



OPEN AGE

Members' Newsletter

New Horizons • Second Half Centre • The Avenues • and more
May 2023 • Issue No. 40

Amazing! Three years have passed...

Over three years ago, the Covid lockdown began in Britain. Most of us were in some kind of shock, as Chelsea resident **Margaret Porta** wrote in her diary:

It's Tuesday, 17th March 2020 (9.30 a.m) and my diary says: 'Current Affairs'. I'm at New Horizons front door getting a head start (some hopes!) of the usual queue for this crackingly good debate. Not!!

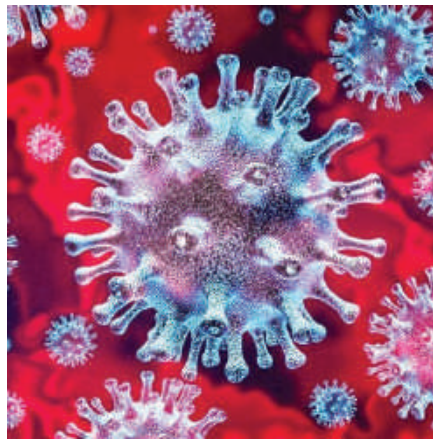
Herve, our superstar manager, appears: 'We're shut, it's called LOCKDOWN' (or words to that effect), he tells the small crowd of wretched hopefuls who have gathered in the chilly morning air.

We look at each other, shuffle about in the cold... We had no 'Plan B'!! 'SHOCK HORROR!' is the comic strip cliché that descends from the gloomy skies. Now what?

But we survived. Zoom classes began. A year later, we had started to get vaccine shots and were trying not to mingle too much, but Open Age centres bravely reopened in September 2021.

By 2022, life was nearly normal, although Covid deaths did not abate, and many of us often wore masks when travelling or in groups.

Now, in 2023, was it all a bad dream? We asked Second Half Centre volunteer **Gala Mylod** if she could suggest some bad and



and mental health and on employment or earnings. Here they are:

Negatives

- 1 Huge death tolls at the beginning.
- 2 Increased numbers of Covid cases all over the world.
- 3 Lack of hospital beds, medications, PPE and vaccinations.
- 4 Funerals greatly delayed. Weddings and celebrations very limited or non-existent.
- 5 Discovery of 'long Covid' side-effects, still current nowadays.
- 6 Constant uncertainty about what was happening increased levels of fear, anxiety, depression, isolation and distress.
- 7 Repeated lockdowns—which were a necessity—had a prolonged effect on physical

and mental health and on employment or earnings.

Positives

- 1 Reconnecting with nature through walks and outdoor activities may have helped improve physical health and well-being.
- 2 Working from home may have improved productivity and flexibility and saved employees time, money and energy by not commuting.
- 3 Saving abilities increased due to lack of spending outlets.
- 4 Technology and a huge amount of spare time enabled people and communities to reconnect with families, distant relatives and friends.
- 5 Distance learning became a focus to improve or develop skills and change careers.
- 6 Exploring creativity, thanks to so much spare time, contributed to mental health.
- 7 Furlough schemes and other financial help appeared.
- 8 Our plight encouraged empathy, resilience and kindness to our fellow human beings.
- 9 Many developed inner resources while facing adversity and human suffering.

What do you think? Opinions welcome.

Inside this issue	Van the Man—page 3	Keys Ceremony—page 6
	Pimlico meal project—page 5	Congratulations, Yvonne—page 7

Sarah backs age champion

Remember the inimitable Noele Gordon, who starred in the seventies soap opera *Crossroads* and then got the sack because TV bosses considered her too old at 61?

You may have read that multi award winner Helena Bonham Carter has played Noele in a film about her life called *Nolly*. As a 56-year-old herself with an 'extraordinary' mother aged 89, Helena has put out a plea for better opportunities for 'golden girls' on TV because, fifty years after *Crossroads*, attitudes have not changed greatly.

In a piece in the *Evening Standard* newspaper in January, Helena said "You have all these people in telly who are men," and declared: "Where are our 74-year-old women? It should be more equal. We're all marvellous!"

One Open Age member who found this article encouraging was **Sarah Dwyer**, who says: "Helena Bonham Carter really made my day, with her support for older women. She made it clear 'old women' need boosting up—in her profession, as well as other professions.

