



The Swindon Parkin Lot September/October 2025 Newsletter 5

Editor: Kerry Hartman Email: sp12024@gmail.com

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this late summer edition — your bi-monthly update filled with news, views and tips. Whether you're newly diagnosed, a long-time Parkie, a Carer, or a friend, this is your space to pick up relevant information, share experiences, and voice concerns.

After feedback from 'Behind the Mask' there is a special focus on 2 areas that have been mentioned most to date, they are '**research breakthroughs**' (what can we expect NOW) and **holidays and travel**. We know that planning a break when you're living with Parkinson's can sometimes feel daunting — from thinking about mobility and access to managing the unexpected. But we also know that with the right preparation and a few clever ideas, those breaks can be not just possible, but deeply enjoyable.

David Pack, who has been bravely honest about his personal DBS journey, has supplied a much requested follow up one year on. Also, a quick guide to the new Beech Band device.

Read up on trips, events, forward planning and an early introduction of the 'C' word. Ho Ho Ho!!

So, grab a cuppa, settle in, and enjoy reading. If you have something to share, then please email me at sp1news2024@gmail.com. Deadline for inclusion in the next newsletter (Nov/Dec 2025) is Wednesday 26th November. As this is bi-monthly please check website for updates in between publications. Remember you are never alone with Parkinson's. *Kerry Hartman Editor*



Sunday 30th November 2025 for SPAG Christmas Lunch

Following members feedback from previous lunches we are changing this year's venue to The Village at Shaw Ridge. Details to follow...

Parkinson's UK - Swindon & District Activity Group. Contact: hspawls@parkinsons.org.uk. It is a local Group of Parkinson's UK (PUK), and responsible for raising all funds to support those affected by Parkinson's in the Swindon and District area. The Group carries the same charity number as PUK which 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)

Diary of Events

** Note change of time for Music to Movement - Class 1pm – 2pm; Tea & Chat 2pm – 2.30pm

September 2025	Event	Page
Mon 8 th	Barge trip	5
Mon 1 st 8 th 15 th 22 nd 29 th	Walking Football - Supermarine, 10.45am	3
Mon 1 st 15 th	Singing for Fun - Des Moffat centre, 2pm	3
Tue 2 nd	Parkies Pals - Shrivenham Park Golf Club, 10am– 12noon	3
Tue 2 nd 9 th 16 th 23 rd 30 th	Seated Exercise classes - The Grange LC	3
Wed 3 rd 10 th 17 th 24 th	Balance & Exercise classes – The Grange	3
Wed 17 th	The Cricklade Cafe - Cricklade House Hotel & Spa, 10.30am – 12noon	3
Wed 24 th	Coffee and Cake Social - Gorse Hill, 10am – 12noon	3
Thu 4 th	Care & Cared For Café	5
Thu 4 th 11 th 18 th 25 th	Tai Chi - Neuro Wellbeing Centre, Westmead, 2pm & 3.15pm	3
Fri 5 th 12 th 19 th 26 th	Movement to Music, 1pm – 2.30pm**	3
Fri 5 th 12 th 19 th 26 th	Walking Tennis - Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, 1pm – 2pm	3
October 2025		
Mon 6 th 13 th 20 th 27 th	Walking Football – Supermarine, 10.45am	3
Mon 6 th 20 th	Singing for Fun - Des Moffat centre, 2pm	3
Tue 7 th 14 th 21 st 28 th	Seated Exercise classes - The Grange	3
Tue 7 th	Parkies Pals - Shrivenham Park Golf Club, 10am – 12noon	3
Wed 1 st 8 th 15 th 22 nd 29 th	Balance & Exercise classes – The Grange	3
Wed 15 th	The Cricklade Cafe - Cricklade House Hotel & Spa, 10.30am – 12noon	3
Wed 22 nd	Coffee and Cake Social - Gorse Hill, 10am – 12noon	3
Thu 2 nd 9 th 16 th 23 rd 30 th	Tai Chi - Neuro Wellbeing Centre Westmead, 2pm & 3.15pm	3
Fri 3 rd 10 th 17 th	Movement to Music, 1pm – 2.30pm	3
Fri 3 rd 10 th 17 th	Walking Tennis - Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, 1pm – 2pm	3

Walking football and tai Chi continue to be successful but there is always room for more.

