



OPEN AGE

Members' Newsletter

New Horizons • Second Half Centre • The Avenues • and more

November 2022 • Issue No. 39

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

Feelgood fun with Rah Rah Singers

How do you celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee? According to the Rah Rah Theatre Company, it's with music, comedy and dance that includes some of the Queen's favourite songs

Ten free singalong shows throughout the month of June were on offer at Open Age Centres, expertly performed by a trio of freelance musical theatre actors.

The performers—Matthew Peter-Carter, Phoebe-Loveday Raymond and Lauren Steele—had researched much of the show themselves, to link each song with a letter from the words 'Platinum Jubilee'.

So the 'Ls' stood for London (*Maybe It's Because I'm a Londoner* and *Land of Hope and Glory*), the 'I' stood for Icons like Dame Vera Lynn (*White Cliffs of Dover*), 'N' for Navy (*In the Navy*) and lots more.

Those who could danced, others just sang. And everybody had a jolly good time, helped along by tea, coffee and biscuits.



Jubilee specials

As the country faces a difficult winter with a new Prime Minister and a new monarch, it's good to look back at the highlights of 2022—the amazing hot spell of July and August and the wonderful Platinum Jubilee celebrations for our late Queen.

There were so many Jubilee activities, it's hard to focus

on just one or two—but one memorable event for Kensington & Chelsea residents was the fabulous Jubilee tea at Kensington Town Hall, attended by hundreds of residents, including many from Open Age.

A special visitor was the TV newsreader Victoria Hollins, who was there with a

cameraman to chat to visitors (see picture). She later gave it a mention that very day on BBC London News.



Victoria Hollins

Another special celebration was Open Age's own Platinum tea dance held on 15th July at The Tabernacle, off Portobello Road, W11. The popular Kenny Charles and his trio provided the music and songs that got everybody up on the floor in their dancing shoes (see picture).



From sickness to active life

Not many people can say they have attended over a thousand Open Age classes over the years, but that's the proud record of member Brenda Meadows, who at the age of 90 is still super creative and super active.



Brenda (left) at her 90th birthday party with Karen Buck MP

Brenda mostly attends The Avenues centre off the Harrow Road—within walking distance of places she has lived all her life. She enjoys a line games quiz on Mondays, a Scrabble group on Wednesdays and a singing group on Thursdays.

She loves singing, but her chief interest is creative writing, mainly poetry—although she has had short stories published in local magazines and newsletters, and once won an award from a Westminster charity.

Even during the pandemic, she kept her interests going through Zoom classes. She found Zoom manageable and liked the fact that she did not have to travel anywhere in bad weather.

“I prefer to write poetry rather than prose because it's quicker. I was a librarian and I worked in a bookshop for 55 years, so it's always been literature with me,” says Brenda, who penned a lovely poem in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee (right).

“I often compose verses for various persons and groups. This one was about the Coronation and what

I remembered about it. I was getting married the same year, and so was more engaged with that.”

You might assume Brenda had a head-start in life, but you couldn't be more wrong. Brenda never went to school till she was nine, because she was in and out of hospital with recurring pleurisy and pneumonia, and in the absence of penicillin, had to have ribs removed.

While in hospital she read voraciously and became a huge fan of Shakespeare and poetry. Eventually she won a scholarship to Paddington & Maida Vale High School for Girls—and at the age of 17, making up for lost time, took up sports including badminton, tennis and finally squash.

At the age of 50 she started athletics training, and eventually began teaching exercise classes, not giving up until the age of 82. She was also a Scout leader for 66 years at her local church, retiring only two years ago.

“When my husband passed away 12 years ago, I had been a carer for six years and I had to find something else to do, so that's when I joined Open Age,” says Brenda, who has also been involved in drama and play readings.

“After a bad beginning, I've had a lovely life, because when you are at rock bottom, the only way is up.”

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS OF CORONATION YEAR

The poem, written before the loss of our Queen in September, looks back at two different experiences of 1953: Elizabeth II being crowned in July and Brenda preparing for her wedding in October.

