



OPEN AGE

Members' Newsletter

Second Half Centre • New Horizons • Avenues • St Margaret's
November 2023 • Issue No. 41

OA Mile celebrates 30 years



We're thrilled to share a recap of our Open Age Mile event in August and want to say a heartfelt thank you to all those who took part and donated.

It was a day where unity, movement and community met to mark a significant milestone—30 years of Open Age.

Under the warm sun at Paddington Recreation Ground, a diverse gathering of members, friends, families and supporters walked side by side, embodying the spirit of Open Age. The infectious energy of the day was further uplifted by the presence of our enthusiastic Panto Dame, **Iain Cassidy**, CEO, spreading joy and laughter.

Now, let's celebrate your dedication and generosity: we raised £2,689.50 through your collective efforts. While it didn't quite reach our initial target of £3,000, your unwavering commitment to Open Age's mission truly shines.

Furthermore, I want to say thank you to the St Margaret's group who got together on the very same day to do the mile in Battersea Park, extending the reach of our shared purpose.

A remarkable 42 members participated in the walk, a true testament to the enthusiasm of our community. And let's not forget the friends, family members, and staff who joined to cheer and support us, making this event truly special.

As we reflect on this meaningful event, we're excited about the possibilities ahead. With your continued support and enthusiasm, the Open Age Mile is set to become an annual tradition, offering us the chance to come together and make a difference year after year—so do keep an eye out for the announcement of the Open Age Mile 2024.

Thank you for being part of the Open Age family and for making

the Open Age Mile a memorable occasion. Stay tuned for more events and opportunities as we journey forward together.

Emese Budai
Community Engagement and
Supporter Care Manager
Assisted by **Tina John**



Who is this being interviewed
outside Westminster Abbey?
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The good travel guru



Tony Good—long-haul travel expert

Anthony Good has flown to India 465 times, has an OBE and is listed in *Who's Who*. But when he joined Open Age last year and came to the quiz group and later the current affairs group 'In the News' at New Horizons, no-one knew anything about his background and career.

An only child, Tony attended Felstead public school and, on leaving, was accepted as a management trainee with the Distillers Group. His father was a sports journalist working for *Sporting Life* and also chairman of the Fontwell Park Racecourse—perhaps because of this, Tony next became an editorial assistant with Temple Press and eventually a journalist.

In the south of England, an unusual airline called Silver City Airways carried both passengers and their cars. Tony was recruited as their press officer—a fascinating job, he says—and for five years helped develop the company, looking after many VIPs and famous names along the way.

Because of this success, Tony founded his own PR consultancy, Good Relations, and worked with high-end clients such as Jensen Motors, GrandMet and Grindlays Bank.

In 1970, following the acquisition of the Crown agency Cox & Kings by Grindlays Bank, he was given the task of converting it into a tour operator

specialising in India.

He created their first tour package from UK to India in 1971, and in spite of the launch coinciding with the Indo-Pakistan war, Cox & Kings went from strength to strength.

Said Tony: "We were pioneers in the package holiday industry. When we started our first tour, all-in holidays were in their infancy. If you wanted to visit India, you booked your flight but had to make your own arrangements after that."

Tony has an accurate log of his 465 flights to India, flying out every month or two to attend board meetings, and to develop the Indo-British tourism and business relationships for which he received his OBE in 2014.

He became Cox & Kings' director in 1971 and their London-based global chairman in 1975. For the next 45 years, Tony's chairmanship helped Cox & Kings become a global leader and India's largest travel company. In November 2009 Cox & Kings floated on the Bombay Stock Exchange.



Recalls Tony, who lives in Chelsea: "In 1999 Cox & Kings sent 4,000 tourists from India; a decade later, in 2009, we operated holidays for 400,000 Indians around the world, while we exceeded one million Indian tourists by 2019".

Tony was a founder director of the UK-India Business Council and served on the board of many UK companies, bringing his India expertise and helping them expand to India. He facilitated major joint ventures of UK and Indian companies—such as Marks & Spencer with Reliance Industries, SunLife insurance with the Birla Group, and Scottish & Newcastle with the UB Group.

