



# OPEN AGE

## Members' Newsletter

Second Half Centre • New Horizons • Avenues • St Margaret's  
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## Welcome Emma!

Emma Foulds joined Open Age as our new Chief Executive Officer in mid-January following the departure of Iain Cassidy to U3A last September, and soon arranged to meet members for tea and a chat.

You may have met her at the informal drop-in sessions she ran at each of the Open Age centres—New Horizons on Wednesday 26th February, St Margaret's on Friday 28th February and The Avenues on Tuesday 4th March—or perhaps just seen her in the corridor or even attending one of your classes.

Emma, who is based in Open Age's offices at the Second Half Centre, is originally from Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire, and became involved in charities at a young age, fundraising for Round Table and Rotary with her family.

At Cambridge University, she spent some of her time studying for her Social and Political Science degree, but much more of it supporting the university charity, Rag. After completing her degree, she took a year out to be the President of Rag and then went on to work for the Children's Society as a fundraising manager.

Emma's varied career then took her to Procter and Gamble, where she led UK/Eire beauty businesses including Max Factor, Olay and



Emma with a guide dog puppy

Oral B. After that, she became a strategy and marketing consultant with Accenture, working with major national and international organisations including M&S and Novo Nordisk.

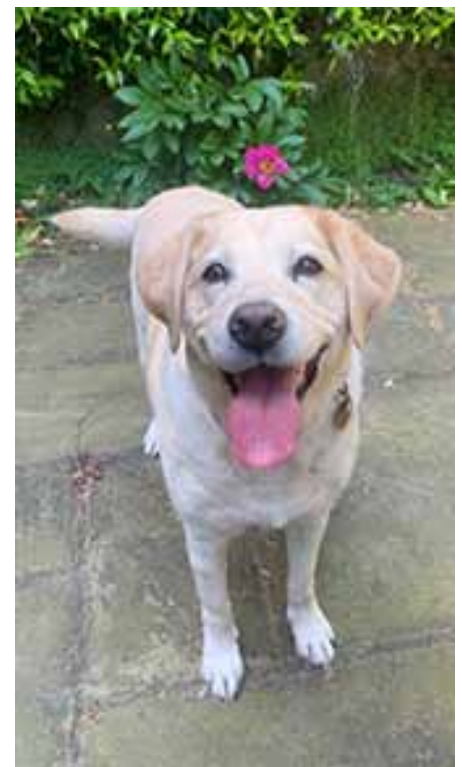
Throughout this time, Emma stayed close to the charity world as a trustee of Crisis, with ending homelessness a cause that remains close to her heart.

Keen to return to the charity world full-time, Emma joined Guide Dogs as their Chief Marketing and

Strategy Officer. As part of this exciting role, Emma was Managing Director of Blind Children UK, leading Guide Dogs' children's and adults' services delivery.

Emma also became a volunteer dog fosterer and had the pleasure of looking after many lovely labradors and retrievers, although some of them did not always behave in the exemplary guide dog manner while staying at her house!

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One of Emma's foster dogs

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## Small but mighty: the centre that packs a punch!

St Margaret's is the smallest of Open Age's current four centres. Situated at 1 Carey Place, SW1, close to Pimlico Underground station and just off Vauxhall Bridge Road with a bus stop outside, it has excellent transport links.

Inside there is just one activity room, a kitchen and a small office. But—as they say—size isn't everything, and the centre is a vibrant and active venue for a host of physical activities, arts and social events, including Intermediate Bridge, Art, Dance Exercise and Social Singing. The programme is supplemented by additional physical activities in nearby community venues.

The centre is managed by Senior Coordinator Vivienne Mitchell, who moved to this role after the previous Senior Coordinator, Hannah Munns, left to take maternity leave.

"I really love coming here and spending time with our members, new and old," says Vivienne. "What's really great is that we also have a range of activities run by our volunteer members, or that are self-run, such as Social Singing on Mondays, Shared Reading on Tuesdays and Table Tennis and Games afternoons on Fridays."

