

Swindon Parkinson's Activity Group

Proudly supporting those effected by Parkinson's in the Swindon Area since 1978.

Formerly Swindon Parkinson's Branch

honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2018



The Swindon Parkin Lot March/April 2026 Newsletter 2



Editor: Kerry Hartman Email: splnews2024@gmail.com

Dear Friends,

Winter can feel like a long season and it's been a tough start to the year for many, so signs of Spring are most welcome. Days are stretching a little longer, flowers are beginning to bloom and we can look forward to brighter days.

In this newsletter, we look ahead to the activities and resources that will help us to reconnect and support each other whether you're managing symptoms, caring for someone you love, or simply seeking connection. You are never alone with Parkinson's.

Sadly, we have 3 members of our valuable Volunteer team standing down so consider whether you would like to join us in any of these posts (page 5 & 6) or as a general Volunteer, you would be most welcome. Contact our Membership Secretary, Gail Fallon, gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com for further details.

It's World Parkinson's Day on 11th April so look out for 'Blue' buildings in Swindon and come along to the Putting For Parkinson's event on 17th April to raise awareness (page 9).

If you have something to share, then please email me at splnews2024@gmail.com. Deadline for inclusion in the next newsletter (May/June 2026) is Monday 27th April. As this is bi-monthly please check website for updates in between publications.

Kerry Hartman Editor



Have you Moved, changed your phone or email details?

Please let our membership Secretary know so your records can be updated and you don't miss out on any news and announcements. Contact Gail Fallon
Email: gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com Mobile: 07971 180 583

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)

March 2026	Event	Page
Mon 2 nd 9 th 16 th 23 rd 30 th	Walking Football - Supermarine, 10.45am	3
Mon 2 nd 16 th	Singing for Fun - Des Moffat centre, 2pm	3
Tue 3 rd	Parkies Pals Shrivenham Park Golf Club 10am–12noon	3
Tue 3 rd 10 th 17 th 24 th 31 st	Seated Exercise classes The Grange LC	3
Wed 4 th 11 th 18 th 25 th	Balance & Exercise classes The Grange	3
Wed 18 th	The Cricklade Cafe Cricklade House Hotel & Spa 10.30am–12noon	3
Wed 25 th	Coffee and Cake Social Gorse Hill 10am–12noon	3
Thu 12 th	Together with Parkinson's Gorse Hill 10.45am–12.30pm	3,8
Thu 5 th 12 th 19 th 26 th	Tai Chi Neuro Wellbeing Centre, Westmead 2pm & 3.15pm	3
Thu 5 th	Parkies and Partners. Gerard Buxton Sports Ground 2pm – 4pm	7
Thu 5 th 12 th 19 th 26 th	Movement to Music 12.30pm-1.30pm	3
Fri 6 th 13 th 20 th 27 th	Walking Tennis Gerard Buxton Sports Ground 1.30pm– 2.30pm	3
Sat 21 st	Swindon Male voice Choir. St Pauls Drive SN3 7.30pm	9
April 2026		
Mon 13 th 20 th 27 th	Walking Football - Supermarine, 10.45am	3
Mon 20 th	Singing for Fun - Des Moffat centre, 2pm	3
Tue 7 th 14 th 21 st 28 th	Seated Exercise classes The Grange LC	3
Tue 7 th	Parkies Pals Shrivenham Park Golf Club 10am–12	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 9 th	Together with Parkinson's Gorse Hill 10.45am–12.30pm	3,8
Thu 2 nd 9 th 16 th 23 rd 30 th	Tai Chi Neuro Wellbeing Centre, Westmead 2pm & 3.15pm	3
Thu 16 th 23 rd 30 th	Movement to Music 12.30pm–1.30pm	3
Fri 17 th	Parkies Pals Putting for Parkinsons 2-4pm	9
Fri 24 th	Walking Tennis Gerard Buxton Sports Ground 1.30pm– 2.30pm	3

