

One of the aims of the **Parkinson's UK Edinburgh Branch** is to provide a range of activities that will contribute to improving members' quality of life. Group exercise, and in this we include the voice, features strongly because exercise is increasingly being recognised as a way of helping to alleviate and delay PD symptoms, while working in a group adds a social element. But our classes don't suit everyone. There are other ways of taking exercise to help with the condition whether facilitated in a group, on a one-to-one basis or with self-motivation at home. The *Parkinson's: Let's Get Moving Event*, 7th May 2016 was organised to further promote our objective. As part of the event we have here a selection of **edited** articles from the Branch Newsletter since its new format introduced in November 2012.



Pilates Sessions



The Branch is running a 10-week pilot to assess the possibility of one (or more) weekly Pilates classes for members. The foundation of Pilates is **core stability**. It aims to promote strength, stamina, balanced muscle development, flexibility and increased range of motion for the joints. As your core strength develops so will stability throughout your entire torso, which can help with

some of the mobility and postural issues of Parkinson's. In addition, reducing the effort placed on the body during everyday activities can help lower fatigue levels.

We are fortunate to have **Sasha Baggaley** leading the sessions. As well as being a Pilates instructor, Sasha is a neuro-physiotherapist with a particular interest in neurological conditions. The pilot completes in May when we will assess the viability of such a class(es) for the Branch. If you believe regular Pilates may be of interest or want to ask about this form of exercise, please contact *Sasha* on 0131 620 3780. (Sasha is also available for 1:1 sessions in your own home).

Original Branch Newsletter article March 2016

Individual Approach – Bob's Boxing Training

Bob Raeburn (in his seventies and diagnosed with PD in 2003) is an Edinburgh Branch member now living near Sheffield where he is also a member of the Sheffield Branch. Bob authored a paper entitled *RIPE: Realistic Improvement in Parkinson's through Exercise*. In the article he describes a variety of approaches to exercise and how these can help to ameliorate the symptoms of PD and improve quality of life.

Bob later wanted to address his feet dexterity as falls were happening more often. Bob took on boxing training exercises, which have resulted in him being able to move his feet sufficiently fast that if he trips, he can regain his balance and not fall. Bob wrote about this aspect of his regime in another article *My Boxing Training Experience*. Both articles are available on the *Branch website* in the *News* archive.



Original Branch Newsletter article August 2014



“I don’t sing because I’m happy, I’m happy because I sing”

William James, American Philosopher & Psychologist, d.1910

“Health choirs” have become all the rage thanks to the BBC and choirmasters like Gareth Malone. The Natural Voice Practitioners’ Network promotes the idea that singing is everybody’s birthright. Research in recent years suggests that human beings sang before we could speak. If you listen to the babblings of a baby you should recognise that it’s more akin to singing than speech. For thousands of years, civilisations have sung to express joy as well as grief, accompany work, support devotional rituals, foster a sense of community and aid healing. They’ve done so without worry of whether any one individual had a good voice, got it right or harmonised appropriately.

Here’s what singing can do for us:

- ♪ improve our **breathing**, exercise the **vocal folds** and tone the **facial muscles**
- ♪ release **endorphins**, our pain-relieving and feel good hormones
- ♪ help **tone the diaphragm and abdominal muscles**, which in turn helps the digestive system and circulation
- ♪ **focus the mind** away from everyday worries and concerns.



These are the benefits for everyone but for people with Parkinson’s they relate to areas often affected by the condition. When we sing in a group we have the added benefits of improved listening skills, mutual support and friendship and a great source of fun and laughter. The Branch recognised the beneficial effects and in 2009 established “Singing4Fun.” It is run by Branch members, **Cathie Quinn** and **Heather Robertson**

with professional singer and voice coach **Wendy Carle Taylor**. Ask any regular member about the benefits and you shouldn’t need further convincing. Anyone can join, which may provide an incentive for people who shy away from gatherings involving just those with Parkinson’s.