From May this number will be increased by the addition of Jewellery Making, which will run on Tuesday mornings and will be led by member Suzie. "As if all this weren't enough, our member and history buff Frances runs a highly successful fortnightly walk in London on alternate Wednesdays, helping members discover the unknown or forgotten history of our capital city." Want to join in? Look out for details of these Secret London Walks in our Open Age weekly emails!

Equipped with a catering kitchen, the centre has hosted numerous community lunches in the past. "Hannah is a trained chef and could easily turn her hand to preparing lunches for 30 people," laughs Vivienne. "I don't quite have her skills, but we still run the occasional lunch with the support of companies, through our work with Paddington Partnership (where our main contact is a former Open Age staffer!) We had a fabulous 3-course lunch event in March and now have a couple of events in the pipeline for May and June, so fingers crossed we can make these happen."

In addition to the work with local companies, Vivienne also runs

occasional workshops or visits with national organisations. "We recently ran a guided visit to the Evolution Garden at the National History Museum and an art workshop with The International Institute of Visual Arts (Iniva). This was followed by a visit to Iniva's library and archive."



Vivienne

"Our trips and visits programme is fun-packed and allows us to visit many fascinating venues—this is true of all our centres", says Vivienne.

While space is limited, there is always scope to explore new activities. "Working with the Open Age Outreach team, we are offering a new Men's Space session on Monday mornings from May. This will allow local men to come together to socialize and explore issues important to them. It will be hosted by Michael, who joined the Open Age team in April and will be a very welcome addition to our programme."

- Hannah's twins, boy and girl, were born on 19th February 2025, and all three are doing well, we are told.
- Vivienne is still running half of the activities she previously supervised as Hammersmith & Fulham Senior Co-ordinator. The other half are run by the Physical Activities team.



St Margaret's main room with kitchen

## Opera at The Avenues

Opera stars came to The Avenues hub off the Harrow Road for the first time in March, and everyone agreed it was an enormous success.

The big event happened on Friday 28th March, when Open Age hosted a visit by English National Opera, with four musicians and three singers, not to mention a rail of costumes so that members could dress up themselves and join in.

Jill Forgham, one of those taking



Jill with singer and Open Age member Derek Sibbering

part, said it was a "fantastic" event, with wonderful performances interspersed with active audience participation. "The ENO usually invites people to go to them for workshops, but because of a new grant (I think from Westminster City Council), they came to visit Open Age," explained Jill.



Hats for the audience

"They sang *Pirates of Penzance*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Summertime*, but the real tearjerker was *O Mio Babbino Caro* (*Oh My Beloved Father*) by Puccini.

"One soloist's rendition was so moving it reduced most of us to

tears. We also sang *We'll Gather Lilacs*, with everyone joining in."



More of the audience



Rita O'Driscoll (right) gets advice from a professional singer

...continued from page 1

Away from work, Emma is married with three children, Hannah, Rebecca and Tom. Hannah is away at university in Durham studying biochemistry, Rebecca is studying for her A-levels and is a talented ballerina, and Tom is in Year 6 and is the much-loved 'baby of the family'.

Emma is passionate about keeping fit, especially through dance, and learning French. She is a trustee at Diabetes UK and has a particular interest in tackling health inequalities.

She has enjoyed her first few months at Open Age and is excited to be able to use her experience and passion for delivering

excellent services for older people and supporting them to lead healthier lives, to which she is very committed.

Emma says: "I am so grateful for the warm welcome I have received at Open Age. I am looking forward to getting to know our members better, so please do come and say hello when you see me in our centres!"

• You can read another piece about our new CEO on the Open Age website. She also thanked her predecessor Iain Cassidy for his work over the past seven years, and Deryn Bath for her leadership as acting CEO in the months before Emma arrived.

## Welcome Emma!



Emma in exercise kit



## Mahjong, anyone?

Everybody seems to have heard of the Chinese game of mahjong—also popular in Japan—but few say they know how to play it. Now, thanks to volunteer mahjong instructor Patricia Plummer, you can learn its secrets on Friday afternoons at New Horizons.

One of the members who took up the challenge was David Rolph, whose profile was featured in this newsletter in November 2022. He volunteers at The Avenues and the Second Half Centre, but happened to see the class advertised in the Open Age programme last spring.

