

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

Dear Readers,

My name is Jamie, I am the new editor of the Branch newsletter and will be managing the Branch website alongside being a Volunteer Committee Member. I would like to thank Florence for her support in transferring the responsibility to me, and to both Florence and Caroline for helping with this first issue. We also have another new volunteer member of the committee, Clotilde, who will also help manage the website and social media pages for the local branch.

I hope to maintain the high standard of newsletter set by Florence, I will be continuing the same themes with the usual updates on the branch activities, summaries of speakers and updates on events that are upcoming. I am a PhD student at the University of Cambridge, supervised by Dr Jo Jones and Prof. Roger Barker and my research investigates neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's. As a researcher I am keen to continue the research section & Researcher profile as I feel this is a brilliant way to disseminate the science conducted! This issue will not contain a researcher profile section as it is my first issue but the next one will!

🌷 **Tulip Fun Run/Walk - Sunday 31 August 2025** 🌷

Save the date it's our biggest fundraiser of the year!

Plan to take part • Bring the family • Rally your sponsors

Let's beat the 2024 total of £4,000+!

World Parkinson's Day



On World Parkinson's Day Jill W, Pam H, Caroline B, Nick L, and Betty G (pictured), were joined by Gary A, Edwin W, Penny B, and Lydia S, dispensing information about PD, collecting £256 cash from passers-by at the Guildhall in Cambridge Market Place.

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

World Parkinson's Day

On 11th April 2025, members of the Cambridge branch were out in the Market Place, taking part in World Parkinson's Day. Armed with leaflets, collection tins, and plenty of enthusiasm, helping to spread awareness about Parkinson's, raising an impressive £256 in the process. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time or donated on the day! These events offer a vital opportunity to share information with members of the public who may not otherwise be familiar with the realities of living with Parkinson's.

A History on Parkinson's Disease and WPD

World Parkinson's Day takes place every year on the 11th April, the Birthday of James Parkinson, the man who first described the medical condition in *An Essay on the Shaking Palsy* published in 1817. Initially the disease was known as "paralysis agitans" or "shaking palsy", until over 50 years later in 1872, the French Neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot proposed renaming it to Parkinson's Disease. Charcot observed that patients were not all markedly weak and did not necessarily have a tremor, with the new name reflecting the condition's broader range of symptoms.

Our understanding of Parkinson's has advanced by leaps and bounds since the 1800s. Most notably in 1997 when the protein Alpha-synuclein was identified as a key contributor to Parkinson's disease. This protein was identified by Prof. Maria Spillantini (Who happens to work in Cambridge, in the lab next door to mine!).

Events like World Parkinson's Day play a crucial role in supporting research by raising public awareness and understanding of Parkinson's. We are especially lucky here in Cambridge as we're home to some of the world's leading Parkinson's researchers. This research combined with the dedication of volunteers and charities play a vital role in driving the progress of Parkinson's research.



As part of the events on World Parkinson's Day over 180 iconic landmarks, buildings and homes across the country lit up blue to shine a light on people with Parkinson's and to recognise their loved ones and people who care for them. This year Ely Cathedral joined in and lit the Octagon Tower up in blue!



Also on World Parkinson's Day our Branch Chair, Mark G (Left), accepted a mighty cheque from Colin Banks (Right), 2024-2025 President of the Cambridge Chesterton Indoor Bowls Club. Colin is known to members of the Branch as one of the retired John Lewis refreshment team at monthly meetings and Christmas Quizmaster. Thanks to Colin and CCIBC members who donated a massive £1,350!

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

Aqua Party Fundraiser



We also had Steph Baudino, known to some for two spectacular Flash Mob events in 2023 and 2024, organise an event where they invited over 40 fitness enthusiasts to an Aqua Party at Parkside Pool on 12/4, in recognition of World Parkinson's Day — Steph gets involved with the charity because her Dad is a Person with Parkinson's. This year's event at Parkside pool raised a whopping £470, Thank you Steph!

Whist Drive Fundraiser

Last but not least we had the Whist drive run by Carol P, which took place in in Great Wilbraham on the 12th April. Carol reports that there was a slightly chaotic start, since we had forgotten to put the refreshments in the car! Robin had to go back to fetch them leaving us one short to get ready.

