

Edinburgh Branch

December 2025 Newsletter



Welcome to our final newsletter of the year. Our next one will be mid-January 2026. Contributions are welcome, please send anything of interest to communications@edinburghparkinsons.org

Christmas Message from Branch Chair

2025, a warm dry summer; success and medals from the table tennis players; stem cell therapy explained in another successful annual lecture; full attendance in Edinburgh of the whole Parkinsons UK executive team; another busy year of activities and get togethers; some volunteer changes; full launch of Tech Guide and a new word in our vocabulary - BeechBand!

Welcome to my thoughts on another successful and busy year for the Edinburgh Branch of Parkinsons UK. Let me start by once again thanking all our volunteers for their help and support during 2025. Without their unwavering support, we could not do as much as we currently do for all our members, PwP and their partners and carers. There have been a few changes with our volunteers:

Diane Drummond has fully taken over managing our fundraising activities. In particular, the can schoogling at Craigmillar Retail Park. She does a fantastic job getting a rota of people to turn up and collect money in cans. As more people use cards instead of cash we have invested in new kit to collect the funds. Thanks to Weir for finding this new kit and purchasing it for us.

Frank Ribbons has joined the committee taking over the tasks around capturing, organising, and maintaining our membership details. You will have seen emails from Frank containing our newsletters and other information which needs to be circulated to our members. Many thanks go to Patrick who has managed our membership records for a number of years.

Gina Allen has been a rock at the centre of our committee for many years. She has decided to leave the committee but has agreed to continue with the table tennis and YPG. Gina will be a huge loss for the committee. She led a number of initiatives for the Branch and beyond into Parkinson's Scotland. In particular, Gina has been our link between our many activity leaders and the committee. We are looking for a volunteer to take on this role and join committee.

Cathie Quinn has been a stalwart of the Branch, volunteering for many years. She has run the Side by Side Course since 2009 and the Carer Support Group shortly after. Cathie has had health issues. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Over the last months our get togethers have become a must go to for our members. We have enjoyed several interesting presentations at our Get Togethers in the LifeCare centre. From a presentation on avoiding scams to another on dealing with falls. Still to come in 2026 will be Natalie Blair, our local adviser, and Tilo Kunath from the University of Edinburgh.

The Social Cafes continue to attract more visitors. Butterfly café averages 18; Fairmilehead about a dozen and Niddrie 6-8. All attendees enjoy the informal chat with people like them and exchanging tips on how to deal with symptoms.

Our annual Edinburgh Parkinsons Lecture continues to attract world class speakers and the whole PUK exec team. This year we had Annette Kirkby who presented on stem cell therapies. This complex subject was presented simply yet it explored the subject in some detail. Many thanks to David Melton for organising the lecture, we look forward to what you plan for 2026!

Well done to our medal winners from the Table Tennis group who competed in various competitions this year.

Many of you will have heard of the BeechBand. It has been reviewed for the Tech Guide. Read all about it in the Tech Guide, search for Parkinsons Tech Guide.

Finally, I would like to say a heartfelt thanks to all the members of our committee for all the support they have given me and our initiatives over the last 12 months.

I hope to see you at the Christmas lunch on 10th December. Carrie Gooch will give a short presentation on bee keeping and her honey will be available to purchase.

Stephen



Christmas Lunch Final Reminder

**This is the last chance to book for our Christmas Lunch on Wed 10th Dec.
Orders must be placed and menu choice submitted by 2nd December.**

Further information, including menu choices and how to submit is on the [Lunch webpage](#). Booking is via the secure [Shop](#) option on our website.

Volunteers Required: Can You Help?

We have two roles that we would welcome people to take over. Both will have lots of support and Parkinson's UK Scotland have a volunteer induction that you will be invited to undertake.

Activities Coordinator

This role to some extent is acting as a liaison from activity leaders to the committee, and when relevant to Branch members. As you know, we have many [Regular Activities](#) and opportunities for [Support](#).