*There was a lot of difference between the two of us.
She in a carriage, and me on a bus.
She was getting ready to put on a crown.
I was trying on my white wedding gown.
The people clapped and gave her three cheers.
My lot ate their food and drank down their beers.
She proudly said: “My husband and I”.
I loudly said: “My old man's quite a good guy”.
Now in our gos, we both get some ache,
And have some trouble in keeping awake.
But, after all of our problems and strife,
We can both still say that we've had a good life.*

Quitting while ahead

If this were Facebook or WhatsApp I'd be sending out mixed messages the 21st century way.

There would be a couple of sad-face emojis alongside images of balloons, popping bottles of fizz and the announcement 'I'm retiring!!!' What's more, those emojis would be meaningful. I've enjoyed my 14 years working for Open Age.



When I first walked through the doors of the old OA offices in Thorpe Close to meet with the head of learning, Swati Shah, I'd spent the best part of 20 years working as a freelance journalist specialising in the design, retail and leisure industries.

My CV said that I'd left school at 17 to train as a potter, had been a mature student at 30 (BA Humanities, MA Eng Lit) and had started writing about design on leaving Sussex in 1989. By the time we met, I'd asked all my questions many times over, knew all the answers and wanted to get away from my phone and computer screen.

Swati offered me a job teaching basic computer skills. It seemed to go well. Then came the offer of teaching creative writing at the newly opened New Horizons centre. New buildings have a particular smell. New Horizons had it in

bucketloads as I sat in the small upstairs room with one other person.

She must have enjoyed the class because she passed the word. The next week there were three. They kept coming. I now leave behind four Creative Writing classes (and I'm not the only tutor running writing courses). Added to which, I have run courses on journalism, creative non-fiction, literature, documentaries, poetry and even a history of design course.

If I were still in the business of writing my CV and trying to build a career, this is where I would start 'bigging up' my job growth and progression—or some such. But the truth is that if you're lucky you wash up in the right place at the right time.

I was lucky. Because, despite the best efforts of occasional OFSTED inspectors and their ilk, Open Age is resolutely about people rather than processes.

It's the members that make it. Teach for Open Age and you're working with people who have had lives. You don't get that in schools, nor to such an extent in universities where everyone is filtered in some way.

Only in the rare remainders of adult education will you have an Oxbridge graduate and someone who left school at 15 at the same table. Or a retired model and a woman who worked on ships bringing soldiers back from Korea. They have stories to tell and, as a teacher, you can't help learning.

Now, before I write myself into asking for my old job back, I should say why I'm leaving. I started out as a potter, a craftsman. Since then, I've engaged in other crafts: journalism, script writing and teaching.

Then three years ago I found a place to make pots. It had shared wheels, kilns and nice creatives. What's more, this time round people are buying my work.

So, my plan is simple. Quit while I'm ahead. And get some decent pots made before my hands give up on me. Meanwhile, thanks for the good times, Open Age.

Robert Silver

My queue experience, by Jill

What an experience it was, going to see the Queen! So glad I went. I wasn't planning to, but then when I saw it on the news it made me think what a moment in history this is. I woke up at two in the morning after it opened for public viewing and decided I would go.

So I crept out of bed at 5 o'clock without disturbing Neil and got on the first Bakerloo line train, went to Southwark station and joined the end of the queue at 6 a.m. under Blackfriars rail bridge.

It was starting to get light and the sky over St Paul's was really pretty. The top of the Shard was lit up in purple. There was a chill wind off the Thames, and it was cloudy but luckily no rain. I had my headphones on and was listening to Radio 3—bliss!

We moved fairly constantly, just at a gentle pace and every now and then a set of portaloos appeared. I tested three in all. Each time I had to remember who was near me so I could rejoin the correct section.

I made three friends and we looked out for each other. A girl who had come up from Devon, a smartly dressed man from Orpington and a woman from the East End about my age.

When we had passed the London Eye, we were all given a bright pink wristband and we had to show our wrists to pass key entries, for example into the gardens next to the Houses of Parliament.

I had my flask of tea and a snack, thinking we were nearly done, but then we did about 100 tight zig zags, and the policeman said there were 8,000 of us in that section.

Word got out that we could not take food or drink in, so people started eating or giving their food away. I scored a satsuma and a Crunchie bar! The lady from the East End had an enormous stash and full change of clothing.

