



OPEN AGE

Members' Newsletter

Second Half Centre • New Horizons • Avenues • St Margaret's
May 2024 • Issue No. 42

Body and soul boosters

This spring newsletter is focussing on these very topics—food for the body and art for the soul. You will find food stories on pages 3 and 5 and stories about art on pages 2, 8 and 9.

The art show described on page 9 was inspired by an exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery, Chelsea, by the world-renowned Canadian artist and photographer Edward Burtynsky, whose assembled works entitled *Extraction: Abstraction* (from February to May) marked the largest exhibition ever mounted in his 40+ year career.

Burtynsky, who is aged 69 and of Ukrainian descent, dedicated his practice to show the environmental impact of human industry on the planet. He presents his thoughtful and often beautiful work without comment, leaving us to draw our own conclusions.

We feature a couple of his



Extraction site

pictures on this page, but the internet has a huge and varied display. Many are aerial views, leaving the observer wondering how on earth he managed to achieve such amazing pictures in often remote places.

Using the environment idea as a springboard, Open Age members produced their own work in various media. A few of the contributions are featured on page 9. For other stories, see the list below (Inside this issue)



Plane fuselages being assembled

Inside this issue	Festival winner—page 2	Zooming down Memory Lane—page 6
	Sylvia of Dock Green?—page 4	Fundraising art show—page 8
	Winter warm meals for all—page 5	Changing landscapes—page 9

AGM reports Margaret's success



Margaret Porta

As it overcomes the after-effects of Covid, Open Age has increased its income by £200,000 in 2023 compared with 2022, when it was running a deficit, and the surplus is largely due to a substantial increase in donations and legacies.

This good news was reported at the AGM on 16th January when more than 50 members, trustees and staff participated on Zoom to monitor and approve the charity's progress.

Open Age is planning to offer all its classes online as well as in person—a move which could recruit potential members all around the country to generate more revenue, said CEO Iain Cassidy.

A report by Niall Reilly, the coordinator of The DigitALL Project which aims to get internet beginners online, said that since April 2022 his team had supported over 750 participants. Referrals came from over 40 different sources including primary and social care and local authority, plus Open Age itself.

Of these, 80 percent were supported daily either through drop-in sessions or via outreach technical support, while most of the rest took part weekly.

One member referred through New Horizons was artist and designer Margaret Porta, whom they assisted to organise her own four-day art exhibition in Pimlico in March 2023. She discovered websites

and apps she knew nothing about, such as Instagram and Painters Online, where her work is displayed.

As a result of her success, she received a Festival of Learning 'Patron's Award' handpicked by the Princess Royal in July 2023 (see below). For more about the awards, go to the site:

<https://festivaloflearning.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Margaret-Porta-10-6-1250x1593.jpeg>



Margaret writes:

Of course our learning journey begins at birth and continues throughout life, sometimes broken up into bite-size pieces.

A couple of years ago I finally acknowledged the grim reality that my IT skills were dodgy... very dodgy.

So, signed up with DigitALL and had the great good fortune to meet Niall Reilly for some superb one-to-one tutoring.

"This is like learning another language," I thought... Actually, IT is exactly that!

Meanwhile, an idea was germinating... I am an artist and I gradually perceived the potential for the weaving together of such unlikely bedfellows as art and technology.

The logistics of setting up an 'Art Show' could, I realised, be much less of a grind with the aid of my trusty computer!

Eureka! Now, thanks to OpenAge, DigitALL and Niall, I had not only the technical skills to achieve this aim but, oh so subtly and equally as important, I had gained the self-confidence to manage each facet of the project.

With Niall's encouragement I submitted my story to the 'Festival of Learning' competition in the hope that it might inspire others.

...And promptly forgot about it—after all, it was an 'England-wide' contest!

Weeks later Niall called: "You've won, Margaret."

Strewth!

Margaret Porta

Time to meet Laura

Laura Taylor has been Centre Co-ordinator at New Horizons centre for more than a year—since January 2023—so we thought it was about time we introduced her to members who might be interested in her background.

Raised in Essex with family roots in Yorkshire (maternal grandma) and California (maternal grandad), Laura landed the job only five months after she graduated from Leeds University with a BSc degree in the Psychology of Education. Prior to that, she studied English Literature, History, Geography and Classical Civilisation, which she really enjoyed.

