announced that it would cease paraquat production at its Huddersfield facility—its only paraquat-manufacturing site—by the end of June 2026. The company attributed its decision to competition from generic manufacturers, rather than to health concerns or the litigation.

This creates a striking contradiction. Paraquat has been banned for use in the UK since 2007, yet it continued to be manufactured here for export to countries including the United States, where it remains legal and widely used. Syngenta ultimately sits within the Chinese state-owned Sinochem group, while China has itself prohibited the domestic sale and use of paraquat formulations.

The announcement that production would cease did not, by itself, commit every other manufacturer to stop producing paraquat or guarantee that its use in the United States would end. Other manufacturers can continue supplying it unless regulators prohibit its sale.

Then there is what might be called the legal smokescreen. Syngenta says that it has settled certain claims but that doing so “in no way implies that paraquat causes Parkinson's disease”. It also says that it continues to stand by the safety of the product.

That familiar dance—settle, but deny; pay, but admit nothing—may make commercial and legal sense, since companies sometimes settle simply to avoid the expense and uncertainty of litigation. Nevertheless, to an ordinary observer it inevitably raises questions. If the company is entirely confident in its position, why settle so many claims before the central scientific and legal arguments are fully tested in court? Equally, settlements and confidentiality agreements are not themselves scientific proof that paraquat causes Parkinson's.

What does this mean for people like me who have been diagnosed with idiopathic Parkinson's—meaning that its origin is unknown?

Although paraquat is no longer approved for agricultural use in Britain, a British person could previously have encountered it through agricultural work, through living near places where it was used, or while working or residing overseas. However, for most individuals it would be extremely difficult to reconstruct the timing, duration and intensity of exposures that may have occurred decades before their diagnosis.

Britain also imports food and ingredients from countries where paraquat remains permitted. American maize, for example, may be processed into cornflour, modified starches, syrups and oils used in manufactured foods. However, no reliable figure appears to show what proportion of UK ready meals contains ingredients from American farms where paraquat was used. More importantly, the presence of such an ingredient does not demonstrate a harmful exposure. Imported foods are subject to statutory pesticide-residue limits and monitoring,

and Parkinson's UK says there is currently no evidence that very low-level pesticide exposure through food increases the risk of Parkinson's.

The strongest concerns therefore relate to repeated occupational or environmental exposure—particularly among those who mixed, sprayed or worked close to paraquat—rather than to the ordinary consumption of imported food.

So, is there a causal link? The most balanced answer is that there is credible evidence of an association and several biologically plausible explanations, but science has not yet established that paraquat directly causes Parkinson's in an individual person. That uncertainty should neither be exaggerated into proof nor used as an excuse to disregard a serious and growing body of evidence.

David Lowther

DRUMHEAD - AWAKE YOUR RHYTHM

Let's start with a joke!

How many African drums can you fit into a medium-sized hatchback?



The answer, apparently, is an astonishing number!

That is how Drumhead can provide everyone with an instrument and give us the opportunity to tell our own stories through rhythm. This will be my third time attending one of their sessions, and I can promise you that everyone—regardless of age, ability or musical experience—can make music. Come along, pick up a drum and enjoy an hour-long injection of rhythm, laughter and positivity.

[Details on Page 3 - September 2026 - Tuesday Afternoon Meeting](#)

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!!

It is already time to start thinking about your attendance at our Christmas Lunch.

This year it will be on Tuesday 1st December, and as usual at Broadwater Pavilion, Godalming.

Last year we had a great lunch and I am sure the Broadwater catering team will excel again this year. Doors will be open at noon, with the meal served at 1.00 pm. For those coming by taxi, the 'proceedings' are normally complete by 3.00 to 3.30 pm.

As in previous years this will be a full three course traditional Roast Turkey meal with all the usual trimmings, with red or white wine, followed by coffee or tea and mince pies. For those who prefer something different, there are alternate choices. There will be the usual Christmas crackers and optional wearing of silly paper hats! The Christmas Quiz will be back, as will a raffle.