*The whistle blows, a gentle start,
No frantic dash, no pounding heart.
A walking game, a gentler pace,
A smile is seen on every face.
The ball caresses ageing feet,
A measured pass, it's good to compete.
No soaring shots, no diving saves,
Just steady play, that's us on Mondays.
The banter flows, a friendly jest,
A shared delight, a welcome test.*



*Of skill and wit, and comradeship,
A bond that time cannot outstrip.
For in this game, the joy is found,
Not in the score, but on the ground,
Where laughter rings, and spirits soar,
And friendship's warmth we all adore.
So let us walk, and let us play,
And cherish every passing day,
With team and ball, and hearts alight,
A walking game, a pure delight.*

Neil Fallon

Regular Activities available with Swindon Parkinson's Activity Group

Monday 10.45-12noon weekly Swindome Stadium Supermarine SN3 4BZ	Walking Football	Neil Scott Fallon 07504 851 672 Taff.hammer@yahoo.co.uk Graham Vaughan graham.vaughan1@gmail.com 07764 219 916
Mondays 2pm 1 st & 3 rd monthly Des Moffat Western Community Centre Somerset Rd SN2 1NF	Singing For Fun	Kathy Hobson 07923 473 261 Hobsonkathy3@gmail.com
Tuesdays 2pm weekly The Grange Leisure and Community Centre, Grange Drive SN3 4JY	Seated Exercise Classes	Linda Barrett 07876 068500 Lindaj19@hotmail.co.uk
Wednesday weekly 1pm – 1.45pm, 2pm – 2.45pm, 3pm – 3.45pm The Grange	Balance & Exercise Classes	Linda Barrett 07876 068 500 Lindaj19@hotmail.co.uk
Thursdays weekly 2pm & 3.15pm Neuro Wellbeing Centre, Westmead Westmead Drive SN5 7ER	Tai Chi	Neil Scott Fallon 07504 851 672 Taff.hammer@yahoo.co.uk Graham Vaughan graham.vaughan1@gmail.com 07764 219 916
Fridays 1.30pm weekly Neuro Wellbeing Centre Term time only	Movement to Music	Linda Barrett 07876 068 500 Lindaj19@hotmail.co.uk
Fridays 1-2pm Gerard Buxton Sports Ground Term time only	Walking Tennis	Dawn Mulrain Dawn.jarvis2@btinternet.com 01666 860845

These activities are free to members of the Swindon Parkinson's Activity Group.

For more information go to our website: swindonparkinsons.org.uk

or email: gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com

Parkinson's Social Café

Friendship and support groups for people with or without Parkinson's

3Parkies Pals meet every 1st Tuesday of the month 10am – 12noon

All welcome. £3 to cover coffee and cake



Shrivenham Park Golf Course, Pennyhooks Lane SN6 8EX

Kerry Hartman ParkiesPals@outlook.com 07875 416 236



The Cricklade Café meet every 3rd Wednesday of the month 10.30am – 12noon

All welcome, no booking required.

Cricklade House Hotel and Spa, Common Hill, Cricklade SN6 6HA

Café co-ordinator Vincent Mobey: parkinsonscafecricklade@gmail.com

Parkinson's Coffee and Cake Social meet every 4th Wednesday of each month 10am-12noon

Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street, SN2 8DA

sharonfulcher@aol.com 07958 165 423

300+ Club Monthly Draw



Winners for July and August



July 2025

1st Mary Hailstone

2nd Helen Moss

Bonus £10 voucher: Ruth Wood

August 2025

1st A&E Ware

2nd Katherina Fairgrieve

Bonus: £10 voucher: GD Falkingham

Join the 300+ club and you could be a winner

You've got to be in it to win it

Help boost our fundraising, support the group and get a chance to win every month by joining our 300+ club draw. For a stake of **£1 per number per month** your name could appear in our winner's grid above. If anybody would like to join, or buy more numbers, to further support the group please email or text Jackie Cowley j.cowley27@btinternet.com and 07554 006 501 to receive the documents that are required to set you up as a new member.

Website & Facebook



For any further information and details check out our website:

swindonparkinsons.org.uk

Or join our Facebook 'Swindon Parkinsons Activity Group'

It's a quick, easy way to share group photos and friendship

You will need to answer the questions that appear, then our admin team can approve you. This is done because we are a private group, which means we do not allow advertising. If you have any problems please send an email to dearymee66@gmail.com and we can send you an invite.