He sat on the Prince's Trust and was a member of the committee that decided to keep the pound currency and not convert to Euros. He has received many Life Awards in the UK and India.

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All thanks to Maureen



We have been reminded that 2023 is the 30th anniversary of the founding of Open Age, so it seems appropriate that we should remember **Maureen Whyberd**, the woman who started it all back in 1993.

The first activities began in Hardy House in Great Western Road, Notting Hill, almost next door to Westbourne Park tube station and a 15-minute walk from two of our present centres—the Second Half Centre in North Kensington and The Avenues in North Westminster.

Maureen, who later became senior community development manager of Open Age and is currently a member of the Queen's Park Neighbourhood Forum, set up an art class which continued for well over 20 years before transferring to The Avenues.

In 2016 she was given an RBKC Mayor's Award for services to older people. The venue Hardy House was still used by Open Age until recently.

Norma Dove-Edwin, one of the original members, recalls that Maureen often used to visit the centre.

Says Norma: "She was a community worker or social worker who saw the need for older people to be active with a place to go, as they approached their retirement years, or in retirement. She was active on the Open Age website up until 2018.

"I was in her first organised art class at Hardy House soon after 1993. She would often pop in to see our work and did the administration of Open Age herself. When the art class was in jeopardy due to lack of funds, I found £400 from the then Chairman of the Arts Council, Luke Johnson, as a Gift Aid donation and the equivalent was found by Maureen. So our art class was able to continue for many years at Hardy House, with great Christmas parties.

"Sadly, most members today know nothing about Maureen or Open Age's early history and how it has grown in importance to become vital in their lives and for their wellbeing."

More about the anniversary appears on the Open Age website: www.openage.org

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In 2016 Cox & Kings threw a 40th anniversary party for their chairman which he was able to attend in Mumbai (Bombay). In December 2019, aged 86, he took a back seat, just coinciding with the start of the COVID pandemic.

The following year, to everyone's shock, Cox & Kings was declared bankrupt in November 2020 and went into liquidation in 2021 amid allegations of fraud by the Mumbai CEO and Chief Finance Officer, who were both arrested while denying the claims.

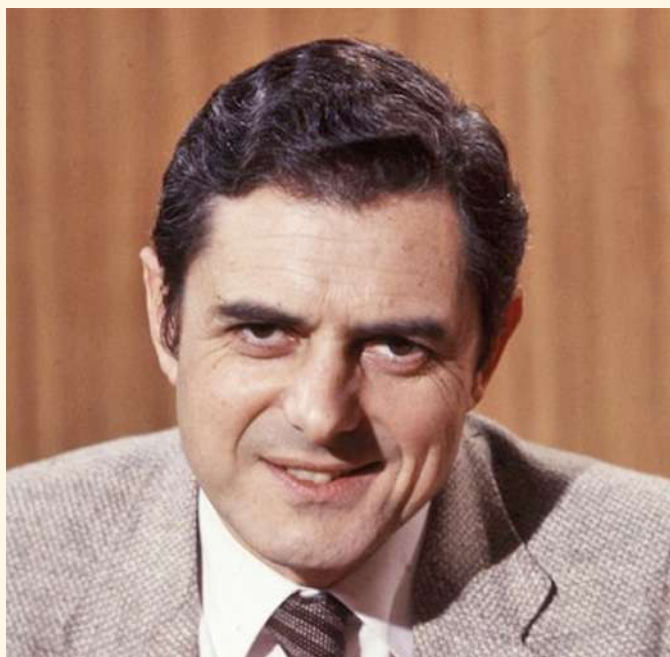
Despite the company's demise, Tony has no regrets about his career. He says: "I think I was very lucky to be in a number of right places at the right time."

His luck extended to meeting his wife Iris on a domestic flight in India. He discovered she was a scientist and investment adviser, she discovered he was a big name in travel... and the rest is history.



The demise of Cox & Kings was a sad end to what had once been the longest established travel business in the world. Founded in 1758 to supply British troops in India, the company stayed on after independence in 1947 and became one of India's leading travel companies. At its peak in 2018, it had offices in 27 countries, from Japan to the US, and claimed to have seven million customers for services that included foreign exchange and conference events, as well as holidays and tours.

