

Oxford Branch of Parkinson's UK

Chair's report 2024/2025

Introduction

Described as 'outstanding' by Parkinson's UK CEO Caroline Russell, the Oxford branch has continued to thrive over the last twelve months. With a stalwart and well-connected Committee, we've offered our 250+ members a varied programme of social and exercise activities.

Key achievements during the year

- We saved the Botley Big, Bold and Balance class, and the carers' coffee group along with it.
- We launched the Thrive in 2025 campaign, a fun and sociable way for everyone to try something new every month.
- OXWAG continued to support working age people who are affected by Parkinson's.
- We surveyed the Branch members in March 2024, which helped establish our priorities and gave us some great ideas for our 2025 speaker programme.
- We strengthened connections and sharing information between carers, providing much-needed mutual support within our carer community.
- We collaborated with MuMo Creative to continue Dance for Parkinson's classes, bring back singing classes, and introduce the new Mindful Movement class.
- We provided the JR and every GP surgery in our Branch area with up to date Branch and Parky Pals leaflets, increasing our visibility in the community.
- We provided opportunities to socialise at our monthly Branch meetings and regular lunch events.
- We provided two *First Steps* courses for recently-diagnosed people with Parkinson's and their partners.

Key challenges

- We're very proud of our Parky Pals befriending programme, so it's disappointing that there aren't (yet) many takers. We think that this is because it's not well advertised, so the recent GP leaflet drop may help this.
- Organising fundraising events takes a lot of skill, time and energy. Kit Marriott is stepping down from the Committee after many years of leading this, and our hardworking Committee doesn't have the bandwidth to mount major events and campaigns. We need to explore alternative ways to raise the funds that will keep our Branch thriving. And we'd love our members to [think of ways that they can fundraise individually](#), because every little helps!

Thank you!

Grateful thanks to everyone on the Committee for their contribution to keeping our Branch thriving. I brought my corporate approach to Committee activities, which I know took a bit of getting used to! So thank you for your tact, diplomacy and support as I navigated my way through the first few months. Specifically, thanks to:

- **Lynne Allen** is not a Committee member, but is taking the lead in organising the Thrive in 2025 activity programme. Given that I launched it in January, then announced I would be stepping down in March, she could be forgiven for feeling a bit peeved! But she's doing a brilliant job; thank you, Lynne!
- **Jonathan Bromley** continues to provide sterling technical support, managing the website, email, telephone lines and the Branch meeting technical Stuff. We couldn't function as a Branch without him - thank you, Jonathan!
- **Sally Bromley** is basically Branch royalty! She has been a great ambassador for the Branch both in Oxfordshire and in her role as a Trustee of Parkinson's UK. She has also been a great mentor to me. Thank you, Sally!
- **The Friday morning carers coffee group** - Claire, Josey, Christine, Gill, Francoise, Judith, Louise, Lynne, Margaret and Rachel. That weekly hour is a much-needed oasis and outlet for everyone who spends the other 167 hours selflessly caring for their partner. I've cried my heart out, laughed my head off, and everything in between with these beautiful human beings. Thank you, everyone!

