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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

A photograph from the recently published Official History of Britain showed a man with a 20 foot pole knocking on the upstairs windows of a terraced house.

He was a 'knocker upper' for Lancashire mill workers and on working days, he would tap on their windows at 5-30am.

His unusual job made me think of 'What's my Line?' the very popular 1950's Sunday evening panel show. A celebrity panel was allowed just 10 questions to find out exactly what work the contestant did. I am sure the 'knocker upper' would have presented an ideal challenge for them!

The statistics contained in the Official History of Britain reveal the huge changes over the years in types of employment. In 1851 there were 243,052 shoemakers and 267,423 milliners (one being my grandfather who moved from Scotland to Leeds to pursue his hat making).

Today you can make a fortune on U-tube without leaving your bedroom. There is now not the same demand for gunsmiths, sword cutlers or bayonet makers as there once was but you might fare better as a climate change scientist or computer game inventor.

The main fascination in what I am sure will be a good stocking filler book is that it underlines how employment reflects the great changes society has undergone as major industries have disappeared to be replaced by others. Changes which could not have been imagined.

I think of when I started teaching how grateful we were when a parent gave to the school a full set of Encyclopaedia Britannica. Not many years later the Encyclopaedia salesmen were put out of work over night by the advent of CD's. All the information from those 25 large volumes had been captured on a few shiny discs.

Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the discs were replaced by a reference tool to end all reference tools, the Internet! One Click of the mouse takes you as far as you want to go in quantum physics, inside any of the great art galleries of the world or orders your shopping for the week.

Coping with even more rapid change has been one of the biggest challenges of this Covid centred year. Overnight the everyday activities we took for granted disappeared and were not available to us; shopping, visiting family and friends going to clubs, eating out. Add to this our feelings of vulnerability to a disease that clearly strikes our age group the hardest.

As we face the dark long nights, cold weather and uncertainty about the presence of the virus, I feel we have something to learn from Scandinavian countries. They can still thrive, some in the north, with only four hours of daylight in midwinter. I thought this Danish writer, Meik Wiking, offered good advice to us as we enter winter with Covid lurking in the background:

“The key this winter is not to strive for future happiness but to find something to enjoy each day, to create moments of connection and a small daily pleasure. It is in this recognising what is on offer each day that leads to an appreciation of the life you have where happiness is to be found.”

One of her most important tips is

“Go outside every day whatever the weather, being outside has been proven to raise levels of happiness and wellbeing. It stimulates our awareness, grounds us in the present and makes us thankful for the world around us.”

Then there's the famous Danish **hygge** which is about making sure we create a living space that is as snug and comfortable as possible for us so that sense of slow, cosy homeliness is a big part of our living and will without doubt help us to cope with the thought of living alongside a persistent nasty virus.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PAUL MAYHEW-ARCHER:

Huge congratulations to Paul Mayhew-Archer on being awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his services to people with Parkinson's and cancer.

You can watch Paul's award winning half hour documentary **'The Funny Side'** in which the Vicar of Dibley co-writer goes in search of a cure and therapies for Parkinson's disease here: <https://vimeo.com/4504593>

ANNUAL PARKINSON'S UPDATE FROM OUR BRANCH PRESIDENT:

October 27th brought us our annual visit from our Branch President, Dr Peter Fletcher, who specialises in Parkinson's and is a consultant for many of our members. This year, of course, his talk had to be via a Zoom meeting which I am pleased to say attracted 26 members.

He had recently been lecturing at a training day for medical staff who are making Parkinson's their specialty. He saw this as a good sign that more junior staff are seeking to become Parkinson specialists.

He explained how in the early months of the first Covid lockdown it was all medical hands on deck and he found himself once again, after many years, on the wards, looking after Covid patients. The good news, which he was passing on to us at the end of October, was that Gloucestershire Hospitals had only 10 Covid patients and there wasn't a ventilator in use at that time and at the time of his talk.

It is also good news that our major hospitals have been able to catch up with other unrelated treatments and operations that had to be put on hold at the peak of the epidemic. It is the case that Parkinson patients did not have their consultants and nurses available to them during lockdown because of this redeployment of staff so we suffered from fewer consultations

Gloucester Royal will continue to take the Covid cases and Cheltenham Hospital takes on the other cases, particularly cancer care. One interesting observation was that during the first wave of the virus there have been fewer deaths from Parkinson's which might be attributed to Parkinson's patients staying indoors during lockdown and having fewer serious falls which can lead to pneumonia..

On the drug development front, the cholesterol reducing drugs in the statin family have been shown to have no benefit in the treatment of Parkinson's. However, repurposing the diabetic drug Exenatide looks more promising. It is hoped that it will slow down the progress of Parkinson's and it is on its way to larger trials.

There has been some publicity about the use of cannabis in Parkinson's. Research has shown that there is no evidence of any benefit for Parkinson's patients and the mind altering version of cannabis has been shown to have detrimental effects on neuron function.

Having Parkinson's shouldn't interfere with the effectiveness of the Covid vaccine when it arrives. Although, when it does arrive it will take a long time to roll out. In the meantime we have to accept that vaccine or not, the virus is going to be around a long time and we should adapt ourselves to living with it in parallel.

The ageing process is often accompanied by a progressive lack of resilience. We must resist this and build up our resilience with plenty of exercise and to do what we can to stay healthy and particularly to try to prevent falls.