RIP John Edmunds



A younger John Edmunds

One of Open Age's best known names, language expert and former television newsreader **John Edmunds**, died on 3rd May, a month after his 94th birthday on 3rd April 2023.

Many friends and ex-colleagues attended his funeral although, once the lockdown started, John had retired from teaching as a volunteer tutor at New Horizons, where he was the charity's oldest tutor. He felt that travelling from his home in Brighton to London was too risky while the threat of COVID continued.

A profile on John appeared in this Members' Newsletter in Spring 2019 (Issue 33) to mark his 90th birthday, followed by an update in Spring 2021 (Issue 36—see the Open Age website) when he was 92.

From these, members would have learned of his multiple talents—academic, professional actor, lecturer, director, translator and, most famously, TV broadcaster. He was even at one time a university professor of drama.

An obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* on 19th May 2023 described him as "an actor, linguist and a television newsreader before becoming a university academic and an authority on Shakespeare and French classical drama."

Readers may remember him in the 1960s as one of the question-masters on BBC TV's *Top of the Form*, a general knowledge quiz for schoolchildren.

Among viewers, he had a lot of female fans, including one who sent him a £50 note and another who wanted to borrow his tie for her husband to wear at a wedding. One lady actually thought she was married to him—a bachelor—and that they had several children!



John Edmunds at New Horizons

John taught at Positive Age and then Open Age for around 11 years, teaching Shakespeare and French classical plays (Racine, Corneille and Molière) on Friday afternoons at the Chelsea centre, using his own translations. The class also studied poetry.

One of those who once attended his classes, as well as the current affairs group *In the News*, was the actress Gayle Hunnicutt, who herself died on 31st August this year at the age of 80.

During the lockdown, John continued to work translating Russian writers, and one of his translations entitled *The Angel* appears below. It seemed rather appropriate in view of his passing.

THE ANGEL

Across the midnight sky an angel flew,
And, flying, softly sang a holy song;
The moon and stars paid heed, the dark clouds too:
All drawn to hear him, an enraptured throng.

He sang of blissful spirits pure whose ways
Lie in the shady groves of paradise;
The great god he exalted, and his praise
Was true and faithful, free of all disguise.

The angel in his arms a young soul bore
Whose fate was in this vale of tears to dwell;
In that young soul the song stayed evermore,
Wordless but living still to cast its spell.

And that soul pined an age upon this earth:
Filled with a wondrous yearning, he would long
To hear, not tunes that seemed to have no worth,
But that entrancing sound, the angel's song.

*Mikhail Lermontov (1814-41)
translated by JE, December 2020*

Fran sets the stage



Fran (centre) with her group of thespians

Open Age's drama class at New Horizons has many past successes, but in September 2022 it began a new chapter when Carol Allen left and the role of drama tutor was taken over by **Frances Isherwood**.

Carol has not given up teaching completely, because she runs a drama group at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, on Friday afternoons. As a member of Open Age, she also attended the Wednesday lip-reading class, which resumes in the New Year.

Meanwhile, Frances is focussing on improvisation sessions to build confidence and teamwork, acting scenes from plays, reading poetry and having fun. She hopes to stage a cabaret similar to last year, to include sketches devised and performed by members.

"We have a range of students who have had interesting lives, and they all have their own strengths," says Fran. "We don't go for exams or any big performance and some people may need help with projecting, but you gain confidence as you go along."

Fran hails from Manchester where she studied a foundation course before taking a degree in drama at Middlesex Polytechnic. She later did an MA in creative writing at Roehampton, but she has also sung with a rock band, performed in fringe theatre musicals, done street theatre,

written and voiced radio features, and worked in comedy.

This included a solo physical comedy act, half of a musical comedy duo, and a member of a comedy improvisation troupe, which included TV comedienne Catherine Tate.

Over the years, Fran has taught in a variety of settings—centres for mental health service users, an active retirement project, in schools (teaching literacy to parents), a day centre for homeless youth, as a visiting poet in schools, and further education colleges. Most recently, she worked at New City College in Hackney where she taught BTEC Performing Arts, GCSE and Functional Skills English, and then in the Special Needs Department: Drama, Movement, Life Skills, and Social Skills.

