

As a local support group, our purpose is to offer friendship and support to anyone affected by Parkinson's in the Reading area. No one should face Parkinson's alone and so we aim to be as accessible as possible offering a wide range of social and therapeutic activities.

**Please note that the views expressed in the newsletter are those of the editor and contributors and do not necessarily represent those of Parkinson's UK.**

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**Edition 21**

Welcome to the latest edition of the PUK Reading Branch Newsletter. I hope you find it informative. If you have recently joined the group, then a very warm welcome to you. If you are not yet a member then you are invited to join – see **Branch Membership Information** below. [www.parkinsonsreading.org.uk](http://www.parkinsonsreading.org.uk)

### Committee Members:

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### Branch Membership Information

The suggested donation for 2025 is £10 per person. The easiest way to pay annually is by setting up a Direct Debit to **Parkinsons Disease Society of the UK, Sort Code 20-00-00, Account Number: 43353958** using the reference "Reading Membership". Alternatively, you can pay by cash or cheque, made payable to 'Parkinsons UK - Reading Branch', at any of the Reading group meetings. Any questions to [membership@parkinsonsreading.org.uk](mailto:membership@parkinsonsreading.org.uk)

**Not yet registered to receive regular updates?** Download the registration form from the "Contact Us" page of our website and follow the instructions.

## From the Chair

Parkinson's increased media profile is making a welcome contribution to the general awareness of PD and hopefully is helping to improve understanding of the things that we struggle with in everyday life. The "Movers and Shakers" podcast has done a great deal to increase knowledge within the Parkinson's community and has also stimulated a wider interest in some of the weirder features of PD symptoms. Consequently, we are most grateful that **Paul Mayhew-Archer**, one of the leading lights in the Movers and Shakers team, has kindly accepted an invitation to perform his one-man comedy show "Incurable Optimist" at the Wokingham Theatre on June 27<sup>th</sup>, as reported elsewhere in the Newsletter.

There is a lot about Parkinson's that is far from funny, but the ability to laugh at some of the situations that we find ourselves in is a good antidote to many of our annoyances and frustrations. We hope the show will raise a substantial amount of money which will help the Reading Branch continue to provide support to the local Parkinson's community, through our various events, activities and therapies.

These perform a lot of functions:

- helping us keep fit as individuals, especially those bits of us most attacked by PD
- improving our knowledge of the science of PD and what can be done about it
- providing social opportunities to make and keep friends
- share experiences and ideas about how to make life easier.

This last point is going to be the theme of one of our meetings later in the summer – a semi-social, round table discussion exchanging hints and tips for living with Parkinson's. It should be both enjoyable and informative!

For now, we have had a taste of summer sun, albeit cooled by a chill wind; let us hope for more "Goldilock's temperatures" – not too cold, not too hot! - and an enjoyable few months' of decent weather and light evenings.

Keep well, and very best wishes

Andrew Last

Chair, Parkinson's UK Reading Branch

## Dates for your Diary

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### MAY 2025

#### Wednesday May 7<sup>th</sup> from 2.15pm to 4.00pm

Branch Meeting at Our Lady of Peace Church, 338 Wokingham Road, Earley RG6 7DA

Dead Sea Saltwater Therapy, Ginny Mancey, Nirvana Spa Health Manager

#### Friday May 9<sup>th</sup> from 10.30am to 12.00pm

Wokingham Café at the Bradbury Centre, Rose Street, Wokingham RG40 1XS

#### Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup> all day

Bucket collection at Waitrose, Oxford Road. **Please book your shift with Kryz**

#### Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup> from 7.00pm to 8.30pm

Working Age Group meeting at the Waterside Pub, Fairwater Drive, Woodley, RG5 3EZ

#### Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup> from 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Tilehurst Café in the Youth Hall at the Tilehurst Methodist Church RG31 5AN

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### JUNE 2025

#### Wednesday June 4<sup>th</sup> from 2.15pm to 4.00pm

Branch Meeting at Our Lady of Peace Church, 338 Wokingham Road, Earley RG6 7DA

Overview of UCL work on mental health and the TOPHAT trial: Suzanne Reeves & Olga Zubko

