



Parkinson's UK 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 **September/October 2026 Newsletter 5**

Editor: Kerry Hartman Email: splnews2024@gmail.com

Dear Friends

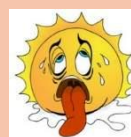
I hope you've all managed as best you could through the heatwaves this summer. I certainly found the combination of mobility challenges and sheer lethargy a bit much at times and spent more hours than planned tucked indoors in the shade. With the unprecedented temperatures and national alerts, it was a real shame to cancel some events, but absolutely the right and safest decision.

This issue brings some uplifting Parkies news from Shaz Sadie Ballard and Shirley Tucker (pages 13–15). Their stories are a wonderful reminder that Parkinson's may shape our days, but it does not define who we are. We were also delighted to welcome Tony M in July. His support helped make the *Bakes and Boogies Tea Dance* such a success (page 9), and he then entertained us again at the *Together with Parkinson's* event later the same week (page 10). A busy man and a real boost to both gatherings.

I hope you find plenty in these pages to interest, reassure, or inspire you. This is *your* newsletter, so if there's something you'd like me to research, or if you have a piece you'd like included, please do get in touch at splnews2024@gmail.com. The deadline for the next issue (November/December 2026) is **Friday 23rd October**. As we publish bi-monthly, please remember to check the website for updates between editions.

Keep cool, *Kerry Hartman, Editor*

My apologies for printing the incorrect dates for the Cricklade and Gorse Hill cafés in the July/August newsletter. Cricklade is always on the **3rd Wednesday**, and Sharon's cake bonanza at Gorse Hill is always on the **4th Wednesday** of the month. I picked up the wrong lines in the calendar — can I blame the heat!



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)

Sept 2026	Event	Page
Mon 7 th 14 th 21 st 28 th	Walking Football - Supermarine 10.45am	3
Mon 7 th 21 st	Singing for Fun - Des Moffat centre 2pm	3
Tue 1 st	Parkies Pals Shrivenham Park Golf Club 10am–12	3,9,10
Tue 1 st 8 th 15 th 22 nd 29 th	Seated Exercise classes The Grange LC	3
Tues 8 th	Barge Trip – FULLY BOOKED	5
Wed 2 nd 9 th 16 th 23 rd 30 th	Balance & Exercise classes The Grange	3
Wed 16 th	The Cricklade Cafe Cricklade House Hotel & Spa 10.30am–12	3
Wed 23 rd	Coffee and Cake Social Gorse Hill 10am–12	3
Thu 10 th	Together with Parkinson's Gorse Hill 10.45am– 12.30pm	3,4,6,10
Thu 3 rd 10 th 17 th 24 th	Tai Chi Neuro Wellbeing Centre, Westmead 2pm & 3.15pm	3
Thu 17 th 24 th	Movement to Music 12.30pm-1.30pm	3
Thu 3 rd	Parkies and Partners. Gerard Buxton Sports Ground 2pm – 4pm	3,5
Fri 11 th 18 th 25 th	Walking Tennis Gerard Buxton Sports Ground 1.30pm– 2.30pm	3
Oct 2026		
Mon 5 th 12 th 19 th 26 th	Walking Football - Supermarine 10.45am	3
Mon 5 th 19 th	Singing for Fun - Des Moffat centre 2pm	3
Tue 6 th 13 th 20 th 27 th	Seated Exercise classes The Grange LC	3
Tue 6 th	Parkies Pals Shrivenham Park Golf Club 10am–12	3,9,10
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Thu 1 st 8 th 15 th 22 nd	Movement to Music 12.30pm-1.30pm Term time only	3
Fri 2 nd 9 th 16 th	Walking Tennis Gerard Buxton Sports Ground 1.30pm– 2.30pm Term Time Only	5

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

gfallon.parkinsons.swindon@gmail.com

Monday 10.45-12 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 winners

June 2026

1st J&M Robinson £101.85

2nd S Burks £43.65
Bonus £10 voucher:
J Hewitt



July 2026

1st D&D Humphreys £101.50

2nd J Hewitt £43.50
Bonus £10 voucher:
G Vaughan

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 Sue Coles scgrice.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 scan QR code



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.