Regular Activities available free to members of Swindon Parkinson's Activity Group. Check website for details or email:

gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com

Monday 10.45-12noon weekly Swindome Stadium Supermarine SN3 4BZ	Walking Football	Neil Scott Fallon 07504 851 672 taff.hammer@yahoo.co.uk
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 068 500 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
Thursdays 12.30pm weekly Neuro Wellbeing Centre Term time only	Movement to Music	Sarah Fletcher 01793 601700 sarah.fletcher@swindondance.org.uk
Fridays 1.30pm-2.30pm Gerard Buxton Sports Ground Term time only	Walking Tennis	Dawn Mulrain dawn.jarvis2@btinternet.com 01666 860 845



Parkinson's Regular Social Cafes – all welcome – no booking required



Parkies Pals meet 1st Tuesday of the month 10am–12noon
Shrivenham Park Golf Club, Pennyhooks Lane SN6 8EX
£3 to cover coffee and cake. Kerry Hartman ParkiesPals@outlook.com 07875 416 236

The Cricklade Café meet 3rd Wednesday in the month 10.30am–12noon
Cricklade House Hotel and Spa, Common Hill, Cricklade SN6 6HA
ParkinsonsCafeCricklade@gmail.com

Parkinson's Coffee & Cake Social meet 4th Wednesday of the month 10am–12noon
Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Hill SN2 8DA
sharonfulcher@apl.com 07958 165 423

Together with Parkinson's meet 2nd Thursday of the month 10.45am–12.30pm
Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street SN2 8DA
Dee Vaughan dearymee66@gmail.com 07793 463 409



300+ Club Monthly Draw Winners

January 2026

1st 166 D Gibbs

2nd 15 J Hemsworth

Bonus £10 voucher: 237 G Vaughan

February 2026

1st 44 A Newman

2nd 283 D Barber

Bonus £10 voucher: 231 N Fallon

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 Gail Fallon

gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com 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.

Celebrating Dedicated Volunteers and Inviting New Applicants

Sadly, I must report that five much-loved members of our volunteer team: **Ian and Jackie Cowley** – Treasurer and 300 club administrator, **Vincent and Maggie Mobey** – PUK The Cricklade Café and ‘Carers & Cared for’ Café at Royal Wootton Bassett, coordinators and **Christine Khan**, valued Volunteer. After giving so much of their time, energy, and heart to the Swindon Parkinson’s Activity Group, they have decided to step down from their roles. We are deeply grateful for everything they have contributed, and they leave with our full support and appreciation. **As we look ahead, we are now inviting group members, carers, and friends to consider taking on one of these rewarding roles to help keep our activities running smoothly.**

Message from Vincent regarding PUK The Cricklade Café



It is with heavy heart that I give notice to stand back from my role as coordinator for the café. Maggie and I started this monthly gathering in 2018 with support from Sally Wood of PUK.

Originally, we met at The Cricklade Club but sadly the venue closed and left us homeless. Sean and I met with the management team at The Cricklade Hotel and Spa where they welcomed us with open arms and are a fantastic host to our meet ups in their beautiful ballroom.

Our small but beautifully formed volunteers team make each event run perfectly.

What we need is a volunteer coordinator to lead the monthly cafés, keep in touch once monthly with our email reminder list and to seek out and invite speakers who can bring support and / or valuable

information to the visitors.

You would also liaise with the Hotel management to ensure that the teamwork is going to plan for both parties. Are you able to take on that role? Could you be the PUK The Cricklade café coordinator?

The pay is non-existent but the rewards are priceless. Please respond to Kerry Hartman (splnews2024@gmail.com or text mobile 07875 416236) in the first instance and we will get back to you. In the meantime, Sean will assume temporary promotion, loyally backed by Ray and Jim. Thank you everyone for making this café such a great meeting place to forge lifelong friendships and share our Parkinson's journeys together.

Vincent Mobey

Editor's note: In 2019 Vincent received one of the first ever volunteer awards from Parkinson's UK recognising his dedication and services. Vincent campaigned for better services for those living with Parkinson's in North Wiltshire which, at that time, had one dedicated 'Neuro' Nurse. As a result of Vincent's determination and the support of Ted Wilson, CEO of the NHS Trust, North Wiltshire and Swindon NHS trusts merged and set the foundation for the wonderful Parkinson's nurse service we have today.

Thank you, Vincent, and thank you Maggie for your endless enthusiasm and support with fundraising activities and ventures such as 'Behind the Mask'.