#### Friday June 13<sup>th</sup> 10.30am to 12.00pm

Wokingham Café at the Bradbury Centre, Rose Street, Wokingham RG40 1XS

#### Thursday June 19<sup>th</sup> from 7.00pm to 8.30pm

Working Age Group meeting at the Waterside Pub, Fairwater Drive, Woodley, RG5 3EZ – **see page 7**

#### Friday June 27<sup>th</sup> from 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Tilehurst Café in the Youth Hall at the Tilehurst Methodist Church RG31 5AN

#### Friday June 27<sup>th</sup> 7.00pm

Paul Mayhew-Archer at Wokingham Theatre – **see page 7**

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### JULY 2025

#### July 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> all day

Bucket collection at Waitrose, Wokingham. **Please book your shift with Kryz**

## Activities organised and supported by the Reading Branch of Parkinson's UK

*For more information contact the named Committee lead at [therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org](mailto:therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org)*

<b>Hydrotherapy</b>	Park House Spa 57 Honey End Lane, Southcote RG30 4EL	Hydrotherapy is held on Mondays from 2.30pm to 3.30pm inc. changing time. £10.00 per session. Exclusively for our members. Contact David Adby at <a href="mailto:therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org">therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org</a>
<b>Pilates</b>	Our Lady of Peace, Earley, Reading RG6 7DA	Every Wednesday 12.45pm to 1.45pm; £5.00 per session - contact David Adby at <a href="mailto:therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org">therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org</a>
<b>Ballroom Dancing</b>		No longer available
<b>"BEAT Parkinson's!" group drumming sessions</b>	Stoneham Court, 100 Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4EZ	Fortnightly group Samba drumming, every other Thursday from 11am to 12:15pm. No experience required, instruments provided, partners welcome, good fun guaranteed! Contact <b>Andrew Last</b> at <a href="mailto:chair@parkinsonsreading.uk.org">chair@parkinsonsreading.uk.org</a>
<b>"Boxercise" – Boxing Exercise for Parkinson's</b>	Mapledurham Pavilion, off Woodcote Road, Caversham RG4 7EZ	Fortnightly classes on alternate Wednesdays from 16:00 – 16:45. If interested contact Colette Wood at <a href="mailto:therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org">therapies@parkinsonsreading.uk.org</a>
<b>"Express Yourself" – Speech and Communications</b>	Beansheaf Community Centre, Calcot, Reading RG31 7AW	Weekly classes focussed on improving communication skills for people with Parkinson's – <b>About to be relaunched, look out for details!</b> If interested contact Belinda Beakhouse at <a href="mailto:belindabeakhouseSLT@outlook.com">belindabeakhouseSLT@outlook.com</a> or Andrew Last at <a href="mailto:chair@parkinsonsreading.uk.org">chair@parkinsonsreading.uk.org</a>
<b>Singing for Parkinson's</b>	Stoneham Court, 100 Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4EZ	Fortnightly classes every other Thursday, 2.00pm to 3.00pm, vocal and coordination warmups, and sing-alongs. Contact Andrew Last at <a href="mailto:chair@parkinsonsreading.uk.org">chair@parkinsonsreading.uk.org</a>

## Activities organised without Reading Branch involvement – for details contact provider

<b>Boxercise Classes</b>	Wokingham Leisure Centre, Wellington Road, Wokingham RG40 2AF	<u>Delivered by Places Leisure</u> ( <a href="http://www.placesleisure.org">www.placesleisure.org</a> ) Every Tuesday from 1.15pm to 2.00pm at Wokingham Leisure Centre. Tel. 0118 977 0007
<b>Hydrotherapy - Dead Sea Saltwater Pool</b>	Nirvana Spa, Mole Road, Wokingham RG41 5DJ	<u>Delivered by Nirvana Spa.</u> Times to suit your individual needs.
<b>Walking Football</b> <b>** NEW **</b>	Mondays 12.30pm to 1.30pm at Slough	<b>See Page 10 for more information</b>
<b>Nordic Walking</b>	Thameside Promenade Car Park, RG1 8BD	Delivered by Derek Holloway, every Thursday, currently from the Tesco carpark, Napier Road at 2.45pm for a 3.00pm start Please contact <b>Derek Holloway</b> beforehand on 07843 584 900 or <a href="mailto:derekholloway1@gmail.com">derekholloway1@gmail.com</a> No experience needed. Poles available for loan