He soon caught the bug, and now attends the two-hour session every Friday after playing walking cricket with another charity. "I'd never played Mahjong, but just wanted to see how I got on," says David, who was so impressed that he bought two sets of his own.

"The game is a mixture of skill and chance, and you meet nice people. So I've spread the word, and one of my friends is now interested."

Another attendee is Sue

Brookes, who at only her third lesson in February managed to achieve "a treble mix sisters"—something which the tutor had never ever seen. Says Sue: "I'm not sure how I did it, but Patricia said it was one of the best hands one can score."

Based on drawing and discarding tiles, mahjong is usually played with a standard set of 144 tiles. The goal of the game is to remove all tiles from play by matching identical pairs. Some say the name means 'sparrow', because the clacking of the tiles resembles the chattering of sparrows.

Patricia (pictured centre front below) writes:

"I first came across the game at a Japanese festival before lockdown. I was given a simple name card with the name of the Japanese themed café called Library Pot in Richmond.

"I kept this card throughout lockdown and when lockdown was finally lifted, I was on my way to Richmond to learn Japanese Richi mahjong.

"I then wanted to take the hobby further and look at other venues



Sue Brookes

to play at. This is when I came across the U3A in Ealing. There I learned to play Hong Kong Style mahjong. This style of mahjong is somewhat easier to play and is the most common style played across the world.

"Mahjong is played with tiles very similar to a game of gin rummy.

"I wanted to play the game with as many people as possible; therefore, I decided to teach in order to have more persons to play with.

"I started volunteering at New Horizons last year after the Easter Term, and now we have two tables of four, with six people on the waiting list. I can only handle teaching 2-4 people at a time, but soon I hope to admit four more.

"The game is a great way to relax and meet others. It is very good for memory retention. You get to learn so many things, such as making a decision for a discard of a tile.

"I aim to teach at least two persons a week. Within 30 minutes, they have grasped the aim of the game and I have them playing amongst the experienced players. The best way to learn mahjong is to play as much as possible!"



The class hard at work

## Ballet for all

I started going to classes at The Avenues in 2017. Having done various dance classes previously, I was attracted to Ballet Fitness. We started with some barre exercises, accompanied by the sort of piano music that real dancers exercise to.

Apart from the fact that we were using chairs for a barre, this was just like a proper ballet class. And with my legs and arms starting to ache after only a few minutes, it certainly felt like one. After a while the chairs were put away and we moved on to floor exercises. This was easier physically, but more of a challenge mentally as I tried to work out where various limbs were supposed to go.

The following year Open Age started a new class, Soca Fitness. It's hard to convey how much fun this turned out to be, but imagine an aerobics class with added flag-waving, a sort of mini-carnival. And it introduced me to some great new tunes.

It would be difficult to think of two more different classes, and I loved both of them. The fact that I could do two such unusual classes a few minutes' walk from home made me very grateful for Open Age.

With lockdown, my classes quickly moved onto Zoom. I continued with Soca, live from the



Neil with tutor Anna

Caribbean, and started a new class, Disco Fever. The latter was a great help because, as well as dancing, there was time to chat about the music and its era.

I have taken different classes over the years, and enjoyed other events, ranging from cookery demonstrations to a recent performance from English National Opera. Currently I am doing Ballet and Chi Chi Fit on Monday mornings.

Our teachers, Anna for ballet, and Olivia for Chi Chi, are both cheerful encouraging personalities, always ready to praise us more than we deserve.

Anna leads us through our barre exercises and definitely keeps

us on our toes! The Chi Chi class is a mix of aerobics and dance routines, all done to songs from the musicals and great fun! Olivia demonstrates the trickier bits, but for most of the class we just follow her moves.

The classes have definitely improved my levels of fitness, health and happiness. When giving feedback about why I come to classes, I'd always say it was to keep fit, rather than meet people and make new friends. But then it occurred to me that this was exactly what had been happening, and all for the bargain price of £1 per hour!

Thanks, Open Age!

Neil Forgham

• Neil is not the only man who enjoys ballet. Recently widowed after 37 years, Ying-Hui The is a regular class member since before the pandemic. He was taken to watch ballet from a young age and continued until it got too expensive.