Ian And Jackie Cowley



I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our wonderful volunteers and committee members, **Ian and Jackie Cowley**, for everything they have contributed to both our group and the wider community.

Ian, our current Treasurer, will be stepping down at the end of March. Over the years, he has taken on many roles including Activity Host, Group Finance Lead (Treasurer) since 2023, and Group Coordinator for 2024–25. Ian has generously given his time, expertise and steady leadership, and his commitment, particularly in financial oversight and coordination, has brought stability and confidence to the group.

Jackie has been a valued Activity Host and has managed the 300 Club, our group lottery, raising much-needed funds. Both Ian and Jackie have supported countless events over the years.

They will be greatly missed and we wish them every happiness for the future.

I would also like to thank **Christine Khan**, another much-valued volunteer and committee member, who has stepped down following her husband's retirement so they can enjoy travelling together. Christine was instrumental in securing funding for our Cared & Cared for Café at RWB in 2025 and has supported many of our events. While she will be missed as a volunteer, we're pleased she remains a SPAG member and hope to see her at future activities.

Gail Fallon, Group Coordinator & Membership Secretary

As a result, we now have a **vacancy for a Treasurer** within our friendly and supportive group, and we are looking to fill the role as soon as possible. Full training and a comprehensive handover will be provided to the successful volunteer.

If you are interested in volunteering and would like to join our welcoming committee in supporting people with Parkinson's in our community, we would love to hear from you.

Please also feel free to share this opportunity with any family members, friends, or colleagues who you think may be interested and suited to the role.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Gail Fallon.

gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com

Role details for the Treasurer can be found under [Volunteer.parkinsons.org.uk](https://volunteer.parkinsons.org.uk) or follow here: <https://volunteer.parkinsons.org.uk/opportunities/108083-group-finance-contact-swindon-parkinson-s-activity-group-2026-02-13?>

What's Next?



Join us at

Parkies and Partners

A 'two-in-one' group for people living with Parkinson's and their Carers. We meet quarterly on the first Thursday from 2-4pm. 2026 dates: 5th March, 4th June, 3rd Sept. and 3rd Dec.

We share a drink and a chat together before Carers move to a separate room for small group support sessions while those living with Parkinson's take part in activities run by our volunteers. All welcome to this new look group for 2026.



Location: Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, Royal Wootton Bassett
Contact: If you have any questions, please contact Dawn Mulrain on 01666 860845 or dawn.jarvis2@btinternet.com

Parkies and Partners

**Parkies and Partners - previously known as Carers and Cared for Cafe
Gerard Buxton Sports Ground, Brinkworth Road, Wiltshire, SN4 8DS**

We will start by sharing a cup of tea and a biscuit and a chat before the Carers move to a separate room for a peer support session, during which we will sit in small groups to share experiences and knowledge. During this time those living with Parkinson's will take part in activities run by our volunteers and we are planning to secure some outside support to enable us to offer a wider range of activities for this group. We welcome suggestions from attendees on topics that would particularly interest you.'

We meet quarterly 2-4pm. The dates for 2026 are:

- **Thursday 5th March**
- **Thursday 4th June**
- **Thursday 3rd September**
- **Thursday 3rd December**

**No booking is necessary, please just come along on the day and meet our friendly group.
For any information, please call Dawn Mulrain on 01666 860 845 / 07748 632 779**

Dawn.jarvis2@btinternet.com

Swindon Parkinsons Activity Group

Invites you to come



'Together with Parkinson's

Time: 10.45 – 12.30

At: Gorse Hill Community Centre SN2 8DA

£3 on entry for refreshments



On: Thursday 12th March 2026

Swindon Dance Demonstration

Come along and see Abbie & Sarah, who run our Movement to Music classes, showcase some of their work.

Dance lifts everyone, whatever their age or ability. It keeps the body moving gently, boosts balance, coordination, and strengthens muscles without pressure. It sparks joy, reduces stress, and brings people together in a way that feels natural and social. Most importantly, dance adapts to *you* – seated, standing, slow, fast – making it an inclusive activity that welcomes everybody and every condition. Come along and see some of the techniques used and see how lives can be enriched through dance.