Laura works alongside Senior Centre Coordinator Fiolla Korenica to ensure that New Horizons is running smoothly, helping to organise events within the centre and trips to galleries and looking out for interesting opportunities

for Open Age members.

As someone who played the flute for 14 years and can play the ukulele, she still likes to play music, but sadly not as often. She loves all things art related—including designing the calligraphy welcome signs at the front of New Horizons and getting the opportunity to work with different art organisations, such as the Saatchi Gallery in Chelsea.

Laura says: "I have worked in multiple community settings during my university holidays and so I knew I was passionate about working within the charity sector. I used to co-run a Community Arts Hub in my local area; we did lots of art and mental health projects and worked with all ages and groups of people."

Though she really enjoys her job, and loves interacting and building connections with the members,



Laura Taylor

Laura has plenty of outside interests. She enjoys going to watch live music gigs and has been to see a few different indie bands in the last few months, including The Vaccines and The Kooks.

She also travels up to Sheffield and Leeds regularly to see her university friends and to visit the lovely countryside in the area.

Birthday party people!

You may have heard that there's no such thing as a free lunch—so members were delighted to find pork pies, sausage rolls, sandwiches, cakes and creme eggs awaiting them at New

Horizons on Monday 25th March.

Scrabble fans Cilla Shiffner and Tony Papard celebrate March birthdays 11 days apart, so rather than hold the Monday afternoon Board Games session at the centre

just before Easter, they brought party food, cakes and drinks into the café and invited members to join them for a celebration lunch.

Cilla regularly plays Scrabble, dominoes and Chinese Checkers on Mondays and also joins the Bridge Club on Tuesdays at Ixworth Place, Chelsea.

As well as Scrabble, Tony enjoys various activities, including an Open Age Creative Writing class. New Horizons offers two Creative Writing classes, one on a Tuesday and one on a Friday.

If you fancy joining them, the Board Games group would welcome more participants—but, sorry, they can't promise party food on a regular basis!



Party surprise! Scrabblers Tony is third from the left and Cilla is on the far right

Sylvia of Dock Green?

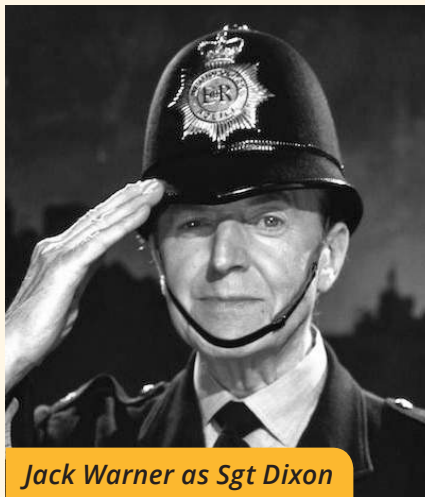
Have you noticed that the television channel Talking Pictures TV has been showing episodes of *Dixon of Dock Green*, the famous series about the everyday life of a British bobby starring Jack Warner as Station Sergeant George Dixon?

For 21 years from 1955 to 1976 we were greeted by "Evening all!" as Dixon stood outside his gaff named Dock Green, supposedly located in East London.

But the set was actually the old Paddington Green police station, which Open Age member Sylvia Hart knew well, because she used to work there in her twenties as a uniformed WPC with the Metropolitan Police.

"It was a very comprehensive training in those days, and I was a member of the Met Police first aid team, which won the national competition in 1966, beating St John Ambulance, the British Red Cross and other teams," recalls Sylvia.

She left the uniformed side after four and a half years when her son was two years old but continued with the Met on weekdays as a shorthand writer at Wood Green and Scotland Yard, as well as doing Sunday morning work as a communications officer



Jack Warner as Sgt Dixon

at Tottenham police station.

She then did PA and secretarial jobs for various companies, including Reed International, Hambros Bank and Trust House Forte. "I have worked with some lovely people and was lucky enough to have good bosses all the way through—Forte were a very family orientated firm—and I still use my shorthand even today," says Sylvia, who continued working till she was 73.

Born in World's End and raised in Chelsea with five younger siblings, she attributes her positive attitude to her mother, who was the 19th of 20 children and the daughter of a chimney sweep, whose gifts of books from the big

houses he worked in were passed on to her.

Sylvia now lives near St Margaret's Centre in South Westminster, and has enjoyed craft classes, creative writing, box-making and London walks, but her main interest is the two-hour Friday afternoon Games session at St Margaret's.