What's next?

Canal Barge Day Monday 8th September



Come and enjoy a leisurely day out messing about on the canal! Swindon Parkinson's Activity Group members are invited to come aboard an especially adapted barge for a trip from Hungerford to Gt Bedwyn on Monday 8th Sep 2025.

Leaving Hungerford around 09.30am and will arrive at Gt Bedwyn around 4pm.

FULLY BOOKED

Please bring a packed lunch, tea and coffee will be provided.



Join us at

Parkinson's Cafes for people living with Parkinson's and their loved ones or carers

Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, Brinkworth Road, Wiltshire, SN4 8DS

We meet quarterly, 2-4pm. 2025 dates:

Thursday 6th March | Thursday 5th June

Thursday 4th September | Thursday 4th December

Join us to meet others living with or caring for someone with Parkinson's, as well as Parkinson's health and support professionals.

We'll start as a group for a drink and a chat, then separate into people living with Parkinson's and carers/partners for a peer support session.



No booking necessary. For more info contact Hannah on 0344 225 3778 or hspawls@parkinsons.org.uk



Parkinson's UK is the operating name of the Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom. A registered charity in England and Wales (258807) and in Scotland (SC027254).

Supported by





Callout for donations for tombola at Christmas at Steam

Sharon and her team are looking for donations for the tombola that they are running again at this event. It is an incredible fund raiser. They are looking for donations in New or Great condition: Toys, Teddies, Bottles (any), smellies, anything for small hampers...

Please bring any donations to Sharon's coffee morning, Parkies Pals cafes, any activity classes or contact Sharon directly to arrange collection on 07958165423 or email sharonfulcher@aol.com



**Donations required by end November latest.
Christmas at Steam is on 6th and 7th December 2025**

The Eagle has landed!



After many setbacks, James Ludford got to finally do the Skydive in July in place of Martin Upfold and has raised over £2740 to date. Huge thank you to James for 'stepping out of a plane' in Martin's place. Huge thank you to Martin for coming up with the idea in the first place and working so hard to get donations. There is still time if you wish to sponsor this event follow the JustGiving link:

<http://justgiving.com/page/swindon1055>

Past Events Reviewed



B&Q Tombola

In July we were invited to join the B&Q Distribution Centre family day for the employees and their families. We ran a teddies tombola and raised £127.25 which is less than last year but the event was not as busy.

Fish & Chip Quiz

On 20th August we held another of our fish and chip quizzes at Hook Village Hall. The quiz was amazing thanks to **David Roblin's** interesting variety of questions. The fish and chips were outstanding from China Chef, RWB.

There was a great atmosphere with 62 participants, and everyone seemed to enjoy the evening. We all learnt something 'useful', did you know that 55,000 tennis balls are used at the Wimbledon championships! Prizes were awarded for the best team's name 'Eureka' and the overall winners.... **'Grice's Gang'** took the trophy this year.

Dawn Mulrain volunteer



*Thank you Dawn for arranging this event and to all teams for not demanding a recount as I ran out of digits to add up your scores! Great evening, my favourite question was 'how many miles could you draw with a standard HB pencil ?' (**answer on bottom of page in case you are drawing lines now!!).*

Kerry Hartman Editor, dubious score keeper, volunteer

Parkies Pals at Shrivenham Village Fete

A sunny August Bank Holiday Weekend saw the return of the 'Bubbles or Bubbly' game at the Parkies Pals Stall at Shrivenham village Fete. We are becoming



known for this fun game and this year we had 120 bottles of various kinds of 'bubbly' thanks to everyone's generous donations. Along with ping pong alley, 'win a date with a book kit' and some lovely craft sales we raised £348 for SPAG. Thank you to all the fabulous helpers and especially **Bob, Pip, Dawn and Mike** who were very good at enticing people in to try their luck!



The Three prizes for the 'win a date with book kit' were won by **Mike Read, Angie Price and Mike Dixon**. Thanks to **Lindsey Skelt** for donating these lovely kits and raising £100 for us.