On: Thursday 9th April 2026

FREE Talk and Tasting session from Wiltshire Farm Foods

This is a local company based in Cricklade and they will present a brief overview

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FOODS

of Wiltshire Farm Foods and how their service supports independent living, post-hospital recovery, and everyday mealtime convenience. They will provide a sampling of the meals, cakes, and other goodies to taste. This is an **information only demonstration** and there will be no hard selling, just

an opportunity to see what is available.

Any queries or ideas for speakers, presenters or activities
please contact Dee 07793 463 409

Saturday 21st March – Enjoy a Spring Treat

The Swindon Male Voice Chior have, once again, very kindly organised a concert to raise funds for SPAG.

Tickets £10

See poster for details. Contact Dee or Graham Vaughan for tickets or more information.

07793 463 409

dearymee66@gmail.com

Swindon Parkinson's Activity Group
Present
"United In Song"
Featuring
Swindon Male Voice Choir
Directed by Kirstie Smith
With Special Guests
Thamesdown Ladies Choir
Directed by Shelley Morgan
St Paul's Church and Community Centre
St Paul's Drive, Swindon SN3 5BY
Saturday 21st March 2026 7.30pm
Tickets £10.00
Under 16 yrs—£5.00
Ticket available from:
Online: ticketsource.co.uk/Swindon-MVC
Parkinson's Ticket Point: 07764 219916
Email: swindonmalevoicechoir@msn.com
Call to reserve for door collection

Friday 17th April 2-4pm



Parkies Pals and the Shrivenham Park Social Putters invite you to raise awareness and help support World Parkinson's Day



PUTTING FOR PARKINSON'S
Friday 17th APRIL 2026
Shrivenham Park Golf Club
2pm – 4pm



Join us for Putting and Afternoon Tea £3 per person, pay at the door. Putting fun, prizes to win, cakes, scones, tea, raffle

Last year's medal and trophy winners were Mike Mulrain, Neil Fallon and Graham Vaughan, come along for your chance to be a winner.

SAVE THE DATE



**With fabulous guitarist and singer
Tony M.**

Step back in time with the sounds of
the 60s, 70s and 80s.

Served with a side of tea, cake, and
community cheer.

Dress to impress.

Special 'Tea'-mendous raffle

All welcome

£10 per person

Tickets must be purchased in
advance as numbers are restricted.

For more details contact

Kerry Hartman

ParkiesPals@outlook.com or mobile

07875 416 236



NOTE: This event was very successful in 2024 when Parkies Pals and Home Instead organised a joint venture. This year Parkies Pals are running it as our main fundraising event for SPAG. **Tickets will be available from 17th April but if you would like to reserve tickets email me at ParkiesPals@outlook.com** with name and number required.

The set up will be tables of 8, so please say if you wish to make up a table. It is open to all but SPAG members and Parkies Pals will have the early option to reserve tickets. Enjoy the vibes across the decades whether you are sitting or dancing, Tony M is amazing and Sharon Fulcher is providing the bakes ...what else can I say? *Kerry Hartman Editor, Volunteer, Parkies Pals Founder*

Past events reviewed

Together with Parkinson's (TWP)

This is now a very welcome addition to our regular monthly activities and is a great opportunity for a wide variety of workshops, talks and demonstrations enjoyed with refreshments on the 2nd Thursday of the month.

Spring Paintings



In January, we were pleased to welcome local artist Deepti Arora.

Deepti guided us through the process of producing a painting of Snowdrops which was very apt for the time of year! All the materials were provided for a small fee and demonstrated step by step how to set free our inner artist! The results were very satisfying and a lot of fun. It was a great opportunity for those with Parkinson's and their helpers to do something together and have a laugh! Thank you, Deepti.



Graham Vaughan

Ministry of Samba comes to TWP!!



In February TWP were delighted to have a visit from the drummers of the local drum band Ministry of Samba.

The band was formed some 10 years ago playing Brazilian style music in Swindon known as Swindon Samba.

After a short talk and a demonstration of the different drums, bells and shakers we were all invited to join in using Percussion Tubes. A few of the more adventurous

SPAG members came to the front and joined in. Under the guidance of Kev we got a good rhythm going and even managed some smooth tempo changes as we kept going!

We would like to thank the members of the group for giving up their time to entertain us.

