

UTTLESFORD SUPPORT GROUP
NEWSLETTER/INFORMATION SHEET, December 2020–January 2021
www.parkinsonsuttlesford.org.uk



PARKINSON'S UK LOCALLY

Now is the time when an editor is supposed to write 'Merry Christmas to All Our Readers!' This year, I am acutely aware that the festive season will be, for all of us, considerably less festive than usual and for some it could turn out to be quite a depressing time. Members of the committee of PUK's Uttlesford Support Group wish we could run our usual events but – as everyone knows – such activities must remain on hold. We do intend to resume as soon as it is possible to do so. Meanwhile, we want to stay in touch with members, so please let us know how *you* are getting on. (Our contact details are at the end of this newsletter.) Maybe you would like to contribute to the next newsletter?

What use you are making of the internet? Our much larger neighbour, the Cambridge PUK branch, holds regular online 'cake and cuppa events'. (They even had one [online exercise class!](#)) Should we try to do something similar?

Now, at last(!) the recent news that there are at least three Covid vaccines coming our way gives us every reason to believe that things will get better soon. With that thought in mind, please enjoy your Christmas as much as circumstances allow. *By the time I write the next issue, many of our members will already have received a Covid vaccine!* Tell us about your experience.

WHAT TO DO IN A PANDEMIC: ONE MEMBER WRITES...

Jean Coe tells us...

I felt reasonably fit when I visited the Yorkshire Dales in August. Just as well I had taken lots of regular walks in Audley Park during lockdown. The first day, my son and I tackled the Ingleton Falls Trail - it took an energetic four hours with hundreds of ups and downs and I was thankful for walking boots and stick.

A few days later it was waterproof gear from head to toe as we walked to Malham Cove. Visits to many spectacular waterfalls followed. We drove along single track, gated roads with just beautiful scenery for miles. From the Forest of Bowland, really a heather covered moor, there were excellent views of the Three Peaks in the Dales. There is so much beauty in our countryside, just look around.

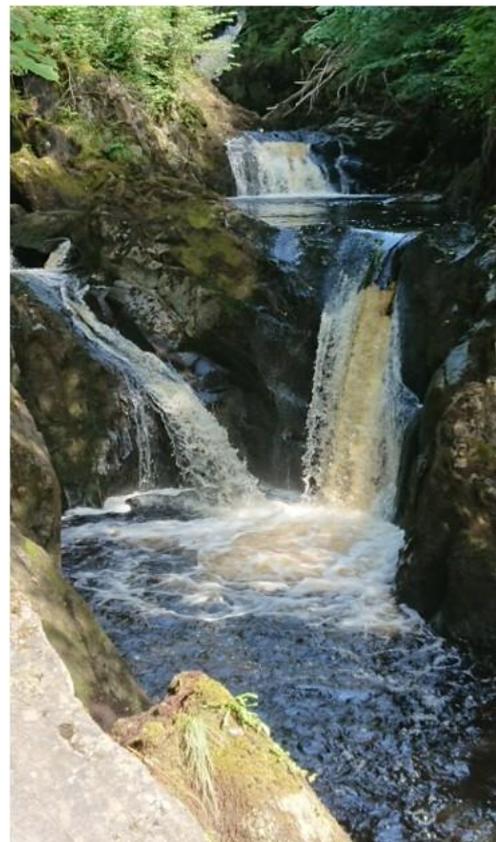


Photo of Ingleton Falls by Jean Coe

RESEARCH

- Patients receiving treatment for type 2 diabetes have a lower prevalence of Parkinson's disease. With this in mind, researchers at Warwick University used an antidiabetic drug (glibenclamide) to see whether it might reduce the effects of the toxic protein alpha-synuclein, which plays a role in the development of the disease. (Alpha-synuclein seems to open up channels in the membranes of nerve cells and this damages the way they function.) The researchers [have now reported](#) that they have found 'some evidence' that glibenclamide does indeed exert such an effect. This is very early stage research but it makes a case for conducting trials of this commonly used drug to see whether it might help people with Parkinson's.
- There have been suggestions in the media that the Covid pandemic might lead to more cases of Parkinson's. It has, for example, been noted that the loss of taste and smell reported by the majority of Covid patients is also a common feature in Parkinson's. A [study](#) has just been published in the *Lancet*, where researchers found that *some* new Parkinson's cases have appeared in people recovering from Covid but they argue that these few cases are not sufficient evidence to back up what they describe as mere 'speculation' on this issue.
- Diagnosing Parkinson's at an early stage is a priority issue. [Researchers in Florida](#) are investigating whether a simple eye test, in which pictures are taken of the back of the eye, could be the basis of a new method of diagnosis that could be carried out in just a couple of minutes. They compared images of the retinas of people with Parkinson's with similar images from people without the condition. Sophisticated computer software was then used to study the pictures taken. The researchers concluded that small changes in the blood vessels of the retina can indicate the progression of the disease. The software can be 'trained' to detect whether someone has Parkinson's and what stage it has reached. If further research confirms this to be a feasible approach, screening for Parkinson's could become part of annual eye tests.
- [A two-year clinical trial](#), jointly funded by PUK, will test a new drug (NLX-112) that targets serotonin-producing brain cells, believed to contribute to the development of dyskinesia (involuntary, erratic, writhing movements of the face, arms, legs or trunk). NLX-112 has already shown great promise in recent lab studies but this is its first test in people with Parkinson's. (See PUK's [website](#) for a look at other research that the organisation is currently supporting.)

USEFUL WEBSITE

[Health Watch Essex](#) is 'an independent voice for the people of Essex'. It gathers and represents views about health and care services in the county to help shape them. It can help you find out about and access health and social care services through its [Information & Signposting Service](#). Or call 0300 500 1895, between 10am and 2pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

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

PARKINSON'S NURSE COVERING UTTLESFORD: Vivienne Kavanagh 01279 621924 or 07778 934669. Viv does not offer clinic sessions, but she is available to give advice over the phone.

LOCAL ADVISER: Angela Nullmeyers 0344 225 3707. If you are not successful in attempting to reach Angela, then please contact the national helpline on 0808 8000303

*UTTLESFORD COMMITTEE: Chair, Simon Russell (01799 524638); 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).*

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