• As well as The Avenues, Ying often attends ballet at New Horizons on Monday lunchtimes.

• Says Ying: "I have a gym membership which is cheaper if you are over 60. I go about three times a week.

• "But ballet is the highlight of my week. I like the music, which can get one's emotions connected. I'd do a professional ballet class every day if I could afford it. Open Age seems the only place to do this at an affordable price."



Neil's ballet class



Ying-Hui The



### From Vienna to London

India Deiana is Centre Co-ordinator at the **Second Half Centre**, North Kensington, assisting Senior Centre Co-ordinator Andrea Carrington.



India

She writes:

My name is India, and I was born in Italy, but grew up in Vienna. I studied social work and Chinese nutrition science and have been working with or volunteered for charities since I was 18 years old.

In 2019 I moved to London and have been living here ever since. I do love the city and enjoy a walk or a cycle when the sun is out, and London transforms into a different place. On the weekend, you can find me eating myself through various food markets!

When I was looking for jobs in the charity sector back in 2023, I came across Open

Age. I hadn't heard of them before but quickly learned by looking them up that this was an incredible organisation I wanted to be a part of. I started working for Open Age in December 2023 and have been loving every minute.

I enjoy interacting with our members, leading on trips and witnessing the amazing work members are creating in our art classes and workshops. I also really appreciate our amazing Open Age team and how committed everyone at this charity is.

I'm looking forward to many more fun experiences I will be having here at Open Age!

### Job changes

It's all change at **New Horizons**, with two Co-ordinators leaving this year.

In January 2025, Laura Taylor, the Centre Co-ordinator for the past two years, left the post for a new job at an arts charity for younger people called Art History Link-Up.



Laura

Since then, New Horizons has welcomed Natalie Mitchell as the new Centre Co-ordinator.

Laura's profile appeared in the newsletter in May 2024 (MN42).

Now in May 2025, Senior Centre Co-ordinator at New Horizons Fiolla Korenica has also left to take up a new role as Operations Administrator at Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. This is an independent body that focuses on improving the family justice system for children and families in England and Wales.



Fiolla

Fiolla's last day was Friday 9th May. Her profile appeared in the newsletter in December 2021 (MN37).

Over at **The Avenues**, Co-ordinator Nisat Firdus left in February, but has now been replaced by new Co-ordinator Leo Goodlife. He is settling into his new role assisting Senior Centre Co-ordinator Marinne Laurent.

Open Age runs a wide range of health-based activities—both general and clinical—across several London boroughs. One of its key specialists is Jaxon Biglari, who arrived in Britain just 5 years ago.

Jaxon moved to the UK from Iran in 2020 with his wife to further his studies, completing a Master's degree in Sports Rehabilitation at Teesside University. With a background in Exercise Physiology from the University of Tehran, he has always been passionate about rehabilitation exercises and helping people improve their health through movement.

Jaxon worked as a Research Assistant in Iran, contributing to several well-published studies on the effects of exercise on the human body. His work focused on how movement influences health, and long-term well-being.

Outside of work, Jaxon is a badminton coach and currently coaches at St Margaret's, London's oldest badminton club. He goes to the gym or plays badminton almost every day, and says: "Staying active isn't just my profession—it's a way of life!"

In September 2023, Jaxon joined Open Age as a Clinical Exercise Specialist, delivering the Steady & Stable programme and supporting Open Age's new contract with Barnet Falls Clinic, where he leads falls prevention classes. A year later, in October 2024, he was promoted to Senior



Jaxon

Clinical Exercise Specialist, expanding his role to coordinate and deliver additional programmes, including Osteo Blast and Healthy Lungs.

He currently designs and delivers a variety of evidence-based programmes to help older adults maintain their mobility, strength, and confidence in movement. While supported by freelance tutors, Jaxon personally delivers around nine classes per week, both in person and via Zoom.

Why the UK? Jaxon chose to further his studies in the UK due to its strong reputation in sports science and healthcare research.

The opportunity to work in a multidisciplinary environment and apply the latest advancements in clinical exercise made it the ideal place to develop his career.