***Answer: 35 Miles*

DBS – A personal journey

Parkies Pals member David shares his experience with DBS (Deep Brain Stimulation)

In summary David's first report described how on 1st May 2024 he underwent **Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery** at JRH Oxford, which he described as *life changing*. Before the procedure, David experienced frequent and severe dystonia—painful muscle cramps in the toes and ankles—along with unpredictable ON/OFF state with Parkinson's medication cycles, sometimes becoming over-medicated.

Three months after surgery, dystonia attacks had gone, symptom fluctuations were improved so he was no longer defined by ON/OFF days.

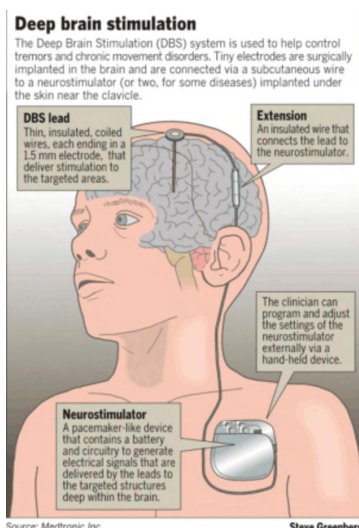
Process Overview:

1. **Eligibility** – Required at least 40% improvement in ON vs. OFF states. At the time, David was taking MADOPAR 200/50 every 2 hours but still having OFF periods.
2. **First appointment /Pre-surgery testing** – Following recommendation by Neurologist David stopped Parkinson's medication for 12 hours prior to first appointment and was shocked to realise just how totally dependent he was on medication. This appointment was with a nurse from the movement disorder team and involved a range of tests taken while in this OFF state. Then appointments with the psychology unit for memory assessments, and a 40-minute MRI to plan lead placement.
3. **Surgery** – Started early morning; under sedation for 6 hours while surgeons precisely placed leads (± 1.5 mm tolerance) using a robotic drill (skull only, not brain). The only discomfort David felt was the chest implant and he was discharged the next day. There were no dressings and the wounds healed very quickly.
4. **Recovery period** – Six weeks of rest, no driving, light activity only.
5. **Activation day** – Medication stopped briefly to establish baseline, this period was shorter and less disabling than prior to procedure and is called the 'post op bounce'. A Nurse sat at her laptop and 'blue-toothed' to the chest implant adjusted wirelessly to optimise the settings. David was amazed at the immediate and noticeable improvement on walking out.
6. **Follow-up** – First "service and tune" confirmed continued improvement; others have noticed the positive change.



'Everyone I have met says they can see a difference in me and most importantly I feel so much better, I have more energy and feel more positive about the future. My meds have been hugely reduced and the dystonia is a vague memory. I would be happy to talk to anyone about my experience.'

David Pack August 2024



One Year On: 'I'm pleased to say that the change that DBS has made remains life changing. I'm now more positive and look forward rather than looking back. I've joined the Parkinsons Walking Football at Supermarine, I go to the gym, do Pilates and have thrown myself into bowls. My stamina has improved in step with my more positive attitude (though you can't beat an afternoon nap). None of these exercise classes would have been physically possible prior to DBS

My levels of anxiety have reduced, and I'm told facially I look less drawn and more animated.

The only caution I will throw in is that DBS is not a cure in the same way medication isn't a cure. I still attend regular appointments for my medication and DBS stimulation levels to be tweaked (achieved by Bluetooth between my implant and a laptop).'

David Pack August 2025

Please note: David stresses that Parkinson's experiences vary and outcomes can't be predicted, advising anyone interested to discuss with their neurologist or Parkinson's nurse.

Beech Bands

Many of you may have been asking what the 'Beech Band' is and what does it do so here are a few facts to help you decide whether it's for you or not:



What is it?

It is an affordable wrist-worn vibration device designed to support people with Parkinson's.

Created by Carl Beech who at 51 was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's. He found that rhythmic tapping relieved his symptoms and wanted to turn this into a wearable device that could benefit more people. Users report improvements in communication, speech, mobility,

anxiety, sleep and relaxation. Also reduced rigidity, dyskinesia and stress. Some users have dramatic improvements, while others experience more subtle gains. Individual results will vary.

How It Works.

It uses gentle, pulsating vibrations on the wrist, emulates a heartbeat.