No matter how well or poorly *you* believe you sing you will be warmly welcomed. Learning is by call-and-response, no need to read music. The group tackles all manner of genres, languages, rounds and harmonies. It is not a performance group as such. However, Wendy is such a master of encouragement, patience and persistence (all with a glorious sense of humour) that in the last year (2012), the singers exceeded all expectations and felt confident enough to take up several invitations to perform in public. Participants don’t need to take part in these but many do, because they can see just what’s possible when all manner of voices blend.

To date (May 2016) the Group’s performances have included Branch Coffee Mornings, various community gatherings, Parkinson’s UK Festive Concerts, Parkinson’s Specialist Nurses Information Afternoon, UN Concert for Trees at the Usher Hall and performing a song specially commissioned for the Queen’s Baton Relay at the Scottish Parliament prior to the 2014 Commonwealth Games, a video of which can be seen on the *Branch website* page “Regular Activities – Singing4Fun” where you can also find contact details. If you don’t feel ready to join us, do please **sing in the bath, in the shower, in the kitchen, or wherever** it takes your fancy, carers included, and **watch for the benefits**.



Original Branch Newsletter article November 2012



You won't be taught ballet, hip-hop, disco, ballroom or ethnic dances at **Movement and Dance for People with Parkinson's** (PwP) but you *will* have the opportunity to experience the pleasure and direct benefits of specially choreographed movements to music. There is a powerful source of rhythmic knowledge in us all. Think of our heartbeat, our breathing, the way we walk, and the patterns of our daily lives – waking, working, eating and relaxing. As we are all too aware, the impact of Parkinson's on movement and its knock-on effects on our life rhythms can have devastating consequences.

Dancers know all about rhythm, movement, stretching, strengthening and toning muscles and about co-ordination and balance. They also understand how thoughts, imagination, seeing, listening and touching can influence control of body movements. *Movement and Dance for PwP* involves dancers *specially trained* to apply this knowledge in helping people to manage the condition better and improve feelings of well-being.

The concept arose from collaboration between the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinsons Group in New York. This resulted in Dance for Parkinson's®. The UK network of practitioners and subsequent training development has been wholly supported by the UK-based Dance Umbrella and the Foundation for Community Dance. The Branch has been supporting the concept since 2010.

Classes are run in a highly supportive environment at Dance Base, Grassmarket. Some partners and carers also participate because the activity can be therapeutic for *them*. A talented pianist provides the accompaniment, allowing flexibility in how the music can be used to encourage movement and development of sequences. Voice-work is also incorporated to exercise the vocal folds and work facial muscles. The session begins seated, giving a stable base for warm-up exercises then progresses to gentle choreographed movement around the floor to:

- **wake up stiff muscles** and improve **flexibility**
- encourage **mind-body connection**
- improve **co-ordination** and **balance**
- increase **self-awareness** and **self-esteem**

But just as important are enjoyment, creativity and mutual support; so if you're not already a regular, come and give it a try. For the year beginning April 2016, the Branch sessions are being run by **Jen Farmer** and her colleagues free of charge and weekly as part of a *Dance Base* and *Scottish Ballet Dance for PD project*. For more information, please contact us via the *Branch website* page "Regular Activities – Movement & Dance."

Branch member, **Lindsay McDermid**, has compiled a tasteful short video demonstrating the types of movement involved in Dance for PwP. You can access it via the same page.

Original Branch Newsletter article March 2013

Individual Approaches – Ronnie’s Kayaking



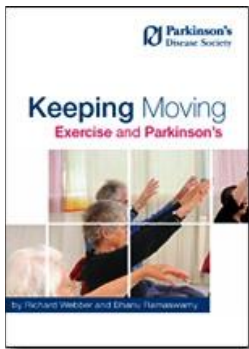
While Bob Raeburn uses a variety of exercises in his management of PD, another of our Branch members, **Ronnie Blyth** resorts to kayaking, learned in his early teens. Ronnie was diagnosed with Parkinson’s 15 years’ ago at the age of 50. Kayaking provides good exercise for the whole body involving rotation of the

trunk matched by pressure from the legs, while the arms provide the link between this power source and the paddle. Balance and co-ordination are also key factors.