Despite the slow start there was a flood of people in the last 10 minutes, resulting in 11 tables and 2 sitting out, a total of 46 players. At half time there was a short break and everyone seemed to enjoy the refreshments (it was a good job Robin went back home for them!). The raffle was then drawn with a lot of good humour and cries of "not you again" each time a repeat winner was drawn.

The Drive finished slightly later than expected but no one seemed to mind, with everyone leaving in good spirits. The money raised from the night amounted to £355. A huge thank you to everyone who helped on the night, provided refreshments, and donated raffle prizes.

And a BIG THANK YOU to Carol, from the Committee and membership of the Cambridge Branch for organising this event.

BRANCH MEETINGS

28th March AGM and Brainstorming

A formal AGM is no longer required for branches of Parkinson's UK such as ours. Parkinson's UK's own AGM now acts on behalf of all affiliates. It was therefore simply to keep our members informed that the Committee decided to hold a short 'AGM' before asking members to assist our forward planning during a 'Brainstorming' exercise.

Chair, Mark Goodridge, opened proceedings with a welcome, and a brief summary of 2024's activities: he spoke of continued 4th-Friday meetings, having interesting speakers attend the meetings, and friendship; how we have contributed funds to both Parkinson's UK Research, and to Parkinson's researchers' attendance at relevant conferences; how this was made possible by fund-raising efforts – notably by the Tulip Fun Run and the Christmas Concert; how the Yoga group thrives, as does AWPC to which we have offered financial support.

He thanked all volunteers including our refreshment team, collectors, and above all our Committee members, especially our young research cohort.

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

In the unavoidable absence of our Treasurer, he recommended we adopt the 2024 financial report, and scrutinise the draft 2025 Budget, both of which were available to view. Gary A proposed adoption of the AGM report, which was unopposed.

A few broad topics for discussion were suggested as a basic structure for the Brainstorming which followed. After 45 minutes of discussion, one member of each of the six groups reported back to the meeting.

Comments and suggestions were too many and varied to list here, but broadly speaking the nature of the Friday meetings continues to meet with approval, two popular features in particular recurring: short physical or vocal exercise is popular, and mingling with others is crucial but also difficult, given physical mobility and speech limitations.

With respect to the raising and spending of Branch funds, members were happy with current methods of fund-raising (an Auction of Promises might be considered in addition) and pleased to see money going to Parkinson's UK, provided it was to support research projects, and that some feed-back followed; it would be good to spend money on an annual outing.

The exercise and therapy choices currently available (AWPC, Dance, Yoga, and walking football) are good. There are many non-PD-specific local community exercise opportunities for general fitness, singing, strength and balance, Pilates, etc.

Communication within the Branch membership, through monthly emails, the Newsletter and the Website is good, but between the Branch, other PD groups, and professionals (consultants, nurses, GPs etc.) could be better.

25th April Branch Meeting

Our latest branch meeting began with a few announcements, including an invitation to have a chat with Gary about a walking football event that he is organising. Attendees were also given a sheet outlining the upcoming events for the year, all the way up to the Christmas carol in December this year! A summary of the activities outlined in last months brainstorming session was also provided to all in attendance to look over, and finally there was a questionnaire from a local sixth form student handed round.



We were joined by Monica Konrad for this months branch meeting, where she presented a talk titled *Living Well With Complementary Therapies*. Monica is a Fellow at Girton College and a researcher at the department of social anthropology, University of Cambridge and is familiar with the charity as she used to attend Parkinson's UK meetings with her late mother who lived with Parkinson's. Her talk focussed on complementary therapies, and she outlined the findings of the *Complementary Therapies and Parkinson's* report, where she noted that holistic approaches to the wellbeing of people with Parkinson's can help support many things such as

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

providing pain relief, aid digestion, help to regulate people's mood, and to generally improve quality of life.

Monica shared some insights into the long history of therapeutic massage, which dates back to ancient Egypt and China between the years 2000 and 3000 B.C. and also shared a variety of Swedish massage techniques too. She also outlined the use of aromatherapy, highlighting that essential oils such as lavender may help with pain relief and helping their wellbeing, citing recommendation from NICE for these purposes. Monica also touched on how reflexology may also help with people's balance. Finally she outlined the details of recent studies and some useful contacts for people interested in exploring these complementary therapies further, handing around a short survey afterwards to gather feedback and interest from members.