It acts as a tactile distraction, helping the brain regulate daily functions.

Medical trials.

These are continuing and 'based on a unique version of the tapping technique developed by Carl, which significantly alleviated his symptoms. The tapping technique calms the parasympathetic nervous system, helping to shift the body from a fight-or-flight response to a more balanced emotional state which can offer some relief.' Quote from beech band website

Using the Beech Band

Wearing: Like a watch, on either wrist; snug but comfortable fit.

Tip: The band can be uncomfortable, but many people replace with a Velcro strap easily available cheaply online ... ensure you order **20mm pin**. Simply turn the band upside down and slide the pin over within the original strap and slide the new strap on.

Charging: USB-C, 45 minutes, device must be off while charging. Note the charger does not come with the device.

Operation: Press side button to turn on/off. Vibrates continuously until stopped or battery ends.

Note: It is not waterproof or splash proof.

Tip: Beech Band effects vary so try both wrists and different routines to find what works best for you'

Where do you get one and how much? Order via the website: www.beechband.com

At time of going to press the cost was £49.50 Plus postage usually received 3-5 days from ordering.

Returns: 45-day refund if not satisfied (must be like-new). Help: support@beechband.com



NOTE: Caution - The Beech band is a wellness device, not a medical device. Users with pacemakers or DBS should seek medical advice before use.

For further information about this and other devices and apps that could improve the quality of life for anyone living with Parkinson's check out the Parkinson's UK Tech guide: <https://techguide.parkinsons.org.uk>

Beat the Beech Band Buzz:

Many people have remarked how 'noisy' the devices are. I cover mine with a sweat band and it helps muffle the sound plus with so many colours available so cheaply they can match any outfit!! I do have a stock of colours for 50p each if interested. Contact Kerry at Parkiespals@outlook.com



Research Breakthroughs

There is no cure for Parkinson's, but Parkinson's UK are certainly pushing to deliver new treatments in years rather than decades by working with National and International partners. There are often headlines in the press about 'incredible breakthroughs' and the potential to 'slow down' the progression of Parkinson's. These often come up in conversations in cafes, so I have delved into some of these a bit further and hope this synopsis is relevant and of interest.



Parkinson's UK have seen recent 'breakthroughs' in several areas:

Produodopa (foslevodopa–foscarnidopa):

A new wearable, 24-hour infusion pump for advanced Parkinson's patients that provides more consistent symptom management than oral medications.

Stem cell therapy:

Human cells that have been reprogrammed to produce dopamine are being used in clinical trials, with initial studies showing safety and the ability of the cells to produce dopamine in the brains of people with Parkinson's.

Lewy Body Research:

Researchers are investigating how Lewy bodies (protein clumps linked to Parkinson's) form in the gut and travel to the brain, with the goal of stopping their formation before motor symptoms develop.

Anle138b:

This drug, which was shown to break down Lewy bodies in mouse models with the support of Parkinson's UK funding, is now in clinical trials for human use.

Virtual Biotech Programme:

Parkinson's UK has a programme focused on accelerating drug discovery by working with experts globally to fund new ideas for life-changing treatments.

Learn more about Parkinson's UK's research – there is a new video and podcast about the role of PUK as the leading European funder of Parkinson's research - finding out why people get Parkinson's, unlocking new tests, and developing new treatments. Take a look at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj9ZmkcZl2o



The Brain Bank was featured in a recent episode of the '2 Parkies in a Pod' podcast. The world's only brain bank solely dedicated to Parkinson's research. Based at Imperial College London, the Parkinson's UK Brain Bank collects tissue from people with and without Parkinson's who pledge to donate for research. To listen to the full episode visit: www.2parkiesinapod.com/podcast/episode/24eb8a0e/2-parkies-at-the-brain

Everyone can play a part in the search for a cure for Parkinson's. From funding to volunteering, the more people who get involved, the faster we'll get there.

Behind The Mask

Parkies Pointers tips, quips and other helpful bits!



Feedback and responses to date

Do you get exasperated trying to enter details into the ridiculously small handheld devices used for carriers such as EVRI?

I now carry a small, laminated card with the [sunflower symbol](#) on and hand this to the assistant to key in for me. I made this myself, printed and laminated, you can add whatever details may be useful to carry on you. Feel free to use this as template:

	Name:
	Email:
	Phone Number:

You don't have to say you have Parkinson's as the sunflower symbol is fast becoming recognised as the symbol of 'Hidden Disabilities'.