We aim to subsidise the actual cost of the meal by approx. 50% for members and their first guest. At the time of writing we do not have the meal price from the caterers but based on 2025 pricing the subsidised price will be in the region of £30 to £35 per head for the member and first guest. Additional guests are welcome, but they will not be subsidised and they will need to pay the full meal price. Wine with the meal is included in the price, however any pre meal drinks at the bar are for your own account.

Could those of you who wish to attend either:

1. email your name, address, telephone number, and any guest names to our Treasurer, Steve at sheron@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk. He will email you the menu choices and payment details.

or

2. Write to Steve at his address below with your name, address, telephone number, and any guest names, including a stamped addressed return envelope. Steve will then post to you the menu choices and payment details.

Mr S Heron
Guildford and South Surrey Parkinson's Branch
11 Merrow Woods
Guildford
GU1 2LQ

You need to respond by no later than Friday 16th October to ensure you are included in this great annual event!

Menu choices and payments need to be with Steve by mid-November so the venue can prepare.

DESPITE THE DOOM AND GLOOM, MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT PEOPLE ARE, ON THE WHOLE, GOOD

Maintaining a positive mindset is perhaps more difficult today than ever before. We live in a world of 24-hour news, social media and constant notifications. Academic studies generally do not conclude that the news is false or inaccurate. Rather, they suggest that news reporting is naturally biased towards negative events because they are considered more newsworthy. We hear about a bridge collapsing, but rarely about the millions that remain perfectly safe. Over time, this repeated emphasis on negative events can distort our perception of reality, making the world appear far worse than it really is.

Remembering my O Level Maths, I recall that two negatives somehow make a positive. I'd like to tell you a story because I think it illustrates that, despite the headlines, people are fundamentally good.

A Positive Experience

My story starts at Aldershot Gym, where I attend exercise classes every Tuesday and Thursday. One of the people I exercise with is Dawn. In 2009 she travelled to Poland for gastric band surgery after being unable to receive treatment in the UK. Tragically, the operation went badly wrong. She spent seven weeks in a coma and, following further complications, became a wheelchair user. Her remarkable story was later featured on BBC Three (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le6-pGafpw0>).

Like many social networks nowadays, we have a WhatsApp Chat Group. It is usually very quiet, only springing into life when the gym is closed or someone needs help. During the first heatwave a few weeks ago, a message appeared at about 4 p.m. Dawn was desperately looking for someone to take her to her son's school prom at Farnham Castle, which was due to start just an hour later. As this was her youngest child, she knew it would be her last opportunity to share one of these important milestones.

I've never experienced a school prom. Today's proms seem to be all about making an entrance—dressing in your finest clothes, arriving in the best car you can find and enjoying the occasion with your friends. In many ways, it's an opportunity to earn a bit of teenage 'street cred', often by seeing who can spend the most money on the experience.

I don't know whether I'm alone, but I occasionally find myself facing these little moral dilemmas. One part of me was saying that the decent thing to do was to help Dawn. The other part was pointing out that there was an amber heatwave warning in place and that trying to arrange transport just an hour before such an important event wasn't exactly ideal planning. After a few moments of contemplation, the first voice won, and I agreed to take her to Farnham Castle.

When I arrived outside Dawn's house, I was greeted by a stunning yellow Lotus.

Knowing that finances were often tight, I was quietly pleased that Dawn had somehow found a way for her son to enjoy the same experience as everyone else. I imagined it must have been quite a sacrifice.

During the drive I learnt the full story and how the key elements interlocked. My part was that some alleged mates from school had previously seen Dawn transferring into her wheelchair after a parents' evening. Sadly, her son had then endured months of cruel comments that I cannot document here. My role was simply to arrive in an ordinary, incognito VW Golf without any disabled stickers or the like.

You may think this story is building up to me being the hero. It isn't. The real hero is the owner of that yellow Lotus.

