

Dear Open Age members



There have been quite a few changes at the New Horizons centre in recent months and, understandably, they have raised questions among some members about what these changes mean for the future.

I hope to address some of these concerns in this letter, though I will also be hosting two information sessions in mid-October, one each in the north (Monday Oct 21 at New Horizons) and south of the borough. These will give you all an opportunity to meet me, and senior managers within Open Age, to find out more about what changes are being made, our plans for the future, and how you can help us.

At those meetings I will also be outlining plans to reinvigorate our Member Forums as mechanisms that will allow us to gain member feedback, and incorporate this into the wider Open Age strategy.

One of the most visible changes has been the departure of two well-loved staff members, Centre Manager Roshan and Coordinator Carly. I know many of you had built up strong relationships with them both over the years, especially Roshan, who was manager at the New Horizons centre from its opening. She and Carly will be missed and Open Age wishes both of them every success for the future.

We will not be appointing a new centre manager, but have instead recruited Herve Bessieres into the newly created role of Locality Manager. As well as looking after the centre and our wider provision in the south of the borough, he will also oversee our activities in South

Westminster. Herve started in August and will feature in the next edition of this newsletter, but I hope many of you will meet him before then.

Part of the reason for this new role is to bring increased consistency across different parts of Open Age and, in doing so, improve the experience of all members. The New Horizons centre has always been part of Open Age, although we have not always communicated this as well as we could have, or explained the benefits.

I will go into more detail at the sessions in October, but it is important for you to know that it would be impossible to run New Horizons if it was not part of Open Age. Council grants cover only around half of our running costs. The money we raise as Open Age the charity is essential to keeping New Horizons running. This funding allows us to deliver extra arts and culture and physical activity classes, as well as all the IT and learning courses run at the centre.

Going forward you will see and hear a lot more about Open Age as we try to standardise our approach to what we do. This is nothing to be concerned about and doesn't mean the New Horizons centre is at risk. As Open Age, we simply have a bigger voice to showcase amazing work we do and so reach more people. This means we have a greater chance of raising more money to allow us to maintain what we have and hopefully increase our offering in the future.

Please keep a look out for posters and flyers advertising the information sessions I mentioned above and, in the meantime, feel free to take any questions you have to Open Age staff members. If they can't help, they will forward your questions to one of our managers, or to me, and we will all do our best to get back to you.

Iain Cassidy CEO, Open Age

Ted tests Virtual Reality



Picture of Ted courtesy of BBC

Between Dec 2018 and May 2019, a remarkable immersive experience was available to adventurous visitors to the Saatchi Gallery in the King's Road, Chelsea – at a price.

The event was so popular that often huge queues formed, despite the cost. But **Open Age: New Horizons** member Ted Waight attended for free because he volunteered to take part in a BBC film which helps promote activities by the elderly.

'We Live In An Ocean of Air' was a stunning VR experience where the invisible connection between plant and human was revealed – but tickets costs £20, or £15 concessions.

For 20 minutes, cutting-edge technology transported participants to an ancient forest to witness the majestic power of the largest ever organism – the giant Sequoia tree.

Visitors could explore a magical world where the invisible exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide was brought to life, while breath and heart sensors tracked real-time breathing, and encouraged them to reflect on our dependence on, and responsibility to, the organisms with which we share our planet.

After meeting video producer Trystan Young from the BBC Centre at Portland Place, Ted was filmed going round the site

which he described as “disorientating, but amazing”.

“They use your heartbeat to create visual effects, combining art, science and technology. When it first starts, everything is black – you have the earplugs in, with music playing, but you are reaching for something that isn't there,” says Ted, who is a fit 80-year-old.

“For oldies it can be very disconcerting, because you don't know what's up and what's down. Some people didn't like it at all. I nearly gave up myself a couple of times!

“They say it helps dementia patients, because it makes them concentrate.”

In May, the BBC crew came to New Horizons centre to film extra bits about Ted, mainly when he went to nearby Ickworth Place to play bridge with other NH members and told them of his experience.