Wear sunflower lanyard at airports will get person with Parkinson's (PWP) and Carer through security and passport queues as a priority.

To help gait and balance walk with [Hiking poles](#)



Sun, Sea and Support - Holidays without hassle for People with Parkinson's

There is nothing like personal experiences and recommendations to help decision making in so many areas of our lives and holidays are a great example. Read these accounts from members sharing honest advice on what worked well and what they might do differently next time covering short UK getaways to cruises and adapted tours:



Accessible Caravans

Brian and Geraldine Fisher have recently had a holiday in an accessible caravan at Donniford Bay near Weston Super Mare.

'Do other Parkinsons pals realise there are caravans for disabled people?? We have had quite a few holidays in them with HAVEN holidays. The caravans have a wet room, large sliding doors, lower work tops, beds with a hoist above and a ramp, not steps up to the caravan for easy access .Book up early for a cheap holiday,'



Brian and Geraldine Fisher

Check out their website for a wide range of accessible options:
www.haven.com/holidays/accessible

Weekend Escape to Sinah Warren, Hayling Island – Warner Hotels

Dee and Graham Vaughan share their experiences and opinions of travelling:

'Since our caravan trips touring Europe are now behind us, we've been looking for new ways to enjoy a getaway. Life has changed a little — we now travel with our new companion, Parky — so while we don't yet need wheelchair access, we do have to consider mobility and anxiety when planning.



We've learned, after a few trials, that airports are more trouble than they're worth but Cruises, sailing from Southampton, have been a far easier option. With a coach to and from the port, the whole process was smooth. We've enjoyed trips to Norway and the Canary Islands, and with a shift in how we approach the entertainment and dining, the cruises were great experiences.

A few years ago, we discovered **Warner Hotels** — which, in many ways, feel like cruises without the sea. We've stayed in some beautiful historical properties such as Littlecote House in Hungerford and Cricket St Thomas in Somerset and thoroughly enjoyed them.

Recently, we tried something different — a coastal location: **Sinah Warren, Hayling Island**. We were lucky with fabulous weather and made full use of the outdoor heated pool (there's also a smaller indoor one). The food was plentiful and tasty. Entertainment included sea shanties on the terrace, tribute bands, quizzes, archery, and croquet (some activities at an additional cost).



We opted for a ground-floor room with a patio — a little extra to pay, but well worth it for the convenience and comfort.

In summary, we had a wonderful three-night weekend break, made even better by the sunshine. At £800 for the weekend, including breakfast and evening meals, there are definitely cheaper short breaks — but as a treat, it was excellent value for the experience'

<https://www.warnerhotels.co.uk/hotels/sinah-warren-hotel>

Graham and Dee Vaughan volunteers

A comprehensive report from Ray Clarke on 'CRUISING WITH A DISABILITY'



'After experiencing 23 cruises, I want to share practical advice for travellers with disabilities who are considering a cruise vacation.'

Having a disability shouldn't prevent you from enjoying cruising. Cruise lines are excellent at accommodating passengers with various disabilities, and their crews are committed to making sure every guest has a wonderful time onboard.

Solo travellers should note that ships carry limited single-occupancy cabins, which typically come at a higher cost. If you're unsure whether cruising is right for you, consider starting with shorter voyages of 2-4 days—these mini cruises are perfect for testing the waters before committing to longer trips.

Boarding and Departure: Wheelchair users and passengers with mobility challenges should inform their travel agent or cruise line during booking to arrange assisted boarding and departure. Upon arriving at the cruise terminal, a dedicated crew team will greet you, guide you through the boarding process, and escort you directly to your cabin to ensure you're settled and satisfied with your accommodations.

Mobility Equipment Rental: If you prefer not to bring your own wheelchair or mobility aids, you can rent equipment through "Mobility at Sea" (0800 328 1699). They'll deliver items directly to your cabin on sailing day and collect them when you disembark. This affordable service is well worth considering, though booking early is recommended as it's not available at all UK ports.