It transpired that he was part of a volunteer-led network that provides free prom transport for disadvantaged or less fortunate young people, ensuring they don't miss out on an important milestone simply because of financial circumstances. With commercial prom transport sometimes costing £600 or more, volunteers offer sports cars, supercars and novelty vehicles completely free of charge.

This gentleman had driven from Woking and given up two hours of his own time



so that a young lad he had never met previously could enjoy a memorable evening and arrive with exactly the same sense of pride as everyone else.

Stories like this rarely make the headlines because kindness is not considered newsworthy. Yet I suspect similar acts of generosity take place every day. Perhaps the world really is a better place than the headlines sometimes allow us to believe—and perhaps that's one more reason to hold on to a positive mindset.

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
Saturday 31 Jan	19:30	Royal Surrey Hospital Choir	Holy Trinity, Guildford
Saturday 7 Mar	19:30	Occam Singers	Holy Trinity, Guildford
Thursday 25 Jun	16:00	Picnics and Pink Concert	Chilworth Manor
Saturday 4 Jul	19:30	Occam Singers	St Mary's, Guildford
Saturday 11 Jul	14:00	Summer Jazz	St Catherines Village Hall
Saturday 24 Oct	19:30	Occam Singers	Holy Trinity, Guildford
Saturday 19 Dec	18:30	Occam Singers	St Nicolas, Guildford

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

- One volunteer to contact our Treasurer (Steve) regarding any wine and drinks purchase needs, and to collect the reusable plastic glasses from him 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 the plastic glasses and return to Steve.
- 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

Volunteer Requirements	Funds Raised	Status
Lead: Sharyn Grenville 4 Volunteers required to collect donations	£4,182	
Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar	£1,018	
Lead: Clare Price: 16 Volunteers required to check entry tickets, guide car parking etc	£22,000	NEW
Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar	£463	NEW
Lead: Clare Price: Volunteers required to run bar, raffle	£1,400	NEW
Lead: David Lowther 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar		
Lead: Steve Heron 4 Volunteers required to run interval Bar		

COMMUNITY PARKINSON'S NURSE INTERVIEW

David explains "Parkinson's Specialist Nurses are a vital part of the team supporting people with Parkinson's and play a central role in helping each patient manage their condition. They provide expert advice, monitor symptoms and medication, coordinate care and offer reassurance to patients and their families when it is most needed. I have rarely encountered a group of professionals who are held in such universal affection and respect. Whenever members describe the support they have received from their Parkinson's nurse, the word that appears time and again is simply "exceptional". Let's find out how they make this magic work."

1. Can we start with introductions

We are Dawn Rawson & Georgina Kelly and we look after people registered with GP practices in Guildford and Waverley.



2. Could you explain the role of a Parkinson's Specialist Nurse in practical terms — how it differs from, and complements, the role of a Consultant and a GP?

Parkinson's nurses bring a specialist focus because, unlike GPs or general nurses, they work exclusively with people affected by Parkinson's, so are able to dedicate their time to this specialism. In practice, that means supporting people to come to terms with their diagnosis, helping them manage their medication so they get the best results with fewer side effects, and referring on to other professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists. Nurses also play an educational role, training other health and social care staff — for example, making sure people get their Parkinson's medication on time

when admitted to hospital. Consultants remain responsible for diagnosis and complex treatment decisions, GPs manage overall health and facilitate the prescribing of Parkinson's medications, and the nurse sits alongside both — often the first point of contact for day-to-day management and troubleshooting.

3. How does someone with Parkinson's come to be linked with a specialist nurse, and what does that ongoing relationship typically look like?

Referrals are usually made through a GP or a Consultant, with the only requirement being that they have a confirmed diagnosis by a Consultant.

As Parkinson's Nurses, we also provide care for patients with a diagnosis of an Atypical Parkinsonism, such as Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), Cortico-Basal Degeneration (CBD), Lewy Body Dementia, or a Vascular Parkinsonism.