Away from Open Age, Sylvia visits a lunch club in Wandsworth and a coffee morning run by Westminster Age UK. She also likes to attend the low-price classic film afternoons every Monday at Regent Street Cinema, near Oxford Circus, which serves coffee and drinks and welcomes older people.

She says: "It's been a good eventful life, I've met some nice people, done some lovely things and made friends. Open Age is wonderful and they need our support. If I've made a booking, I never fail to turn up, because if someone has taken the trouble, you must always respond."

FOUR-LETTER WORDS

At least three strange four-letter words have come into our language of late. How many of us know what they mean?

Meme—A meme is an image or video that represents the thoughts and feelings of a specific audience. Most memes are captioned photos intended to elicit humour. If you've laughed at a picture or video on Facebook and then shared it, that's a meme.

Hack—Fashion hacks are tips and tricks that help women look their best without spending a fortune. Sounds vicious!

Edit—Verb that used to mean proof-read, check, correct and prepare a piece of writing for publication. But now fashion magazines use it as a noun meaning collection or range, e.g. 'Here is our summer edit with the latest styles'. But.... what was wrong with the original words?



Friday games. Sylvia is at the back on the right, wearing red

Winter Warm meals for all

If money is short and you are being careful with the heating, what could be nicer than a free dinner in a welcoming setting with friendly companions?

Open Age members enjoyed a hot meal and dessert at the Second Half Centre every Friday early evening between December and March, preceded by a chat and a catch-up and followed by

a fun general knowledge quiz courtesy of SHC's senior co-ordinator Andrea Carrington.

Anyone who enjoys TV quizzes like *The Chase*, *Eggheads*, *Tipping Point* or *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* may think this sounds like a walk in the park, but not all the questions were easy, so you could have found yourself (university) challenged!



Some of the Winter Warm diners at the Second Half Centre relax after their meal

The food was prepared by Open Age's very own award-winning chef tutor Manju Malhi with help from an assortment of other staff, and usually attracted over 20 people keen to try different dishes.

Andrea told us in February: "People enjoy it and they often come back every week. The Winter Warm meals are a nice experience."

Meanwhile, over at St Margaret's in Pimlico, the regular winter meals of a year ago were not repeated, but staff of Marks & Spencer came to the centre for a one-off event on 17th January to serve members a special meal made up of tasty M&S dishes (see also Games story below).

Games on Fridays

If you want to challenge the little grey cells, as Hercule Poirot would say, and have fun in a social setting, the place to be is St Margaret's Open Age Centre on a Friday afternoon.

Once the fitness fans have cleared away the table tennis equipment and staff have set out the tables and chairs, a two-hour session of Games and Crafts can begin, punctuated by tea, coffee and cake.

But a special event recently on 15th March was the annual charity day involving six staff from the Paddington head office of Marks & Spencer, who choose a different charity each year. They arrived bringing M&S cakes and a keenness to join the games.

These included Scrabble, Draughts, Trivial Pursuit and two tables of Rummikub, which I had never heard of, but turned out

to be a jolly version of one of the Rummy card games using tiles and racks.

On my table, merchandiser Dem and buyer's administrative assistant Hannah from the M&S Casual Trousers Team (yes, indeed!) proved to be dab hands at the game, and so did St Margaret's regular Sylvia Hart (see photo on page 4).

Over in the Draughts corner, member Gill Blackburne was taking a break and having a chat. She usually brings two cakes with her after popping into Sainsbury's but this time she was happy to enjoy the ambience.

Gill is full of praise for senior co-ordinator Hannah Munns, whose caring nature makes many activities a popular success. She says: "People love it here. Hannah has a heart of gold. She looks after everyone and nothing is too



Gill Blackburne

much trouble."

The M&S visit was the second this year. In January a different team came along to serve a full Winter Warmer meal to members using M&S food, and 36 members took part (see above).

Also planned are meals served by other companies, including Visa and British Land.

Kay Shelley

Zooming down Memory Lane

Most older people enjoy looking back to the days of their youth and recalling local people and places, and Open Age members are no exception.

If you are one of them, a good place to share those memories is the Local History class run on Zoom by voluntary tutor Sue Snyder, who invites all comers to log in on Monday afternoons every month or so.

Focussing on the north of the borough, Sue is assisted with contributions from Open Age members Maggie Tyler and Maureen Macromallis. At the 19th February session, Maureen described the Blue Plaques to be found on houses in and around the area.