"Now she's up there alongside Bette Davis, who applied for work by advertising herself in a



Helena Bonham Carter as Noele Gordon

newspaper as 'an unemployed old actress in need of a job'. (I think *Baby Jane* came after that).

"Fortunately, Helena Bonham Carter is still well employed, as her new film *Nolly* shows. It was a generous gesture that she made for other less fortunate actresses or women in any other career—or no career at all."

Open Age AGM 2023

Nearly 60 people took part in the 2023 AGM on 19th January via Zoom, and it was good news all the way. Open Age offered more than 6,600 activities during the year April 2021 to March 2022, significantly more than the year before, and over 2,200 members took part in at least one session.

Individual attendances across the year totalled almost 48,000, added CEO **Iain Cassidy**, and quoted members who had sent messages of appreciation, including "Open Age is the focus of my everyday life."

Membership numbers had dropped during the pandemic but have grown steadily since.

Chair of Open Age **Eric Kihlstrom**, who took over the job from Dean

James, confirmed that the charity would continue to offer a hybrid service—both in person and Zoom classes—for the foreseeable future, as some members were still not comfortable with face to face activities.

He declared: "The future's bright and I'm pleased to be part of it. I think what we do is magical!" Seven people were elected or re-elected as trustees.

Head of finance **Kailash Bhantoo** gave a report on how the charity was doing and confirmed that the balance sheet showed it was in a stable financial position.

In reply to a question about membership, Iain explained that Open Age used to have a renewal process, but this did not involve a

fee and was no longer required. Initially the Second Half Centre charged a yearly membership fee, but that stopped seven years ago, and surprisingly donations then increased.

He said most activities cost £1 an hour at the moment, but some people give more. Open Age was investing in a new database, so that people could book and pay online, and also make a donation if they wished.

For more about the Open Age Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31st March 2022, see the [Open Age website](#).

Meeting Van the Man

His meeting with the famous Belfast singer-musician Van Morrison proved a turning point in the life of an Open Age member—it led to a job as manager to the reclusive musical genius for 11 years.

Unpublished poet **Christopher Haslam**—whose uncle, the Irish arts patron Garech Browne, founded Claddagh Records—was in a Shepherd Market club in 1988 with the multi-instrumentalist Paddy Moloney, founder of Irish folk band The Chieftains.

Paddy had just finished making the album *Irish Heartbeat* in a collaboration with ‘Van the Man’ and was in London to promote it.

“Someone suggested he invite Van in for a drink and, much to the surprise of all, he turned up. I was already involved in creating sleeve notes for Claddagh Records, who at that time were making an album of Northern Irish poets in County Wicklow,” said Christopher.

“Van went to do a few live dates on the East Coast of the USA, and in his absence I accidentally committed him to a film about the making of the album. On his return, he was incandescent with rage, but after he had calmed down he agreed to do it. Filming took place in September 1989, immediately after which he returned to Belfast. Then he invited me to join him as his assistant!”

Van already had a travel agent, tour manager and lawyer, but decided Christopher could be useful in a variety of ways.

“He liked my poetry, which occasionally I would read to the band and others after his performances—so he assigned me a 20-minute spot, whereby I would read alone on stage with only a music stand and one white spotlight.

“The highlight was when Van invited Johnny Depp and his then wife Vanessa Paradis from London to Portsmouth to see my performance!

“People used to look at me quizzically when I was introduced to them as his manager. He had a ferocious reputation and most of the time a short fuse, but I learned to be thick-skinned and ‘roll with the punches!’”

Born in Earl’s Court but educated in Cheltenham and Edinburgh, Christopher now lives in Chelsea where he is a regular member of Chelsea Old Church in Cheyne Walk. He is part of a team of church-wardens and guides who conduct guided tours every Sunday—his slot falls on the second Sunday of the month.



Christopher joined Open Age after taking a year-long computer course at the Clement James local education charity. He heard about courses in poetry and literature run by Robert Silver at the Second Half Centre and a course in android mobile phones. Then a friend mentioned New Horizons, which was nearer to home and was offering a class in using an iPhone.

He discovered Pilates and Chi Gong, and learned that New Horizons were looking for extra help, so he signed up as a volunteer and could often be found on reception on Mondays and Tuesdays. Now he’s hoping to rejoin Lena’s mobile phone course when spaces become available.