- **Josey Carpenter** was the first person that I met in the Branch (and she was the broker who lured me onto the Committee!). Josey is the octopus fielding all those not-quite-sure-who-does-this queries at the heart of the Branch and keeping everyone informed, as well as championing carer issues. Thank you, Josey!
- **Martin Cowell** was (and is) a huge support in sharing his connections and experience to help me settle into the role of Chair. My weekly chats with him have been a highlight of the year. He's also organised all the very well-attended lunches and the Branch holiday. Thank you, Martin!
- **Steve Duhan** is stepping down as Treasurer; thank you, Steve, for expertly managing our finances and contributing so much to Committee life.
- **Lona Fedorowicz** contributed energy and resourcefulness like you've never seen to organising the Big Cream Tea and negotiating Stuff (e.g. free milk for the post-BBB refreshments from Tesco). Thank you, Lona!
- **Nigel and Debbie Hamilton** manage incoming members brilliantly, warmly welcoming everyone to Branch meetings and putting newcomers at ease in moments. Thank you, Nigel and Debbie!
- **Pamela Hutchinson-Collins** is a woman of many talents and tireless energy! This year, she has managed respite care, offered support to people as a Parky Pal, and worked closely with MuMo Creative to add more activities for our Branch members, including the much-welcomed return of singing classes. Thank you, Pamela!
- **Paul Latham** continues to deliver the *First Steps* programme with warmth and humour, brilliantly assisted by his wonderful wife, **Sue Latham**. A two-day programme for recently diagnosed people with Parkinson's, *First Steps* is the first contact with the Branch for many attendees. Paul is an inspiring example of getting on with life no matter what. Thank you, Paul and Sue!
- **Roosa Leimu-Brown** and the team at MoMu Creative continue to offer inclusive, joyful spaces for our members to exercise and express themselves. Thank you, Roosa!
- **Barbara Levick** is our wonderful Committee secretary. Her fingers fly over the iPad during our Committee meetings, and she somehow makes sense of two packed hours of intense discussion (plus many detours from the subject!) in the meeting minutes. Thank you, Barbara!

- **Kit Marriott** is stepping down as fundraising lead after 14 years on the Committee. Thank you, Kit, for the many (many) thousands of pounds that you have raised for our Branch.
- **Dr Kevin McFarthing** is our expert brainbox and keeps us up to date with all the latest research, as well as making us proud when he takes to the stage at World Parkinson's Congress! Thank you, Kevin, and here's to Phoenix in 2026!
- **Paul Mayhew-Archer** continues to fly the flag for the Oxford branch, and has invited several Branch members to take part in the *Movers and Shakers* podcast. We feel honoured to have him in our Branch – thank you, Paul!
- The Oxfordshire branches of Parkinson's UK were included in the nominated charities selected by **Cllr Alison Rooke** for her year as Chair, for which we are very grateful. Thank you, Alison!
- We're incredibly fortunate to have close links with the internationally renowned **Oxford Parkinson's Disease Centre**. Thank you to **Professor Michele Hu**, **Professor Richard Wade-Martins**, **Lorraine Dyson**, and all the researchers who have been to our meetings and helped us to run fundraising events. Particular thanks to **Elly Robles-Rodriguez**, who has been around to help at almost every meeting and event over the year. Thank you, everyone!
- **Claire Toplisek** has created a safe and supportive space for carers to share information, offer mutual support and build friendships. Thank you, Claire!
- **Peter Thompson** continues to find the most interesting and hard-to-pin-down speakers for our Branch meetings. Thank you for your tenacious charm, Peter!
- **Katy Slade** and **Zoë Sole** (happily, perfectly aligned with this alphabetical list!) have provided sterling support and encouragement to the Branch in their capacity as Area Development Manager and Local Volunteer Officer for the South East. Thank you, Katy and Zoë!
- **Dean Stowell** has recently joined the Committee to represent OXWAG, which brings a welcome additional perspective to discussions and decisions. Thank you, Dean!
- **Trina Wilcock** continues to run OXWAG with warmth and compassion, providing a relaxed and informal space for working age people affected by Parkinson's. Thank you, Trina!

- **Sarah Wheatley** is our beloved Big, Bold and Balance teacher, and she was willing to work with us to keep the Botley class going when it was about to close. Thank you, Sarah!
- **Nick Wrigley** manages Parky Pals brilliantly, and has worked hard to raise its profile. And when we decided to change our daytime Branch meeting venue at the last minute, Nick volunteered to lurk in the lobby of the original venue to direct people who hadn't spotted the change – thank you, Nick!

Finally, I'd like to thank every member of the Oxford Branch for making me feel so welcome, and for supporting my mum and me over the last two years. I've hugely enjoyed my time as Chair, and I'm sad that it was only for a year! I wish the new Chair lots of success.

Rebecca Berry

March 2025