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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

I wonder whether in these lockdown days you have undertaken a new project or activity. My new pastime started when I decided to examine a box of old family photos. As I looked at them, it struck me that I am the only one left who could say who those in the photo were or where they were when the photo was taken. They each needed a story to make sense of the image. So I chose the ones that had some links to my life and began writing about them using the photo as a prompt. I am really enjoying it.

Of course the present generation won't need to venture into providing a story for their many hundreds of photos accumulated on social media, because, I believe these days Facebook does that for you!

The other completely new discoveries for me are Skype and Zoom. As a family we now Skype every couple of days, seeing each other makes such a difference. Until three weeks ago I only associated zoom with lenses. Our two Branch Zoom groups have been such a success. It has been so good to catch up. In our first coffee morning Zoom we had members join us from the deepest French countryside and throughout we were treated to farmyard noise.

Do drop in on one of our Zoom meetings. It is so straight forward. A couple of clicks and you are in! You don't have to stay the whole time, it will be good to see you again whatever the length of time you stay.

What things have you tried in lockdown? It would be really interesting to hear about what new activities you are pursuing or what fresh perspectives you have found. Please email them to me at parkinsonshjm@gmail.com

THOUGHTS FROM OUR COMMITTEE

Val Corke sent the following on the same theme of fresh perspectives:

Everybody has become increasingly aware of the birds singing and the benefits to our mental health of being outside. Clive and I, on our daily permitted exercise, have been trying to identify all the trees we regularly pass and perhaps have taken for granted in the past.

Each has its own distinctive overall shape; the barks vary from smooth and silver to chocolate brown and deeply fissured; the leaves may be oblong, palmate, pointed ... the list goes on. Because we see these trees on a daily basis, we are able to observe the magic of the leaves slowly opening, see

whether they have catkins, or flowers like the magnificent horse chestnut I can see through the window as I write.

We have started to photograph individual trees and bring home leaves to try to identify the (many) we are unsure of. There is lots of information online including pictures. It becomes increasingly fascinating as you learn more about each tree - not just to identify it, but its habits, how it contributes to the environment, what the wood can be used for, the folklore relating to each species...

Your walk will never be the same again!

Clive Corke sent the following email which includes information about the difficulties the lockdown is giving former England spinner Shaun Udal:

"Zoom" Land is certainly good fun and certainly makes a difference to the self-isolation most of us have to endure at the moment!

The days and times seem ideal as they are a very pleasant reminder of the more light-hearted joys of PD!!

This certainly includes having a bit of very enjoyable "virtual company"!

We try to 'phone someone every day to see how they are getting on and, of course, try and go for a 1/2 hour walk and/or Bentley (mobility scooter) trip every day for a breath of fresh air!!

The other interesting Parkinson's-related thing was an article in the paper about former England spinner, Shaun Udal. We hadn't realised he had been diagnosed with PD - just before his 50th birthday. He is finding the lock-down particularly difficult as his deep-tissue treatment massage (on the NHS incidentally) has had to stop. It was giving him huge relief from pain and enabling him to walk and speak more freely.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/cricket/2020/04/10/treatment-parkinsons-hold-coronavirus-crisis-tough-sayshaun/>

Didi Jepson, who before lockdown really enjoyed local Dance for Parkinson's classes, has found an online Dance for Parkinson's site which she really enjoys. Google the 'Mark Morris Dance Group'.

<https://markmorrisdancegroup.org/community/pd/dance-for-pd/>

TAI CHI - WHERE NEXT?

Brian Rawsley has written the following article about the benefits he has found from Tai Chi.

While classes are closed because of lockdown it is still possible to take part on line:
antoniavassiloudi@hotmail.com. (Toni is also holding her Active Balance classes online)

Many of you attended the January Meeting, where guest presenter Toni Vassilouthis took us through some Tai Chi exercises. In trying these exercises, you may have felt "there is something here for me" and may be tempted to learn and try some more. I can give my own experiences, which may be a helpful guide for you to find a next step.