Now the 1min 46sec film is online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-48666133/take-a-vr-trip-inside-a-giant-sequoia-tree-with-80-year-old-ted>, but Ted hopes it can also be used to promote **Open Age: New Horizons**, as we are briefly mentioned in the text under the intro, with a link to our website.

Our great Saatchi art show

Eager anticipation was felt by all who waited for the opening of the week-long Open Age exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in the King's Road, Chelsea. Whose painting would be chosen? Who would be disappointed? Such was the privilege of being invited to exhibit.

This was the Saatchi Gallery reaching out to the community in a new way, and we had to send in our very best entries. (See also page 1).

They were chosen by the charity, who partnered with the gallery to display the work of talented members across the entirety of Open Age.

All was revealed on Tuesday August 6 at the Private View, the pictures having been carefully hung by the Saatchi Gallery and Open Age. Special thanks are due to Simon, who organised New Horizons' entries and generated enthusiasm for the project.

The Private View was thronged with people, the elderflower cordial was sipped with welcome gratitude, the cherries and brownies were nibbled, and everyone felt they could talk to any other artist whom they'd never before met.

In the last analysis it was revealed that, as the number of possible entries from each participant had at the last minute been halved from two to only one, every artist who entered a painting was able to have it exhibited.

And a very fine collection of work was displayed; the room appeared to have more curious visitors than any other part of the Gallery. It was a very popular exhibition, a warm and friendly event, great fun and not a little good for one's self-esteem.

Josie Jenkins



Top left: Josie with her exhibit: "Rui playing the drums at the Cafe Forum on Gloucester Road". She imported a photo into Tayasui, the Japanese digital sketching app, then drew on it with Apple Pencil. **Top right:** 'A Stitch in Time' jacket created by members of the sewing group – Sue, Frances, Elaine, Palmira, Felicia, Ruth, Vicky and Thelma. **Right:** Open Age staff who put the exhibition together. L. to R: Vennetta Royal (Time For Me Coordinator, S Kensington & Chelsea), Serena Dicks (Centre Coordinator, NH), Jenny Marshall (Head of Member Experience), Bee Burgess (Outreach and Support Services Manager), Geoff Brown (Senior Coordinator, North Westminster Centre), David Singleton (Senior Coordinator, N Kensington Centre)



Tea is the key for Ivor

When Ivor David started teaching, he wore dreadlocks and eyebrow pins, and people thought he was a student.

Even his father, Ivor's mentor and biggest advocate, laughed at the irony of the fact that his tenth and youngest child was now in charge of the type of class he previously disrupted.

But the 6ft 4 ins Londoner was determined to succeed when he realised he could influence street kids for the better and bring a new dynamic to the business of disseminating knowledge and educating the young.

Soon he specialised in IT therapy, helping pupils overcome anxiety and natural hurdles to appreciate why they were learning. Schools realised that the children the teachers couldn't handle, because of learning difficulties, mental health issues or problems at home, could relate to him.

Now he works for Open Age, adapting his methods and resources to suit a senior audience since 2014 – at the Second Half Centre on Mondays and Wednesdays and at New Horizons on Fridays.

He says: "My method is very relaxed – we play Latin and jazz background music, we drink tea, we eat cake, we laugh and we learn. My slogan is Sip Tea And Learn IT!"

At school Ivor could draw and tell stories, but did not have a good attention span, so he tended to disturb others. He spent two weeks at a polytechnic, and tried fashion design.

But when a back injury left him with severe sciatica and forced him to spend a year convalescing, he decided to study. He enrolled for a basic Introduction to Teaching course – and transformed his life.

A qualified teacher since 2007, Ivor became network manager for Salusbury Primary School in Queen's Park for over six years. He has taught at Harrow College and the Working Men's College in Camden and done private and consultancy work.

At New Horizons, he began teaching people to use smart devices. His pupils



Ivor with one of his class members Lillian Chambers

create greetings cards online – by accessing online apps, taking pictures with their iPads and phones or downloaded from the Cloud, using Canva graphic design and writing messages, with the help of Funky Pigeon, Moonpig and Mypostcard.

"Making cards teaches lots of IT skills and that seems to be popular," says Ivor, who once ran a gallery with a friend selling his own sketches, art and photographs.

