



Acting Chair's report to the 2023 Annual General Meeting

The year 2022/23 began with my taking on the role of Acting Chair at short notice. It has been a busy and fulfilling time.

I must begin by saying how grateful I am for the ready and sustained help of the committee in seeing through our programme of Branch meetings and events.

It may be invidious to select individuals - but I must thank in particular **Sally**, our Branch Ambassador, for her unswerving support, and the wonderful **Pen** as Secretary, for guiding me through, not least via our regular Monday morning chats, and ensuring that so much has been achieved. **Jonathan** is always there to assist both on the technical front and with a whole myriad of administrative issues. I am particularly grateful to all three of them.

Steve has been a tireless and meticulous Treasurer, and we owe him a great deal for making sure that we keep on the straight and narrow. In the background **Carys**, our former treasurer, has continued to lend expertise and experience – both of them ensuring that we do things as our charitable status as a branch of PUK requires.

Respite Care has come under the wing of **Pamela** and she has worked diligently to ensure that applicants are able to take advantage of the support that we offer. She has also taken great care to listen, and to understand the individual circumstances behind each request.

Ian as Membership Secretary has continued to keep our lists up to date, and to welcome new members. He has also worked with Jonathan on the huge task of creating a database that will enable us to make best use of our most important resource – our members. Unfortunately Ian has decided that he must stand down from the post, and we will be looking to find somebody to replace him in this important role as soon as possible.

Peter took over the responsibility for creating a regular programme of speakers for Branch Meetings and we have had a varied and interesting schedule. I consider that it is important that we cover topics that are not solely to do with Parkinson's, although I am aware that some events do not always draw such audience numbers.

Kevin continues as our Research Officer, somehow managing to combine this with his unwavering support of Liverpool FC. We really are most fortunate to have him as a key member of the branch, and for keeping us so clearly and comprehensively up- to- date with all that is going on in the world of research into Parkinson's.

Kit is another long-standing member of the committee and ensures that we continue to keep our eye on the funding ball. The Oxford Walk is the main fundraising event of the year (albeit that funds go direct to PUK). Despite the sad demise of our sovereign leading to a postponement, which meant that not everybody who had originally intended to take part was able to do so, we still managed to raise the significant sum of over £12,000.

Nick has continued to be the first point of contact for the newly diagnosed, as well as drawing on his culinary experience to ensure that the cheese selections provided at the AGM and Christmas party were of a fine standard.

Josie joined the committee this year and we are most grateful to her for standing in as Meeting Secretary/minute taker on more than one occasion in Pen's absence. I am delighted that she has now agreed to take over from Pen in the role of Communications Secretary*, managing our contact with Branch members, existing and new. Such was the range of Pen's activity that it is taking TWO people to succeed her, with **Barbara Levick** joining as Committee Secretary* to record the Committee's deliberations (*both subject, of course, to approval at the upcoming AGM). I am delighted that Pen will continue to maintain our contact with PUK, and will also assist as 'front of house' at Branch Meetings.

Mark, Nigel and Paul Latham have all offered staunch support as Committee members, and Mark kindly stood in for me as Chair at a recent Branch meeting. **David Salisbury** has given valuable service to the Committee and Branch over many years, but is no longer able to attend in person: we are pleased that he will continue as an Associate Member of the Committee.

Lastly and by no means least, as well as ensuring we retain our focus on our members, our other **Paul** (Head of Humour as Mark designated him) ensures we always see the funny side. His show 'The Incurable Optimist' draws the crowds across the country from Louth (recently) to Marlow (coming up on May 26th).

I have been pleased to join several of the meetings of **OxWAG**, the working-age group, ably led by **Trina and Alison**.

Wearing my **Visits Co-ordinator** hat, I have been pleased to arrange successful Spring and Autumn Branch Lunches at The Evenlode; Coffee Mornings at both Millet's Farm and The Eden Café in Witney; and the Branch Holiday at Warners in Bembridge on the Isle of Wight (including the ferry crossing when mercifully no-one was lost overboard...).

Finally, I had rather hoped to be finishing my 'Acting' role by now. I am ready to continue for a few more months as we search for a successor, but I do need to stress that this will not become a permanent appointment by default. The Branch thrives on the work of its volunteers: could you be one such??

Martin Cowell
1 March 2023