SAVE THE DATE

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Butterfly workshop (postponed from August) on **Thursday 12th November** at **Gorse Hill Community Centre 10.45 – 12.30**



Christmas Lunch Sunday 29th November 2026
The Village Hotel, Inspiration Suite, Shaw Ridge 12noon
DETAILS AND MENUS TO FOLLOW



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

Barge Trip – Tuesday 8th September 2026



*THIS TRIP IS
FULLY BOOKED*

Together with Parkinson's presents: Thursday 10th September



DRUM FITNESS
SENTIMENTAL JOURNEYS
With Nicki

SEATED & STANDING SESSIONS
Suitable for all abilities

FUN & ENGAGING EXERCISE TO FAMILIAR MUSIC
Promotes movement, coordination & rhythm

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES
Designed to support memory & wellbeing

ENCOURAGES SOCIAL INTERACTION
Building confidence, connection & joy

IMPROVES WELLBEING & MOOD
Helps manage symptoms and boosts confidence and motivation

Time: 10.45–12.30 At: Gorse Hill Community Centre SN2 8DA
£3 on entry for refreshments



**Your Mission is to come along
on Thursday 8th October for a covert
conversation about secrets and shadows.**



Listen to someone who knows how to stay under the radar. Decode the mystery, look for clues no gadgets required!

The only way to find out is to come along.....



Together With Parkinson's will be running the **Butterfly Workshop in November** and a **Christmas Special in December**, but the sessions **will not continue** on a regular basis in the New Year.

The idea behind the programme, to offer a wide variety of workshops, talks and demonstrations, was a wonderful one. In practice, though, securing such a broad mix of activities on a consistent schedule has proved a daunting task. With the sessions sitting so close to the Tai Chi and Music to Movement classes, attendance has also been unpredictable.

A huge thank-you to **Dee**, who has done an exceptional job organising an impressive range of speakers, demonstrations and creative activities. Her hard work has been greatly appreciated by everyone involved. If anyone has ideas for future one-off workshops or guest sessions, we'd be delighted to explore them and find a more suitable way to include them.

Thank you, Dee, for everything you've contributed.

Thank you

Sporting Predictions Donation

David Roblin, known by many as our quiz master, together with the Sporting Predictions group generously donated £1,030 to support SPAG's Walking Football team in June. This donation came at a particularly timely moment, as the team was preparing to attend the first South West Walking Football Festival, hosted by Parkinson's UK and Portishead FC.

SPAG needed to fund coach travel to the festival as well as customised football shirts, as the team had previously only had bibs. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure sponsorship for this, making the generous donation from Sporting Predictions group an invaluable contribution towards these expenses.

We are extremely grateful to David and the Sporting Predictions group for their continued generosity and support, which makes such a positive difference to our Walking Football team and people with Parkinson's in our community.

We recently received a message from David Roblin which stated, 'We are delighted that SPAG will again be one of the joint beneficiaries of The Swindon Sports Quiz, sponsored by Beard, which is on the 4th of November. If you, or just as importantly, any of your friends are interested or want to know more, email Swindonsportsquiz@btinternet.com'

We send a massive thank you to David Roblin

Neil Fallon Volunteer Walking Football

The Old Town Rotary Club presented SPAG with the proceeds of the sale of tickets for the annual "Duck Race". We were pleased to receive a cheque for £730; our thanks go to the Old Town Rotary Club and all those who supported the event!

Graham Vaughan Volunteer

Walking for Parkinson's UK

'Three of my grandchildren took part in the Parkinson's Fundraising Walk which took place at Blaise Castle, Bristol on the 4th July. Isabelle, my eldest granddaughter came up with the idea of taking part. Their fundraising page stated, 'My brother, sister & I are taking part in the walk for Parkinson's for our grandpa. The cause is very important to us, so this is for him. Grandpa helps to give us every opportunity that we have ever wanted, or needed, so this is our way of giving back to him.'



Initially they set out to raise £150 but as friends and family, and some SPAG members, started to donate the total grew until they reached the amazing total of £1,094. I am very proud of their achievement and the ongoing support that they, and their family give to me.

Isabelle has also joined the Malmesbury Parkinson's Group as a Volunteer and is managing their website, which she is doing alongside her studies at Loughborough University.'

Mike Mulrain, Volunteer and proud Grandpa

WHO ARE YOU??

These little cuties are your present SPAG committee and registered volunteers.