Parkinson's UK is the operating name of the Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom. A charity registered in England and Wales (258197) and in Scotland (SC037554)

## Neuro Physiotherapy Options

Here is a summary of the neuro-physio sessions organised by the Reading Branch - select the class most suitable for your individual needs.

### Movement and Balance Exercise

Home-based exercise via Zoom, Thursdays from 12.45pm to 1.30pm. Session led by Sarah Papworth. Exercise from the comfort of your home or anywhere that has an internet connection. Feel free to Contact Sarah directly to find out more on **07775 647054**. £5.00 per session.

**Zoom meeting ID: 859 771 2511 / Password: nD42pD.**

### Medium intensity classes in Wokingham

Led by Kelly Dodds, at Bradbury Centre, Rose Street, Wokingham RG40 1XS

Every Tuesday 10.30am to 11.15am

Every Thursday 1.00pm to 1.45pm

£7.00 per session

Email [therapies@parkinsonsreading.org.uk](mailto:therapies@parkinsonsreading.org.uk) to find out more about the Wokingham classes

### Medium intensity classes in Caversham

Led by Sarah Mindham. PD-specific exercises at a medium/high intensity.

At Mapledurham Pavilion, signposted off the Woodcote Road, Caversham RG4 7EZ

Every Monday 2.30pm to 3.30pm, including PD-Warrior style exercises

Every Wednesday 3.00pm to 4.00pm, including circuits and PD-Warrior style exercises.

First session is free - £30 per month for one class per week

Email **PDExercise@hotmail.com** to find out more about the Caversham classes

## Don't miss this!

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/worlds-toughest-drive-my-african-adventure/on-demand/76602-001>

This documentary shows the incredible and inspirational 2-year journey through Africa made by 61-year-old, former army officer, Guy Deacon who had had PD for 12 years.

The people he met and the personal stories he heard were heart breaking. The high cost of Levodopa medication results in little or no access to any kind of treatment. Worse of all, people believe that PD is a sign of witchcraft and is contagious, so people with PD are often isolated and mistreated. Despite the enormous challenges, there are some incredible people trying to make a difference raising awareness and renovating the stigma associated with PD.

I encourage you to watch this programme if you have never seen it. – Nigel.

## World Parkinson's Day – April 11th



RBH Main Entrance

### Raising Awareness for the Branch and the Hospital

On World Parkinson's Day, April 11th, our branch ran an information stall in the entrance lobby of the Royal Berks Hospital.

Krys Lewis led the organisation of the day, liaising with consultant Dr Apurba Chatterjee and Parkinson's Nurse, Helen Avery, from the RBH. We had visits from many of the RBH team that work with people with Parkinson's: doctors, nurses, physios, researchers and occupational therapists.

As well as displaying some of the most recent booklets from Parkinson's UK, we had information about our branch activities. We all had t-shirts in the updated PUK branding, with the 'Parkinson's tulip.'

A 'guess the name of the (5ft) bear' competition helped to attract attention. Bonnie the bear found a welcoming home with one of the researchers, Styliana, who works at RBH for the TOPHAT clinical trial (see June branch meeting). We will be following up on the contacts we made so we can keep up to date with changes in the RBH team, and they know about what we are doing.



Styliana and Bonnie the Bear

### Research Webinar on World Parkinson's Day

Members might be interested in watching this video of a Webinar on research that took place on World Parkinson's Day (April 11<sup>th</sup>). It provides an update on various research initiatives, and features Reading Branch member, Helen George, talking about (at 32:40 into the video) her experience of involvement in research trials and various Parkinson's UK initiatives.

