

CHELTENHAM BRANCH NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2021

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- **Thoughts from the Chair**
- **Parkinson's and Coronavirus - Obtaining Help or Advice**
- **Feeling Anxious? How To Navigate The Lifting Of Coronavirus Restrictions**
- **Branch On-line Events**
- **Regular Events**
- **Branch Meetings**
- **Branch Contacts**
- **Useful Contacts**

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

The mention of Cheltenham on TV or radio always grabs my attention. So my ears pricked up late last month when Radio 5 Live had given a microphone to a Cheltenham mother and daughter to record their first face to face meeting in what was to them an age.

The mother had not set foot outside her care home for fourteen months. A wonderful day together awaited them. You won't be surprised to hear that the mother had her coat and hat on ages before she needed to as she waited patiently in the foyer while her daughter passed a rapid flow test. The final hurdle before release!

At last the great moment arrived and they were together for real' not separated by the glass of a window pane or the hard to read expressions on a Zoom screen. Mother fancied a drive. Bourton on the Water was her first idea but second thoughts led them to Cirencester. They had not gone far before mother started to express wonder at the new and different world she was seeing. So many people wearing masks for a start. The emblems of a new world order. The symbols of difference. She felt like an explorer looking for the first time at changes completely new to her that we have all lived with for over a year and now don't notice.

On May 17th it was our turn to be explorers. Everything looks much the same from the outside but inside, Tardis like, social space is carved up in many different ways. The layout of furniture, markings on the floor and the continuation of mask and social distance rules remind us that the pandemic is not over.

The virus, wearing its old and new outfits, is still more than eager to join in with the revellers, the sneezers and the huggers.

What are we to make of our new freedoms? Are we like the mother coming out of the nursing home, ready to be explorers of the new world order? Do we feel ready to meet our friends for coffee on the strength of being vaccinated twice? Or are we more comfortable staying at home until the virus from India and every other conceivable place becomes yesterday's news?

Clearly, the evidence so far doesn't point to a sudden end to Covid. It seems it's more like the Flu virus which lurks around each winter wearing its latest mutation to challenge our world class vaccine designers. Remember how we felt when we heard that a South African variant and the one from Brazil were the latest bullies on our block? We are now, unfortunately, having to deal with the more transmissible Delta (India) variant.

I am pleased to say that our future programme of branch activities will attempt to meet the needs of both viewpoints and will combine caution with a drive to renew our social experience.

Our Table Tennis Club started again on May 21st. We still have to follow Covid protocols which include a maximum of 6 players in any one session. We have two sessions. We wear masks when not playing and we keep the outside door open for good ventilation. March 13th 2020 was the last time we played. It took some of us a while to stop missing the table as much as we missed playing. It didn't take long for some great matches to emerge

We had hoped to begin our first actual coffee mornings in mid-June but our usual venues do not have a suitable, covered external seating area that we can pre-book just for morning coffee. Sadly the delay in Step 4 of the Roadmap means that groups larger than six can still not meet up in pubs, cafes or restaurants. But watch this space there will be more information to follow.

When we are able to meet up indoors, as a larger group, we are anxious that members do not feel pressurised into face to face meeting so I am pleased to say that we are carrying on the fortnightly Thursday virtual Zoom Coffee conversations. The Zoom quiz time is continuing on the second Tuesday of the month at 2pm.

If you think we could be doing more by way of activities either by Zoom or in the great outdoors please let us know. We are anxious that Covid will not rob us of the time together we so enjoy each other's company whether by having real or virtual coffee together.

Do not hesitate to email me parkinsonshjm@gmail.com or ring me, Harry Matthews, on 07515 857110, with your thoughts and suggestions about resuming face to face activities.

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>

The following guidance from the Parkinson's UK Website was **up-to-date on 26th May**.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Restrictions and social distancing

Some restrictions and social distancing guidelines remain in place. Check the guidance where you live:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

You must wear a face covering in many indoor spaces, such as shops and places of worship, and on public transport, unless you are exempt or have a reasonable excuse.

Restarting activities as coronavirus restrictions ease

As restrictions start to lift across the UK, some people are meeting up and joining activities in person. Others aren't ready to do this, and are keeping things virtual for now.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on people's Parkinson's symptoms, and on their confidence. We're here to support you and help you stay safe, whatever you plan to do.