A key task will be to enable information to be circulated. This can be *from* activity leaders but also providing information to them. For this role, you would be invited to join the Committee. They meet on the first Friday of the month, at 11am.

Carer Support Group Caretaker(s)

The role would be to provide refreshments (contributions are made at the meetings, but any shortfall would be reimbursed by the Branch). We need to set up the room and ensure that it is left clean and tidy (several who attend pitch in to do this). There is option to invite speakers, if there are any topics that are felt to be useful. Help to undertake this will be given by the Committee if necessary.

If you would be interested in either of these roles, please contact Stephen Brannan the Branch Chair. Email: chair@edinburghparkinsons.org

Beech Band

As Stephen mentioned at the start of this Christmas newsletter, the word of the moment seems to be ‘BeechBand.’ For those who have bought one (or two!) and/or listened to Carl Beech’s webinar, you will know a new version has been launched.

Version 1 of the BeechBand had a number of issues: short battery life; awkward strap; no warning light telling you when it is fully charged; a vibration noise like an angry duck. Despite these drawbacks, many people claimed to get relief from symptoms when using it. Unfortunately, Stephen was not one who benefitted.

He bought a new one to see if the improvements would help his symptoms. He found that some of the old issues are still there: the battery does not last much longer than 3 hours; he still finds the new strap awkward to use; a warning light has been added, red for charging and green for fully charged (not great for Stephen who is red/green colour blind, the most common form), and ‘Donald Duck’ is still there! However, still no improvement in Stephen’s symptoms.

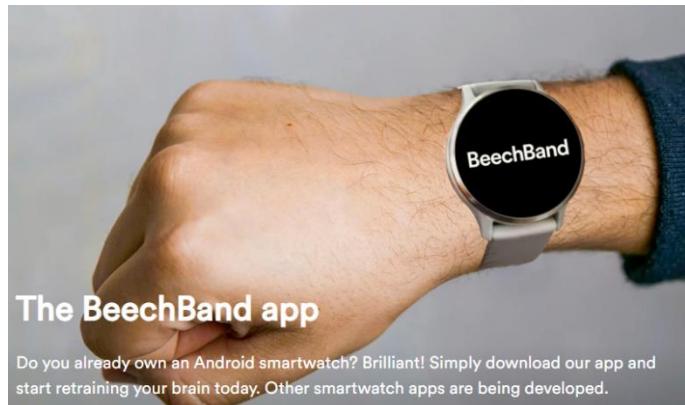
As he is part of the Parkinson’s UK [Tech Guide](#) review panel, he has had various conversations with some Branch members, and some of them have experienced improvement in some of their symptoms, and that is great news! (Note: Parkinsons UK does not recommend products.

BeechBand App

With Christmas just around the corner, some of you may get gifted a smartwatch (which you probably didn’t ask for or really want!)

Well, BeechBand have an app that turns your “Android smartwatch into a hands-free, non-invasive device with a gentle, audible buzz, offering a calming effect for a wide range of users.”

For more information, please visit the [BeechBand website](#).



Frank Ribbons Introduction

Frank joined the committee earlier this year, and as Stephen mentioned has taken over the role of Membership Secretary. We think it would be good to let Frank give you some information and insight into himself.

“Hi – I thought I should write something to let you know a bit about me.

I think all of you will have had emails from me by now as the sender of various bits of information from the branch.

I became the membership secretary after hearing Stephen appeal for a volunteer to take on the role. I remember the occasion vividly. It was either our first or second visit to a branch meeting. My wife Lorraine who has the Parkinsons diagnosis turned to me and said, “You could do that.”

I gave it a few weeks to see if anyone else would step up and volunteer as I felt that it would be presumptuous of me as a new member, to volunteer. However, no-one else did, as you can see.