Of his church work, he says: “Van was a great inspiration, as we once did a tour of every cathedral city. This was around the time of his double 1991 album *Hymns to the Silence*, in which you can hear his version of two well-known hymns.”

“In December 2022, we met again when I visited Belfast. We were delighted to see each other after so long, and I expect to see him again on 28th June at the Royal Albert Hall when he returns to London.”

HM King Charles III

Do you have any experiences of the King's Coronation this month—May 2023—to share? Please contact the editor Kay Shelley with your contributions for possible inclusion in the November newsletter.



Leasehold—a thorny problem

Do any readers live in a leasehold property where the lease is getting worryingly short? If so, they might consider joining the National Leasehold Campaign, which has been fighting to get rid of leasehold and ground rent since 2017.

Although residential ground rents in England and Wales have been abolished since June 2022, this only applies to new properties. The NLC wants leasehold to be abolished for new build homes and replaced with freehold for houses and commonhold for flats. It also seeks redress for the millions of people currently trapped in old leasehold properties.

Last August the NLC submitted a petition to the government and was hoping for change, following a Law Commission report and expressions of support from Michael Gove and other ministers. However, the freeholders' lobby is very strong, because for them it would mean losing income, so the government has to find a way to compensate them.

Open Age member **Norma Dove-Edwin**, who has attended classes in art and digital photography at The Avenues, is keen to encourage support for the NLC. At her Maida Vale flat the ground rent is only £110 a year, but that sum may shoot up if she applies to extend her short lease.

"Many Open Age members live in council properties, and are not affected by this, but there are

over 4.5 million leaseholders in England and Wales, so it is a major problem," says Norma. "The NLC is hoping for an announcement in the King's Speech, but that won't be until the autumn."

One who is keen to find out more about the NLC is New Horizons member **Ellena Woodward**, who moved to Chelsea from Bromley five years ago and joined the Open Age drama group. Her flat has only five years left on the lease, and she has been told it would cost her £500,000 to renew the lease.

Said Ellena, who now attends the Wednesday Steady and Stable class and the Thursday Life Stories class at Chelsea Theatre: "I spoke to a lady in the same block as me, and she told me that when her lease runs out, she will just rent from the freeholder.

"But the rents are high and there may be charges on top, so it's difficult to know what to do."

The subject was aired on BBC TV News in March. Anyone interested in finding out more can access the Facebook sites of the NLC, which has over 25,000 members, or the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership, the leaseholders' charity, which held a public debate on this subject in February.

An online petition has been started called *Stop this Great Extortion—The Estate Management System*. It is still open for signatures and can be found on [change.org](https://www.change.org).



Meal project in Pimlico

Free hot meals at St Margaret's Open Age Centre have proved a lifeline for some elderly people, since Open Age launched a special early evening project with funding supplied by Westminster Council.

Not only has the charity been able to provide a free home-cooked meal, showing and teaching some of its more isolated members how to prepare healthy meals on a budget, but the centre also offers a relaxed warm space for members and non-members to meet and converse, as well as play games.

The highly successful project which started before Christmas finished at the end of March 2023 but could be repeated next winter if funding becomes available.

The organiser of the project is senior coordinator at St Margaret's Hannah Munns, a former chef, who said Open Age was trying to help some of its more struggling members, as well as other Westminster residents aged 50 plus who were finding it hard to get by this winter.

"Warm space sessions have been extremely well attended, with a wide range of attendees. I feel this service is essential for the elder generation, especially with the current situation," said Hannah. "Eating healthily is of the utmost importance, but also being able to do this on a budget is great knowledge.

"Each meal is made with fresh ingredients, fresh on that day. Recipe ideas included:

- roasted sage and onion chicken with rosemary potatoes and seasonal vegetables
- baked roasted vegetable omelette with homemade chips and Greek salad,
- butter chicken/vegetable curry with rice
- jacket potatoes with a choice of cheesy beans or chilli con carne
- home-made tortellini stuffed with ricotta and spinach served with home-made pesto

Meals are often served with a mixed side salad, as

well as a pudding normally supplied by Open Age members during the week.

"We encouraged the members/attendees to ask questions as well. There are always wonderful conversations, quizzes, board games and the occasional fashion show of donated clothes which we put out for the attendees to take home if they are struggling to clothe themselves as well as keep warm.