Although it doesn’t offer the regularity possible with indoor exercise, Ronnie’s sport provides the opportunity for him to embrace the sea air, escape city bustle and apply long-learned skills, knowledge and experience paddling in tidal waters and in the company of kayaking friends. The elements aren’t always as kind as on this trip round the Ross of Mull – the Paps of Jura in the background. Of significant note is that Ronnie has long recognised his symptoms seem to disappear whenever he’s in the kayak no matter what has gone on just before he gets into it.

Original Branch Newsletter article August 2014

Keeping Moving Exercise DVD and Booklet



Available *free* from Parkinson’s UK, this programme is intended as an exercise regime for those in the early stages of PD to improve and maintain physical function including postural control. It was devised in consultation with physiotherapists having an interest in PD, involved in research AND with experience in running exercise classes for people with Parkinson’s. The **DVD** includes work on postural awareness, techniques to correct poor posture, help with control of movement, and exercises for weight transference and balance. The **Booklet** can be used on its own, however the DVD (forty-five minutes) provides the added dimension of a physiotherapist talking you

through the movements while 3 participants perform the exercises – helps make you feel as though you’re taking part in a class. Instructions are clear, the pace is slow and relaxed. Order via the Parkinson’s UK website – search for *Keeping Moving* or telephone 0845 121 2354.

Original Branch Newsletter article January 2014

Swimming/Aerobics

For those who like to swim and/or exercise in warm water, we run a session at the Hydrotherapy Pool, Braidburn School on Monday evenings during school term-time organised by **Liz McBain**. The session also provides an opportunity for those who have attended a physiotherapist-led hydrotherapy course to carry on with the exercises. At the end of the session, the fitness trainer in attendance suggests her own exercises and finally some participants enjoy a laughter-filled ten minute ball game. Others choose to happily do their own thing throughout. For more information, please contact us via the *Branch website* page “Regular Activities – Swimming/Aerobics.”



Original Branch Newsletter article November 2014

Hydrotherapy

For some years the Branch has subsidised Hydrotherapy courses of six one-hour sessions led by a Specialist Physiotherapist at the Astley Ainslie Hospital. Since their introduction, these sessions have proved extremely popular. Participants enjoy the opportunity for exercise, the relaxation section at the finish, the pain relief effects of the warm water and the camaraderie. An initial one-to-one assessment is carried out on “dry land” to determine suitability for hydrotherapy treatment and to allow planning and adaptation of the programme content for each group (four to six participants).



Exercises focus on mobility, resistance work, posture, stretching, upper and lower body work and balance with a different focus each week using floats and a variety of other aids as appropriate. The warm water and the effects of the buoyancy can make exercises easier and more comfortable for those with compromised mobility. The final session is a revision one with guidance for individual needs and preferences. The ideal is for participants to carry on with exercises at other pools in the community. To this end a laminated summary of exercises is provided and a list of other suitable pools in the area. The courses have been suspended for a while because of pool issues but we hope to re-establish them in the near future. For further information please see the *Branch website* “Training & Care” page.

Original Branch Newsletter article November 2014

Regular Gentle Exercise Classes

The Gentle Exercise class was one of the first major activities established by the Branch. It is organised by **Liz McBain** and run by **Lynne Scott** based on her long-standing experience as a yoga teacher and a yoga therapist. As Lynne has been facilitating the class for a good number of years she is very aware of the effects of Parkinson’s on the mind and body.



The aim is to support flexibility, strength, co-ordination and balance. Exercises involve working with the breath and movement together, which not only helps with breathing, it encourages mental focus, allowing participants to separate from the rest of their day and create some “*therapeutic space*” for themselves. Voice work is also included.

Men and women attend, including carers. Exercises are adapted for the individual as necessary and some people work seated. The success of the classes is demonstrated by the regularity with which participants attend; we encourage you to come and try it out. For further information, please contact us via the *Branch website* page “Regular Activities – Gentle Exercise.”