There was a loo at the top of each zig zag and I met new people. Old and young, fairly diverse, one bowler hat, several red berets and medals, a really mixed crowd, but all beautifully behaved and no one yacking on their phone.

Rubbish was collected by Scouts and Guides, and unused food into a pile for the homeless. The organisation throughout was quite something—so many stewards and volunteers at every step.

Finally we emerged opposite Westminster Abbey and a whole bank of TV crews, and straight into twelve lanes of police, putting our bags through airport-type machines.

The Speaker of the House of Commons joined us, wished us good morning and thanked all the police for doing such a wonderful job.

Once inside just before 11 a.m. we were received by people in frock coats, frilly blouses and breeches and went into four lines. The hall looked beautiful, with so many points of colour, from the uniforms guarding the coffin to the crown and orb on top.

I was probably only in there three or four minutes but it was enough, and I was thrilled to be there.

We said our goodbyes and I walked through Horse Guards Parade and saw the guards on horseback, another lovely moment. I collapsed onto the number 6 bus and went to meet Neil at noon for a giant lunchtime fish special. Epic!



Jill Forgham with husband Neil

Have guitar, will practise

Open Age member Brian is a bit of a joker, so it's best not to take everything as gospel. "I was sent to piano lessons when I was ten, but I found it a bit heavy to carry," says the man from Maida Vale.



Guitar class regular, Brian

Music took a back seat to studies when Brian went to Salford University in 1967 to study electrical engineering, following

in the career footsteps of his father, who was a maintenance engineer at the *Daily Mirror*.

One of the professors Brian came across was the famous Dr Eric Laithwaite, who developed the first full-size working model of the linear motor used in hovertrains and later the Docklands Light Railway.

Braithwaite had moved to Imperial College, London and, on completion of his first degree, Brian followed him there to study for a master's degree.

He acquired a guitar but didn't have much chance to practise, as work took him abroad. His first job was with a telecom company in California for three years.

He then went travelling to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria and Ghana, installing microwave antennas, before returning to

the UK to work as an electrical engineer in hospitals. He spent five years as chief electrical engineer at Great Ormond Street.

When he retired, he decided to take the guitar more seriously. He discovered Open Age's two music classes—Guitar for All on Thursdays at the Avenues, and the Magic of Music men's class on Tuesdays at the Second Half Centre (see previous newsletter)—and joined them both.

"Each class is different—the Thursday class is more for beginners, but the Men's Tuesday class includes people who are more experienced, including a bass player," says Brian, who also enjoys walking football. "Most of us aren't professionals, but we are of all different ages and we enjoy ourselves."

Memories of Daphne

A popular Open Age member, who in 2017 wrote about her childhood memories during WW2, died in July at the age of 85.

Daphne Morgan, formerly a keen member of the New Horizons singers the Chelsea Belles, ran a karaoke group on Zoom during lockdown and kept up her love of the internet through Facebook. Many of her posts were about animals.

Daphne's funeral on 18th August at Gunnersbury (Kensington) cemetery chapel took her friends and family, including husband Joe, son David, daughter Denise (Dee) Spence and granddaughter Toni, on a journey some distance from home, but afterwards many returned to Earl's Court to celebrate and toast the life of a woman often described as 'a force of nature'.

Denise said her mother was "strong minded and strong willed,

loving and funny, gentle and kind". As a small child Daphne was evacuated to the country but was so terrified of cars and strange noises that her mother had to bring her home, where she discovered mischief on bomb sites with other children.

As an adult she embraced technology and gadgetry, enjoyed art and books, and through this members' newsletter discovered a hidden talent for writing poems and humorous pieces. She often described her recollections of meeting celebrities, and in spring 2021 wrote about her cat.

As part of WW2 anniversary celebrations, Daphne was asked by a local councillor to write about her wartime experiences. Her book with archived pictures from the internet was called *Growing Up in Earl's Court—the War Years*, and the stories were so well received that they were

turned into a fundraising drama. The memoir is in Kensington Library.