What is Tai Chi?

It is a collection of gentle and slow movement sequences, usually a collection of individual movements called "stances", which can be strung together into a sequence called a "Tai Chi Form."

Is Tai Chi originally a martial art?

Yes- it is adapted from a Chinese martial art, and contains some self-defence movements, though these are performed in a slow and controlled manner.

What are Stances?

Stances are short, controlled movements, often used as “warm up” exercises. Some have interesting names such as “Parting the Clouds” “Touching the Sky and Scooping the Sea” and “White Crane Spreads its Wings”

What is a Tai Chi Form?

A Tai Chi Form is a collection of stances linked together in a smooth and flowing sequence. There are many different Tai Chi Forms.

Can I learn Tai Chi from a Book?

In my experience this is difficult. It is hard to follow the required slow and co-ordinated movements

Can I learn Tai Chi from a DVD/Video?

I have found it possible to learn a few stances, enough for a “warm up”. I have used a book which comes with DVD called “Simply Tai Chi” by Graham Bryant and Lorraine James. “Used” copies are available from Amazon for under a fiver!

Are there many styles of Tai Chi?

Yes- there is a bewildering array of them

Can I learn Tai Chi from a Class?

In my experience this is the best way. Before lockdown I regularly attended the class “Tai Chi for Falls Prevention and Arthritis” led by Toni Vassilouthis at Churchdown Community Centre, Parton Road, GL32JH, 12.30 to 1.30 on Thursdays, email antoniavassiloudi@hotmail.com, tel. **0780 3345702**. Course fee £5 pay-as-you-go. Free parking or bus 97 from Cheltenham, café on site.

What happens at a Class?

Toni spends about half an hour covering some individual stances as a “warm up” and then we learn, and practice, a Tai Chi Form for the second half hour. Beginners are welcome. Many of the stances can be performed seated. Class size is around twelve.

Toni structures the lessons and chooses the Forms from a programme called “Tai Chi for Health” led by Dr Paul Lam.

What has been my personal experience of learning Tai Chi?

I was motivated to attend a class following an article in Parkinson’s UK about Tai Chi. I had not previously tried anything like it, and had no experience of any martial arts. I have grown to benefit from it mentally and physically.

Mentally I find the warm-up exercises very relaxing. Physically, I feel sure my posture and balance have been improved, as well as my “sure footedness” while walking.

I feel a small but noticeable difference most weeks simply in my walking about half a mile to the class, then half a mile home again.

On the way home I am less ‘shuffly’ and more sure footed. Yes, in my experience it is well worth a try!

Brian Rawnsley

RESEARCH NEWS

Why are researchers interested in gut bacteria?

There is increasing understanding that bacteria in the gut is somehow linked to Parkinson's and therefore can be targeted as an area to attempt treatments.

Research has shown certain diets including high fibre ones and water based probiotics have been linked to the promotion of beneficial bacteria. These "good" bacteria inhibit the formation of harmful proteins linked to Parkinson's and help to clear harmful protein clumps.

Researchers are also interested in the idea of boosting "good" bacteria with drinkable probiotics. Unfortunately, the bacteria in many probiotics are unlikely to reach the lower gut because the acidic environment of the stomach prevents them reaching their destination.

But an oral water based probiotic called Symprove claims to be able to deliver live bacteria to the lower gut. Therefore research, funded by Parkinson's UK, is underway to test if Symprove might improve motor and non-motor symptoms for Parkinson's

What can improve quality of life?

Attendees at a PUK conference were asked: *'What is the single most important thing you do to maintain or improve your quality of life?'*

72 people responded and perhaps unsurprisingly the most frequent response was exercise in one form or another. However other important aspects included things like staying positive, continuing work, seeing friends and family and humour.

Additionally researchers found that exercise has a beneficial effect on depressive symptoms. The more time spent on exercise per week the larger the reduction in depressive symptoms.