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Parkinson’s UK is the operating name of the Parkinson’s Disease Society of the United Kingdom. It is a charity registered in England and Wales (258197) and in Scotland (SC037554), tel. 0808 800 0303, www.parkinsons.org.uk.

Parkinson’s UK Edinburgh Branch www.edinburghparkinsons.org

Bowling Activity

The Indoor Bowling Centre at Meadowmills, Tranent is used every Monday by our Indoor Bowling Group and organised by **Kenneth Williamson** and **Marjorie Barker**. This is a relatively new venue for the Group but members and their partners or carers have been meeting to play indoor bowls since 2000. Were you aware bowling is an ancient sport dating back possibly as far as 5,000 BCE? The oldest established club is in Southampton but it was Scottish bowlers who kept the sport alive when the English monarch, Edward III prohibited the game for common people in the 14th century as archery essential to national defence was being neglected.



Scottish bowlers developed the present lawn game, establishing a set of rules by the late 19th century. Carpet bowls were introduced around the same time allowing people to set up a “rink” indoors by laying down a length of material. With modern materials technology and laser floor levelling techniques it became possible to design the equivalent of a full size green lawn indoors like the one at Meadowmills (*see the photo*).

At first glance, bowling seems a relatively low-key physical sport but the constant movement helps burn excess fat and the legs are being exercised as you walk back and forth between ends. As you roll the ball, the repeated flexing, bending, twisting and stretching tones the shoulders, arms, chest and leg muscles, whilst gripping the ball helps strengthen the hands. Sense of balance and hand-eye co-ordination are also given a workout. Yet all this can be achieved in a very gentle fashion, which is why **it is such a good activity for people with motor skill challenges as with Parkinson’s**.

Added to the benefits is the social aspect of these meetings; so if you’re looking for an activity to help further improve your quality of life, we encourage you to give indoor bowling a try whether you’ve previously bowled or would be a total newcomer to the activity. The Group books 3 rinks (enough for 24 players) every Monday lunchtime. If interested, please contact us via the *Branch website* page “Regular Activities – Indoor Bowling.” If you’re keen but getting there is an issue, please get in touch with the Hon. Branch Secretary via the *Branch website*.

Original Branch Newsletter article October 2015

QMU Study on Attitudes to Exercise

Some Branch members were involved in a research project by Queen Margaret University physiotherapy students looking at how people with Parkinson's regard exercise and what barriers there might be to exercising on a regular basis. The project was supervised by Senior Lecturer, *Gillian Baer* and Lecturer *Jane Hislop*. Identified barriers include: *physical issues* (interference of Parkinson’s symptoms, the timing of medication, fatigue); *environmental* (crowded locations, not knowing the staff, transport to the venue, availability of support); and *psychological* (embarrassment, anxiety, depression, apathy, self-doubt). Aspects that facilitate people with PD taking regular exercise include: the benefits of social interaction, having a competitive streak, support from loved ones, group encouragement and camaraderie, being someone with a sense of humour and determination, having knowledgeable instructors available, ease of transport as well as friendly facilities.



Original Branch Newsletter article June 2013

Branch Exercise Class at Thistle Foundation

The Thistle Foundation, located in Niddrie Mains, was established as a charity in 1944 by Sir Francis and Lady Isabella Tudsbury to provide housing and care for disabled war veterans and their families. Since that time the organisation has undergone many developments, handing over the housing activities to others and focussing on helping people with disabilities or long term health conditions to a better quality of life. It does this through a variety of courses, classes and provision of gym facilities, all with a person-centred approach.



Twelve years ago a number of Branch members attended the 10-week Lifestyle Management Course. It was such a positive experience, in particular the benefits of exercising at the venue on a regular basis, that the Branch set up a weekly exercise class there for People with Parkinson's, running throughout much of the year. Others have joined the class since the original group (*shown here*).

The session is facilitator-led and begins with warm-up exercises involving walking, stretching and twisting. (Participants can be seated when the need arises.) Then follows much laughter with ball throwing activities which participants are well able to do – research shows that when the mind is focussed, even though people are experiencing tremors, controlled co-ordination *can* be achieved. Next, there are specific mobility exercises perhaps with some tai chi movements. Finally, a little mindfulness is used to help focus thoughts on the here and now helping individuals to feel in charge and in control.