All revealed on page 12



Past events reviewed

Parkies Pals Tea Dance 2026

Thank you to everyone for making this event such a success, I feel proud to have been such a part of it and will let Neil's lovely poem give you the highlights. We raised £400 from the raffle and donations and it would not have been possible without the incredible team of friends and supporters who helped me and Sharon our baking Queen for providing the bakes.



In Shrivenham where the spirits soar,
The pals are gathered at the door
A rhythmic pulse, a sweet, toothed grin,
Let the 'Boogie and Bakes' begin.

A journey through the golden years
to toast the joy and drown the fears,
we start when rock was young and wild
the 50th style unreconciled,

With greased black hair and polka dots
we give it every ounce we've got.
Tony M and Elvis beat
there's magic in those shuffling feet!

The swinging 60s filled the room
Like flowers in a summer bloom
A 'twist and shout', a Beatles track
There's simply no one looking back.

From Motown Soul to mod attire
the Shrivenham floor is set on fire.
The 70s bring the disco flare
with glitter tossed into the air!

The flares are wide, the collars long,
To ABBA's beat we're standing strong.
We find our stride in staying alive
popping the rhythm and soul survive.

Then neon lights of 84
came crashing through the ballroom floor.
with synth pop sounds and big hair dreams
we're bursting at the vibrant seams!

Leg warmers glow, the rhythms fast,
a techno revelry built to last.
But when the dancing starts to slow
The bakers station starts to glow

Victoria sponge's light as air and lemon
drizzles baked with love and care,
brownies rich, and banoffee cream, the
ultimate sugar-coated dream.

For Parkies Pals this isn't just tea.
It's the triumph of community
Though tremors try to dictate pace
There are cancelled here by love and grace.

A slice of cake, a vintage song
to show the world where we belong.
So, raise a cupcake, strike a pose,
In Shrivenham the spirit grows'

Through every era, every strain
The 'Boogies and Bakes' remain
Four decades of music, one heart in the
room
Watching the Shrivenham Parkies bloom.

Big thanks to Kerry and her amazing team
And thanks to Sharon our Baking Queen.

Neil Fallon



Boogies and Bakes 2026 Gallery



Due to popular demand, the next Parkies Pals Tea Dance is planned for June 2028....

The return of Tony M at "Together with Parkinson' Thursday 9th July

Our meeting at the Gorse Hill Community Centre was a fun filled morning with entertainer Tony M, hot from the stage of Boogies & Bakes in Shrivenham, singing and playing a wonderful selection of familiar songs that we could tap our feet to and sing along with.

Our very helpful volunteers kept our members hydrated in the extreme heat, although Gorse Hill Community Centre was beautifully cool.

He entertained us for an hour and we had teas, coffees and sweet treats to keep us going.

Thank you to all our members who came along and supported us."

Dee Vaughan Volunteer



Model Patients

"SPAG members acting up for Medical Exams!"

Some members of SPAG took on the role of Patient Actors recently. They were assisting with the practical exams for 4th year medical students. The day was organised by Bristol University in Partnership with GWH Academy.

The examiners were able to observe as the students conducted a Neurological Assessment to identify symptoms and make a diagnosis. They had 10 minutes after which they were required to give their findings and conclusions to the examiners. Along with written exams this assessment is their last before they move on to the next year. Sharon McDonald from the partnership said that they had used actors in the past but felt it is more effective with real patients.

Shirley Tucker, a member of SPAG and one of the patient actors said, "It was interesting to see the different ways the students came to their results - most ended up with the correct diagnosis!"

From the point of view of someone with the condition I felt that being invited to be patients at events such as these can only be a positive thing.



Graham Vaughan

Editor's note: I was also on this exercise and was examined by 10 medical students, they all looked so young! All diagnosed me as potentially having Parkinson's and 8 of them actually said 'early onset' which after 9 years officially diagnosed, I was quite pleased to hear.

Meet The Team



Gail Fallon
Lead volunteer
Membership
Secretary



Dawn Mulrain
Parkies &
Partners
Walking Tennis



Dee Vaughan
Facebook
admin.
Together with
Parkinsons



Shirley Tucker
Walking
Football



Kerry Hartman
Newsletter
editor/Parkies
Pals



Neil Fallon
Walking football.
Tai chi



Sue Coles
Treasurer



Sharon Fulcher Gorse
Hill Café



Graham Vaughan Barge
trip/Radio star



Mike Mulrain
Beechband
coordinator



Katherina Fairgreve
Correspondence



Mick Hughes
Volunteer



Sandip Chane
Walking
Football



Shaz Volunteer



Sean Devine
Cricklade Cafe



Ray Clarke
Cricklade Café



Jim McLeod
Cricklade Cafe

Daniel Bruhn

(no Photo)

Webmaster

Rising Strong: Shaz's Remarkable Road to Recovery



Shaz Sadie Ballard is probably known to many of you for her posts of her trying out various ways to keep her fit and push her limits with line dancing, sailing, abseiling, paddleboarding amongst the many. She is supported and often joined by her fabulous husband Martyn who has recently learnt how to sail.