An earlier very well-attended session was called *Lancaster Cross*, and featured what was once a busy crossroad on Lancaster Road, part of the Lancaster West redevelopment programme, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Some who had grown up in the area made some fascinating contributions.

Other subjects presented have included *A Walk Down Ladbroke Grove*, *Notting Hill Gate*, *Holland Park Circle* (Victorian artists), and *The Hidden History of St Mark's Road*. The sessions include photos, maps and even old newsreel clips.

St Mark's Road turned up several interesting subjects, including an Arabic-speaking nun supporting the Moroccan community, the notorious murder site of 10 Rillington Place where serial killer John Christie lived, the school attended by Sue's mother and the Sunbeam Talbot factory.

The group uses many photos from the RBKC Local Studies collection, in particular the photographic survey of the borough undertaken around 1970. Participants are encouraged to offer their own memories or knowledge, since many who

attend the sessions had been resident in Kensington for most of their lives.

Explains Sue: "The Zoom class has evolved from in-person meetings at the Second Half Centre featuring the History of North Kensington and the areas adjacent.

"I worked for many years for Historytalk, a local voluntary organisation working on local history projects with older people and local schoolchildren. Historytalk is no longer, and I retired a long time ago. However, over the years I compiled a lot of information and images about the past that I like to share with others."

Sue began her work for Open Age at least ten years ago, when she ran a weekly session called 'Walks and Talks—Local History'. This included outings on foot to places of interest, with up to 20 people taking part.

continued on page 7...

...continued from page 6

Then Covid came, so when Open Age started running Zoom sessions, local history seemed like a perfect candidate, since old photos, maps and illustrations are essential elements of the sessions.

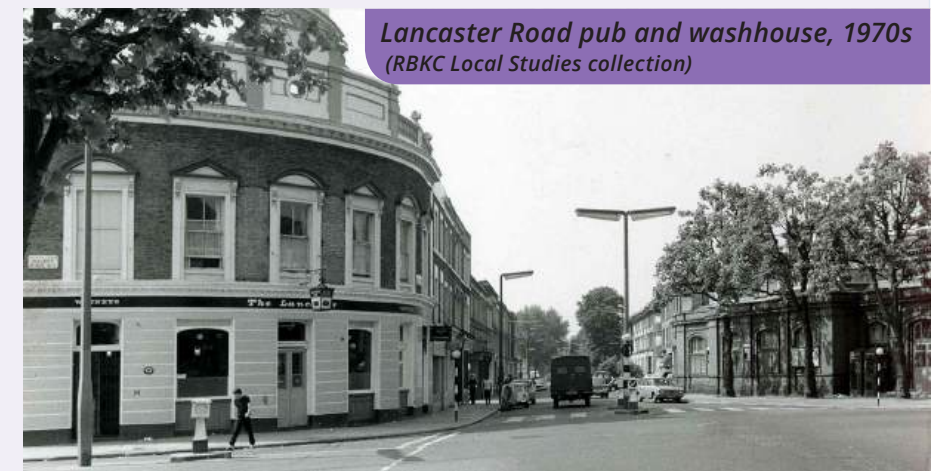
Now some of the original group members would like to go back to meeting in person, as sessions were very social. For space and time reasons, this is not currently possible, but occasional local history walks might be considered.

"For the Zoom sessions, I stick to areas that I have already researched, just trying to represent the images from a different angle," explains Sue. "Members of my original group tell me that it is fine to repeat areas that I have done before, as there are plenty of people new to my sessions. and the older members have forgotten the details anyway and say they like to see them again!"

The date of each class tends to vary, so anyone interested in joining should check not just with the Open Age programme, but also with Sue herself. It is also worth checking the blog **North**



Walk and talk 2018, led by John Henwood



Lancaster Road pub and washhouse, 1970s (RBKC Local Studies collection)



Imperial College walk 2017. Sue is on the far left.



Orridge's pet shop, Walmer Road, 1970 (RBKC Local Studies collection)

Kensington Histories, which contains dozens of memories and photos provided by residents and uploaded by Sue.

It was started in 2012 by Sue after an IT tutor showed her how to set it up. There was a previous attempt in 2009 called 'Around and About Kensal Road' which can still be accessed, but she transferred most of the material onto the new blog.