Jaxon's passion for health and fitness started at the age of nine when he was introduced to badminton by his uncle. His dedication to the sport led him to represent the Iranian national team in 2011. However, after suffering an injury, he was unable to continue playing professionally.

This personal experience with injury and recovery sparked his interest in sports therapy and rehabilitation, inspiring him to help others regain their strength and mobility.

He says: "I love the friendly and supportive atmosphere at Open Age. The organisation's positive environment makes it a great place to work, and I value the collaborative spirit that allows me to help people improve their health and well-being."

Jaxon's English is excellent, thanks to years of studying the language in Iran. Although it wasn't his strongest subject in school, living and working in an English-speaking environment has helped him refine it.

Incidentally, his real name is Soheil Biglari, but he chose the name Jaxon as a nickname because it is easier for his class participants to remember and pronounce.



Arm exercises



Leg stretch



# Planning for the future: Legacy Giving

Open Age recently (Wednesday 19th February) hosted a successful one-hour Legacy Event for its members, shedding light on legacy giving and the essential aspects of legal matters such as will writing, lasting power of attorney and probate.

Expert solicitor Krystal Ramsammy from Taylor Rose solicitors delivered the engaging and thorough talk at the Second Half Centre, answering questions on the legal implications of these important issues. Deryn Bath, our Senior Head of Service Delivery, helped tie everything together, making sure the session was directly relevant to the lived experiences of Open Age members.

With 20 members in attendance, we were delighted to see the level of appreciation and engagement from those who were there. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting on the event's format, organisation, and the thoughtful refreshments and gift bags provided.

The resource packs were particularly well-received, offering valuable information for members to refer to after the event. The session sparked many insightful conversations and questions.

While Legacy Giving was the primary focus, understanding the role of an executor and knowing the immediate and practical steps to take after a death, such as registration procedures, key contacts, and power of attorney arrangements, were the highest priorities for attendees.

It was enlightening for us to learn that members not only sought guidance for themselves but also for others, whether it be a neighbour, family member, or friend. Krystal's expertise was invaluable here, as she adapted seamlessly to meet the interests of the group.

One member shared: "Trying to even find—or read and understand—this information online is a headache. It's too much and overwhelming, but she explained everything so clearly. I know where to start now."



Given the feedback, we're excited to announce that we're planning quarterly sessions to help you navigate and plan for the future, no matter where you are on that journey. A special thank you to everyone who joined us for the occasion—your participation makes all the difference, and we look forward to hosting more events that support and empower our community.

CEO Emma Foulds says: "Open Age is a charity which relies on donations to continue to deliver its life-changing services. Legacies are a critical part of this, and we are very grateful to everyone who attended this event."

We'd also love to hear from you, if there are subjects you'd like us to explore to further support you on this journey. If you have already included Open Age in your will, we'd be honoured to hear from you, thank you, and keep you informed about the vital work we do within our wonderful community.

If you'd like more information on Legacy Giving or would like to receive a copy of our Legacy Information Pack, please do get in touch.

For more details, please contact:  
[community@openage.org.uk](mailto:community@openage.org.uk)

*Jane Chanakira*

- Those who missed this event could have attended an online talk on Wills & Probate hosted for Open Age by the Citizens' Advice Bureau on 2nd April.



*Krystal Ramsammy addresses her audience*

# Roland in China

Holidaymakers often pick snowy destinations in Europe to spend Christmas, but last December one Open Age member chose China for a three-week visit, thanks to an invitation from an old friend.

Roland Saam flew direct to Hong Kong non-stop on 18th December, and returned on 9th January after two weeks on Hong Kong Island, separated by a one-week stay in Canton Province—about one hour away on high speed rail.

US-trained engineer Roland met Zhijia twenty years ago when the latter was studying for a PhD in Electrical Engineering at Queen Mary College of London University. Zhijia worked in the City of London and got married, but later returned to Hong Kong.

Roland, who edited this Open Age Members' Newsletter for several years, and also edited a regional newsletter for the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), said the main purpose of his holiday was to see his friend, chill out and relax, but the trip turned out to be busy, and included picturesque islands, steep hills, and fishing villages.