"I feel these sessions have been extremely beneficial to the older people in Westminster, with Westminster social prescribers also directing people to the service. I think the quotes below from users say it all:"

"I have been struggling with the current circumstances. I just wish this were accessible for more days, but at least I know I am being fed well on Monday evenings, thanks to Open Age. The food is always of great quality and always healthy."

"What a great idea. It has been a long time since I have been able to sit down with friends and enjoy fabulous food. I am normally really lazy and struggle with health issues when it comes to preparing dinners—however, these classes may have enticed me a bit more into preparing healthy dinners at home for myself when I have the money and my health is not so much of an issue."

"There I was, thinking no one wanted to help and that I was just going to have issues looking after myself during this extremely depressive time. Just wish it could run more regularly. However, I am so thankful to know that on Mondays I have a warm meal and company."



Hannah serves some tea to her regulars

Ceremony of the Keys

Last December Avenues member Jill Forgham and her husband Neil went to the Tower of London to watch the Ceremony of the Keys. (You may have seen a TV programme about how *The Repair Shop* was asked to repair the antique candle lantern used every night to light the way.)

The whole experience was so enjoyable that Jill invited Open Age art class member Meng Lim and a friend to join her for a second visit in February. Of her first visit, she writes:

On a cold December night, Neil and I approached the Tower of London, romantically lit by a full moon gradually emerging through a cloudy, wintery sky. Across the dark Thames we saw The Shard looming high over the Southwark riverside, all brightly shining with festive illuminations, and Tower Bridge ahead twinkling with white light. What a setting for our long-awaited visit to witness the Ceremony of the Keys!

There were over 30 people waiting quietly by the Tower entrance and a Yeoman Warder



Meng Lim, friend and Jill



Candle lantern

in his red and black Beefeater uniform appeared promptly at 9:30 p.m., checked our tickets and ushered us in through the main gate. We gathered round, enthralled by his stories from the Royal Palace's violent and fascinating history.

All phones turned off, we looked up at the ancient ramparts and down to the water lapping at the river gate and imagined Ann Boleyn arriving by boat to be greeted by her King, when Henry's love was new and true.

Then silence fell, as the seven-minute ceremony began. It has taken place every day for 700 years (even as bombs fell during the Second World War and through the recent pandemic). The enactment used to take place at sunset but since the 1800s the Tower gates have been locked at 10 p.m. each night to give soldiers more time to be out in London town. At the end of the war in 1945, George VI

invited the public into the Tower to watch the ceremony as a thank you to the Eastenders who had endured so much hardship during The Blitz.

I was mesmerised as we heard the outer and inner gates locked in turn with giant keys clanging on an iron ring, footsteps echoing on the ancient cobbles. The Yeoman Warder was challenged at each gate by the soldiers on duty (Irish Guards in bearskins and overcoats during the week of our visit): 'Who goes there?' The reply rang out: 'The keys!' 'Whose keys?' 'King Charles III's keys!' The final response came: 'All is well, you may pass.'

Exactly as the clock chimed ten, we followed the guards and the keys up the steps. A lone soldier played the Last Post, a tribute to all who have fallen in the line of duty. The whole event was very moving.



The Tower of London

The Royal Palace safely secured for another night, we stepped out through a hidden door back into the silent City streets. This was a wonderful piece of living history and I would highly recommend the experience. Book on the Historic Royal Palaces website—the cost is just £5 per ticket.

Jill Forgham

Local Webbers

Your editor was surprised to discover in a recent TV documentary that the composer Andrew Lloyd Webber was brought up in South Kensington—almost opposite the tube station in a flat in Harrington Court. At the time—late 40s to 60s—the block was rather run down but is now luxury apartments after total refurbishment.

Although his parents were musicians—his father was a professor at the London College of Music—they didn't have a lot of money, and Granny paid for some necessities. Andrew was still living here while he was writing his first musicals. Imagine! Some of you might have shared a tube carriage with him.



Yvonne's a winner

Congratulations to Open Age member **Yvonne Kazeem**, who received a Highly Commended mention in the Learning for Personal Progression category at the Mayor of London's annual Adult Learning Awards in October, paying tribute to her determination and proactive attitude.