Since 2007 Fran has been a performance poet, featured in anthologies and in her own published book of poems. She stages a one-woman fringe show *The Songs My Mother Used To Sing* which includes humour, monologues and the odd popular song. She has appeared in Morecambe, Lancashire, and the Faversham Fringe in Kent, and is now looking for a London venue.

Since 2022 when she joined Open Age, Fran has taught Creative Writing at St Margaret's on Mondays, and two Tuesday

classes at New Horizons—Speaking English with Confidence in the morning and Drama in the afternoon.

THE PERFORMERS

COVID meant that some former students dropped out and did not return. One colourful character was the late **Peter Cairn**.

In 2018 Peter auditioned for the TV talent show *X-Factor*, and got as far as the second round of auditions. He once belonged to the NH singing group Chelsea Belles, but could sometimes be found entertaining diners at Giotto's restaurant in New Oxford Street.

Returning regulars include **Audrey Joseph**, who studied drama and acted with the Bush Theatre and the National Theatre's *The Odyssey*. Another is **Anna**, who sang with a rock and folk band and once performed in the musical *Hair*.

Irene Hart has done film extra and voiceover work, and **Lou Duguid**, who performed in *The Odyssey*, *Pericles* and *As You Like It*, would now like to write a play.

But you don't have to have drama experience, says Audrey. "We like to act. I do it because it gets me out of depression, keeps my memory going and you make friends."

Manju at the Abbey

One of our Open Age tutors, **Manju Malhi**, who was featured in this newsletter in 2022, was invited to the Coronation and met several famous names, including Dame Emma Thompson DBE.

Manju leads on a number of classes at Open Age, where she teaches cooking. She was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) by Queen Elizabeth II, for “services to the community in London” during the COVID-19 response. We put a few questions:

Was the invitation a surprise?

I was just doing what I always do regardless of being recognised for it. And it was an even bigger surprise to receive an invitation to the Coronation on email. And of course I thought it was spam and ignored it for a few days. I still think—Why me? It still feels surreal—I cannot believe I was there on such an historic occasion.

What did it feel like being a special guest?

Leading up to the Coronation, I must have carried out over 40 interviews. I was courted not only by national media but also the international press. Again, I felt that I’m not really that special. However, it was so gratifying that they would highlight the work of the people, including volunteers, of Open Age. It went global. Even India wanted to know what we did at Open Age! It was an honour to be invited and a time I will never forget. I met so many lovely people including fellow BEM recipients such as Dawn Wood, a PC with Essex Police’s marine unit for her conservation work, and Sahil Usman, a Lancashire student helping his communities during the pandemic.



Manju with Dawn Wood and Dame Emma Thompson

What did you wear?

I tried to check online what one wears at a Coronation but all I found out was ‘business attire’—whatever that means. So I decided I had to improvise in an economical and sustainable way, but to make it special. I contacted my fashion designer friend who runs a small business called Geeta Handa to create a bespoke outfit with Indo-Western influences in mind to represent my diversity.

The outfit was tailored from Indian broderie cotton in a vibrant royal blue tone and consisted of a cut-off kameez (long top) over trousers. Geeta added elements of the 1940s, the era King Charles was born, with a sleek shape and frill double collar. The broderie fabric gave it an effortless sophisticated day dress look.

Did you have to arrive very early?

Yes, I had to arrive at 6:30 in the morning. The national press wanted to talk to me before I entered the Abbey to capture my feelings and to explain what it was like and then I had to enter the Abbey to be seated at least two hours in advance. I found sitting in the Abbey quite exhilarating and also overwhelming because of the enormity of the occasion. It was an ethereal experience, but I was soaking up the atmosphere—a mixture of euphoria and good trepidation. I was seated near the entrance—where Ant and Dec and Gyles Brandreth amongst others were seated.

Did you find the ceremony moving?

The ceremony was awesome and breathtaking. The acoustics in the Abbey added to the sense and gravitas of the occasion and I didn’t expect to be as involved as I was by singing the hymns. All of us in the congregation did step up to the plate by making sure we were on our best behaviour, so to speak, by standing when told, singing without shouting or being too off key!

How did you meet Emma Thompson and Dawn Wood?

