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UTTLESFORD SUPPORT GROUP
NEWSLETTER/INFORMATION SHEET, August–September 2019
www.parkinsonsuttlesford.org.uk

LOCAL NEWS



Two of the Uttlesford Support Group's main events of the year have taken place within the last few weeks – the Annual Garden Party, and the Annual Outing. Both were much enjoyed. The Garden Party was also a successful fund raiser; over £200 was collected! Our thanks to Vivian Falk for so generously hosting the party in her house and garden – even the rain couldn't stop us having a good time.

The picture was taken during the Outing, which was to the Botanic Gardens in Cambridge. Sheila Bricknell writes: "Only 15 people came but the weather was perfect for wandering the avenues while learning about the garden and its history from the two well-informed tour guides. By 1 o'clock everyone was

ready for a relaxing lunchbreak. Having a reserved table and not having to queue for food made a somewhat uninspired menu much more palatable! Several members were renewing acquaintance with the gardens after many years and some remembered the Group's last visit, when Anna Heathcote terrorised everyone with her first attempt at scooter driving! There were no such incidents this time and several people said they would like to visit again."

As you may know, Parkinson's UK has a team of 'Volunteer Educators' who can give training to care home staff, so that people with Parkinson's in those homes get appropriate treatment. One of our own members is now a Volunteer Educator but has so far not been invited to visit any local care homes. This is obviously disappointing. If you have any contacts in the local homes, do encourage them to get in touch with the Uttlesford Group so that we can send in our Educator!

Uttlesford group member Simon Russell started a charity funding page for Parkinson's UK on Facebook. Total contributions so far have amounted to £175. Perhaps other members might want to follow his example?

On a sadder note, many group members knew Ron Burridge who died in July. Ron was a popular figure in the group. Our condolences to his wife Doreen.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Our regular Saffron Walden meetings continue in the Jubilee Gardens, 2–4pm, on the *second* Wednesday in each month. On 14th August we have a speaker on the [Uttlesford Time Bank](#). Time Banks make it possible to offer your skills to help others locally, at a level that can be reasonably expected from a friend or neighbour. In return you can receive help or support that *you* need, or learn new skills.
- Details are not yet available on speakers at the Saffron Walden meetings after August but we are hoping to bring you a range of interesting people!

The regular monthly Great Dunmow lunch meetings take place every *third* Wednesday, Banks Court, Noon–2pm. Do please come.

NEW PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

- A small study (48 patients) found that gentle, controlled stimulation of the ear canal helped reduce symptoms of Parkinson's disease (PD). The therapy was performed at home using experimental portable headsets. Patients reported greater movement and mobility, plus improvements in decision-making, attention, memory, mood and sleep. They said they found it easier to perform everyday activities by themselves. The patients continued to take their usual medication during the course of the study. [Details here](#).

- Widely reported by the media (including the [Guardian](#)) have been new studies on mice providing further support for the theory that PD begins in the gut. The abnormal versions of the protein alpha-synuclein, which are found in the brains of people with PD, seem to appear first in the gut and it is thought that they move, through the nervous system until they eventually reach the brain. In the most recent study, researchers injected abnormal alpha-synuclein into the guts of mice and found that, as predicted, they did spread over the next few months to the animals' brains. (The study comes months after a different group of researchers revealed that people whose appendix was removed early in life had a reduced risk of developing PD later in life.)
- Many people with PD suffer from depression and/or anxiety. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is often recommended for these conditions. A [study](#) using a modified form of CBT ('mindfulness-based CBT') found beneficial effects for depression in people with PD, but not for anxiety. It would be easier and cheaper if CBT could be given over the telephone, instead of patients having to travel to clinics. A [pilot study](#) found that such an approach could be effective.
- People with a diagnosis of PD are always encouraged to exercise but not everyone does so, and others start but don't keep it up. Why is this? A questionnaire about exercise was given to 30 US patients and, from their responses, [researchers concluded](#) that more people would exercise if exercise programmes were more enjoyable and included 'social engagement and social support'. Programmes should be adapted according to the abilities of the participants, and aim to improve balance and reduce fear of falling. It was also noted that individual exercise programmes can also be effective; many people with PD exercise alone with the most common form being walking.
- A brief [BBC video](#) reports on a Canadian woman with PD whose problems with walking have been helped by a spinal implant.

EXERCISE EXTRA

In our previous newsletter, Simon Russell described his experience, so far, as a man with Parkinson's who has decided to take exercising seriously. (He has since added Pilates to his busy exercise plan!) His short article has created a lot of interest and he has now been asked to speak at a meeting for people newly diagnosed with Parkinson's in Chelmsford on 15th October. (Further details available later.)

In the meantime, what is your own experience with exercise as a way of helping control Parkinson's symptoms? Share it with others via this newsletter.

GET IN TOUCH: As Editor, I'm always happy to hear from members with ideas, news items or suggestions for ways in which this newsletter might be improved. Your opinions on other matters are also welcome. For example, what is your reaction to Parkinson's UK's re-launch of membership as 'Team Parkinson' with its accompanying 'Toolkit'? Do you think this will help the organisation towards achieving its aims?

Paul Chinnock

Parkinson's UK membership: if you are not already a member, we do encourage you to join. Please ask for a form. The fee to join is £4 a year, with an extra £6 a year to join the Uttlesford Support Group.

TRANSPORT: *If you wish to attend a meeting but can't do so because of transport problems – please contact a member of the committee; we will do all we can to find a way to get you there.*

PARKINSON'S NURSE COVERING UTTLESFORD: *Vivienne Kavanagh 01279 621924 or 07778 934669. Unfortunately due to temporary disablement, Viv Kavanagh is currently unable to offer her clinic sessions, but she is still available to give advice over the phone.*

LOCAL ADVISER (formerly Information and Support Worker): *Carol Jacobs 08442 253778.*

Uttlesford Committee: Secretary, Judy Millward (01763 838742); Treasurer (Donations), Tony Leek, Richmond House, Mount Pleasant, Hundon, CO10 8DW (01440 786599); Joint Outings Coordinators, Sheila Bricknell (01799 219078) and Mary Woolhouse (01799 530155); Representing Dunmow members, Val McGregor (01371 870296); Membership & Welfare Officer, Janet Crofts (01223 893619); Fundraising Officer, Kate Riley (01799 530350); Speaker organiser: Pat Lodge (01799 500255); Newsletter editor, Paul Chinnock (01799 522570).