Ship Size and Cabin Location: If it's your first cruise, consider avoiding very large ships—unless you're travelling with family, as these tend to cater more to bigger family groups. Larger ships also mean more walking between venues. For a more relaxed experience, especially if you have a disability, an adult-only ship with around 1,500 passengers or fewer can be ideal. These ships often have a better crew-to-passenger ratio, which can make service more personal.

Cabin Options: Typical choices include **Inside cabins**, **Ocean view cabins** (with a window), **Balcony cabins**

If you have a disability, some cruise lines may require you to book an accessible cabin, depending on the equipment or assistance you need. Discuss your requirements with the travel agent or cruise line when booking. At that time, you'll also choose your preferred bed configuration (twin or queen), which will be ready for you on arrival. You'll be assigned a cabin steward who will be happy to assist you during your voyage.

For better stability at sea and easier access to the gangway in port, choose a cabin on a lower deck and as close to **midship** as possible. Gangways are usually located on decks 4 or 5.

Trips: If you plan to take a coach excursion, book it before your cruise. This ensures any assistance you may need is arranged in advance—and it's usually cheaper than booking once on board.

Dining: When booking your cruise, you'll be asked about your preferred table size—options often range from 4 to 10 people. If you'd like a table for two, request it at the time of booking rather than waiting until you're onboard.

For the main restaurant, you'll usually be allocated a set dining time—early (around 6:30 pm) or late—and a specific venue. Some ships offer “freedom dining,” allowing you to eat at a time that suits you. Your dining steward will take your order from the menu and serve your meal. If you prefer something more casual, the self-service cafeteria is open from breakfast until late at night. Assistance is available if needed—look for catering staff wearing jackets marked “Here to Help.” All dietary requirements are accommodated.

A helpful tip: consider wearing a **Sunflower lanyard or badge** during your cruise. Crew members are trained to recognise this symbol and offer discreet assistance. Lanyards are available free from outlets such as M&S, Argos, Sainsbury's, or online at hdsunflower.com.

Insurance: When purchasing travel insurance, you must disclose any disabilities in the medical questionnaire. Don't be discouraged by the first price you see—use comparison sites to find the best deal before buying.

Insurance is essential—you won't be allowed to board without proof of cover. Your policy must still include COVID-19 protection, including repatriation, so check the small print carefully. Since COVID, most cruise lines require a minimum of £10 million medical cover. While many policies already meet this, you may be asked to show proof of the amount during embarkation.

Medical Facilities Onboard: All cruise ships have a fully equipped medical centre staffed by qualified doctors and nurses. Treatment can be expensive, hence why having valid insurance is essential. I've only needed to visit once, but the care and assistance I received were excellent.

Car parking: All cruise lines have secure parking at the port; this is run by a private company on the cruise company's behalf. A good tip is to tick the disabled driver (Blue badge) when you book, then your car will be parked closer to the ship ready for when you pick it up after your cruise. If you have booked assisted boarding and disembarkation, you will be taken to your car in a wheelchair by a porter who will even help you into your car and make sure you are ok.

Entertainment: All cruise lines have excellent onboard entertainment throughout the day, something to please everyone. All entertainment venues onboard are accessible for wheelchair users and those with other disabilities, with crew members always available to assist if needed.

Drinks packages and Wi-Fi can be purchased either before your cruise or once onboard—check prices in advance, as they can be costly. In many ports, you can access free Wi-Fi ashore.

I hope these tips may have inspired you to try a cruise,



Wishing you a Bon Voyage,' Ray Clarke



This literally came through at the last minute so look out for more details soon. If you have any contacts for an activity or a topic you think might be interesting to a group please email dearymee66@gmail.com or spl2024@gmail.com

**SWINDON PARKINSON
ACTIVITY GROUP
MONTHLY GATHERING
FOR PEOPLE WITH
PARKINSON'S & FRIENDS**

SPEAKERS 

ACTIVITIES 

**SECOND
THURSDAY
OF THE MONTH
10:30 TO 12:30**

 **GORSEHILL
COMMUNITY
CENTRE
CHAPEL STREET, SN2 8DA** 

Parkinson's UK - Swindon & District Activity Group. Contact: hspawls@parkinsons.org.uk. It is a local Group of Parkinson's UK (PUK), and responsible for raising all funds to support those affected by Parkinson's in the Swindon and District area. The Group carries the same charity number as PUK which 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)