Sue says particularly popular blog postings are: *Seedy Clubs and Dives of Notting Hill*, *Lancaster Road Baths*, and *1966 And All That*—all written by John Henwood—Gwen Nelson writing on *Golborne Road*, and *Kensal Road* written by Roger Rogowski, who went on to research and publish his own local history book.

She adds: "I am quite proud of the blog. I found and still find posting material quite a challenge, but I am on the whole very satisfied with the outcome and the interest from people who used to live in North Kensington who add to the site with their comments. Also, I am pleased to give people the opportunity to do their own research, record their own memories and to be able to preserve it for others to access."

For more information, contact Sue by email on:

suesnyder23@yahoo.co.uk

or by phone on 07857 145584.

To access the blog, click this link:

[North Kensington](http://NorthKensington)

Or visit:

<https://northkensingtonhistories.wordpress.com/>

Fundraising art show

Members who regularly attend Open Age activities at the Second Half Centre may have been surprised to find that the centre was closed from 20th to 22nd March. During those three days Open Age staff worked with Lady Jill Shaw Ruddock, Founder of The Second Half Foundation, to set up and manage an art exhibition and sales events.

The theme of the annual exhibition was 'Celebrating Living Older Masters', with all the exhibiting professional artists aged over 50.

Lady Shaw Ruddock said: "Artistic expression becomes a powerful vehicle for challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive perspective. As older artists continue to create compelling and relevant works, they inspire a new

conversation—one that embraces the potential for growth, innovation and enduring artistic brilliance well into the later chapters of life... This shift can potentially usher in a transformation in the way society views ageing—rewriting the language of creativity."

Featured artists included Caroline Cole and Helen Johanness (ceramics), Fleur Grenier, Objectti, Ikuko Iwanoto and Derek Wilson (sculpture), Michèle Oberdieck (glasswork), Ian Thompson (porcelain ceramics), Maryam isler (photography) and Prettysac (fashion). Their works are generally for sale but the arrangement is that the artists receive 50% of the sale price and the remaining 50% goes towards the Foundation, with the funds donated to Open Age.

In addition, artists Linder Sterling, Daniel Reynolds and Andrea Hamilton generously donated artworks for a silent auction. (For those unfamiliar, a silent auction does not involve an auctioneer. People submit sealed bids and the highest one wins).

The exhibition was open for two days, 21st–22nd March. On the first day Open Age hosted an evening reception, and the following day a breakfast event. Invited audiences attended both events where they were able to meet the artists, purchase artworks and submit bids for the silent auctions. They were also able to meet Lady Ruddock and Iain Cassidy, Open Age's CEO.

Staff from the Member Experience team were on hand to support this exciting fundraising opportunity and to spread the word about Open Age.

Guests were also able to view the permanent display of artworks created by Open Age members in their art classes and visible in the corridor of the Second Half Centre, but these were not for sale.

All in all, the event was very successful in raising funds for Open Age and in demonstrating the power of creativity in older age.

Open Age would like to thank Lady Shaw Ruddock, the artists and the Exhibition Committee for their support of our work. Thanks also to Vivienne Mitchell for her report.



Exhibitors at the show

Heart of glass

If someone mentions an exhibition about glass, what do you think of? Tumblers, jewellery, vases, ornaments? Well, there was much more to it than that when the free museum Two Temple Place, the stunning neo-Gothic mansion built for William Waldorf Astor beside the Thames, hosted an amazing exhibition, also free.

Called *The Glass Heart: Art, Industry & Collaboration* and running from January to April 2024, the show's exhibits ranged from the dazzling to the quirky and unexpected.

Stained glass windows, a luminous glass chair, ships in bottles, glass blowing and glassmaking films, amazing rainbow sculptures, a section on the Crystal Palace—even a depiction of a woman who looked like Joan of Arc on a pillar, but was actually a female gardener urinating on the plants!

The exhibition was a collaboration between the National Glass Centre, Sunderland, the Stained Glass Museum in Ely and the Stourbridge Glass Museum. So that's three more places to visit, if you're intrigued.



Changing Landscapes

Almost 70 members from all centres took part when Open Age once again joined forces with the Saatchi Gallery in Chelsea to showcase members' artwork in a week-long exhibition in April.

The show on the theme of *Changing Landscapes* from 23rd to 30th April coincided with a Saatchi Gallery exhibition by the world-renowned photographic artist Edward Burtynsky, whose beautiful yet often poignant work

focused on the impact of human industry on the planet (see also page 1).