If you are interested in complementary medicine, please read the following webpages as they provide some overview of their use in people with Parkinson's and potential benefits and limitations:

[Complementary Therapies Parkinson's UK](#)

[NHS Complementary Medicine](#)

We finished the meeting with a few announcements. Professor Roger Barker will be speaking at the next branch meeting on the 23rd May. We will also be having an all day collection at the Tesco's in Milton on the 16th of May. Cameron also asked all members that if they are not yet on the mailing list, to please contact him at: cameronparkinsonscambridge@gmail.com to be added to the mailing list.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Museum Encounters: Parkinson's Dance Course



On the day we marked World Parkinson's Day, University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) proudly announced the launch of three six-week programmes planned for 2025-2026.

From Darwin's letters and ancient armour to tree specimens and ghost nets, each week curators from across Cambridge's museums will share with participants carefully selected objects from their collections and their stories. This in turn sparks the movement, dance and imagination that shape that week's session. It's believed to be the only initiative of its kind in the UK that invites people living with Parkinson's to take part in dance sessions inspired directly by museum artefacts. The result is a powerful fusion of cultural discovery, creative expression, and personalised support, designed to enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of those living with Parkinson's.

Following two successful pilots in 2024, the course will launch with Summer, Autumn, and Winter terms, each offering free six-week sessions at Cambridge Junction, an inclusive space accessible for those living with the neurological condition. Encounters sessions are led by Cambridge-based dance artist and creative

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

practitioner Filipa Pereira-Stubbs, in collaboration with UCM's Inclusion Associate and Programme Producer Ruth Clarke, whose vision for fusing collections and care has earned international recognition. "We know that creative engagement can dramatically improve wellbeing," says Ruth. "This programme responds to a societal challenge with empathy, creativity, and imagination—connecting people with themselves, each other, and the stories within our museum collections. Participants are invited to move in a way that works for them—seated or standing—building strength, confidence, and connection through dance inspired by the museum stories we explore together."



Ruth Clarke (Left) & Filipa Pereira-Stubbs (Right)

In the 2024 pilots, participants reported feeling a rare combination of physical movement, intellectual stimulation, and emotional connection as key to the course's impact. The pilot welcomed 22 participants, ranging from early to late-stage diagnosis. Participants described the experience as "stimulating for mind and body," and "unlike anything I've ever done before." One participant remarked, "It took my mind off Parkinson's—and that's wonderful," another "I loved learning and dancing!, connecting with people and meeting new friends—it was a delight."

Roger Barker, Professor of Clinical Neuroscience and Honorary Consultant in Neurology at the University of Cambridge and Addenbrooke's Hospital, and a Principal Investigator at the Cambridge Stem Cell Institute (and incidentally Hon. President of the Cambridge branch) has lent his support to the programme: "This is such a great idea as there is much interest in the effects of dance on Parkinson's and the benefits it can bring."

Programme dates for 2025-26:

Summer Term: 2 May – 4 July 2025

- Friday 2 May
- Friday 16 May
- Friday 30 May
- Friday 6 June
- Friday 27 June
- Friday 4 July.

Autumn Term: 3 Oct – 19 Dec 2025

- Dates TBD

Winter Term: 6 Feb – 30 March 2026

- Dates TBD

Selected Fridays, 10:30am–12pm at Cambridge Junction

Booking for Summer Term is open Now!

To find out more visit

(<https://www.museums.cam.ac.uk/events/museum-encounters-parkinsonsdance-course-summer-2025>) To book a place, email

info@museums.cam.ac.uk

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Stem Cell Replacement Therapies

Research studies carried out in Japan and the US are exploring the potential of using stem cells to replace cells that are lost in the brain during Parkinson's.

The 2 studies that have shared their results used human stem cells that had been reprogrammed to become cells that produce the brain chemical dopamine. Participants in the study had surgery to inject the new cells into an area of the brain, and have been monitored closely.