In Loving Memory
of
Daphne Marguerite Morgan
19th May 1937 – 19th July 2022



Gunnersbury Cemetery Chapel
Gunnersbury Avenue
W3 8LE
18th August 2022
at 2:00pm

Discovering healing energy

Does anyone remember an offbeat indoor market in the King's Road, Chelsea, called Antiquarius? If you were something of a hippy in the 70s and 80s, you probably do—and you may have crossed paths with Poplar Cosmo, who ran a stall with his late wife selling ethnic and tribal silver antique jewellery.



Poplar Cosmo

The market was a 'village' of around 100 stalls occupied by antique dealers, many of them amazing characters. They welcomed visitors like Justin de Villeneuve (the man who discovered Twiggy), George Harrison and all the Rolling Stones, who descended on Chelsea when it was a mecca for alternative lifestyles.

Poplar grew up in Gloucestershire among a family involved with spirituality and healing. After abandoning a classical piano degree in Devon, he came to London which he had often visited with his mother and sister and began to develop a career as a life and soul coach.

Now based in South Kensington, he was looking for a course in Qi Gong and discovered Open Age with its wide choice of classes for over 50s, so he quickly enrolled in February this year.

"I have known about this charity for over ten years, and since my wife died, I feel I'm ready to expand and try things I've never done before," says Poplar.

"I did Tai Chi as a teenager, which is similar, and was looking for an exercise that suits me, as I'm tall (6 feet 6 inches) and thin. Qi Gong is very fluid and gentle—it's an ancient Chinese exercise that goes back about 5000 years.

"You are working with your 'chi' or life force, and don't go into complicated postures like yoga, yet it gets everything flowing through the body very nicely. I was overjoyed to find the class was being offered here for £1—it's a real service to the community."

Poplar attends the Thursday lunchtime class at New Horizons, but in summer he went to an open-air Wednesday class in Porchester Square, W2. Performing the movements in the open air transformed his experience, because it meant he was interacting with nature.

Now he's thinking of joining an IT class—"because I'm really hopeless!"—while continuing with his own chair-based 1:1 spiritual healing practice—a little like reiki, but without the hand movements.

His life and soul coaching is based on word of mouth recommendations by people who have benefitted emotionally or psychologically. He developed a healing gift from childhood and was helped by a healer who was a supportive influence and mentor.

Poplar's philosophy as a healer? "We all have healing energy, but most people don't realise this. Focusing on the spirit or soul can override your physical limitations and be a source of inspiration.

"We used to have elders in our community who held positions of great influence and respect because they had the wisdom and inner vitality. Nowadays we don't respect our elders and don't know how to be elders—Open Age is an attempt to strengthen your spirit so that you can live happily into old age and beyond."

This summer, Poplar met a 100-year-old painter who had a pop-up gallery in the King's Road, and asked him his secret of a long life. The man replied: "Firstly, be creative, make your life beautiful. Secondly, have a siesta or meditation each day."

Volunteers extraordinary

Where would Open Age be without its volunteers on reception and in other useful roles? Here are two of the long-serving regulars.

DAVID ROLPH—SHC and AVENUES



As well as helping to staff the front desk, David Rolph is a dab hand at compiling and running quizzes. He has hosted two online quizzes on Zoom this summer, and has run at least three in-person quizzes at The Avenues, plus another quiz during a visit to Kensington Palace—not to mention quizzes he runs for other organisations.

You may feel worn out just reading this, because David seems to be so busy, with so many interests, it's surprising he can fit them all in. Based in Kensal Rise, he is lucky enough to live within easy reach of the Second Half Centre and The Avenues and attend classes and volunteer at both.

His special Interests include history (World War II), watching football, walking cricket, playing green 'lawn' bowls, cinema, I.T., listening to music from the 60s to the 80s, and of course volunteering.

Before retirement David spent ten years in order processing and customer service for a company in Cricklewood and before that worked in sales and customer service at British Telecom for 27 years.

He joined Open Age ten years ago, and quickly became a volunteer—first doing one half day a week on reception at the old office in Thorpe Close, Ladbrooke Grove, and gradually increasing the work to three days a week—one at The Avenues, and two at the Second Half Centre.

"I wanted to find somewhere where I could use

the work skills that I had acquired during my life and found I could put them to good use at Open Age," says David.