"I hadn't focussed on seniors before, but it is a comfortable fit. The youngsters think they know a lot but they know less than they think, whereas older people know more than they realise."

Soon Ivor plans to set up his own inter-generational 50+ project linking youngsters and elders, called the iTeabar. The idea is to reduce senior isolation and IT anxiety while mentoring children and having fun.

Of his work, he says: "I love the job – it's so rewarding. Stereotypes are there to be broken. We theme our work around ourselves. I would say my strengths are analogy, humour, music and tea!"

• After his break, Ivor plans to return to teaching Open Age classes in the New Year. But check out his iTeabar plans on the website www.theiteabar.com

Kay Shelley

Tantalising Tangier



Morocco's most northerly city, Tangier has long been known as the gateway from Europe into Africa and a key centre of trade and power, standing as it does at the very entrance to the Mediterranean Sea.

Just 20 miles from mainland Spain, Tangier's ancient whitewashed citadel sits nestled within its old city walls, overlooking the turquoise waters of the Bay of Tangier.

It has an ancient history, spanning over 4000 years. The first known people occupying Morocco were the Berbers – the indigenous tribes that travelled across North and sub-Saharan Africa, and remain today.

Then 3000 years ago the Phoenicians, a seafaring people from modern day Lebanon, were the first foreign traders to settle.

Later came the ancient Greeks, who knew it as Tingis, followed by the Romans, who made the town the capital of their empire of Mauretania (now a smaller West African country). In 846 AD, Arabs from the Middle East invaded, bringing the new religion of Islam, still the predominant religion.

During the 1920s, when France, Spain and Britain were fighting for control of the city, Tangier was made a neutral demilitarised zone and soon gained the reputation for tolerance and diversity.

It became a playground for the rich and famous, drawn to the city by its Bohemian lifestyle. Spies, politicians, writers and artists all favoured Tangier for its relaxed, 'anything goes' approach.

Finally in 1956 after years of political tension, Morocco and with it Tangier won its independence and was finally free of French and Spanish control. Its history has resulted in a fabulous collective mix of

many ethnic backgrounds and gene pools, and has given it a rich culture and heritage.

Today Morocco is a major tourist destination, and a new emerging country. Thousands visit Marrakesh each year, drawn to its climate, cuisine, artisans and colourful array of fabrics and spices.

Tangier has the largest port in all of Africa, and this year boasts Africa's first ultra-high-speed TGV train, with speeds of 200 km per hour, and now links Tangier to Casablanca in just over two hours. Its tax-free zone makes all Boeing aviation parts

and engines, as well as manufacturing many cars for European markets.

Tangier continues to be a feast for the senses. Its colours, its flavours, its glorious beaches and wonderful climate attracts playboys and millionaires as well as regular tourists. It retains its ancient Medina and Kasbah, where visitors

navigate its narrow alleys

unchanged for a thousand years, but it also has a modern vibrant new town, with 5-star luxury hotels and cafes and eateries.

It was in Tangier in the spring of 1981 that I met and fell in love with my lovely husband Ahmed. Seduced by the exotic culture of the country and its welcoming hospitable people, I returned every few months, commuting backwards and forwards, until, at the end of 1982, I decided to stay and get married.

Now 36 years on, we have two children and a beautiful granddaughter, and we spend our time between London and Tangier. It is our bit of paradise where we escape to relax, to write, to sip warm mint tea and enjoy the sun and sea. It really has something for everyone.

Susan Kaidi



Susan with her husband and daughter

Why our thespians are the Cat's Whiskers!

A double bill of new work partly devised by company members was performed by the New Horizons Drama Company of Elders at the Bush Studio Theatre, Shepherd's Bush, on August 16.

The show attracted an enthusiastic audience, who were treated to the intriguing *Dangerous Women* – a rehearsed reading of scenes from a play still in development about Wallis Simpson and Diana Mosley – followed by *The Waiting Room*, a mysterious drama about airline passengers who find themselves in an unexpected location.

The first piece, starring Jo Cooklin and Diana Hickman, was written by company member Chrissie Fraser and adapted by drama teacher Carol Allen. With the second play, the students were all asked to create a character in class through research, where appropriate, and improvisation, and this was woven into a story by Carol.