I made bench buddies with Dame Emma Thompson and her partner, actor Greg Wise. He not only kindly took a photo of us (Dawn, Emma and myself) but offered his invaluable musical knowledge of the music at the service.

Continued at the bottom
of the following page...

Running the gauntlet?

Open Age member **Yonita McGregor** had an unusual interest in watching the Coronation of King Charles III on television, especially the part where he was handed the emblems of power, including the orb and sceptre, the sword and the ring.

Her main focus was the gauntlet that the monarch had to wear—because she is descended on her mother's side from the Maunsell-Dymoke family who had the privilege of ceremoniously challenging usurpers of the king's power.



The Gauntlet

The expression 'throwing down the gauntlet' alludes to the medieval practice of a knight on horseback—'the King's Champion'—throwing down a metal glove, as a challenge to anyone who denied the monarch's right to the throne.

Yonita writes:

"How was this traditional ceremony going to happen today? I was expecting 'the Gauntlet' to appear. It did, but not thrown down from a horse.

It was brought to Charles on a red velvet tray by a bishop. No horses involved. No throwing. We saw King Charles slipping his hand into it. He wiggled his fingers inside it and held his sword of state on high.

There was no challenge to his kingship. Charles III was concentrating more on the 'Green Man', an ancient figure from British folklore, symbolic of Spring and Rebirth.

Charles has done away with medieval happenings in order to streamline the service and make it multi-faith. The gauntlet was handed to the king by the British Sikh peer Lord Indarjit Singh.

The shape of the Green Man on the Coronation invitation was formed of leaves of oak, ivy and hawthorn; flowers of the meadows, as well as lily-of-the-valley, cornflowers, wild strawberries, dog roses, bluebells, a sprig of rosemary for remembrance. These appeared together with wildlife, including a bee, a butterfly, a ladybird, a wren and a robin.

It shows our new king's dedication to the natural environment in which he was one of the first to be seriously involved."

Yonita may have been disappointed at the loss of a family tradition, but she enjoyed watching the ceremony—if a little sad she was not standing on the route, as in the past. Anyway, she has another claim to fame—through her mother, she is related to the Yorkshire Fairfax family, from which the present Princess of Wales, Kate Middleton, is also descended.

Manju at the Abbey ...continued from page 6



Manju with Gyles Brandreth



Manju in the kitchen

“ Being a chef, I was gutted that I couldn't bring in any food into the Abbey, and I'm sure many around me were feeling a bit peckish too. But I did share my cough sweets, which is all I had!

”

Brenda's Coronation thrill

How could Avenues regular **Brenda Meadows** forget Coronation Day 2023? It was also her 91st birthday!

She didn't meet the new King, but she did meet another VIP at a celebration laid on by Westminster Council, with stalls, food and children's activities. And then she scored 10,000 hits on Twitter!

Brenda writes:

"It was my birthday on Saturday 6th May, and I went to Paddington Recreation Ground (in the rain) to watch the event in the open on a big screen. I visited the Open Age stall (manned by our Senior Coordinators Naomi & Hannah) and then moved on to another one.

"Suddenly the Leader of Westminster Council Adam Hug arrived with a photographer—hence the photo. I had met him a couple of weeks previously at a Fairer Westminster event at which we both spoke, so it was nice of him to remember me. 'Once seen, never forgotten,' I think is the saying!"

Brenda recalls:

"At the first event, I had been asked to speak about what was needed in the community, but they already had a speaker about that, so I had to find another subject. I talked about Open Age, my drop-in centre and the synagogue at St John's Wood!

"At the Paddington event, the Leader heard people



Brenda with Councillor Adam Hug

singing *Happy Birthday* to me, and he said 'I know that lady!'"

Adam put the photo on his Twitter and Facebook sites, where it soon garnered 10,000 hits. He described Brenda as 'local royalty'. What an amazing day!

Farewell Freddie Mercury

Do you find modern pop music repetitive, tuneless and shrieky? Many people believe that the memorable age of post-war popular music was the 60s (Beatles, Rolling Stones) and 70s (Abba, Bee Gees, Queen).