"My time is usually spent either working on reception, or talking to the members who attend the Social Games Café at The Avenues on a Wednesday morning for Scrabble, dominoes and other activities, with tea, coffee and biscuits. I have also attended health fairs and various community events such as the Queen's Park Festival to help promote Open Age to the general public."

Since he joined the charity, David has participated in many classes, including the technological—iPad, Smartphone, Cloud—and the active—Green Bowls (he also meets and greets and coaches newcomers), Walking Cricket and Multi Sports (badminton, table tennis, etc)—plus the Link Up Monday Forum, a group telephone chat with occasional guest speakers. He has also co-hosted Sunday lunches at the Second Half Centre.

His latest activity is assistant trip leader, helping the trip leader with outings, and visits have included the Royal Astronomical Society, Kew Gardens and The Wallace Collection.

David thinks more people should consider volunteering. He explains: "There are many different roles that a volunteer can undertake, and you can choose how much time you want to give. It will keep you busy, and it can be rewarding knowing that you have played a part in helping others."

Farewell to Geoff

Regulars at The Avenues lost their popular and enthusiastic senior centre co-ordinator this term. Geoff Brown left on 6th October to take up a job with a legal setting in London's Temple area, after six years with Open Age.

Past activities have included hosting monthly talks, launching a film club and even writing a pantomime. A profile on Geoff appeared in members' newsletter MN37 (December 2021).

Holding the fort pending recruitment of his replacement is Avenues centre co-ordinator Pamela Clarke, who started her job in September. Welcome, Pam!

Volunteers extraordinary (continued)

RAZINASACRANIEDAMJI—AVENUES



Razina first joined Open Age in 2017 after retiring from her job in social work in a mental health team. She found details of an osteoblast class in her doctor's surgery, and later enrolled for Pilates and yoga, but soon got drawn into volunteering.

Before COVID, she was doing two full days a week at the Second Half Centre and three at New Horizons. Now it's reduced to three mornings a week at The Avenues—Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays—because she also helps look after her grandson for her daughter, and spends time with her husband at

their home near Marble Arch.

Born and raised in Malawi, she got married and worked in a tea estate with her then husband. They moved to Dundee in Scotland where her in-laws lived, but this was difficult for Razina because she knew nobody in the UK.

She also faced verbal and emotional abuse, and eventually decided to leave with her young daughter. After a brief stay in a women's refuge, she moved to Canada to live with her brother, but was only allowed six months.

She returned to Britain and lived with an aunt for a short while, before deciding to settle and start her life again—but where? At St Pancras station, she and her daughter played a nursery rhyme to choose a platform, and found themselves on a train to Bedford.

Initially they lived in a women's refuge, where Razina took the opportunity to do short courses once her daughter had started school. After almost three years, Bedford Council finally housed her in a nearby village, where she took further courses and landed a job as an educational welfare officer, before training in social work.

After many happy years, she finally moved to London to join her fiancé (later husband) and be near her daughter, who had become a financial consultant. She continued her social work as an agency locum in different areas of the capital until she turned 60.

"I decided to join Open Age because it enables you to exercise your mind and engage with life outside in the world," says Razina. "Volunteering is good if you find yourself sitting at home. You meet people, you laugh with people, you help people—I really enjoy it."

Orangery Café to close

Sad news for patrons of the New Horizons café, which has served hot meals, drinks and snacks in the Cadogan Street centre for many happy years and was featured in the last members' newsletter in May.

It will close for good on Friday 2nd December, and staff will be moved to the company's other centres or look for other jobs, while trainees will also be dispersed.

Danilo Salemahomed, who operates as a peripatetic relief manager for the parent charity Unity Works, said the café had struggled financially since returning from lockdown in January 2022, because fewer members were dining there and trainee numbers had dropped.

He himself is setting up his own catering business.

Open Age plans to find a replacement caterer, but in the meantime is looking for member volunteers to serve tea, coffee and biscuits (no meals) during December. Anyone interested should speak to reception.

Can U help them B Active?

At this year's AGM in January 2022, Outreach and Support Services Manager Bee Burgess announced a new service for Open Age called the Be Active Project, which since June 2021 has encouraged people who are home-based and less active to get about and about.