Since moving to the UK in the 1960s from Barbados, West London resident Yvonne worked as a nurse for over 40 years, beginning in Birkenhead near Liverpool where she trained and worked until her daughter was born. Later, as part of an agency, she worked in Manchester and then London.

Here she worked at many different hospitals, including St Mary's (Harrow Road), Lindo Wing, St Mary's Hospital on Praed Street, St Peter's Hospital, St Paul's Hospital, the Royal Free Hospital, Edgware General Hospital and even St Charles Centre for Health and Wellbeing, where The Second Half Centre is based.

On retiring, she became a carer for her grandchildren, and then realised that the services and support network she counted on in the past now required IT competency which she did not have. But thanks to Open Age, she enrolled on courses relating to digital skill development, progressing from beginner to advanced without even a device of her own.

Says Yvonne: "I wanted to be in touch with modern facilities, and also after Covid I was experiencing isolation as I live by myself, and I wanted to make sure I was learning more.

"I believe I got the award for

perseverance. My determination in not wanting to be 'left behind' helped me go from 'no knowledge' in using my tablet to now, when I can use it for what I want."

Here are some courses that Yvonne has taken with Open Age:

- Computers for Beginners
- Excel Made Easy
- iPad for Beginners
- Microsoft Word & Touch Typing
- Getting to Know Your Android
- Getting Confident with Your Android Tablet

She also took part in the DigitALL project mentioned in the last newsletter, and even tried her hand at Italian for Beginners.

Yvonne was one of several members nominated by Angela Sharkey, whose profile you can read on page 11. Yvonne was chosen out of over 200 nominations celebrating the achievements of Londoners, employers and training organisations.

Other Open Age wins have included a major sports award for innovative physical activities during the pandemic, and a One You Active Westminster award to Men's Space co-ordinator Russell John, accompanied by member Albert, for aiding long-term improvements to participants' lifestyles. More details on the website: www.openage.org

A pilgrim in Fez



Sue Kaidi

Nestled inland, northwest of the Atlas Mountains, lies the ancient city of Fez. It is known as the spiritual and cultural capital of Morocco, and for centuries has welcomed pilgrims and scholars, and travellers from every corner of the known world.

The city has been a centre of learning for millennia. It is home to the world's oldest university, founded in AD 879, called the University Al Qarawiyyan. It was built by Fatima Al Fihri, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, originally from Tunisia, who had amassed a fortune and upon his death left his entire wealth to his two daughters Fatima and Maryam.

Fatima, who was highly educated, proclaimed Fez to be a centre of education, spirituality and learning, and opened the doors to anyone wishing to learn and understand the Islamic religious and legal sciences. The tales of these wise and learned women fascinate me, and the city still retains a magnetic charm, experienced by all that visit from afar.

When I first entered the ancient city walls, I felt I had been transported back a thousand years. Narrow, winding cobbled

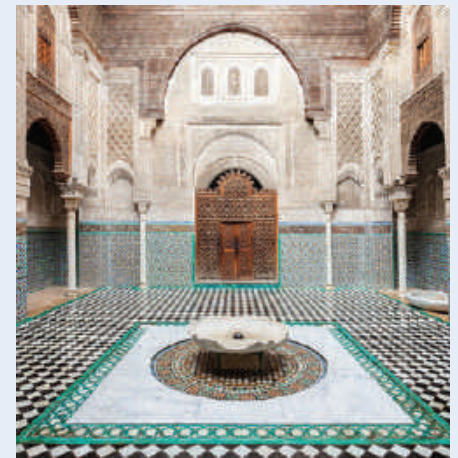
streets heaved with traders, spice merchants and leather sellers. Exotic perfumes filled the air—sandalwood and rose, orange blossom and jasmine, bergamot and amber. I felt entranced, intoxicated at its heady beauty and eager to experience its soul.

The ancient Medina continued with a labyrinth of ever narrowing alleyways. It is a UNESCO heritage site and is considered one of the best preserved Imperial cities in the Arab world. It is impassable by car and the only mode of transport for people and goods are its donkeys.

Everywhere, you hear the shouts of 'belak, belak!' 'Move out the way, move out the way!' and witness the scramble of pedestrians into shop doorways, to avoid being trampled by oncoming donkeys, laden with a myriad of wares. Further into the Medina I came across the Mellah, the Jewish Quarter, rich in history and still home to many Moroccan Jews.