Thank you to those who attended, it was a good turnout. Please encourage others who may benefit from being entertained at this monthly event. Next month will be the turn of "Swindon Dance". (See page 8 in this newsletter)

Dee and Graham Vaughan



Race To The Stones



James Marshall, Grandson of Parkies Pals John and Margaret Hern, has set himself another tough challenge this year to complete the 'Race to the Stones' along the length of The Ridgeway. That's 100km in ONE day!

James raised over £1000 for PUK in 2024 by taking part in the Great North Run and now he's stepping up the pace.

James says, 'I'm challenging myself to take part in the Race to the Stones for Parkinson's UK and would really appreciate your support! Please help by sponsoring me with whatever you can. Together we can fund breakthroughs for the Parkinson's community.'

If you can support James, please sponsor him via his page
<https://events.parkinsons.org.uk/fundraisers/jamesmarshall>

Beech Band loan

BeechBands loan scheme

SPAG have purchased 4 BeechBands which will be offered out to members on a trial basis. Each trial will last for a maximum of 8 weeks. If you are interested in trying out one of the devices then please get in touch with Mike Mulrain, details below and you will be added to the list and contacted when a band becomes available. Please note that Cricklade Café and Parkies Pals also have bands available to borrow, so if their venues are more convenient for you then please contact either Kerry or Sean.



For those of you that have not heard of the BeechBand here is a summary of what it does. We already have several members who have purchased their own so if you are wanting to find out more then have a word with them for more information.

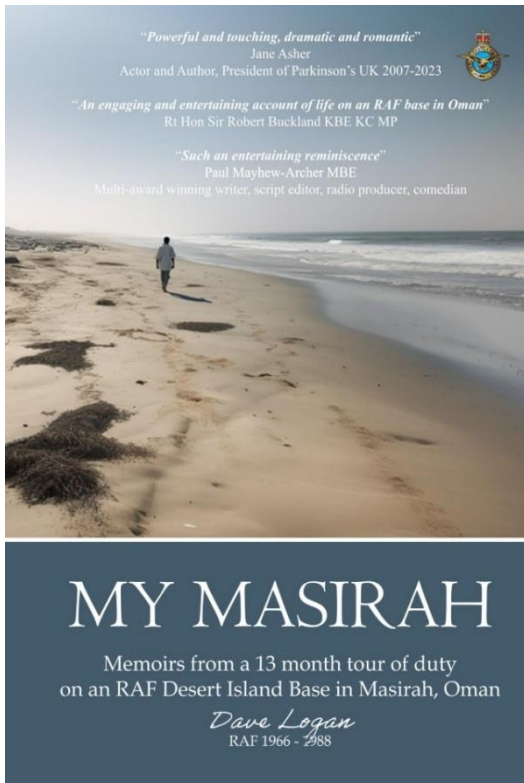
It is an affordable wrist-worn vibration device designed to support people with Parkinson's. Created by Carl Beech who at 51 was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's. He found that rhythmic tapping relieved his symptoms and wanted to turn this into a wearable device that could benefit more people. 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.

If you have already purchased a BeechBand we would like you to complete one of our SPAG evaluation forms to see how it has helped you. The more feedback that we get the better we will be able to advise members in future as to what improvements to look out for. Please contact Mike to request a copy of the Evaluation Form.

Mike Mulrain Volunteer

If you are interested in trying out one of the devices then please get in touch with Mike Mulrain, either by email mike.mulrain@yahoo.co.uk or by phone 07802 757560

My book – My Masirah



Step into a world deeply intertwined in the military life of Dave Logan, the son of an RAF Aircraft Mechanic and a Woman's Land Army volunteer in WW2. It will take you on an exhilarating journey through time and across continents.