Members from any Open Age centre were invited to submit an artwork in any medium, including sculpture, maximum size A3, with a deadline of 16th April.

New Horizons Centre Coordinator Laura Taylor, who organised the event, said the idea was to demonstrate the human impact on the environment, with the

emphasis on climate change. She explained: "Members were encouraged to submit art in any form, so we had paintings, drawings, photographs, poems, mosaics and ceramics."

Participants crowded into the small exhibition room on the open day, 23rd April—St George's Day—to see how their art looked on display, but non-exhibitors could visit the show for free on four later days.



A close inspection



Mosaics and more



Member Audrey Joseph



Open Age CEO Iain Cassidy joins the throng

Lost a loved one? Let's talk...



Bereavement is something we all have to face at some time in our lives—in the pandemic it became even more devastating. And there are many other issues which can drive us to the brink.

But there is help. And talking can make such a difference. You may feel awkward if the bereaved is not a close friend, but a listening ear is always welcome. It can be in person, on Zoom, or via phone.

Margaret Porta writes:

"Talk to me... please! And let me talk to you."

These two simple requests are probably the most imaginative ways of helping a relative, friend, neighbour, work colleague or even a casual acquaintance who is suffering the pain of bereavement.

Of course, there are the practical funeral arrangements to be organised, usually by family members who may also be grieving and 'up too close' to the person who had shared a close and intimate relationship with the bereaved person.

*So, this is where **you** can come in. Sympathy can be unspoken, yet, audible...*

DO make a set time i.e. space, for uninterrupted conversation, and remember to allow time—as long as it takes—for the person suffering to open up. This can come very

*slowly, little by little, or in a rush, a torrent of jumbled words and tears. There may be anger at such a huge loss, so... phones **off!** and no clock watching, ready to race off to something or other...*

DO, also, choose (a mutual choice of time and place, of course) somewhere quiet, perhaps at your home, where you might like to share a cuppa or a comforting hot meal; conversation does not have to be non-stop.

Editor:

Margaret's piece reminds me of two things. First, on the TV channel W which deals with topics of interest to women, I once saw the comedienne Kathy Burke interviewing a woman about love, sex and marriage. One of the interviewees was a psychotherapist who said human beings could do without sex and romance, but could not manage without friendships. And that means having people to talk to.

Second, a famous therapist once said he was phoned in the middle of the night by a woman who said she planned to commit suicide. He spent hours listening to her problems and giving her endless reasons why she should not take her own life and why her continuing existence was important. She finally agreed.

Some years later, he met the woman and asked her which of his reasons resonated with her. She said none. The sole reason she did not go ahead was because he had been willing to stay on the line for so long and just listen to her talk. She felt that if he was prepared to do that, her life must truly be important, far more so than she ever imagined.

This is what The Samaritans do every day.

BACK SLANG ANYONE?

When I first came to London, I had never heard of back slang. But there may be some older Cockneys left who can speak it. There are different versions, but it began as a secret language invented by costermongers in Victorian London so that they could keep certain things private.

A friend had a father who grew up in the East End. So she explained one type of structure. "En-ac yoo-oy kay-apes kay-cab gee-nals?" she inquired. "Oh-en, why-rros", I replied.

The words above say: "Can you speak back slang? No, sorry." Have you worked it out?

Kay Shelley

Answer: You pronounce the last letter of a word as in the alphabet—e.g. 'N is en, 'K is kay—then speak the rest of the word backwards.

New avenue for Marinne



Marinne Laurent

Open Age seems to attract members from many parts of the world, but Marinne Laurent, the Senior Centre Coordinator at The Avenues, could be the first member of staff to be born on the island of Mauritius—which is why she has a French name.

However, the family moved to Britain when she was just one, so she grew up in East London before deciding to take a degree in criminology and criminal justice at Swansea University, followed by an MA in politics.

Such a varied background could have led her in many directions, and initially she found herself in customer service roles and eventually working for a financial tech company.

But the fact that her father manages several care homes for the elderly in Essex, where she spent some time as a volunteer, drew her to the charity sector and,

after joining Open Age's North Westminster centre last June, she quickly found herself taking over her present role when Naomi Nehemen left in September.

Marinne, who since December has been assisted by Centre Coordinator Nisat, enjoys painting and drawing, and last summer led sketching trips to Regent's Park, which she hopes to repeat this

summer.