If you're feeling anxious, read our article below:

FEELING ANXIOUS? HOW TO NAVIGATE THE LIFTING OF CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS

As lockdown restrictions continue to change, many people feel worried or anxious. Here, **Richard Brown, Professor of Neuropsychology and Clinical Neuroscience at King's College London**, talks about how to navigate getting out and about if you are feeling anxious:

There was a certainty about lockdown – stay at home, wash your hands regularly and practise social distancing if you did have to go out. Our brains quickly became trained to spot risks and danger around us, even when we were safe at home. As the guidelines changed, you may have found it hard to switch off these new habits.

So, how do you navigate restrictions as they continue to change? Nothing we do in life is entirely risk free. It is a constant balancing act between minimising unnecessary risks while still doing the things that we need or want to do.

So it's important we find a balance between taking sensible precautions and being able to enjoy the things in life that are important for our physical or mental wellbeing, such as meeting a friend or going for a walk.

If you are feeling unsettled, taking things slowly can help...You will find it gets easier over time.

The first thing to remember is that it's up to you what you want to do, when and how often.

If you are feeling unsettled, taking things slowly can help. For example, try a short walk either alone or with another person. Choose quiet times and keep it brief to start with, but don't leave it too long between outings. Aim to do something every day. You will find it gets easier over time.

While you are out, you may see people who aren't observing social distancing guidelines. This might seem inconsiderate and you might feel angry. But these feelings are unlikely to change a situation and can make you feel more stressed. It's important to remember we can't control other people's behaviour and you should avoid using this as a reason not to go out.

Four steps for managing risk and anxiety

When we are anxious we tend to magnify the threat. We become over-cautious and try to avoid situations that might seem risky. At the moment, this may mean avoiding leaving home or coming into contact with other people.

Below are 4 tips which you can use to look at the risk in a scenario, manage your anxiety around it and ultimately, enjoy the freedom we still have.

1 Will you be able to follow guidelines?

Think carefully about what it is that you want to do – whether it is a small family gathering, inviting a single friend for tea in the garden, going for a walk in the park or a picnic in the country.

- Can you do this in a way that allows you to follow the current social distancing guidelines?
- Is there anything that you can do make following guidelines easier, such as choosing a quiet place and time?
- Will you and the person you are meeting be able to wash your hands or use hand-gel regularly?

2 Who are you meeting or coming into contact with?

If you are meeting others outside of your household, think about their own situation and behaviour. You may feel safer meeting some people rather than others.

- Have they been shielding?
- Are they the sort of person who has been careful to follow the guidelines?

- Are they the sort of person who would be careful if they came into your home, and not mind if you reminded them to wash their hands?

3 For how long will you be in contact with other people?

Evidence suggest that the risk of catching coronavirus is linked to the amount of time that you are in contact with someone who has the infection.

If you are planning to go out, are you likely to be in close contact with another person without other precautions, such as social distancing, for more than a few minutes? If contact is fleeting, such as a stranger that you pass on the pavement, the risk is low.

4 Are you aware of the latest medical advice and guidelines?

Make sure you know what the latest medical advice and guidelines are.

If you have any questions about the guidelines, speak to a trusted source like your GP or Parkinson's nurse.

Or you can contact the Parkinson's UK helpline (**0808 800 0303** or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk).

USEFUL INFORMATION

BRANCH ON-LINE EVENTS (on Zoom)

Parkinson's Cafe on Zoom	11-00am Thursdays fortnightly: June 24th, July 8th & 22nd, August 5th & 19th
Table Tennis 'Chat and Quiz' on Zoom	2.00pm second Tuesday monthly: July 13th, August 10th

An invite and zoom link details will be emailed to the branch mailing list before each session.

REGULAR EVENTS

Table Tennis Club every Friday 2-4pm in St Luke's Church Hall, St Luke's Place GL53 7HP. Cost £4 pp, £5 couples. All abilities welcome. There is disabled access and parking.

NB. Table Tennis sessions have resumed in a Covid secure manner but places are limited to six each session so please book your place with Harry Matthews on 07515 857110 or parkinsonshjm@gmail.com

BRANCH MEETINGS

NB: Most face to face meetings/events are still cancelled until further notice (except for the Table Tennis Club see above)

The Branch Committee are awaiting further easing of Covid Regulations on social distancing guidance in Step 4 of the Government Roadmap, and updated guidance from Parkinson's UK, before we can restart further face to face indoor meetings/events in a safe 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 422 6610 or ghn-tr.parkinsonsteam@nhs.net

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

Age UK Gloucestershire Website: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire/>

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

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