

Chairman's Report January 26th 2025



I was brought up in Southeast Devon before leaving to travel and study marine biology at Swansea University, graduating in 1981. Swimming with the dolphins was not a career option back then, so I joined the RAF in 1982 and served 16 years as a regular officer, predominantly flying the Nimrod surveillance aircraft as a Captain. Following a staff tour at HQ Strike Command, I left the Air Force and joined British Airways in 1997.

I flew various aircraft types within BA, short-haul and long-haul, from both LGW and LHR, finishing my career as a Captain on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. I now live in Billingshurst with my wife, Sara, and Bella, our big woolly German Collie. My daughter, Sophie, lives in Teeside and works as a teaching assistant. Like many of us, I have slowed down a bit but still enjoy walking, table tennis, water sports, and chess.

My flying career came to a grinding halt when I was diagnosed with PD in June 2019 at the age of 60. Like many people who are diagnosed with PD, I went through a phase of shock and disappointment before coming to terms with the diagnosis. Eventually, I decided to get involved with the PDUK charity and joined the Horsham Branch in 2021.

Following a period as the research member on the committee, I took over as chair at the beginning of 2024, following Tom Dellmann, and before him, Paul Dodds; two big pairs of shoes to fill! Thanks to them, the rest of the committee, and you, the membership, we have a solid base to work from. Treasurer Dennis is keeping our finances on an even keel, and we are generating funds that allow us to support various research projects and subsidize activities for our members.

Three of Tom's visions have borne fruit this year. The Working Age Group (WAG), which is expertly administered by our very own Wagamama, Emma Brinton. The PD Warrior program, which starts a second cohort in April, and the website, which is now very much live thanks to the hours of graft put in by Jeremy and James.

Our branch meetings have covered subjects as diverse as Birds of the Amazon, guide dogs, research updates, and estate planning! We've enjoyed a quiz night, a brilliant Elvis night (thanks Trish), a summer day out, and a couple of January Christmas dinners! We've also run a few chess and games sessions, and we'll hopefully have time for more of that after the AGM.

However, if there's one sentiment that sums up my vision for the branch, it was summed up by one of our members at the WAG pub gathering the other night. They said that the branch had helped them find new genuine friendships with local people. I know we would all hand back our PD in a flash. But there's a silver lining to every cloud, we've just got to help each other find it.