She has restarted talks at The Avenues on the last Monday of each month with a guest speaker and social, plus Open Space talks on Zoom—open to members from all centres—on the first Tuesday of the month. Past talks have been mainly focused on health, including arthritis, oral (dental) health and bladder cancer.

Also continuing is the weekly Monday afternoon Film Festival, when popular old films like *Mr Bean's Holiday* and *The Pink Panther* are screened.

The Avenues runs a free hot meal every Tuesday in partnership with the North Paddington Food Bank, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. Says Marinne: "This used to be monthly—however, as of October 2023, we offer it weekly. We get anywhere between 20 and 40 members every week coming for the meals."

Do you remember Marion?

Members of Open Age may remember retired doctor Marion Handscombe, a former stalwart of New Horizons involved in many aspects of the charity.

Few knew that she was a Consultant Ophthalmologist in Coventry from 1963 to 1990 and in 1981-1982 was President of the Midland Ophthalmological Society.

Married again after her first husband died, she ran a crochet, knitting and sewing group for several years, as well as contributing numerous medical-based articles and crosswords to this newsletter.

She went into St Wilfrid's care home in Tite Street, Chelsea, after her second husband died, but when that closed unexpectedly, she moved to a care home on the Isle of Wight to be near her daughter Eleanor.

Marion died peacefully on 27th December 2020, aged 91, but her memory lives on. She supplied many ideas to this publication, including the following four jokes about legal matters in the USA.

Attorney: *What was the first thing your husband said to you that morning?*

Witness: *Hello, Kathy.*

Attorney: *What was wrong with that?*

Witness: *My name is Susan!*

Attorney: *About your road accident, what gear were you in at the moment of the impact?*

Witness: *Gucci sweats and Reeboks.*

Attorney: *The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?*

Witness: *He's 20, much like your IQ.*



Marion Handscombe

Attorney: *Can you describe the individual?*

Witness: *He was about medium height and had a beard.*

Attorney: *Was this a male or a female?*

Witness: *Unless the circus was in town, I'm going with male.*



Outsmart the scammers!

Which?, the consumer organisation, is keen to protect the public from scammers. It seems that scams are on the rise, with £580m lost to fraudsters in the first half of 2023.

Which? states: "Scams can come in many different forms, and even the most bizarre ones often catch people off guard." From swooning love notes to mystery gems arriving in the post, Which? encountered some very strange scams last year.

Some unpunctuated or misspelled ones are laughable. "Hello I am the UK government you need to pay £1500 iTunes gift card to me or you are under the rest" was one. The misspelling of 'under arrest' is the dead giveaway, even without the punctuation errors and the weird gift card demand. However, fraudsters are now using Artificial Intelligence chatbots to polish and perfect their English.

It's often the simplest ones that catch people out. Your friend's email address may have been hacked, so it looks as if he or she is sending you a brief message, but ask yourself: "Does my friend send that type of message? Is that the correct

email address, or does it have some extra letters in it?"

Romance scams are always methods of extracting money. So are 'investment opportunities'. You may think: 'I'd never fall for that!', yet it takes a brief lapse of concentration, or just a few tweaks to the scam, to make it effective.

Pretending that a famous TV name like Martin Lewis or Deborah Meaden has endorsed a product is another one. Sometimes a scammer starts by saying the person has been sacked or arrested—TV commentator Robert Peston is a regular target.

To stay vigilant against these scams, Which? invites you to sign up to receive their free weekly Scam Alert newsletter online, with updates, advice, and what to do if you fall victim. To sign up or learn more, click on this button:



Or visit:

<https://act.which.co.uk/page/103781/data/1>

Editor Kay Shelley

Designer Jennifer Iles

Contributors Margaret Porta, Laura Taylor, Sylvia Hart, Andrea Carrington, Gill Blackburne, Sue Snyder, Vivienne Mitchell, Marinne Laurent, Marion Handscombe

The **Open Age Members' Newsletter** is written, edited and designed by volunteers/members of Open Age, a registered charity, and distributed by staff via email and hard copies. Please email your news to kayonhold@hotmail.co.uk or text Kay on 07748 662213.

New Horizons, Chelsea, the Second Half Centre, Kensington, The Avenues, North Westminster and St Margaret's, South Westminster, are pioneering activity centres for older people delivered by Open Age (Registered Charity No. 1160125), in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and NHS Kensington and Chelsea.

website www.openage.org.uk • tel. 020 4516 9978