# Patrick Mark, Past Chair And Vice-Chair Of Parkinson's UK Edinburgh Branch – On His Retirement From The Committee



Parkinson's UK
Edinburgh Branch

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After many years' service Patrick is stepping down from the Committee. We cannot let him go without expressing our enormous appreciation and gratitude for all that he has contributed to the Branch and the wider Parkinson's community in Edinburgh, the Lothians and further afield. *What follows is based on snippets from the official Branch History and discussions with long-standing Committee players, past and present.*



Patrick joined the Branch in 1999. His wife, Kate, diagnosed with Parkinson's in her fifties, had also become a Branch member. As a couple they quickly became very involved in Branch activities, with Patrick joining the Committee and taking on the role of Vice-Chair. Sadly, Kate passed from this world in September of this year having been an earlier shining light within the Branch.

When the much-lauded Ron Partington retired as Branch Chair at the end of 2004 Patrick took on the role. He set the objective of working with highly motivated Committee members and other volunteers to expand Branch support activities, on the premise that we all have different needs, likes, dislikes, interests, abilities, and what gets us motivated. Just look at the number of activities the Branch is currently offering to get the picture of what we have achieved during Patrick's time in office.

An equally important objective was to reach out to districts throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians, expanding the membership so that a wider community could benefit from our support.

A further objective was to relentlessly campaign for improvements in multi-disciplinary services (i.e. beyond neurological consultancy) and more streamlining of services for people with Parkinson's in Edinburgh and the Lothians. To this end, Patrick consistently used his strategic and planning skills and coupled these with his determination, persistence and at times, necessary perseverance.

In the minds of many long-standing Branch members *and* NHS staff is his successful campaign to increase the number of the Lothians' Parkinson's Nurse Specialist Team from just one nurse in 1999. The aim was originally to have a second nurse. Patrick took every opportunity to attend meetings about nurses or provision for the elderly, always asking the same question, *"What is NHS Lothian's plan for developing Specialist Parkinson's Nurses and why does Lothian only have one, yet Glasgow has six?"*



Finally, in 2009 such was the strength of the case Patrick had been making, the Lothian Health Board appointed *two* further full-time nurses expanding the PDNS team to three.



Patrick went on to fulfil the role of Chair until 2017 when David Adams took up the position, Patrick stepping-down to become Vice-Chair again, continuing in the role when David retired and Stephen Brannan was elected Chair in 2023.

Here we come to identify another of Patrick's attributes from which the Branch has benefitted – spotting existing or potential Branch members who could successfully fulfil existing roles on the Committee, or spear-head a new activity.

Those taking on honorary and other roles have consistently expressed appreciation of Patrick's steadfast mentoring and support, ensuring a smooth transition to the role.

Patrick's previous business experience together with his vision and ability to develop a strategy meant that many projects came to fruition, whether at Patrick's instigation or a suggestion from hard-working Committee members. Patrick's ability to hear all sides of an argument meant that when he gave his opinion it was carefully considered and justified. Committee discussions could often be lively, but the intention was always to make the best decision.

His long involvement with the Branch also gave him keen insight into any politics involving Head Office. Coupled with his shrewd financial brain and business experience this meant that together with the Branch Treasurer, the Branch received the full benefits of legacies and donations with the aim of using these for the benefit of the Parkinson's Community we served.

Two years into his first Vice-Chairmanship Patrick was elected, not just for one but two three-year terms as the Parkinson's Disease Society Trustee for Scotland (PDS was later renamed Parkinson's UK).

During this time, he worked hard to establish a constitution for the Scottish Council as a forum to represent the views of the Scottish membership to the PDS Board of Trustees. He went on for several years to Chair the Society's Nominations Panel which recommends the recruitment of appointed and co-opted Trustees.

The Panel benefitted from Patrick's aforementioned acumen at spotting individuals who would fulfil the Panel's objective of ensuring the PDS Board had the full range of skills and expertise it needed.

In 2013 in recognition of Patrick's *"long-standing, committed and substantial support for the work of Parkinson's UK"* he was awarded a very deserving and applauded Parkinson's Honorary Life Membership.

We cannot leave these words without mentioning the Edinburgh Research Interest Group and the Annual Parkinson's Lecture.

These were spawned from Patrick and Branch member, Professor Ken Bowler (who had Parkinson's) attending the 2010 World Parkinson Congress in Glasgow together with the then Dr Tilo Kunath (Researcher at the MRC Centre for Regenerative Medicine, University of Edinburgh).



The three met later to discuss the establishment of a regular Edinburgh Research Interest Group (ERIG) *and* creating a world class annual lecture in Edinburgh. ERIG had their first meeting in 2011.

The first Edinburgh Parkinson's Lecture was held in 2012 thanks to the due diligence of Ken and Tilo but Patrick was always behind the scenes with his undying support and application of his strategic skills, not just in the early days but in subsequent years. David Melton successfully took over ERIG and the Lecture when sadly Ken died in late 2019.

Patrick, we again thank you for all that you have inspired the Branch to achieve in serving not just our local but the wider Parkinson's community.

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