When I heard that artefacts and possessions of Queen's late great Freddie Mercury were going to be exhibited free at Sotheby's in August prior to auction, it seemed an opportunity not to be missed.

Unfortunately, everybody else had the same idea and the queue snaked right round the block. But after an hour, we were inside the hallowed halls in New Bond Street.

Before becoming lead singer with the band Queen, Freddie had been to art college, and began collecting all types of artwork which his career allowed him to finance. Furniture, furnishings, paintings, costumes and hundreds of interesting and valuable items were housed in Garden Lodge, the mansion he bought in Logan Place, Kensington, off Earl's Court Road, and where he died in 1991.

The exhibition was amazing,

but poignant, because from 6th September onwards, the auction meant that this unique collection would be broken up and scattered all over the world in private hands.

Being inside Sotheby's was fascinating, but the show was even better. We were allowed to take pictures with our smart phones, so here are a couple.

Kay Shelley



Baking mad!

Quiz regular **Ted Waight** was on his way to the Bridge Club in Ixworth Place, Chelsea, on Tuesday 6th June when he discovered that New Horizons was holding a fundraising bake sale with lots of home-made cakes made by members and staff.

He was disappointed to find that none was gluten-free, but he took a photo (see below) and was impressed to hear that the sale raised over £110 for Open Age funds. Well done, all!

Pictured left to right are Julia Kelly, Laura Taylor and Fiolla Korenica. Fiolla is Senior Centre Coordinator at New Horizons, Laura is Centre Coordinator who joined Open Age in January, while Julia is a new volunteer (Wednesdays and Fridays) who brought a few cakes and staffed the stall.

Another bake sale with a Halloween theme was held on 31st October.



Windrush memories

The 22nd of June 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of HMT Empire Windrush arriving at Tilbury. The Windrush Generation has made an outstanding contribution, but life hasn't always been easy, and many have experienced racism and discrimination along the way, not to mention a challenge to their legal right to live here.

The Windrush Compensation Scheme was so slow to compensate that the charity Age UK wrote to the Prime Minister asking for reform.

Obviously, those adults who arrived in June 1948 would now be well over 90, but this newsletter wondered if there were any Open Age members who arrived as children or who came to Britain from the Caribbean later in the 1950s or 60s.

Did they have any interesting stories to tell—similar to short profiles that appeared in the Evening Standard in June? A quick recce did not turn up any volunteers—but if you read this and know of anyone who might be willing to chat about their experiences, please let us know (contact details on page 12).

Naomi bows out



Naomi with prize-winner John Reeves

Former Senior Centre Coordinator **Naomi Nehemen** has left Open Age after a year at The Avenues to become a CEO at the Third Age Project. She left on 21st September, but before she went, she had organised some interesting activities for members during the summer.

These included an end-of-term exhibition of class-work, including painting and textiles, and a Variety Show in which she played the saxophone with other musicians to accompany the singing group.

There was also a picnic in Queen's Park gardens in July, and a concert with musicians from the Royal Albert Hall, plus a sketch by the drama group, songs from the singing group and a quiz run by volunteer David Rolph.

A competition for the best-dressed member was won by John Reeves, whose box of chocolates was the first prize he had ever won.

Holding the fort at The Avenues will be Coordinator Marianne Laurent, who joined Open Age in June. She will continue to run the Monday afternoon film club, with help in choosing films from volunteer Margaret Kettle.

Shipping? Ask Vivienne!

Open Age Senior Coordinator **Vivienne Mitchell** has a very British surname, so you may be surprised to learn that she has a mixed heritage of Scottish, German, Swiss and French. Her mother was Swiss and French and she speaks the language fluently.

She is also the only Senior Coordinator who does not have her own centre. She works from home two days a week or attends meetings or activities, and another two days are spent covering for staff or based either at the Second Half Centre or New Horizons, and occasionally The Avenues.

For the past seven years her role has been to organise the Open Age programme of activities in Hammersmith & Fulham, setting up sessions in a variety of community venues. These can include monthly science talks arranged with Imperial College, delivered via the internet on Zoom, plus theatre and dance, art classes, and more.



Imperial College London

Movement sessions such as exercise classes, tai chi and yoga are run by the Open Age physical activities team with whom Vivienne works in close collaboration as the fund holder.