The link is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbgmB-Nwph4>

Well done, Helen!



## Comedy from Paul Mayhew-Archer

co-writer of the Vicar of Dibley

### *Incurable Optimist*



**Friday June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 7.00pm**

**Wokingham Theatre**

**Twyford Road,**

**Wokingham**

**RG40 5YU**

Tickets £15 per person from us at Branch meetings and Parkinson's cafes in Wokingham and Tilehurst. All profits to Parkinson's UK local branch to support the Parkinson's community in Wokingham and Reading. Alternatively, buy direct from [www.wokinghamtheatre.org.uk](http://www.wokinghamtheatre.org.uk)

The car park is free with level access to theatre, and there are no steps to the front row of seats.

Enquiries: [membership@parkinsonsreading.org.uk](mailto:membership@parkinsonsreading.org.uk). Whether or not you have seen Paul before, this promises to be a very special evening.

Book your tickets now!

### **Working Age Meet Up**

A relaxed meet up at the back of the restaurant in a private area of a pub, for people of working age affected by Parkinson's - including spouses and partners. There is no charge to attend, the only cost is the price of any refreshments you wish to purchase.

- Drop-in - no need to book or let us know you're coming
- Mutual support and encouragement
- Chance to share tips and experiences and make new friends
- Occasional special guests

We are here to support each other and arrange social activities. There is also a WhatsApp group. We meet monthly on the third Thursday of the month from 7pm to 8.30pm at The Waterside, Fairwater Drive, Woodley RG5 3EZ.

For more information, please contact Katy Slade at [Kslade@Parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:Kslade@Parkinsons.org.uk)



## Please Support Izzy

I'm not sure how many of you know Izzy. Izzy is in her final year at Reading University and doing her dissertation on Parkinson's and how it effects language. A couple of our members were helping Izzy with her research and she has helped at our branch meetings and baked cakes for the refreshments.

Izzy is doing a skydive on 1st June near her hometown of Hibaldstow to raise money for Parkinson's UK and I would like to invite you to sponsor her via her [Just Giving](#) page.

Even though Izzy will be leaving Reading, she's been very thoughtful and managed to leave a collection tin at the Tesco where she worked in the town centre.

We would like to thank Izzy for her help and wish her every success in her studies.

## Marathon Fundraising!

We were delighted to hear that Alex, TK and Liz Wong's granddaughter, raised the magnificent sum of £820 for Parkinson's UK when she ran in the London Landmarks Marathon on 6<sup>th</sup> April. Well done, Alex, and thank you very much for your Parkinson's contribution. Your grandparents should be very proud of you!

## Whitchurch Art Café – Another resounding success!

Last Saturday local branch members took over the Whitchurch Art Café to sell tea, coffee, cake and paintings! As last year it was extremely popular – nice to see so many familiar faces – and early indications are that over £600 was raised for branch funds. Well done, and thanks to Colette, Caroline, Sarah and everyone else involved.



## Janet Blackburn

We are very sorry to report that our member Janet Blackburn has sadly passed away. Many of us will have got to know Janet at various Branch events and will have fond memories of her.

Her daughter Meriel has asked us to share funeral details with anyone who may have known her, and all who would like to attend will be most welcome. It is taking place on Friday May 2nd, with a Committal service at 2:30 pm, at Reading Crematorium South Chapel, with a thanksgiving service at Christ Church Woodley at 3:30 pm, followed by refreshments. Full details

here: <https://janetblackburn.muchloved.com/>

If you would like to attend at Christ Church, it would be helpful to advise Meriel to help plan catering. Her email address is [meriel.blackburn@btopenworld.com](mailto:meriel.blackburn@btopenworld.com)

## Joy Alcock

Sadly, my wife Joy Alcock who was a member of the Reading Branch, passed away on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March at West Berkshire Community Hospital where she received excellent care. Cause of death Parkinsons/Multiple System Atrophy.