Their houses are built differently from their Arab cousins, with large wooden windows overlooking the narrow alleyways, intricately carved and within a hand's reach of their neighbours opposite. They are built high above the road, designed for the ladies to see out, but carved perfectly to prevent unwanted prying eyes from seeing in.

Then finally, turning a corner, with tired and weary feet, I found the outstanding and intricately designed Al Attarine Madrasa. Built in 1325 to teach students and scholars from around world the doctrines of Islam, this exquisite building still possesses a spiritual uniqueness. Here I sat and marvelled at its incredible art, its wall tiles, and beautiful Islamic interior filled with geometric patterns and vivid colours.



Al-Attarine madrasa

I was captivated by the smell of rose and jasmine—the aroma heightened as dusk approached—and it retains still a wondrous exotic atmosphere. The paths I have chosen and the roads I have walked have led me to some of the most glorious places in the world. Fez enriched and played a part in my own Pilgrim's Tale.

Sue Kaidi



Fez market

Tina tackles a triathlon

Remember Herve Bessieres, Locality Manager (South) for Open Age at New Horizons and St Margaret's? Tina Lavenu did the same job in the north of Westminster and RBKC borough, at the Second Half Centre and The Avenues.



When Herve left in January 2022, Tina became Localities Manager for all areas, in charge of all coordinators at each centre—but what does that involve?

Apart from supporting her staff at centres, she aims to establish connections with more partners within the community, make connections with arts, culture and similar establishments, and manage centre budgets. She tries to visit each centre every week and has regular online meetings with senior coordinators.

However, in her spare time Tina is a fitness enthusiast. She is currently training for a Sprint Triathlon event in July, involving a 500-metre sea swim, a 25-kilometre bike ride and a 5-kilometre run.

"Sprint doesn't mean I'm fast—it's just referring to the shorter distance for each event," explains Tina.

Her love of exercise once led her to retrain as a personal trainer and sports therapist—a complete change, because she initially took a degree in Business & Finance, and worked for 11 years at Frimley Park Hospital, Farnborough, Hampshire, as an NHS departmental manager.

She gained diplomas in Fitness Studies and Sports Therapy and taught various classes from Boxercise to Spinning, then studied further to become a Pilates instructor, ending up managing the fitness centre in Farnborough.

"I loved my work but after 18 years, time was moving on and I realised to keep working in a health industry, I needed to slow down a bit and find a less physically demanding job.

"I took a job with Healthy Hearts, a cardiovascular disease prevention service in London. It ticked all the boxes for me in terms of promoting healthy lifestyle, with my role being less exercise-intense, more about workshop facilitation and gentle exercise.

"Open Age was a place I knew I could refer people to after the 10-week course, clients having developed some healthy habits which they wanted to continue. I knew Open Age would encourage and support, with a great variety of classes and when I saw an opportunity to work for the charity in 2019, I jumped at the chance.

"I love the whole philosophy Open Age represents. There is a great sense of community, shared by staff and members and I've met wonderful people, with such diverse backgrounds and stories to share... it's a real vibrant community!"

M.E.T.

Tina is leading the Member Experience Team covering for Jenny Marshall, who is due to return in November after maternity leave. The team of centre coordinators organises a broad range of creative, cultural and social activities for members.

One of the shared weekly tasks is to coordinate all articles for the members' emailed weekly bulletin. "We meet every Monday afternoon to discuss what is needed for the mailout," says Tina. "During that week, other teams contribute by sending information they want to draw members' attention to.

"For example, it might be a new physical activity class starting in a centre or community venue. We always ensure this information is available in the centre on our notice boards, so that members who do not use email are equally kept informed."

So what do you think?

We asked those who contributed to the last members' newsletter in November 2022 whether they were happy with the finished version. Here are some responses:

Poplar Cosmo

I think it is absolutely fantastic, so well expressed, recorded, and pulled together. Though I say so myself, it makes a really interesting read!

Robert Silver

Thanks for the newsletter. It looks really good. Lively, informative. And just to prove that I really have read it: Yes, I do remember an offbeat indoor market on the King's Road, Chelsea, called Antiquarius. And now I'm a market trader! Not sure if the two are connected.