I retired from active work (Church of Scotland Parish Ministry) in August 2023, and we moved to Edinburgh from Aboyne. I still do stuff connected with my work but only on a now and again basis. I had to deal with spreadsheets and administrative tasks in my work so Branch Membership did not seem to be outside my skillset.

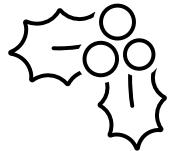
I have been fairly active throughout my life and am trying to continue that into retirement, although helping my wife with her Parkinson’s has curtailed activities like long days out on the hills a little.

Hopefully, this will give a little context to my name at the bottom of emails sent out from the Branch.”

Frank



3-Ingredient Christmas Cake



An online craze is limited ingredient bakery goods. Many of us are busy at this time of year, so we thought you might appreciate a shortcut, which is apparently really delicious (it certainly looks good as per image).

Ingredients

- 1 kg mixed fruit
- 600ml Baileys (or a cheaper alternative from Lidl or Aldi)
- 300g self-raising flour

Instructions

1. Place the mixed fruit in a bowl and pour the Baileys over it.
2. Let it soak for at least 2 hours, or ideally overnight, to allow the fruit to absorb the liquid.
3. Add the self-raising flour to the fruit and Baileys mixture and mix well until just combined.
4. For slow cooker: Line a slow cooker with two layers of baking paper, pour the batter in, cover, and cook on low for 7–8 hours.
5. For oven: Pour the batter into a greased and lined cake tin. Bake in a preheated oven at gas mark 3 (170°C/150°C fan) for 2–3 hours, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
6. Allow the cake to cool completely before serving or decorating. Optional additions include glacé cherries, walnuts, or a splash of rum or brandy.



If you prefer a recipe that does not contain alcohol, here is a [link to a recipe](#) that uses chocolate milk, but still only 3 ingredients.

January 2026

Branch Get-Together

Our first Branch Get-Together of 2026 is Wednesday 7th January at 2pm. We are extremely happy to be joined by Jackie Baillie MSP: Jackie is an active supporter of Parkinson's UK 'Get It On Time' campaign.

A reminder that the venue is the Lifecare Centre, Stockbridge. While we provide tea/coffee and a biscuit, there is a fabulous community café in the Centre, so you may want to tie in lunch or a fancy coffee and cake before the meeting starts.

November 2025 Get-Together Summary

We were joined by Michael McLaughlin: Postural Stability Instructor from Edinburgh Leisure. Michael gave his usual informative, interactive, and fun session on Wednesday 12th November 2025.

Michael outlined Balanced Life which replaced the Steady Steps programme in June 2025. For a summary of the meeting and information on Balanced Life, please see the [Branch Get-Together Summary](#).

Art Class Resumption

As mentioned in the November Newsletter we confirmed Lucy Todd expressed interest in taking over the art group. This will still be at the Botanic Cottage.

We hope to announce details soon. Keep checking the Branch website, there is an [Art Group Webpage](#).



Christmas Jokes



Some cringeworthy cracker jokes from years gone by. Hope they bring a smile 😊

1. Why did Santa go to music school?
2. What do you call a snowman with a carrot nose and a six-pack?
3. What do you get if you cross a snowman and a dog?
4. Why did Rudolph get a bad report card?
5. What do you call Santa when he loses his pants?
6. What did one snowman say to the other snowman?
7. Why was the snowman rummaging in a bag of carrots?
8. Why was Santa's little helper depressed?
9. What do you call a blind reindeer?
10. How did the bauble get addicted to Christmas?
11. How does Santa keep track of all the fireplaces he's visited?
12. How much does Santa have to pay to park his sleigh?



12. Not hinging. It's on the house!
11. He keeps a logbook
10. He was hooked on trees his whole life
9. I have no eye deer
8. Because he had low elf esteem
7. He was picking his nose!
6. Do you smell carrots?
5. Santa Knickerless!
4. Because he went down in history!
3. Frostbite!
2. An abdominal snowman!
1. To improve his wrapping skills!