The aim is to support people over 60 who are finishing a period of rehabilitation, following an injury or illness. Clients are matched one-to-one with volunteers, who will meet the person for a series of practice sessions using their rehab exercises to strengthen their recovery.

Bee, who is responsible for Phone Club, Link Up, Men's Space, Time For Me and other Open Age social groups, would like to see a few more volunteers coming forward.

It seems you do not need to be a fitness freak, no lifting is required and previous experience in rehabilitation support is not necessary—just enthusiasm, commitment, empathy, and a desire to listen and encourage. Volunteers receive training from NHS rehabilitation professionals and on-going support from the project.



Senior project manager Malvina Turnyanszka said volunteers were needed because client numbers have been steadily growing, while volunteer applications had dropped as people resumed normal life after the pandemic. Support involved outdoor walks or home exercises, with some client using a walking aid.

"Feedback has been extremely positive. This service is really unique, and is definitely needed, as there is nothing similar currently running," explained Mal.

"The first client-volunteer visit is always attended by a member of staff, to make sure we all are comfortable with the routine. The volunteers are trained on how to use walking aids safely. If they are comfortable, they can support the client on longer routes, with getting on-off the bus, going to activities, etc.

"As the support is for nine sessions, the aim is to tailor the sessions towards achieving goals that the client can continue doing alone, once the visits have stopped.

"Indoor exercises are usually provided by the physio and we carry on with them. They might involve light weights or an exercise band. We always show all the exercises with the client to the volunteer and have them do it together, to make sure everyone is confident. Exercises range from squats, balancing, side stepping and marching to upper body arm reaches."

Malvina said the project was especially grateful to those Open Age members that have already been volunteers. Comments have included the following:

"My client was incredibly pleasant to work with, and our sessions did not feel like work at all, because walking together and having a nice chat along the way was very satisfying. It was particularly rewarding to watch my client's improvement. I must admit that my own fitness level has gone up: walking and exercising is what all of us need!"

"My volunteer was really nice. It was great to have the support of another person, while walking outdoors. I felt very secure and my motivation increased as the weeks went by. I am happy to have had the service continue on from when my physical therapy ended, as I am now at a level where I feel comfortable going for a walk outdoors with my daughter. Thank you!"

"I asked for someone who will get me to do the exercises and continue with the walks, and my volunteer is great with that. He takes no nonsense, and is really efficient. I feel a change to my motivation, which resulted in a physical improvement, too."

To find out more:
email beactive@openage.org.uk
or call on 020 3859 7283



The value of laughter

The Reader's Digest used to have a column of jokes called 'Laughter—the Best Medicine'. Laughing makes life tolerable and fun—specially if two people have a similar sense of humour.

My mother was the eldest of six, and at least three of them told jokes at home. For working-class people in Salford, life was easier if you were part of a 'funny' family. Later she used to tell jokes to visitors to our house and embarrass us kids.

My father was the youngest of four but people thought he and his twin brothers were triplets. He recalled how the trio got ready for bed at the same time and became hysterical when one sat for ages on the loo and caused a terrible stink.

Dad often warbled along to the radio and always sang when he drove us on holiday. He used to say: "I married your mother because she was the funniest woman I'd ever met!" Occasionally they laughed so hard that they had to support themselves on the furniture.

I myself can remember listening to a record of

Tom Lehrer's comic songs from the 1950s and laughing uncontrollably—not because I had not heard them before, but because a friend heard them and laughed until he wept.

My partner has a habit of mixing up words and speaking in malapropisms. In the early years of our relationship, we found we were comedians without knowing it, and were sometimes in such fits of giggles in bed we were still laughing at one o' clock in the morning.

Scientific research validates the age-old belief that laughter is at the heart of a healthy life. It has been shown to exercise many of the muscles of your body, in addition to releasing endorphins which make you feel good.

Some of us have a good laugh when we take part in Open Age activities—try the New Horizons Wednesday quiz—or just while chatting. Does laughter help you live longer? Definitely!

The Laughing Police(wo)man

Letter to the Editor

Age discrimination in flats?

This is to draw attention to a problem I had not thought about previously.