These sessions, co-ordinated by **Kate Mark**, run on Monday mornings. The benefits aren't just physical, the group support and sociability have a significant positive influence. To find out more, please contact us via the *Branch website* page "Regular Activities – Parkinson's Group at Thistle."

Thistle's main facilities include the Lifestyle Management Course (LMC), an Exercise-based LMC, a Nutrition-led LMC, movement and mobility classes, tai chi, Pilates, mindfulness, gentle circuits, jogging or guided walks, as well as use of their gym with skilled staff on hand to help and support. **People can self-refer** or be referred by healthcare specialists. Do look at the Thistle website www.thistle.org or the dedicated *Branch website* page "Training & Care – Lifestyle Management Courses."

Original Branch Newsletter article March 2016

KICC Active Lothian

KICC Active Lothian runs a variety of classes throughout the region as part of their **self-management exercise programmes** aimed at those with long-term health conditions. Details are on their website www.kiccactive.org.uk. In 2014 KICC visited the Branch monthly sharing and socialising Drop In which ceased later that year as it was felt it had run its course. But here we can see Branch Committee Member, **Heather Robertson**, being colourfully featured in one of KICC's Gallery photos and taken at one of their classes.

Original Branch Newsletter article August 2014



And finally, on a different tack – Exercising our Art Skills

Art Group



This activities group is facilitated by two members who have professional experience, **Christine Ellis** and **Lindsay McDermid**. Participants can do their own thing or work according to the topic highlighted for the day. It is also an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and help each other. Some have submitted their work for *The Mervyn Peake Awards*, a celebration of the talents of people with Parkinson's in memory of the late Mervyn Peake, a much-admired artist and writer who had Parkinson's.

All standards are welcome. The aim is to seek enjoyment from being creative and to socialise with fellow artists but you may find you have creative skills not previously recognised. There are research studies suggesting enhanced creativity from people on dopaminergic medication. The Group has also been involved in public exhibitions of their work. As of May 2016, it will be meeting weekly at premises made available by **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**. For more information, please see the *Branch website* page "Regular Activities – Art Group."

Original Branch Newsletter article March 2014

Research Addendum

From a research perspective, via the Edinburgh Branch Research Interest Group (ERIG) page, Branch Member **Alison Williams** presents notes based in part on a **WPC Scientific Update Congress 2015** and articles by **Giselle Petzinger**, University of Southern California, USA and **Gammon Earhart**, Arcadia University, USA (full articles available via the *Branch website*).

Petzinger has shown that, in Parkinsonian mice, exercise modulates dopamine reception and impacts glutamate neurotransmitters – it normalises its reception. This is important because PD is a condition in which there is a physical loss of synapses (brain connections). She concludes "Intensive exercise can help people with PD walk and move more normally, and research is beginning to reveal how it reconditions the underlying brain circuits."

Earhart looks at the impact of different kinds of exercise on PD, and on how to maintain motivation and consistent practice. She concludes:

- one-to-one working with a physical therapist maintains highest levels of improvement
- group working with a physical therapist is good
- individuals working on their own at home find it difficult to maintain motivation and keep doing the exercises
- the earlier after diagnosis the exercise starts, the better
- aerobic exercise is important; and strengthening exercise is important.

We encourage you to keep an eye on the ERIG webpage to see what further research emerges on the subject of exercise and its benefits for those with Parkinson's.

The Parkinson's UK Helpline offers a 'listening ear' to anyone with Parkinson's or their families who need to talk to someone, safe in the knowledge their call is confidential and the person listening understands Parkinson's. It is available Monday to Friday 9.00am–7.00pm and Saturday 10.00am–2.00pm, FREEPHONE 0808 800 0303, text relay 18001 0808 800 0303 (for textphone users only) email at hello@parkinsons.org.uk or via online enquiry form.