In this captivating memoir, Dave recounts his unforgettable 13-month tour of duty (1968-69) at RAF Masirah, an island off the east coast of mainland Oman in the Arabian Sea. From the moment he stepped foot on this desert island base, he found himself immersed in a world of vivid history and desolate landscapes. Dave discovered a newfound appreciation for the simplicities of life and the camaraderie forged among his fellow servicemen. Yet this memoir is not just about the day-to-day life on the island, it delves deeper into the rich history that shaped Masirah. As Dave uncovers the island's past, he discovers a tapestry of historic tales and nature's wonders including archaeology and geology. Through his vivid writings, readers will find themselves transported to the golden sands of Masirah, feeling the scorching desert winds and hearing the distant roar of jet engines. Not forgetting of course, the rebuilding of a railway and running a daily

service to the jetty and night service during the turtle egg laying and hatching season. Also not forgetting the dreaded fly season when going outside you are bombarded by them, particularly in the face.

From heart-pounding experiences to heartwarming moments with his loved ones, Dave's memoir paints a picture of life lived to the fullest amidst the backdrop of a unique and captivating island. He decided there was a story to tell that crossed the breadth of his time on the Island and its island's history.

Book Reviews:

"Powerful and touching, dramatic and romantic"- *Jane Asher, Actor and Author, President of Parkinson's UK 2007-2023*

"An engaging and entertaining account of life on an RAF base in Oman" - *Rt Hon Sir Robert Buckland KBE KC MP*

"Such an entertaining reminiscence"- *Paul Mayhew-Archer MBE Multi-award-winning writer, script editor, radio producer, comedian*

Available from Amazon for £10.99 for paperback. Your purchase will be greatly appreciated as all profits will go the Parkinson's UK Research to help find that illusive cure. To date Dave has raised almost £1000 (£500 of it already sent to PUK research)

'I have personally read this book and it is entertaining and informative. Well done Dave.'

Kerry Hartman



Voice – THINK LOUD

Graham Vaughan shares his recent experience in finding his voice:

I recently completed the Lee Silverman Voice Training (LSVT) course at Great Western Hospital. The programme involves sixteen one-hour sessions over four weeks and is designed to help people with Parkinson's keep their voices strong and clear as the condition progresses.

For my first session with Speech Therapist Cheryl Davidse, I wasn't sure what to expect. Within minutes I was being asked to produce a very unfamiliar sound: a long, loud "aaaaah!" My first attempt resembled a distressed cat, but Cheryl encouraged me to take a deep breath and really let go. With her steady encouragement, I did.

It struck me that I'd never actually tried to make the loudest sound I could. After a few sessions, it became surprisingly liberating.

Each session involved measurements and feedback: "Good volume — 60 decibels. Try holding it longer next time." By the end of that first hour, my timid squeak had grown into something more like a person falling from a great height. Cheryl seemed pleased.

Over the following weeks, Rachel and Rebecca joined in, each helping turn the consultation room into what occasionally sounded like an interrogation chamber. Like any fitness routine, the repetition and tracking helped build strength and stamina — only this time it was my voice doing the work.

Alongside the famous "aaaahs," we practised rising and falling pitch, reading familiar and unfamiliar sentences, and answering questions. Everything was recorded so we could see the progress in volume and pitch.

Over the following weeks I was helped to use my loud voice in various situations. For example. On the phone, in a conversation, reading allowed and answering questions

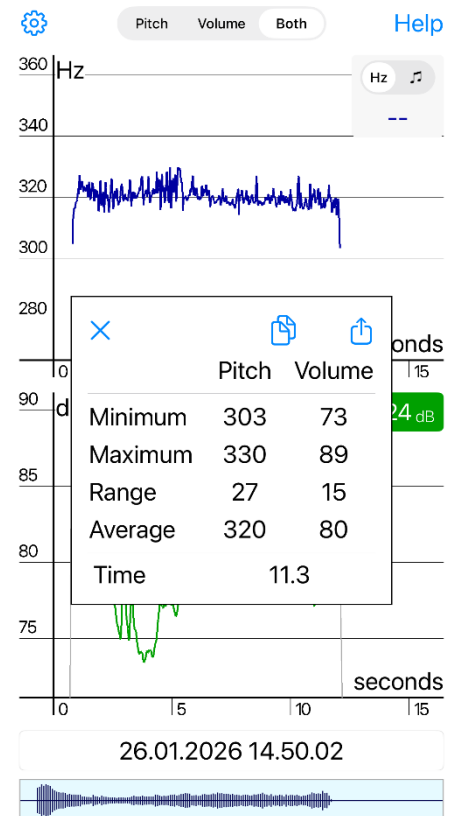
The Voice Training mantra was simple:

THINK LOUD.