The aims of both studies were to explore the safety of the stem cell surgery, and to check for any side effects.

The first study involved 7 people with Parkinson's in Japan, aged between 50 and 69. Everyone involved in the study was followed for 2 years. During this time, there was no report of any unwanted side effects, and scans showed that the injected cells were able to produce dopamine.

The second study followed 12 people with Parkinson's in the US. The researchers split the participants into 2 groups to test how many cells would be the optimal number to inject during the surgery without risking side effects. None of the participants experienced any severe side effects as a result of the treatment, regardless of whether they had received a low or a high dose of cells.

Some participants in both studies also reported that they had fewer movement symptoms after having the surgery. However, this varied among participants and would need further research and follow up to understand more clearly.

[Find The full results of the Japanese Study](#)

[Read the Results of the US Study](#)

There are also similar studies going on jointly between Lund, Sweden & Cambridge into stem cell therapies on the STEM-PD Trial led by Malin Parmar, Agnete Kikerby & Roger Barker, this trial focusses on a different form of stem cell to the Japanese and US trials, but with similar principles.

[Read More about the STEM-PD Trial](#)

AZA-PD Trial

This trial focusses on the use of Azathioprine, an anti-inflammatory / immunosuppressive drug primarily used to treat rheumatoid arthritis. Recent results presented at the AD/PD conference in Vienna has shown that immunosuppressing medicines such as Azathioprine could be key to the treatment of Parkinson's disease. This trial is the first trial to find that broad suppression of the immune system could have beneficial effects in Parkinson's disease.



"I'm five years on from diagnosis, I'm only on low dose medication, and I'm still able to work and enjoy time with my family"

- Sarah Price, AZA-PD trial Participant

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

Participants in the trial reported improvements in movement-related motor symptoms, and in people with faster progressing Parkinson's, they found signs of improved memory and thinking skills. The trial also revealed no safety concerns around the use of immunosuppression in people with Parkinson's, enabling larger scale studies into immune therapies for Parkinson's in the future.

This trial recruited 66 people with early stage Parkinson's disease and was lead by Dr Caroline Williams-Gray, who is an honorary consultant neurologist at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.



"There are currently no therapies available to cure or slow the progression of Parkinson's disease. We know that inflammation in the brain is a factor but this is the first time we've been able to show that we can address this by suppressing the immune system with the potential to deliver benefits for patients."

- Dr Caroline Williams-Gray, AZA-PD lead researcher

Dr Williams-Gray is also leading the DAPA-PD study, which is expected to open recruitment soon. This trial aims to test whether Dapansutride, a drug which targets a more specific component of the immune system implicated in Parkinson's, could also be a safe and effective way of treating the condition. Dapansutride is a new drug recently developed by Olatec Therapeutics.

[For more information on the AZA-PD Trial](#)

[For Information about the DAPA-PD Study](#)

Parkinson's UK Network News

You're invited: Parkinson's UK hosts 'Tackling hallucinations and delusions in Parkinson's'

When: Wednesday 14 May 2025, 11 am until 12 pm

Where: Online via Zoom. Please register to attend on Zoom: [Tackling hallucinations and delusions in Parkinson's](#)

As many as 3 out of 4 people with Parkinson's may experience hallucinations or delusions. A hallucination is when you see, hear or feel things that aren't there. Delusions are unusual thoughts, beliefs or worries that aren't based on reality. At the moment, existing treatments can come with unwanted side effects, and aren't available to everyone.

Since 2019, we have been funding research to find new ways to help people manage hallucinations and delusions. Now we're looking for people across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to take part.

In this webinar, our panel of people with Parkinson's and experts will discuss:

- What hallucinations and delusions are, how they may affect you and why

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

- Tips to help you manage hallucinations and delusions
- Our funded research trials, TOP HAT and CAN-PDP, and how you can take part

[Please register to attend on Zoom](#)

We will be recording the webinar. If you have any questions about this event, please contact [Alex Edwards](#), Research Engagement Manager.

Early bird access opens for Sport Parkinson's Try-Athlon

Parkinson's UK will be supporting the annual Try-Athlon event from Sport Parkinson's and Cure Parkinson's to help more people try new activities and find advice about the best ways to live well with the condition.