*Roland and friends at Guangzhou Cathedral*

Roland writes: "I visited China once previously with my late wife Sheila, staying three or four days in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing as part of an engineering society tour, but that was in the year 2000.



*On Hong Kong Island*

"Last November I was talking on WhatsApp with my dear Hong Kong friend Zhijia, when he asked what I was doing for Christmas. He said it's an ideal time for a holiday visit, 12-15°C, few tourists in hotels, restaurants, sightseeing. Also, we could visit his parents in neighbouring Canton Province.

"The following day I happened by Trailfinders shop in Kensington High Street to enquire—and bought my ticket! They told me about visa requirements for Hong Kong and for mainland China—fortunately now very easy to get at the London visa office.

"So in the next days my plan emerged. I found a nice hotel close to Zhijia's apartment in 'TaiKoo' district on Hong Kong Island. First week in Hong Kong to shake off jet lag, to get familiar with transport, money, food, hotel.

"Second week travel to Canton, where the city of Shenzhen was the border gateway and the home city of Zhijia's wife Schuxian. Also to visit the city Guangzhou where Zhijia grew up. Third week,

return to Hong Kong Island after shopping at Shenzhen.

"Hong Kong is a place attractive for visitors from everywhere. The climate is warm and humid, so the summer months are uncomfortable, but the winter is just fine.

"The Chinese people learn English language in school. Conversation is easy in Hong Kong; but in mainland China, friendly persons use smartphone translation apps to help."

Roland enjoyed lovely fresh fish, street food, gourmet food, but says all manner of western foods are available. Marks & Spencer have exactly the same products as in the UK. Prices are moderate to low compared with London.



*Enjoying a meal*

Regarding attitudes to China, he says the western press give a different view to what he saw. He explains: "China has a huge population which has changed enormously in the past forty years. Their policies include feeding and educating everybody, so many are prosperous.

"People I met were friendly, curious, and enjoy working—in contrast to some attitudes we experience here.

"Everyone was very courteous. For example, I was invited to join in activities that I encountered in the park—exercise group for seniors, or singing along at festive occasions."



## Visit to the Mayor's Parlour

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of the City of Westminster, Robert Rigby, invited Westminster-based members of Open Age to have tea in his parlour on the 11th of February.

The parlour is on the 19th floor of 64 Victoria Street, SW1, where the City Council has its offices. It is not to be confused with the City Hall offices of the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan and the London Assembly, which are located in the Royal Docks, Newham.

There were 15 members present. The Lord Mayor was also assisted by his mace bearers who were very helpful in entertaining the members. Councillor Rigby gave a very brief history of Westminster. He said Old Westminster became a borough in 1897 and became the City of Westminster in 1965. After becoming a city, it capsulated the boroughs of Marylebone and Paddington.

Westminster started having Mayors in 1897 and in 1965 this was changed to Lord Mayor when it became a city, since when he has become the 60th Mayor of Westminster.

His role among others consists of chairing full council meetings at Westminster Council House, also known as Marylebone Town Hall, in Marylebone Road. As Deputy High Steward of Westminster Abbey he attends 1,200 functions a year. When he is unable to



*Tea in the clouds*

carry out these roles, a deputy or Alderman attends.

While in office, the Mayor selected two charities—Cardinal Hume Centre that caters for the homeless and provides other services, and the MCC foundation (Marylebone Cricket Club). He has been in the job for a year and the ceremony process for making one a Mayor is called 'Mayor Making'.

Councillor Rigby said he has met some members of our organisation before and wanted to meet some more—hence the invitation that day. He showed the members his ceremonial chain and explained its significance and was very happy to allow an Open Age member—Sylvia Hart—to wear it, acting as a Lady Mayor.

The Mayor showed and explained a 400-year-old mace and said there are two other

maces—one from Paddington and one from Marylebone dated 1901. He also showed a broadsword made by Wilkinson Match Limited; the company made 50 other swords that went to 50 cities in England.



*Sylvia, looking every inch a Lady Mayor*

After explaining his two ceremonial robes, one scarlet and one blue and gold, he invited the members to have a look round his office and ask questions. Tea and cakes were served to all, with a skyscraper view of London, rounding off a very enjoyable visit.