By the end of the course, I'd learned not just how loud I *can* be, but how loud I *need* to be to stay heard and understood. Like any physical training, it needs to be maintained, but I now have another tool to help manage this condition.

My thanks to Cheryl, Rachel and Rebecca for their patience, humour and encouragement



Inside the World of Speech Therapy: A Conversation with Cheryl Davidse

During my recent visit to Great Western Hospital for Lee Silverman Voice Training, I had the pleasure of speaking with **Cheryl Davidse** from the Speech Therapy team. Cheryl has been a Speech and Language Therapist for 23 years, and her passion for the profession shines through in every word.

Finding a Career with Purpose

Cheryl's journey into speech therapy wasn't straightforward. After completing science-based A levels, she worked in several Swindon laboratories but found herself unfulfilled. "I realised it wasn't sustainable," she explained. "I wanted a career where I could genuinely help people."



That question — *what challenges do people struggle with most?* — led her to communication, eating, and drinking difficulties. Speech and language therapy offered the perfect blend of science, care, and advocacy. A four-year degree in London confirmed she'd found her calling.

A Profession with Many Faces

Many people associate speech therapy with helping children speak clearly, but the scope is far wider. Cheryl describes paediatrics and adult work as "two different worlds." **For children**, therapists support premature babies who struggle to feed, children with cleft palate, and young people with language delays or difficulties accessing the curriculum. **For adults**, the work spans head and neck cancer rehabilitation, tracheostomy care, dementia, stroke recovery, and palliative support.

One common surprise for patients is that speech therapists also work with swallowing difficulties. "It's not in our job title, so who's to know!" Cheryl laughs. Although there's occasional talk of renaming the profession, "Speech Therapy" remains well established.

Rewarding Work, Even in Challenging Moments

Cheryl finds every part of her job rewarding. Even when a person's impairment can't be changed, support still makes a meaningful difference. "Communication is a two-way thing," she says. "Sometimes the biggest impact comes from training carers and the people around the patient."

Technology Making a Difference

New tools are helping patients in innovative ways. Text-to-speech and speech-to-text apps are increasingly useful, and voice banking allows people to record their voice while they still can, preserving it for future use.

Looking Ahead

Like the rest of the NHS, the Speech Therapy service faces rising demand and increasing caseloads. Cheryl has seen the pressure grow over her two decades in the profession. Even so, she remains optimistic particularly about the potential of AI to support time management and improve patient care.

A huge thank you to Cheryl for sharing her insight and enthusiasm. Her dedication is a reminder of the skill, compassion, and quiet innovation happening every day within our NHS.

Graham Vaughan - Volunteer

Laughs and Lifts – Parkies Style!

Living with Parkinson's often means celebrating victories that others might not notice, fastening a tricky button, getting out for a walk, making it round the Supermarket without freezing, just getting through the day. These moments matter and every small victory is a win.

Sometimes the sheer effort of getting up is stressful enough but whether you attend an exercise class or a coffee morning, showing up is an act of strength and triumph. Even on the days when energy is low or symptoms are stubborn, you are NEVER ALONE. Every person in our community truly understands the frustrations and stress is eased by sharing experiences.

One-Liners to help you smile:

- I don't shuffle—I simply move in "eco mode."
- Buttons should come with a difficulty rating.
- If I freeze mid-sentence, don't worry. I'm just downloading the next bit.
- My handwriting isn't messy. It's a limited-edition font.
- I don't drop things. I test gravity at random intervals.
- I don't shake. I shimmer.
- If you see me staring into the fridge, I'm not confused. I'm thinking deeply.
- If you see me freezing, don't worry—I'm just buffering.
- I'm not drunk, I have Parkinson's. What's your excuse?
- I don't freeze. I pause for dramatic effect!
- Parkinson's didn't slow me down. It just made me more deliberate.
- My legs don't slow me down; they just like to think things through!



Living with Parkinson's brings challenges, yes, but also unexpected humour, small victories, and moments of shared understanding. If you've had a Parkinson's moment that made you smile send me an email, put our frozen face to the test.

Kerry Hartman - Would be comedian! Editor, Volunteer

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)