Shaz has very kindly, and very bravely, opened up about her incredible journey of which you may not be aware. I hope that this article does justice to her story of courage, grit, and sheer determination that reminds us what the human spirit is capable of. Shaz has approved this copy and wants me to share it with you all.

Shaz works as a Care Worker and was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2023. As with many of us, Shaz had to cope with a debilitating neurological condition that was new to her and sadly her workplace was not very sympathetic at first making the situation more difficult,

But what came next was even more frightening. In July 2025 Shaz experienced her first seizure (not that she knew what it as at the time) in the form of electric shocks hitting her brain. She was in Longleat with Martyn and her two-year granddaughter Daisy. It was very busy and she just remembers the pain and collapsing to the ground with Martyn holding her. Two days later she experienced another seizure and was rushed to hospital with a suspected stroke. However, blood tests showed kidneys were failing and she was put on a ward for two weeks to recover. She returned to work after discharge but had started slurring her words and friends would say they couldn't understand her on the phone, then five days out of hospital she had another seizure and 999 were called.



The next three months were a blur. 'Apparently, I had another seizure, was admitted to ICU straight away, became abusive with delirium and hallucinations. It was traumatic for my son and daughter to witness, my parents were so upset they felt useless, Martyn stayed at my side. It was horrendous for them all.'



The care and determination of the nurses were extraordinary; Shaz was taken from ICU to another ward to recover when signs were stable. 'I couldn't feed myself; I was hoisted, I was incapable of doing anything for myself even hold a sipping cup! The doctor came round most days with the occupational therapist whose tenacious approach to regular movement no matter the pain was exactly what I needed.'

'I missed walking the dog so one dark cold morning I took my frame and walked what would usually be a 10-minute walk in 45 minutes! But I did it. I learnt how to climb the steps to see my parents and to see their smiles retuning was a real boost.'

Progress came in small steps at first. 'I celebrated everything,' she laughs. 'Standing up without wobbling, making a cup of tea, walking to the end of the garden. They were tiny victories, but they were mine.'

Those victories kept coming, she set herself little goals each day to move a bit further and do things for herself. She wanted to get back to work and had to fight hard to get her case heard but was successful and is now back at work, not full time, but enough to keep her brain working! That was a huge step forward.

Shaz concludes her epic journey to date stating:

'It wasn't Parkinson's that made me ill it was a traumatic brain injury. A bleed to the brain when the seizures started in July 2025.



'I am proud to say that 6 months later in January 2026 I took my first steps in **line dancing** class, started at the back hiding but now I'm in the front shouting he ha; **Zumba** was a challenge but it's dark so I get away with staggering and swaying; **walking netball** I love because I never knew how hard it is to actually catch a ball, now I have a ball post; **Badminton** I love doing with Martyn and have made so many new friends.

What really turned my life around was an email from Parkinsons UK inviting



members to try out sailing. Martyn and I went along, we met Jane Henderson and she got us a **MAD** weekend (Make A Difference) placement and it really did make a difference. It opened my eyes to things I could do. I am now sailing, canoeing and trying my damndest to get on the paddle board.



The Parkinson's cafes have been my salvation and I look forward to meeting up with you all, truly feel I am amongst friends and we all have a story to tell. You say I'm an inspiration but it's you guys that keep me going. I'm now joining as a Volunteer to work with the SPAG team. Special thanks to Dee, Sharon, Neil, my dancing partner Graham, Christine and Phil and not forgetting my paddle board friend Kerry.



'I'm not living in the past I'm making the most of tomorrow'

Compiled by Kerry Hartman under directions from Shaz Sadie Ballard July 2026

Editors comment: Grateful thanks to Shaz for choosing to share this very personal experience so frankly with us all. Her message is simple and powerful: **'Don't measure yourself by what you can't do. Measure yourself by what you keep trying to do.'**

Shaz's journey reminds us that setbacks don't define us. What defines us is how we rise, how we adapt, and how we keep going even when the path feels impossible. She is an excellent example to us all, a reminder never to give up hope, strength comes in many forms, and recovery is always worth fighting for.