Jill Forgham

I have been meaning to write to say how great I thought the newsletter was! I was in watercolours class and the teacher brought in a paper copy, filled with glee to see me in there—it was such a lovely reaction! A really nice spread and I actually thought everything in the edition was well chosen and nicely presented, well done! I have had some great comments from other members since.

Ranjit Dutta

I have read the newsletter and found that your write up about my experience in Spain during the time of the death of HM Queen Elizabeth very true to form and just as I had written. However, may I please correct you in your description of my position in NH. I have been an IT volunteer for the past 13 years, not a tutor. [Sorry, Ranjit!]

The whole publication was well presented and professionally laid out. I found the article about Robert very interesting.

Kay Shelley (editor) replies:

Ranjit asked if certain subjects could be included in the newsletter. We are dependent on contributions and I would be delighted to include more about members' parties and entertainers like Kenny and his band if people could send me a short report and/or a photo. As to the aims of Open Age, its future plans, how Open Age operates and obtains



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Goodbye Ma'am – rest in peace

What a momentous year 2022 has been—quite apart from Covid, Ukraine, energy prices, the economy, and the changes of Prime Minister, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June was followed three months later by the shock announcement of her sudden passing.

We asked members of Open Age to comment on what the Royal news meant to them and what they felt about the funeral on Monday 19th September.

Brenda Meadows had already written a poem about the Jubilee, which we feature on page 3 along with her profile. She also wrote another short poem on hearing of the sovereign's death on 8th September.

Jill Forgham joined the queue for the lying in state on Thursday 15th September and wrote about her five-hour experience for her family. A trimmed version is featured on page 5.

Jill, who enrolled for the new art class in Hammersmith & Fulham this term and attended the Superbloom flower display and Tower of London visit, says: "I think I got off lightly."
"The only other person I know who queued (apart from David



Beckham, of course—12 hours through the night!) was Open Age member Meng Lim. It took her 13 hours the following day, with just a peanut butter sandwich that didn't actually have peanut butter in it in case anyone near her was allergic to nuts. She got to the Queen after 11 p.m."

IT tutor **Ranjit Dutta** was in Southern Spain with his wife when the news broke. He noted that bars, pubs, restaurants, nightclubs and other Brit haunts were full of flags and pictures of the Queen, and on funeral day special foods and drinks were served, some wore Union Jack clothes and all watched TVs in total silence.

He said: "We watched our TV from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. It was a sad day and a great loss to the nation."

She was loyal to her word and the people of the UK, dedicating her life selflessly to the service of her people. The pageantry, punctuality and perfection were breathtaking."

Sylvia Hart, who with her family had lined the streets for many royal events, felt a sense of relief that the Queen died peacefully at Balmoral, with close family present—"a perfect ending to a long and glorious life".

A Pimlico resident and regular at St Margaret's, where she had enjoyed a Jubilee party, Sylvia became engrossed in the media coverage. "I felt proud to be able to watch and hear our new King making his proclamation, a truly wonderful formal event," said Sylvia.

"I chose to be at home for the funeral, ready to sit and watch the whole day's proceedings on BBC television, and I prepared for the day: up early, having a full breakfast and dressing appropriately, as though I was actually attending."

She believes that the country did the Queen proud. "From beginning to end it was a splendid emotional farewell. It made me so proud to be British."

Inside this issue	Brenda the poet—page 3	Volunteers extraordinary—pages 8/9
	My queue experience—page 5	Being Active—page 10
	Healing energy—page 7	The DigitAll Project—page 12

charity funding, we try to include a mention of AGM items every year (see page 2), but more details can be found on the Open Age website—www.openage.org.uk

Jennifer Iles

I joined Open Age in 2014, and in 2021 took over the job of newsletter designer. When I do the layouts and typesetting for the newsletter, I have to read every word of every article, so I get to know who's who and what's going on at Open Age. I'm always impressed by the variety of interests of the members, and the range of activities they engage in. Recent Open Age activities I've enjoyed include a tour of the Queen's Gallery, an exhibition at Japan House, and walks led by Armand Botha. I hope funds can be raised to organise more walks around sections of the Capital Ring.

Courses courtesy of Angela

Head of Learning and Community Development **Angela Sharkey** may not be known to some Open Age members, but she plays a key managerial role organising the wide range of adult community learning (ACL) courses for members at the Second Half Centre and New Horizons, with a few courses out in the community.