*Tina John*

● Only 23 cities in England have Lord Mayors as opposed to Mayors. Two are in London—the historic City of London and the City of Westminster..



*The lucky members*

## Where Sloane Rangers roam

Have you ever wondered while walking round Chelsea about the origin of the names Sloane Square, Sloane Street, Sloane Avenue and the like—not to mention Hans Place?

They are all called after Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1707), Lord of the Manor of Chelsea, who was named by BBC Radio in 2016 as one of the greatest people to have ever lived in Britain.

Anglo-Irish Sloane built his reputation in London as a great physician, living in fashionable Bloomsbury—3 Bloomsbury Place—where his patients included Samuel Pepys, Robert Walpole, Queen Anne and two King Georges, and later moving to Chelsea.

His drawings laid the foundation not just for the British Museum, but the National History Museum and the British Library, and he is known as "the mother and father of all collectors", as his initial collection of 80,000 objects and 50,000 books helped found all three London institutions and created the concept of free museums.

In 1733 a sculptor called Michael Rysbrack (1694-1770) was commissioned by the Company of Apothecaries to create a marble statue of Sir Hans Sloane in doctoral robe for display in the Chelsea Physic Garden which he helped to found.

The original was moved to the British Museum in 1985 and a replica placed in Chelsea Physic Garden. Another replica stands in Duke of York's Square near the Saatchi Gallery.

The statue proved controversial after the Black Lives Matter campaign because his collection was in part funded by the profits from slavery through Sir Hans' marriage to the daughter of a Jamaican slave planter, so the British Museum changed the statue's location.

But Sir Hans had many good points. As a doctor he found a cure for smallpox, promoted the use of quinine against malaria and sometimes treated the poor for free. He is said to have popularised adding milk to drinking chocolate, which was previous dark.



*Sir Hans Sloane*

## 'Kindness' is a favourite word

'Kindness' was chosen as Children's Word of the Year for 2024 after a survey of thousands of young people.

Oxford University Press (OUP) said 'artificial intelligence' and 'conflict' were also among the most common suggestions.

But in the final vote announced in January, 'kindness' had been chosen by 61% of children, while a quarter chose 'artificial intelligence'.

It follows 2023's winning phrase 'climate change', and the 2022 winner 'Queen', following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

More than 3,000 children aged six to 14 were

asked for their suggestions, with the top three then put to vote by a further 2,000 children.

Andrea Quincey, a director at OUP, said the choice was "encouraging" and reflected children's increasing awareness of mental health.

She said: "We know from previous years that young people are very conscious of the big issues that can divide us as a society, and attuned to the important role which language can play in bringing people together.

"Empathy and tolerance matter. Kindness is something everyone and anyone can do to make a difference."



# Tea dancing goes posh

Posh tea, cake and three cabaret shows in the delightful theatre of Morley College, North Kensington, were enjoyed by 100 members of Open Age on Friday 11th April when they were invited to experience the fabulous organisation known as The Posh Club for just a fiver.

The Posh Club run a three-hour event styled as a tongue-in-cheek 'posh' 1940s afternoon tea, with three live 'alternative' entertainment acts, volunteer waiters in black ties and frilly aprons—providing excellent service—and vintage crockery.

The event was funded by Morley College (who also offered the use of their theatre), City Living Local Life and Westminster Ward.

Organiser Angela Sharkey, Open Age Head of Learning and Community Development, said it was an afternoon full of laughter, music, light-hearted performances and warm conversation.

"It was theatrical, glamorous, delightfully over-

the-top and most of all, it brought people together in a warm and welcoming space filled with joy, celebration and community," she added.

Simon Casson, producer of The Posh Club, gave the following feedback:

"The Posh Club with Open Age was a storming success. It was such enormous fun on the day, all the dancing and socialising. The participants were an extremely ethnically and culturally diverse bunch of older Londoners... and the Open Age volunteers were wonderful, so open, hardworking, friendly and generous. The showbiz turns seemed to go down particularly well."

The Digital Communications Manager (Ben Tysoe-Bailey), for RBKC and Westminster, attended the event to gather information to produce a case study and video to highlight the project and partners involved.



*Posh Club audience*



*Part of the stage show*

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