She loves Open Age and is passionate about her area. But it wasn't always thus. She spent her early career in shipping—representing the Port of Le Havre in France but based in London. And her language skills were a major asset.

Hampstead-raised Vivienne studied French and history at London University's Westfield College, with her third year spent in Antibes in the south of France as a language assistant.

On graduating she worked in Birkbeck College library but missed speaking French so much that she enrolled for a part-time MA in French. Recalls Vivienne: "I've never met such passionately interested students as there are at Birkbeck. In the library in the evenings, I used to love listening to the psychology students and seeing how they developed their knowledge and confidence over their four years of study."



Vivienne Mitchell

After a short secretarial course at the French Institute in London, she landed the shipping job—and stayed for 14 years, firstly with the Port of Le Havre and then with a port representation company.

"I absolutely loved it because there is nothing more international. I'd be on calls from Italy, Germany, France, America, Canada, the Far East and Australia. My role was sales, marketing and public relations, and as such I travelled all over Europe and the USA. I learnt so much—container shipping, coal, sugar, oil, petrochemicals, animal feeds—so I was very upset when the port representation company was sold, then the new parent company went bust!"

Vivienne moved to retail marketing at John Lewis and while there studied for a marketing diploma. After 12 years she needed a change and considered teaching, but while freelancing, including working with Age UK Harrow, she saw an advert for her present role in Open Age in 2016 and felt her experiences to date had led her to her true home.

She tries to attend classes in Hammersmith & Fulham once a term if she can and is always impressed by the loyalty our members show.

In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, theatre, cinema and the arts, and visits relatives in Switzerland three or four times a year. She loves travelling abroad and has visited Japan twice.

Says Vivienne: "In Hammersmith & Fulham we consistently over-perform on our targets. Our members love what we do—our tutors, our venues, our activities and our prices—and we are ambitious to do a lot more in Hammersmith & Fulham."

By Royal Appointment

The majority of Open Age members may not have been invited to the Coronation of King Charles III, but on 12th June nineteen members visited the Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace for a guided tour of some of the amazing royal carriages and cars.

The Royal Mews is a working stable tucked away at the back of Buckingham Palace and is responsible for all road travel arrangements for The King and members of the Royal Family, from horse-and-carriage to car and from livery to harness.

A sudden summer storm—complete with thunder and lightning—heralded our entrance. Was someone trying to tell us something?! But, nothing daunted, and helped out by the wonderful staff who quickly arrived with umbrellas, we made our way in. We were met by our guide, Catherine, who was full of information about the coaches and Bentley on display.

Star of the show is the 260-year-old Gold State Coach which has been used at every Coronation since that of William IV in 1831. At seven metres long, 3.6 metres tall and weighing four tonnes, this magnificent coach (which isn't actually made of solid gold) needs eight horses to draw it.

Because of its age and how heavy it is, it is only ever used at a walking pace. It requires a brake man to walk behind the coach who must apply the brake approximately 27 metres before the final stopping point.



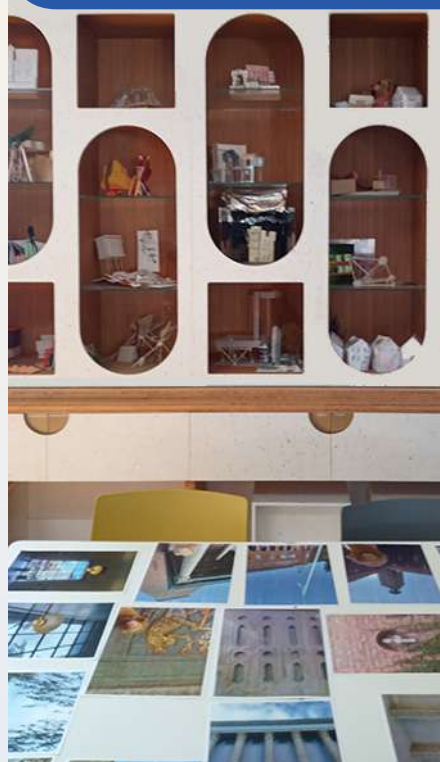
OA member Daniele with the gold coach

The Gold State Coach is notoriously uncomfortable to ride in because of swaying due to its lack of modern suspension, so it was perhaps fortunate that we visitors are not allowed to enter it (only the monarch and consort can make use of it). However, we were all able to take turns sitting in a replica semi state landau and practise our royal waves!

