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CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

For the Wise Men it was a star in the East. For me, it was the floor to ceiling tins of Celebration and Quality Street in my local Co-op that signalled that it was only 12 weeks to Christmas!

Do you remember being in a nativity play? I just about remember being shepherd number two. When their time came, my son was camel number one and of course my daughter was an angel; so typecast....

I read recently about some research results from Virgin Media. After interviewing 20,000 people they concluded that being given a major part in a nativity play was a good predictor of future leadership potential. Thank heavens schools look out for late developers!

On a less contentious note, I once worked in a school in which the producer of the nativity play, being the music teacher, turned the Inn at Bethlehem into a pub. Most of all, it was a place for singalongs!

Her idea was to open the children up to the world of old music hall songs. So we all (especially the grandparents in the audience!) enjoyed singing old favourites such as "Daisy Daisy "and" My Old Man Said Follow The Van" etc.

This YouTube clip unforgettably captures an angel's enthusiasm for singing:

<https://youtu.be/dpsXNlarAk8>

There is an apocryphal story about a naughty inn keeper who realised that after enduring week after week of nagging from his teacher, his performance provided a perfect opportunity for revenge. So when Joseph asked the question: "Is there any room in the Inn?" Without a moment's hesitation, the innkeeper replied "Why, of course there is sir, just step inside and follow me!"

I expect that nativity plays and carol singing this year will be for the most part virtual. I have just heard about one with a difference. **Carols by Car-Light** at Cheltenham Racecourse. I wonder if the idea came from Joe Biden's Election Rallies? These took place in car parks with those attending staying in their cars to hear his message through the car radio. A far cry from his opponent's mask free adoring crowds who were packed together like sardines in overcrowded venues.

So on 20th December at 4pm or at 7pm you can drive to the racecourse and can sing carols in the safety of your car. Details from <https://lovecheltenham.org/>. Proceeds from the event to Cheltenham Foodbank. How imaginative!

Have you decided yet where you are going to spend Christmas? We discussed this issue at one of our Zoom coffee mornings at the end of November. The majority of those present were more than happy to stay at home and not risk infection, especially now that the first of the vaccines has arrived.

At the time of writing this, the Health Secretary is holding out the hope that all will be well after Easter. Which this year is April 4th by which time the Co-op will have long had its hot cross buns on display and, finely balanced among the boxes of chocolate eggs, will be the Easter Bunnies who will have been staring at us since Valentine's Day!

A GOOD STOCKING FILLER:

Michael J. Fox's (MJF) is best known as the teenage helper of Doc Brown in Back to the Future. For anyone involved with Parkinson's he is also known as someone who had early onset Parkinson's and was diagnosed in 1991 aged 29. For some years he tried to hide his illness, but suspicion that he might have a neurological condition began to circulate. When Journalists were seen to track his regular hospital appointments, he disclosed his condition before he was outed. He was instantly motivated to be involved with fundraising and set up The MJF Foundation. He said to the first chief Executive of the organisation "Your job will be only temporary because we will have found a cure by 2000!" Sadly Parkinson's turned out to be far more complex than he imagined. This lack of initial success did not diminish his efforts and his foundation has, over the years raised millions of dollars.

Something of MJF's amazing energy to find a cure can be seen in his two previous bestselling memoirs, Lucky Man and Always Looking Up. These deal with how he came to terms with the illness without losing any of his tremendous optimism.

His new book is called "**No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality**". In it Michael shares personal stories and observations about illness and health which anyone involved with Parkinson's will readily identify: ageing, the strength of family and friends, and how our perceptions about time affect the way we approach mortality. Thoughtful and moving, but with Fox's trademark sense of humour, his book provides a vehicle for reflection about our lives, our loves, and our losses.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2020:

Jane Henderson, Parkinson's UK Network Support Officer, writes:

*When the opportunity came around in 2020 to nominate volunteers for the **Parkinson's UK Volunteer Awards** my thoughts went directly to Dot Simpson.*

Dot and I have worked together for 10 years now and have a lot of joint experience of the Branch and the activities and initiatives we have tried over the years to reach people affected by Parkinson's, both in Cheltenham and countywide.

Most recently Dot worked, with Harry, to start up Parkinson's Cafes in Cheltenham, which have been very successful, and has been hosting a Zoom Parkinson's Café, as an alternative, after face-to-face activities halted due to Covid-19.

Dot has taken on many roles for the Branch over the years and can always be relied on to provide information to me, support for members and an incredible amount of skill and commitment to the Branch committee.

I am delighted Dot was chosen by an independent panel to receive this award and her value has been recognised at the highest level and I am sure you will join me in saying:

Congratulations!

SOME DRUG RESEARCH NEWS

An exciting new drug known as NLX-112 is undergoing its first human trials in Sweden. It is being funded from the MJF foundation and Parkinson's UK. It tackles the worst involuntary movements known as dyskinesia which is presented by some who have Parkinson's.

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE TEWKESBURY GROUP

We are looking for volunteers to take over the excellent work of Jim and Wendy Roberts in running our Tewkesbury Group in the New Year.

If interested in finding out more please contact Jane Henderson, Parkinson's UK Network Support Officer on 0344 225 3694 or 07815610579 or at jhenderson@parkinsons.org.uk

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

Thank you to Ian Jones, our new Branch Secretary, for passing on to us a Christmas Cryptic Crossword that he has compiled.

The Crossword and some Tips and Hints for its completion are attached, along with the Solution.

No Cheating!!