Shirley sails for sanity!

Shirley Tucker had always thought of giving sailing a go and just not got round to it. Then in April 2026 the opportunity arose when 'Sail-ability Whitefriars Sailing' club offered free lessons via Parkinson's UK. Shirley took up the challenge in April 2026:



'I arrived with my cousin at South Cerney Water Park on a chilly grey morning in April and we were immediately made to feel very welcome. We were issued with life jackets and taken to our craft. I opted for a specially adapted high seater, The Wooden Spoon. There was very little wind, but we managed to get up quite a speed using the ropes that were attached to the sails (the rigging). Then we changed craft and I had to climb down into a much smaller boat. Our instructor, Toby, was excellent and put me at ease and once settled I even did some 'driving' at some speed!'

There were plenty of friendly and compassionate people readily available to help me when we docked. Oh boy was I ready for the cup of tea on dry land! All-in-all I had a wonderful experience and I can now tick sailing off my bucket list and make a mental note that Mr Parkinson hasn't got me yet, without him I probably would never have done this. Thank you to Sail-ability Whitefriars Sailing Club, PUK and SPAG for making it possible.'

Shirley Tucker Volunteer

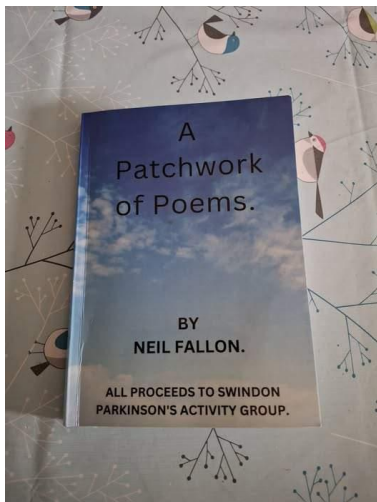


Sail-ability Whitefriars Sailing is a fantastic activity for people with almost any disability, or if you're not quite as mobile as you once were. They have the facilities, support, and boats that can enable people to not only sail leisurely, but to compete on level terms with everybody else if that's what "floats your boat". Families can get a lot from taking to the water and enjoying the experience and surroundings whilst learning a new skill together.

The Sail-ability group operate every Wednesday from April through October. Whitefriars Sailing Club welcome the inclusion of people with disabilities; as a full member of the club, you are free to enjoy all the racing, cruising, and social events that the club has on offer. For further details contact Whitefriars Sailing Club clubhouse.

Whitefriars Sailing Club SN6 6FW. 01285 861 670 Enquiries@whitefriarssc.org

From Our Parkinson's Poet



Neil Fallon not only walks miles for donations he is also a renowned poet and has produced his first book of poems which he is selling at £10 a copy with all proceeds going to support your SPAG activities. These will be available at all cafes or contact Neil directly to order your copies.

I have a copy and certainly recommend it as a good read, a dip in and out, it covers a wide collection of poems; thoughtful, emotional, funny, he covers a wide spectrum hence the 'Patchwork'.

Contact Neil Fallon for your copy: taff.hammer@yahoo.co.uk

And finally, we remember John Hern — a life well lived



This year has already brought more losses than any of us would wish, and we don't usually include tributes unless a family or friend asks. When we recently lost our dear friend, and one of the original Parkies Pals, **John Hern**, I was asked to write a few words. It felt only right to do so.

I was privileged to attend his Celebration of Life, and it was exactly what John deserved: warm, thoughtful, full of smiles and gentle humour. The Church was filled with family and friends whose lives John had touched. He was a truly lovely man in every sense of the word, patient, kind, and always ready with that unmistakable smile. John embodied the *butterfly effect*, the idea that small actions can create far-reaching change. A patient word, a steady smile, a perfectly timed joke are all moments that lifted spirits, forged friendships and made people feel better. Those ripples will continue long after his passing.

Even his service sheets had jokes that were so perfectly, unmistakably 'John', so it feels fitting to end this newsletter with one of those jokes — a final smile in his honour:

And the Lord said unto John, 'come forth and you will receive eternal life.' John came 5th and won a toaster.

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