This year's event will take place on Sunday 22 June at the Twickenham Stoop, Langhorn Drive, Twickenham, TW2 7SX from 10am to 4pm. The event is open to anyone with a connection to Parkinson's and we would like everyone to share this amongst your networks.

[Click Here to Get Early Bird Tickets](#)

Bank signature stamps

If you find signing your name difficult or have an inconsistent signature, Barclays can provide you with a stamp of your signature that works in place of a handwritten one.

Find out more about [signature stamps on the Barclays website](#).

Young Onset Parkinson's Online Group

We're excited to launch a new online group for people with young onset Parkinson's. A 'podcast club' - like a book club with less reading!

This is a space to:

- Connect with others who have similar experiences.
- Share stories, information, and support.
- Enjoy a friendly chat.

Each month, we'll loosely base our discussion around a podcast episode (usually Two Parkies in a Pod or Movers and Shakers). Don't worry if you don't have time to listen beforehand – your own experiences are just as valuable to the conversation. Just like a book club, the social connection is what matters most.

We launch on **Wednesday 14 May at 7.30pm** and will be discussing the Movers and Shakers episode [Young Onset Parkinson's](#) - seems appropriate as a starting point! If you would like to come along please complete this [Google Form](#) and we will send the joining details to you.

Newly Diagnosed with Parkinson's webinar - Preparing for appointments

Are you newly diagnosed with Parkinson's? Join our webinar on **Wednesday 14 May at 7pm** to hear our panel share their experience of appointments. They will explore what to expect at an appointment, and give you tips and tricks to make the most of your time with health professionals. Bring along your questions for our panel or send them in advance on the booking form.

[Book your place on Eventbrite](#). Please get in touch with us at newlydiagnosed@parkinsons.org.uk if you have any difficulties booking.

Cambridge Branch Newsletter: March-April 2025

First Steps programme - bookings now open!

Our next set of First Steps courses are now open for booking! People who are newly diagnosed with Parkinson's and their friends, family and supporters can find out more and book onto a course on the [First Steps programme page](#). If there are no suitable courses available or you have any questions, please get in touch with us at firststeps@parkinsons.org.uk.

Interested in finding out more about research?

[Sign up to our Research Support network!](#)

Interested in finding out more about campaigning?

[Sign up to our Campaigns network!](#)

SAVE THE DATES, AND WATCH THIS SPACE AND THE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

Walk for Parkinsons

Hatfield House, Hertfordshire Saturday 5th July - [click here for more details](#)

Whitlingham Country Park, Norwich Saturday 14th June - [click here for more details](#)

Branch Events

Sunday 31st August 2025: Tulip Fun Run (and Walk)

Sunday 21st December 2025: Christmas Concert in Trinity College Chapel

CAMBRIDGE BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair: Mark Goodridge markgoodridge@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Stephen Naylor

stephennparkinsons@gmail.com

Treasurer: David Allars djaParkinsons@outlook.com

Secretary: Caroline Bent 01223-314279 07922-479289
carolinebent@me.com

Membership: Cameron Ryall

cameronparkinsonscambridge@gmail.com

Newsletter, Social Media & Website: Jamie Shonhard

jamieparkinsonscambridge@gmail.com &

Clotilde Tournier clotildepuk@gmail.com

David Boothroyd 01353-664618 07799-598130

dgboot9@gmail.com

Jim Tanburn jim.pd.cb@gmail.com

USEFUL CONTACTS

Branch Website: <https://www.parkinsonscambridge.org>

Parkinson's UK: www.parkinsons.org.uk 020-7931-8080
enquiries@parkinsons.org.uk

Helpline: A free, confidential helpline is available from Mon-Fri: 9am-7pm and Saturday 10am-2pm. Call 0808-800-0303, or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/parkinsonsukcambridge/

Parkinson's Nurses locally; for help and information:

- Parkinson's Nurse Team 0330-726-0077

- Addenbrooke's Hospital Parkinson's Nurses 01223-349814

Parkinson's UK is the operating name of the Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom. A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales (258197) and in Scotland (SC037554).

Thank you for reading this issue of the Cambridge Branch newsletter and for supporting Parkinson's UK.