INTERGENERATIONAL SINGALONG

Gloucestershire Academy of Music are running weekly online intergenerational music sessions which bring primary school children and adults together with singing, actions and creative listening. These sessions are on Fridays, 3.50-4.30pm and are free.

Please email becky@glosacadmusic.org if you are interested in joining them. They use Zoom for the sessions and Becky will arrange a personal Zoom meeting with anyone who would like to take part so that she can meet them and make sure everyone feels comfortable with the technology.

Becky says: 'We normally have a lot of fun and a really good singalong!'

PARKINSON'S AND CORONAVIRUS - OBTAINING HELP OR ADVICE:

There is support on offer for anyone affected by Parkinson's from the **Parkinson's UK helpline, Website** and **Parkinson's Local Advisors** (See **Useful Contacts** below).

The Parkinson's UK website advice on **Coronavirus and Parkinson's** is regularly updated as Government and NHS policies and advice change.

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/news/understanding-coronavirus-and-parkinsons>

Parkinson's UK have a booklet with information and support about Parkinson's and coronavirus. You can order a copy of this booklet, free of charge, here.

The following guidance from the Parkinson's UK Website was **up-to-date on 14th December.**

What should I do?

Follow the guidance where you live

You must follow the guidance where you live. You can find out about local restrictions on the relevant government websites:

England. From 2 December there are local restriction tiers by area across England. You need to **follow the rules for your tier.**

NB: Gloucestershire is currently in Tier 2

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know#high-alert>

Tier 2: High alert

This is for areas with a higher or rapidly rising level of infections, where some additional restrictions need to be in place.

In Tier 2:

- you must not socialise with anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place
- you must not socialise in a group of more than 6 people outside, including in a garden or a public space – this is called the ‘rule of 6’
- businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, other than those which remain closed by law, such as nightclubs
- pubs and bars must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals
- hospitality businesses selling food or drink for consumption on their premises are required to:
 - provide table service only, in premises which sell alcohol
 - close between 11pm and 5am (hospitality venues in airports, ports, transport services and motorway service areas are exempt)
 - stop taking orders after 10pm
- hospitality businesses and venues selling food and drink for consumption off the premises can continue to do so after 10pm as long as this is through delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-through
- early closure (11pm) applies to casinos, cinemas, theatres, museums, bowling alleys, amusement arcades, funfairs, theme parks, adventure parks and activities, and bingo halls. Cinemas, theatres and concert halls can stay open beyond 11pm in order to conclude performances that start before 10pm
- public attendance at outdoor and indoor events (performances and shows) is permitted, limited to whichever is lower: 50% capacity, or either 2,000 people outdoors or 1,000 people indoors
- public attendance at spectator sport and business events can resume inside and outside, subject to social contact rules and limited to whichever is lower: 50% capacity, or either 2,000 people outdoors or 1,000 people indoors
- places of worship remain open but you must not socialise with people from outside of your household or support bubble while you are indoors there, unless a legal exemption applies
- weddings and funerals can go ahead with restrictions on numbers of attendees – 15 people can attend wedding ceremonies and receptions, 30 people can attend funeral ceremonies, and 15 people can attend linked commemorative events such as wakes or stonettings.
- organised outdoor sport, and physical activity and exercise classes can continue
- organised indoor sport, physical activity and exercise classes will only be permitted if it is possible for people to avoid mixing with people they do not live with (or share a support bubble with). There are exceptions for indoor disability sport, sport for educational purposes and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, which can take place with larger groups mixing
- you can continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, but should aim to reduce the number of journeys you make where possible
- if you live in a tier 2 area, you must continue to follow tier 2 rules when you travel to a tier 1 area. Avoid travel to or overnight stays in tier 3 areas other than where necessary, such as for work,

education, youth services, to receive medical treatment, or because of caring responsibilities. You can travel through a tier 3 area as a part of a longer journey

- for international travel see the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice for your destination and the travel corridors list

Some restrictions will be changing over Christmas for a short period of time.

You can see the guidance for England, Northern Ireland and Wales here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>

It's important to do what's best for you, and your family and friends, particularly if any of you are clinically vulnerable. Whatever you decide to do, Christmas is likely to be very different for many people this year.

Where can I find up to date information and guidance?

- **England** - follow advice from the [NHS](#) and [Government](#).

These sources reflect the most up-to-date information and will be updated as the situation progresses.

AND FINALLY:

To quote the Prime Minister:

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY CAREFUL'

USEFUL INFORMATION

BRANCH ON-LINE EVENTS (on Zoom)

Parkinson's Cafe on Zoom **11-00am Thursdays - January 7th & 21st, February 4th & 18th 2021**

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

Table Tennis Zoom Meeting **2.00pm Fridays - January 15th & 29th, February 12th & 26th 2021**

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

NB: if live Table Tennis sessions are able to safely resume in the New Year is lifted these zoom sessions will not take place.

BRANCH MEETINGS & REGULAR EVENTS

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

The Branch Committee are currently looking at detailed guidance, issued by Parkinson's UK, about how, and when, we can restart face to face meetings/events in a Covid secure manner.

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: Val & Clive Corke, James Howell, Joy & James Ingram,
Didi Jepson, Hilary Moody

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 or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's Local Advisor Service: contact our helpline on 0808 800 0303 or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk to be put in touch with a local adviser.

Parkinson's Nurse Specialist Service: 0300 421 8109 or parkinsons.team@ghc.nhs.uk

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

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

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