We review patients either in person or remotely at periodic intervals - the time between reviews can vary greatly depending on individual circumstance or preference. Between reviews, we are always happy to be contacted with any questions or concerns.

4. What advice would you give about getting the most from Parkinson's medication?

Every person's medication regime is different — Parkinson's is managed with a range of drugs, doses and timings tailored to the individual, so there's no one-size-fits-all answer. What we would say is that timing consistency really does matter, which is why we always encourage people to find a routine that works for them, whether that's phone alarms, a pill timer, or simply building doses around daily habits.

One thing we'd really like members to be aware of is that Parkinson's medication should never be stopped or changed suddenly without speaking to a healthcare professional first. It's also worth being aware that other medications — even ones unrelated to Parkinson's — can sometimes interact with Parkinson's drugs, so it's always worth checking with a pharmacist or your nurse if anything new is prescribed.

We'd also point members towards Parkinson's UK's "Get It On Time" campaign, which highlights just how important it is for people with Parkinson's to receive their medication at the right time, particularly during hospital stays, and offers some excellent practical resources for patients and carers alike.

5. How important is exercise — physically, mentally and socially — in managing Parkinson's, and are there particular activities you'd especially recommend?

Very important — Parkinson's UK are clear that physical activity has a positive impact both physically and on mental health.

Recommended exercise includes all four of the following categories:

- Aerobic activity
- Strength training
- Balance, agility and multitasking
- Stretching

Many of these can also be great social occasions — exercising alongside others adds a real boost of its own.

It's important to acknowledge that everyone's level of fitness and function will vary, and people with Parkinson's need to match their activity to what's right for them individually.

Do speak to your Parkinson's Nurse if you're thinking about introducing more exercise into your routine — we're always happy to help. We can point you towards some wonderful opportunities in the local area, including Parkinson's-specific exercise classes and the physiotherapy support that goes alongside them.

6. A Typical Day in the Life of a Parkinson's Nurse

We are both based at Milford Hospital, but our week is far from deskbound — we divide our time between clinics at Haslemere Hospital, Cranleigh Hospital, Milford Hospital and the Royal Surrey Hospital, so no two days look quite the same.

For patients who are unable to leave their homes, we carry out home visits, including regular visits to residential and nursing homes across the area — some days this involves quite a bit of time on the road, travelling between visits.

Alongside clinics, we manage a busy email inbox, responding to queries from other healthcare professionals, and from people with Parkinson's and their family or carers, who reach out with questions or concerns.

Behind the scenes, there's a good deal of coordination: completing referrals into the wider Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), and regular contact with the range of Consultants responsible for our patients' Parkinson's management.

We also take part in MDT meetings, where complex cases are discussed collaboratively, with the shared aim of improving care, quality of life, and outcomes for our patients.

We are proactive in educating our healthcare colleagues, whether that's delivering formal training sessions or simply sharing our knowledge day-to-day, to help ensure everyone involved in a patient's care understands the specific needs of people with Parkinson's.

It's a varied and often unpredictable role — but that variety, and the relationships we build with patients over time, is exactly what makes it so rewarding.

PETER'S POEM - CLOSE NOW

Close now to counting down the days,
no new age views for tired eyes
to deny our sun its sovereignty over
lives still pumped through hardened veins;
the sum of echoed heartbeats passed
and those allotted yet to tick.

Each string of beats a human tale:
as every precious page is turned
one near the end might softly say
the road beyond is yours to map;
so mark the things you've left to do,
the things you won, the things you took.

The heart, that soaring glory organ,
at times a pit of dark despair,
will pose the questions, tease each reply,
show what's ahead, what's in the way;
so much to love, so much to give,
so much to keep from growing cold.

And if I were to earn one single thing
from learning late the way to take
so much more care of those within
the reach of every close embrace,
I'd choose the touch of one who'd want
to touch as when we first found love.