Some general tips from Dr Peter for living with PD alongside issues that accompany ageing:

- Washing hands regularly with soap and water is more effective against virus than commercial products
- Don't miss your annual eye test and hearing test if necessary
- Use a walking frame rather than a stick to reduce the risk of falls
- Make a list of what you need to say when you next see your consultant or Parkinson's nurse
- Stop putting off making a will and sorting out powers of attorney. It makes things so much simpler for your next of kin when the time comes if all your wishes are known and legally binding.

FREE ZOOM SEMINAR ON PREVENTING FALLS:

On Friday 20th November at 2pm Sandfields Care Home is hosting a Falls Prevention online event in conjunction with Kerrie Hodges, Physiotherapist from Cheltenham Hospital. The event will take place via Zoom and is free of charge. To find out more or to book your free place call us on 01242 806790 or [email \[laura.sayburn@careuk.com\]\(mailto:laura.sayburn@careuk.com\)](mailto:laura.sayburn@careuk.com)

HOPE FOR THE BEST BUT PREPARE FOR THE WORST:

Those of you who were able to join our Zoom meeting with Dr Peter Fletcher would have heard his advice to make sure our affairs are in order – will, powers of attorney, advance decision etc. - to make life less stressful for your relatives if you are incapacitated or the worst happens.

It is also a good idea to keep an up-to-date list of details of pensions, insurances, savings, shares, and household bills, especially if any are online only accounts (but keep online passwords separate and secure).

The Parkinson's UK publication 'Preparing for End of Life' includes a useful section on putting your affairs in order: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/putting-your-affairs-order>

The following **Parkinson's UK Will for Free** scheme may therefore be of interest:

How does the scheme work?

There are about 700 solicitors nationwide who participate in the National Free Wills network, which is used by several charities.

The chosen charity – Parkinson’s UK in this case - is charged a much-reduced fee for your will to be drawn up (or updated).

They hope in turn that you will choose to leave a gift to them in your will to help fund the research and services they provide. There is, however, no obligation to do so.

This is not a DIY or internet-based will-writing service but a full consultation with a solicitor in their offices and the will is free of charge to you.

How do I set this in motion?

Initially, complete a short request form with your contact details using the following link to the Parkinson’s website: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/get-involved/get-your-free-will>

This will result in a pack being sent in the post explaining the scheme and listing solicitors in the area to choose from. You then call them directly to make your appointment.

Is any will covered?

The scheme covers the drawing up or updating of a simple will – either for one person or for joint (mirror) wills. There is no charge for this service. If anything more complicated is required, such as setting up a trust fund, you will be quoted a fee for additional work not covered by the scheme.

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 4th November**. The main change is:

From 5 November to 2 December, England will enter a national lockdown for a period of 4 weeks.

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 website:

- From 5 November to 2 December, England will enter a national lockdown for a period of 4 weeks. These restrictions will replace any restrictions in place in your local area. The government advice is that you must stay at home, except for specific purposes, and to avoid meeting people you do not live with, except for specific purposes.
- For more detail go to: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

Stay at home and limit social contacts as much as possible

Guidance for people who are clinically vulnerable, including people with Parkinson’s, says that it’s important to stay at home and limit social contacts as much as possible. Follow distancing and hygiene guidelines if you do go out.

If you do need to leave your home, the UK government advises people to think ‘Hands. Face. Space’:

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)

- You should wash your **hands** regularly, for at least 20 seconds.
- You should wear a **face** covering in enclosed spaces.
- You should give people outside of your household **space** of at least 2 metres, or 1 metre where other measures are in place.

Look after your wellbeing and mental health

During this pandemic, it's especially important to take extra care of your wellbeing and mental health. We've published an [article on how to cope if you're feeling isolated](#).

The charity, Mind, have put together some [helpful guidance on wellbeing and coronavirus](#). And the British Red Cross have [online resources and tools to help you tackle loneliness](#).

Shielding and support bubbles

Shielding measures for people who are extremely vulnerable

Shielding is for people at very high risk of severe illness and hospital admission from coronavirus (COVID-19) because of an underlying health condition. Only people advised by the NHS have to take this precaution. Shielding advice is officially paused across the UK.

If you are affected, you should have received a letter updating you on what this means for you.

- You can [see the updated guidance on shielding in England in this link on the gov.uk website](#). In England, you can [get direct support](#) if you're clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus.

If the situation changes, you could be advised to shield again. If you are affected, you will receive a letter from the government setting out the new guidance you should follow.

If you're unsure about shielding or need to talk to someone, we're here. Call our advisers on 0808 800 0303.

Can I form a support bubble, or extended household?

Support bubbles and extended households are intended to help you if you're lonely and feeling isolated, or if you need to care for or support someone else. There are different rules about support bubbles depending on where you live in the UK.

If you meet the criteria within guidance for your area, you can form a support bubble or extend your household.

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.

CORRECTION:

In our update on some local exercise classes in our September Newsletter we incorrectly stated that Angela Turner used to run a Move it or Lose it class locally until earlier this year. That should have read Angela Swales. Apologies to both for our error and to readers for any confusion.

USEFUL INFORMATION

BRANCH ON-LINE EVENTS (on Zoom)

Parkinson's Cafe on Zoom 11.00am Thursdays November 12th & 26th, December 10th
(NB. NOT on December 24th), January 7th & 21st 2021

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 November 20th, December 4th & 18th,
(NB. NOT on January 1st), January 15th & 29th 2021

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

NB: if live Table Tennis sessions are able to safely resume after lockdown 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.