We were members of the Branch for several years but not being able to attend events since early 2024 due to Joys disabilities. Joy and I enjoyed being part of the Reading Branch Community especially the meetings, drumming, ballroom dancing and Christmas Lunches. Along with your helpful and welcoming members. we found being a member of the branch a help coping with this terrible illness.

Best wishes to all, John Alcock.

## Powered wheelchair on offer Would you find a powered wheelchair useful?

Steve Allen, who many will know from the talks he has given to our Branch meetings (most recently on 2nd April), has been asked to dispose of a battery powered wheelchair. It isn't a buggy intended for significant outdoor use but can be used both inside and outside the house. He would be delighted to find someone who might get some use out of it, at no charge.

His email address is: [drstephenallen@btinternet.com](mailto:drstephenallen@btinternet.com)  
Please contact him if you would like more information.

## Tilehurst Triangle WI Donation

Thanks to Sarah Ellis, whose husband Tony has PD, the Branch has benefitted from a massive donation of £1,750 from Tilehurst Triangle Women's Institute, after Parkinson's was adopted as its Charity of the Year for 2024-25. A giant-size cheque, to match the giant size donation, was handed to the Branch Chair at the WI AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> March. We are truly grateful for this generous contribution to Branch funds, which will help us support the local Parkinson's community.



## Fighting Fit

If you are relatively recently diagnosed with Parkinson's, you might be interested to know about the "Fighting Fit" weekends organised by Parkinson's UK. Several of us have taken part in these three-day residential weekends over the last few years, and I think without exception we have found them extremely valuable - that has certainly been the feedback.

The programme is a mixture of briefing sessions on topics such as nutrition, exercise and the research landscape, hands-on taster sessions for different types of therapy and exercise, and socially oriented sessions providing the opportunity to relax and get to know fellow participants better. There are usually no more than 25 participants, and our experience is that strong bonds are often formed at these weekends that last for years.

There are a few places available on the next weekend, 16 to 18 May, at Cookham. Others are taking place at Sparsholt (near Winchester) 11-13 July, and in Canterbury 5-7 September. Details can be found here:

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/fighting-fit>

Alternatively contact me if you would like to find out more about my own experience of the weekend.

Andrew Last  
Chair, Parkinson's UK Reading branch  
Email: [chair@parkinsonsreading.org.uk](mailto:chair@parkinsonsreading.org.uk)

## New Walking Football

From Katy Slade, PUK

A new Walking Football for Parkinson's has started at Slough Town Football Club - this activity has been funded by a Parkinson's UK Physical Activities grant and is currently FREE. The action takes place every Monday (except bank holidays) 12.30pm to 1.30pm at the [Arbour Park, Stoke Road Stadium, SL2 5AY](#). In addition, the cafe/bar is open for anyone who would like to go along and just socialise. I appreciate this is a daytime activity and may not suit everyone but if you can go along, please do....

Full details can be found on the [Parkinson's UK website here](#), details can also be found on [Slough Town Football Club website here](#). Please do share with anyone you know who may be interested ... or perhaps you think should be interested.....

If you would like more details, please do contact me, Katy Slade at [kslade@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:kslade@parkinsons.org.uk).

## Reading Branch Carer's Group – Afternoon Tea



On January 30<sup>th</sup> the group enjoyed an afternoon tea at Riseley Tearoom

## Goodbye and Thank You to Gill McInnes

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March we said thank you and goodbye to Gill McInnes who has been our tutor for ballroom dancing for many years - so many, even Gill can't remember when she started, but she has now decided it is time to stop.

We depend so much upon the time, skill and enthusiasm of the tutors who run our classes. Some of us, who now have a grasp of social foxtrot and waltzing thanks to Gill, gathered at the end of her final class to show our appreciation with a small gift.

Gill told us she had enjoyed every minute' of leading our classes. She will be a hard act to follow, but we are looking for a way for us to have some form of dance-based therapy group in future.