Researchers also found a small but significant beneficial effect on thinking and memory

You can keep up to date with research news from the magazine Progress

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/research/progress-our-research-magazine>

STAYING CONNECTED & OBTAINING HELP OR ADVICE

There is support on offer for anyone affected by Parkinson's from the Parkinson's UK helpline:

- Call FREE on **0808 800 0303**
- Opening times: Monday-Friday: 9am-7pm, Saturday: 10am-2pm
(Closed Sundays/bank holidays)
- Email: hello@parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's Local Advisers, whilst no longer making home visits in line with Government advice, are still providing information and support by telephone, video call and by email.

Our Local Advisor can be contacted on **0344 225 9821** or adviser10.west@parkinsons.org.uk

The Parkinson's UK website advice on [Coronavirus and Parkinson's](#) is regularly updated, for example with advice on **managing your mental health while staying at home**

The Parkinson's UK [Facebook group](#) is another way to stay connected - there are now more than 1500 members of the group.

The latest edition of The Parkinson is on line: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/your-magazine>. It contains interesting articles on managing medication and maintaining a good sitting position with Parkinson's.

Parkinson's UK have published [staying active resources](#) to help everyone **Stay Active at Home**.

Gloucestershire County Council Adult Social Care is now operating a **Community Help Hub** phone line that has been set up to help people who are struggling with the effects of the Covid 19.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with things like getting to the shops, picking up prescriptions, walking the dog, etc. then give us a call on **01452-583519**.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/>

The hub advisors won't be able to directly complete these tasks but will be able to either refer you to the organisations who can or give you guidance on where to get the help you need.

Gloucestershire Carers Hub are now offering occasional Zoom Coffee Chats for Carers. Anyone who is a carer but not registered with the Gloucestershire Carers Hub can get info from their web site

<https://gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk/>

For those of you who are not on-line, and therefore receive our newsletter in the post, the branch committee hopes that our regular newsletters will help us keep you in touch with you during lockdown.

Over the coming weeks a committee member may, however, ring you to say hello, have a chat and to check that you are ok. If you would prefer not to receive such calls please inform the committee member when they ring. Our committee members' names are listed below under Branch Contacts.

USEFUL INFORMATION

BRANCH ON-LINE EVENTS (on Zoom)

Parkinson's Cafe on Zoom **11.00am Thursdays May 14th and 28th.**

An invite and meeting link details will we be emailed to the branch mailing list before each Parkinson's Café.

Table Tennis Zoom Meeting **2.00pm Fridays May 8th and 22nd.**

An invite and meeting link details will we be emailed to the group members before each meeting.

BRANCH MEETINGS & REGULAR EVENTS

NB: All face to face meetings/events are cancelled until further notice.

BRANCH CONTACTS

Branch Chair: Harry Matthews 07515 857110 or parkinsonshjm@gmail.com

Branch and Membership Secretary: Ian Jones 07903 850597 or ianjones.parkinsons@gmail.com

Branch Treasurer: Dot Simpson 01242 583894 or dsimpson.parkinsons@googlemail.com

Committee Members: Didi Jepson, James Howell, Val & Clive Corke, Joy & James Ingram

Branch Website: <http://www.cheltenhamparkinsons.org.uk/>

USEFUL CONTACTS

Parkinson's UK Website: <http://www.parkinsons.org.uk>

Parkinson's UK Helpline: (phone free) 0808 800 0303

Parkinson's Local Advisor: 0344 225 9821 or adviser10.west@parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's Nurse Specialist Service: 0300 421 8109 or Parkinsons.team@glos-care.nhs.uk

Age UK Help Team: Monday – Friday 9am – 4pm 01452 422660

Age UK Out of Hospital Team: Monday – Friday 9am – 4pm 01452 420937or420928

Mind: Infoline: 0300 123 3393 or www.mind.org.uk/information-support

Samaritans: call free any time, from any phone, on 116 123.