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FUNDRAISING



The branch was delighted to be nominated as one of the beneficiaries of the Chilworth Manor Vineyard Picnic and Pinks evening, held on the baking-hot afternoon and evening of 25 June. Over the years, the event has grown in popularity and now attracts around 600 guests, who arrive with picnic tables, chairs and generously stocked cool boxes in tow. It is easy to see why people are drawn to picnic in such a beautiful terraced walled garden, created by the late Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and set in a picturesque location on the slopes below St Martha's. Three live bands kept guests entertained and dancing into the night, helped along by supplies of Chilworth Manor Rosé!

As a beneficiary, the branch was asked to provide 16 volunteers to help run the event. Our duties included managing the car park, marshalling, running the bar, scanning entry tickets, clearing up and tidying the site. We had a fantastic team of branch members and friends. Chilworth Manor briefed us thoroughly in advance,



providing several crib sheets and instructions, as well as holding a couple of Zoom meetings before the evening. I can honestly say we did a great job. It was a long and tiring shift, from 4pm until around 11pm, but I am sure I speak for the whole team when I say we all enjoyed the evening and the experience. Best of all, the branch will receive £22,000, and our sincere thanks go to the owners of Chilworth Manor for this opportunity.

Our latest branch fundraiser was a Jazz Event, held on another hot, sunny afternoon on 11 July. Trads Army Dixieland Jazz Band treated us to two excellent sets. We are especially grateful to Valerie Box, who not only suggested and organised the event but also single-handedly secured sponsorship and raffle prizes, helping us raise around £1,800. Everyone had a lovely time, and we thank all the volunteers who ran the bar, sold raffle tickets, set up tables and chairs, and helped in many other ways. Thanks also to Vicky Cooke, who decorated the tables with beautiful cut flowers from her garden.





would also like to take this opportunity to ask members to let us know of any suggestions or contacts that could help raise funds for the branch. In addition to the events mentioned above, we have received donations this year from a golf day, a concert by the Royal Surrey County Hospital Choir, and the Occam Singers — all thanks to you, our members.

Clare Price

Can you crack the code?

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CELIA

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1★	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

1st Monday

1st Wednesday

VISIT TO THE EUROPEAN PARKINSON'S THERAPY CENTRE IN BOARIO TERME, ITALY.

One evening, about a year ago, I was chatting with Tim Goodman at one of the Tuesday evening socials for the newly diagnosed, when the subject of holidays came up. He mentioned that he'd visited the European Parkinson's Therapy Centre with his wife. Wishing to know more, my wife Jane and I arranged to meet with Tim and Ginny to learn what they thought about the centre and whether it was positive. They were very happy to share information and were also very enthusiastic about the centre, having visited three times.

Following our chat, we looked at the website of the centre, which we found a little confusing as some of it is in Italian, obviously, because it's based in Italy. But there now seems to be an effort to improve the web content in English to better describe the services and philosophies used.

The town of Boario Terme is a natural spa and in its heyday was very sophisticated, boasting spas, ballroom dancing and restaurants. All of these "distractions" or "entertainments" depending on your priorities remain in place but changes by the government in the 1960s removed subsidies which allowed people from the surrounding areas to visit the spa, supported by income from wider fields. More recently the smart hotels went into slow decline. An Englishman, Alex Reed, saw an opportunity to acquire a facility which would offer therapy to people with Parkinson's disease in a comfortable environment, challenging the inherent inertia of Parkinson's and managed by people who understand the challenges of the disease. Alex himself is a 20 year plus veteran, and his daily presence was a factor in leading us to decide to attend a course in mid-May 2026.

So, what is it all about and what happens in practice?

