



CHAIR'S REPORT to AGM on 2 March 2022



The 2021/ 2022 year has been another very different year for the branch;

Firstly, there was a change of chair after **Sally's** 6 years of stewardship during which she built the branch into a very successful and highly regarded organisation. I was very pleased when Sally took up the offer of being '*Branch Ambassador*' – allowing us all to benefit locally from Sally's experience and for her to do what she does best – connecting people. We were also all delighted when Sally was subsequently elected to the Board of Trustees for Parkinson UK.

Secondly, the external world we were operating most of last year was extremely uncertain due to the governmental restrictions placed on activities, as a response to the COVID crisis. However, the committee showed its strength and resilience by persisting throughout the pandemic to work creatively to support our members. The ability of the committee to devise online activities (such as online meetings, hybrid meetings, exercise and voice classes, mindfulness sessions, coffee chats and even a Christmas Party) was only surpassed by **Jonathan's** tenacious perseverance with fettling the technology, to make things actually work in practice. In recognition of his work locally and nationally helping take the charity into the digital age, Jonathan was nominated and awarded a PUK volunteer award. Look out for the golden brain!

The branch has also taken the opportunities presented by the pandemic to adopt new ways of working; for example as well as **Nigel** working tirelessly to secure interesting speakers for our meetings, he has also been able to enlist speakers who would not have been available to us were they to have to present in person. Welcome to **Peter** who is taking over the speaker selection and recruitment role this year.

And then when the lockdowns were eased and thanks to **Martin's** meticulous planning, we were able to help members get out and meet again at number of 'face to face' or 'in-person' (what used to be just normal life) activities including a pub lunch, a barbeque at Wytham Woods, a trip to Winchester Christmas market and a Branch holiday at a hotel in Somerset. I enjoyed getting to know branch members on the holiday and will always remember the all-female 3 piece ABBA tribute band!

With **Kevin** as our research officer, the branch is uniquely placed to keep up to date with the latest Parkinson's disease research developments - and he knows an awful lot about the significance of dogfish. Many branch members have commented that his down-to-

earth interpretation of some of the very complex science helps them understand the seemingly mind-boggling complexity of many Parkinson's research projects.

A big Thanks to **Kit** for driving ahead with a number of fundraising activities during the year despite Covid restrictions. The most successful of this year's fundraising efforts was the Oxford walk which proved as, if not more, popular than ever in its new location. The walk was second in the country in terms of money raised Parkinson's UK

In addition to his role developing and presenting *First Steps* **Ian** also took on the role of membership secretary last year and has made steady progress with consolidating membership records to help the branch know its members and offer them more appropriate support for their circumstances.

Keeping the branch running behind the scenes, the branch 'machinery' is supported by the tireless efforts of **Steve** as treasurer to keep the money flowing in and out, ably aided by **Carys** with her labyrinthine knowledge of PUK's financial procedures. And agendas, minutes and notes all accurately produced on time by **Pen** as the branch secretary. Pen also received the accolade this year of a national PUK volunteer award – and so will be seen wearing her 'golden brain' pin badge

Respite care can be a life-line for some carers and **Sue** has made good progress this year in preparing to make this support more widely known about and used, particularly by those who need it most. Sue has decided to stand down from the committee next year to understandably spend more time with her grandchildren and family. I'm sure all branch join me in thanking Sue for her efforts over the last few years on the committee.

Nick joined the committee last year and has brought his enthusiasm and experience to bear on how the branch connects with the newly diagnosed and how we can use social media more effectively to communicate with

Last but not least **Paul** - Our Head of Humour (every branch should have one) - keeps us laughing, not just at the Branch level, but up and down the country, with his one man show 'The Incurable Optimist' (Tickets still available). Not forgetting to mention that Paul was awarded an MBE for his services to charity with which he was invested in 2021

Finally, as I'm sure you all know, for health reasons, I have decided not to seek re-election to the position of Chair of the branch at this year's Branch AGM.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all branch members and in particular my committee colleagues for their inspiration, perspiration, support and friendship during my chairmanship.

Mark