Recently an acquaintance of mine went to an estate agent in Chelsea looking for a flat to rent in my block. She was given details of one, but was informed the landlord only wanted young tenants.

I was shocked. The next day I contacted the chairman of the board of directors of the building (we are self-governed) and told her that, whether this is the general policy of the building or an isolated case, it is unacceptable age discrimination and should not be condoned. She said she would look into it.

One good reason for accepting older people as

tenants is that they are quiet. Young people on the whole have noisy parties.

I do not know if there is a general landlords' association one could complain to, but if anybody reading this has experienced this kind of discrimination, I suggest they complain to the managing agents of the block they are looking to rent in. Also, their Citizens' Advice Bureau may be able to help.

A. M. Cadars

Editor: Age discrimination is largely illegal under the Equality Act 2010, and not just at work, but many have found it still rife in certain situations—for example, older people being excluded from trendy clubs and bars. So it's important to complain if it happens to you.

Banks and scams

If someone steals your credit card details, you would tell your bank and expect them to refund the money, wouldn't you? But what happens if they won't?

Susan Moore, who attends classes at St Margaret's but also visits New Horizons on Mondays for an art class and ballet, has had a bad experience with NatWest despite banking with them for over 60 years.

"I was scammed and I got very upset about it, although it wasn't large amounts, but I felt my bank

dealt badly with it and it has undermined my confidence in my bank and bank cards," says Sue.

"I kept having amounts taken out of my account by Uber Eats and I have never ordered a takeaway in my life. I changed my bank card three times, yet it still kept happening.

"Third time, the bank did not repay me, as they insist I had let someone use my cards, or given someone access to my bank details. Absolute nonsense, but I

kind of lost the will to live by that time, and felt too upset to deal with it any more."

Open Age member Ted Waight, who once had someone use his card to book a flight to America, which he had not visited for 30 years, said his bank immediately cancelled the card and gave a refund. But if they hadn't, he would have gone to the CAB for help, or even the Ombudsman.

If anyone else has had a similar experience, please let us know how you dealt with it.

The DigitAll Project

Is the internet a mystery? Do you avoid computers because it's confusing and difficult? Do you never attend computing classes or drop-in sessions due to lack of confidence?

Fear not—help is at hand from the DigitAll Project, set up by Open Age with other organisations to aid the 'digitally excluded'.

The project started in April 2022 to provide beginners with three things—an Android tablet, a free internet SIM card and five sessions with tutors Lena and Derek over five weeks to demonstrate how to use the tablet or any other portable equipment the student may acquire, such as smart phone,

iPad or laptop.

Project co-ordinator Niall Reilly, who is based at the Second Half Centre, said there had been an overwhelming response, with over 300 referrals in all, including 60 from Open Age members.

Of those 60, 38 completed the project, with three people attending St Margaret's every Tuesday afternoon, and three attending the SHC every Thursday afternoon for five weeks at a time. The remainder will complete the project in 2023, plus any new bookings. The tutors can also offer in-home support for the less mobile.

"The reaction has been incredibly positive. All participants

have described it as excellent for building confidence," says Niall. "We loan the device free for six months, but the loan can be extended if needed.

"The pandemic has exposed a lot of issues people have with online services, especially since topics like health and welfare have moved online.

"Our funding from the Captain Sir Tom Moore Foundation takes us to autumn 2023, and if funding continues, we hope to extend the sessions to The Avenues and New Horizons."

Anyone interested can contact Niall on 07570 428756, or email him at nreilly@openage.org.uk

Editor Kay Shelley

Contributors Brenda Meadows, Jill Forgham, Ranjit Dutta, Sylvia Hart, Robert Silver, guitarist Brian, Poplar Cosmo, David Rolph, Razina Sacranie Damji, Malvina Turnyanszka, A M Cadars, Susan Moore, Niall Reilly, The Laughing Police(wo)man

Designer Jennifer Iles

The **Open Age Members' Newsletter** is written, edited and designed by volunteers and staff of Open Age, registered charity No. 1160125, and distributed by staff.

Please email your news to kayonhold@hotmail.co.uk or text Kay on 07748 662213.

Open Age telephone number 020 4516 9978
website www.openage.org.uk