All in all, a lovely visit and much appreciated by members. Feedback comments included this: "Thanks so, so much for organising this fantastic afternoon. I felt so privileged being with you all. And such a friendly group. It all far exceeded my expectations of the Royal Mews..."

Vivienne Mitchell

Visit to RIBA



On Thursday 7th September, a group of eleven members from Open Age went on a tour of RIBA—the Royal Institute of British Architects—at Portland Place. We were met by Lil, the RIBA Learner Co-ordinator, who gave us information on the history of the building while showing us around and explaining things.

The building was officially opened by King George VI in November 1943 as part of a competition to create a new home for RIBA—now granted Grade II status—after outgrowing the original headquarters at No. 9 Conduit Street.

The building has a library that contains a collection of architectural books, design books, photographs, etc. dating back to the 15th century. The photograph shows part of the RIBA display.

The learning centre has a bookshop that holds frequent exhibitions. It provides hands-on creative workshops, courses, and activities supported by all ages. It also provides a learning experience for students.

The group took part in a drawing session of the building, which was quite challenging for some of us. At the end of the tour, we all had a discussion about our visit, and then tea, coffee and ice cream were provided, as it was a very hot day.

Our leader from Open Age was Lucy Woo, a very supportive member.

Tina John

Spam and scam

According to a recent poll, three scam emails or WhatsApp messages land in our inboxes every week. Well, some people are lucky. I personally can count on up to ten a day, whether it's shopping offers, toolsets I've won in a competition I never entered, dating organisations, or subscriptions I never asked for. And some people receive more.

The other day I was offered by email:

- tooth-cleaning kits (3 times, twice supposedly by Boots)
- a perfume prize (twice)
- free entry into a bingo game (twice)
- more game entries (twice)

The day before it was similar story:

- a free Tesco gift card (twice) to shop at Primark (what?)
- another casino free offer (twice)
- an air fryer (twice)

- plus other bizarre offers.

And that was just the weekend. It happens every day. I am often told that there are packages waiting for me, even though I haven't ordered anything. I regularly learn that my emails are going to be blocked because I haven't renewed something or other.

As someone who has never shown interest in tooth cleaning kits or perfumes or air fryers, I can't imagine why I was targeted with these scam offers. Of course I simply delete them, but it really wears you down.

Though you can block phone calls, blocking fake emails or texts is virtually impossible. But you can report them if you feel it will help. See our advice sheet (below) from the Metropolitan Police about who to call.

Kay Shelley

Tribute to the Fallen

This year Armistice Day falls on Saturday 11th November, followed by Remembrance Sunday when the country pays tribute to the dead of two world wars at The Cenotaph. **Christopher Haslam**, whose profile appeared in our May 2023 issue, is a keen poet who wrote this poem for Remembrance Sunday last year.

THE FALLEN

Abiding submerged with Thee,
In uniform beds when reaped,
Here their loving hearts lie,
Some by rank or county,
Incomplete canon set in stone,
Untangled from their foe,
Blanketed by birdsong,
Which breaks the silence
Of Anglican quartets,
The sarcophagi who sing,
In bold English baritone,
Levelled by arcs of fire,
Planted in rank and mile.
The fearless fusiliers
Speak volumes in dates and creed,
Carved in timeless font,
Gospel truth sung softly
In Elgar's sunlit psalms
Leave chapter and verse
Indeed banked by spade,
Carved their names,
Beneath drifting clouds laid,
Endless patience for the
Rising sons of Nimrod,
Adorned with acanthus,
Where acrimony also perished.
Here the decimated points.

Reporting Scams

Report scams & fraud to Action Fraud, either online at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by telephone on 0300 123 2040.

Contact police- 101 in Non-Emergencies or 999 in Emergencies.

Forward any scam text messages to Ofcom on 7726 (free of charge).

Contact your telephone service provider. Major phone companies provide a call blocker service.



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BE SAFE



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