As a former teacher of adults in further education, the job she took on in September 2017—her first in the charity sector—was a perfect fit. She is based at Open Age’s St Charles headquarters with visits to New Horizons, and is ably assisted by administrator Sara Ferreira, the teaching staff, and staff and volunteers at Open Age who keep members informed.

Says Angela: “It is fantastic being able to run the wide range of courses, nearly 50 per week, to build members’ digital skills and confidence, from getting to know their smartphone/tablet to more bespoke courses such as Building Your Own Website, as well as to provide courses in international languages, creative writing, poetry, meditation and mindfulness, art, drama, lipreading, mosaics, etc.”

Just as well that Angela’s work background is extremely varied. Born into a huge Irish community in North London, she went to an all-girls grammar school ‘with a truly horrible purple uniform!’ and left school at 16 to go to college.

But from the age of 11 she had started doing paper rounds, then shop work, then waitressing and finally accounts. At 18 she went to work full time as a personal secretary to a partner in a London law firm specialising in film. Aged 21, she returned to studies to take a one-year course in industrial relations while working part time.

Finding she loved studying, she went on to do a three-year degree course in Contemporary Cultural Studies (again while working). After graduating, she tackled various roles—a magazine, a women’s legal advice centre, a gardening firm—and then found teaching was starting to appeal.

“I realised I did not want to work in primary, as I had enough experience of little ones at home. I did shadowing at a secondary school, but again it felt too close to home. Then I saw an advert offering to train adults in literacy teaching, and that is where I began,” recalled Angela.

She worked for many years in further education colleges (gaining teaching qualifications on the way), teaching sociology, psychology, research and other subjects, and moved into management in 1999, remaining a senior manager until 2016. She also completed a post-graduate course in integrative counselling.

“Somehow working and studying went hand in hand with me. I managed several areas of study—health and social care, childcare, health and beauty, counselling, advice and guidance, business and accounting, creative arts, distance learning, apprenticeships. When I left Westminster Adult Education in 2016, I wanted a change and worked in the family law courts.”

A recent area Angela has responsibility for is the hugely successful DigitALL project of which Open Age is lead partner. As described in our November 2022 newsletter, coordinator Niall Reilly works to provide support to members who are digitally excluded and with other organisations within the partnership.

“Outside of work I am very much involved with family and the little people of the family, and enjoy the theatre, cinema, eating out, reading, having fun,” adds Angela. Next time you visit a centre, don’t forget to say hello if you see her.

Email scams

If you are bombarded every day by fake texts or emails, you are not alone—it happens to many of us. The main purpose of these scams is to gain access to your bank account or get you to send money. Most are easy to spot. But some are less obvious—like the tweaking of one letter in an email address.

Spot the Difference?

maybank2u.com is not the same as maybank2u.com

citibank.com is not the same as citibank.com

(the first one is correct, the second one is from hackers)

The "a" in the later url is a cyrillic alphabet.

An average internet user can easily fall for this. Be careful for every mail requiring you to click on a link.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE? is a warning about fraudulent emails which has appeared on Facebook (see picture). It was spotted by Open Age member Yonita Macgregor, who points out that citibank.com may look the same as citibank.com but it isn't. Two different characters are used for the 'a' vowel.

Open Age has arranged talks on email scams, known as phishing, and password safety (The Avenues), plus a 5-week course on scammers called Safe Online (Second Half Centre).

How do you know if an email is fake? Look for common tactics. They will often urge you to share personal details, enter confidential information or click onto fake websites.

Examples of phishing emails purporting to come from banks include threats to deactivate one of your online accounts, proposals to send you money in return for your account details, blackmail emails, stating you've accessed illegal content, and offers of tech support to help you with cyber fraud or viruses.

In the first half of 2021, over 106,000 people were scammed out of £355 million. This was an increase of over 70% on the same period in 2020.

How to spot the signs

- hovering over the sender's name reveals a random address
- the email doesn't refer to you by name, but is addressed to your email account or "dear valued customer"
- there are suspicious links or attachments within the email
- the email urges you to share personal information, send a payment or click a link
- the content mentions that you are owed a refund, have won a prize, or need to act urgently

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