On the morning after arrival, the director of the facility, Alex Reed, gave an introductory presentation with the message that in his opinion this type of programme, with its four pillars of therapy, namely medicine, physical activity,, lifestyle and psychology was the best chance we had to slow down the progression of Parkinson's. Alex himself is a strong advocate of neuroplasticity, believing that with the right amount of effort and positivity, neurones and neuronal pathways in the brain can be rewired to some extent. After the introductory presentation, which went on a little longer than we expected because Alex turned out to be an extremely enthusiastic individual, everyone was assigned to an individual physiotherapist who would work with them each morning in the following week for up to 90 minutes a day. A timetable listed the activities for each person based on the information that we had provided to the centre in an on-line questionnaire before the course. Despite a one-on-one focus on individual specific issues, everyone also had the opportunity to interact with each other and attend lectures on voice, aerobic exercise, diet, medication, and psychological interactions. These sessions were attended by individuals and their family

members and were really useful, tackling problems head on to find solutions. Partners were also given separate presentations by specialists on most days, and although attendance was optional, all found it very helpful. Courses were available in English and Italian, and the staff are fluent. All physiotherapists have degree-level training or are doctors with relevant experience.

The week that we participated, there were seven first timers on the course from England, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, and Romania, all but one of whom brought along a family member who was able to attend short talks on various aspects of Parkinson's. A separate group of people were visiting for their second or third time.

During the course of the week, everybody seemed to benefit enormously from the



close contact with the staff, the positivity, and the tips and help that were given to make life a little easier. One lady who had arrived with a walker had abandoned it by the second day and all participants were noticeably more interactive by the end of the week. Everybody left with the firm intention of coming again.

Answers to potential questions.

Would we go again?

Yes, we will definitely return, either this autumn or the following spring. We'd also like to return in the summer as there's an amazing opera festival in the amphitheatre in Verona, which is about two hours away.

How do we get there?

We flew with British Airways to Verona, and we stayed in the old town for a couple of days either side of the course which ran from Monday morning to Saturday lunchtime. I think this can vary depending on the season.

What did it cost?

The course cost €855 for the five and a half days, and that was for participation by both the individual and partner, not full-time, but quite a few sessions. We stayed in a hotel a five minute walk from the Therapy Centre and received a special rate due to our attendance. €864 per couple for six nights full board, which is pretty exceptional value. The food was average and became quite samey after a while, so we went out for dinner in the local town on a couple of evenings. We found our group sociable and enjoyed a few pre-dinner drinks and chats.

[The editor wishes to note that nowhere above is there any reference to wonderful gelato, although evidence of its purchase and consumption can be found in the photographs provided.]



Can I combine a week on the course with other holiday opportunities?

Yes, you can. We flew to Verona and stayed for a couple of days before and after to explore and enjoy the food, the atmosphere, and museums. The old town is enclosed by a loop of the river and can be easily explored on foot. The magnificent amphitheatre, dating from AD 32, hosts opera in the summer months. We travelled from Verona to Boario Terme by train, a journey of about two hours and very inexpensive. Taxis direct to Boario Terme are available if you are anxious about your mobility but much more costly.

Altogether, this was a very positive and uplifting experience. Whilst the assessments, lectures and therapies were clearly the priority, the young staff injected into everyone a sense of enthusiasm and so it was quite a bubbly place, very Italian in the energetic way things were managed

Jane and Andrew Carr



MANIFESTO PLEDGES

THAMES WATER BOSSES TO BE MADE TO TAKE A DIP IN THE THAMES TO SEE HOW THEY LIKE IT!

CORNERS TO BE CORRECTLY REFEREED IN FOOTBALL MATCHES.

OUR NEW 100 CLUB

We launched our NEW 100 Club on 1st July with even larger prize amounts than our original 100 Club albeit also higher per number cost.

Our original 100 Club started in 2021 as a simple and enjoyable way of fundraising. It generated a modest £1,000 p.a. contribution to our ongoing £70,000 annual fundraising need to support all the Branch's subsidised activities. However with the loss of the annual £30,000 major donation from the Vernon Ely Charitable Trust major, the Branch has had to explore every opportunity to raise more funds. Reviewing our 100 Club was one of the opportunities identified with the potential to generate more income for the Branch.

After consultation with Branch members, we closed the original 100 Club after the June draw and launched the NEW 100 Club..

The objective is the same (Branch fundraising), as is the concept - members who participate in the NEW 100 Club subscribe for a number, or numbers, each month with the opportunity to win either a 1st, 2nd or 3rd cash prize.

The members of the NEW 100 Club pay annually in advance for their number(s) at a rate of £5.00 per number per month. Their annual, in advance payment, can be made by Standing Order or Bank Transfer or Cheque. So one number would cost £60 in advance. There is no 'pay monthly' option anymore to reduce administration (remember all the Branch Committee including the Treasurer are all volunteers who give considerable amounts of their time to keeping the Branch as active as it is).

Monthly prizes total £175 in the NEW 100 Club, apportioned as: 1st prize = £100, 2nd prize = £50 and 3rd prize = £25. These prize amounts may be increased in the future if there is both sufficient membership of the Club to allow this and there is income for the Branch.

At the time of writing we have approx. 60 members who have joined the NEW 100 Club, subscribing for 96 numbers. This will potentially generate £3,600 of much needed funds for the Branch over a full year. Over 3 times as much income than came from the old Club. If we have more members joining the amount generated for Branch income could be even higher

If you have not already joined the NEW 100 Club, it is very easy to join.

Contact our Treasurer Steve for an application form (as this is a mini lottery we are required to have formal application form for each participant).

- email your name, address, telephone number, to our Treasurer, Steve at sheron@guildfordparkinsons.org.uk He will email you the application form to complete and return, plus payment details.

or

- Write to Steve at his address below with your name, address, telephone number, including a stamped addressed return envelope. Steve will then post to you the application form and payment details.

Mr S Heron

Guildford and South Surrey Parkinson's Branch

11 Merrow Woods

Guildford

GU1 2LQ

Recent Prize winners are:

2026	1st Prize £100		2nd Prize £50		3rd Prize £25	
	Name	Number	Name	Number	Name	Number
July	Evelyn Koh	83	Dianne Keir	25	George Thompson	53



COUNT
BINFACE
SAYS

MANIFESTO PLEDGES

CLAUDIA WINKLEMAN'S FRINGE TO BE GIVEN GRADE 1 LISTED STATUS

What's funny about that – well not a lot but it is a great segue into congratulating Lorraine and James Cotton (active branch contributors) and their son Mike for winning a BAFTA for his work as Producer of The Traitors

BRANCH ACTIVITIES

Activity	Where	When
Carer's Group	Inn on the Lake	1st Monday of Month
Committee Meeting	Samson Centre, Waterside Centre, Riverside, Guildford	2nd Monday of Month 2pm to 4pm
Friendship Group Meeting	White Hart, Farncombe	3rd Wednesday of Month @19:00
Loud and Clear Speech Therapy	Online	1st Monday and Wednesday
Newly Diagnosed Social Meeting	Grantley Arms Womersh	2nd Tuesday of Month @ 19:00
Tuesday Social Meeting	Shalford Village Hall	Last Tuesday of Month @14:00
Dance for Parkinsons	Godalmin United Church, Godalming	Weekly on Wednesday
Parkinsons 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
Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)	Samson Centre, Waterside Centre, Riverside, Guildford	To Be Agreed

Comments	Contact
Share with others Carers	Carers@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
volunteers always welcome	Chair@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
All welcome Option to eat or not	SupportGroups@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Improve your speech in fun format	Treasurer@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
All welcome Option to eat or not	SupportGroups@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Guest Speaker, Refreshments and Camaraderie	SupportGroups@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
Sessions available 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 SupportGroups@GuildfordParkinsons.org.uk
	National Website: www.parkinsons.org.uk
	Local Website: www.guildfordParkinsons.org.uk
Parkinson's Nurse Specialists (NHS)	
Dawn Rawson	Rose McKinley
Georgina Kelly	
Milford Hospital	Farnham Hospital
01483 362020	01483 908183
rsch.gw.ms.parks@nhs.net	vcl.parkinsonnurses@nhs.net