"They asked me for a script, so I wrote one, but when it came to performance, those who have difficulty in memorising did a lot of improvisation. But they knew the story of their character, so were able to soldier on successfully," explained Carol, who recently formed the charity Cat's Whiskers Community Arts to co-produce work with Open Age: New Horizons.

The show featured several former professional actors, plus many talented amateurs, all of whom got under the skin of their roles with flair. After the interval, there was a premiere screening of *A Vintage Selection*, a film based on a revue created by the group for the 10th anniversary of New Horizons in 2017.

Apart from extracts from Shakespeare, Alan Bennett, Paul Anka and the group's own Chrissie Fraser, other sections were created using a similar improvised method – Mike Leigh style – including a hilarious piece about the opening of the first McDonald's fast food outlet in Moscow.



Cast of *The Waiting Room*

The film wound up with a touching version of the song 'My Way', sung by Peter Cairns and company. Hopefully Open Age:New Horizons members will be able to see this film again before too long.

Meanwhile, anyone wanting to join the thespians, whether they have previous acting experience or not, can attend the drama class on Tuesdays at the Chelsea centre from September.

- Class members Audrey Joseph (right) and Carol Ashby were lucky enough to gain places in the National Theatre's community theatre production of



As You Like It – a musical adaptation of Shakespeare - from August 24-27.

They were chosen after attending free dance workshops at Open Age's Queen's Park & Harrow Road Hub, Third Avenue, Westminster, in 2018.

Last year, the previous NT community theatre production, *Pericles*, was staged at the Olivier Theatre on the South Bank, but this year the project moved to the suburbs – the Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch.

Meet the new chair of trustees



New Horizons is part of the charity Open Age, run by a team of staff led by CEO Iain Cassidy, and supported by volunteers. It also has a board of unpaid trustees,

which includes Open Age members, some of them retired. But that does not mean they lead a quiet life, far from it.

Take the new chair of trustees, Dean James. After retiring from full-time work, “I had time to reflect”, says Dean, “on things I really wanted to do, build up a portfolio of activities, such as voluntary and non-executive roles, and concentrate on things I had been interested in for years but had not had time to pursue, such as health studies.”

But as someone who has made a career in the public, private and charitable sectors throughout his adult life (you can read his CV on the Open Age website), Dean is still very busy and deeply committed to practical developments that involve health and the lives of the elderly.

When he replaced retiring Open Age chairman David Sinclair in May, he was, and still is, chair of a London-based charity, Community Housing and Therapy, which provides residential therapy for people with severe mental health issues.

His last full-time job was as CEO of Future Care Capital, a health and care policy charity.

“I was attracted to Open Age because it’s a charity for older folk and I think it’s fantastic. We have a big bubble of an ageing population in Britain and there has to be more emphasis on lifelong education, activities and other opportunities for the elderly,” says Dean, who lives in Central London.

“It’s so important for people to remain engaged and avoid becoming isolated. It’s about inclusion and independence. All the evidence is that the more you can engage in activities, stay socially connected, the better your health and well-being will be.”

He explains that trustees have a stewardship role. “Open Age is a members’ organization and we consider the quality and range of services for the members, the strategy of the organization and whether and how we should expand so that others may benefit, and of course its funding and financial well-being”.

Retiring from full-time work gave Dean an opportunity to study, and first of all he did a course in nutrition, and decided to give veganism a go.

“It emphasises eating natural wholefoods and seasonally adjusting to the foods in season,” he explains.

“As a vegan, you have to make sure you get the nutrition that you need, and eat a wide variety of foods. Being plant-based, it also takes a while for your system to adapt. It was a bit challenging but when you get it right, it can be a healthy and natural diet, and it agrees with me.”

To advance his knowledge of health issues, Dean also took further courses in conventional and complementary medicine and is still actively engaged in these.

“Millions of people live with chronic conditions,” Dean says, “and in my academic study and research I have a particular interest in the next suite of strategies and protocols that people can adopt to help best manage their condition. There is some fascinating research and also pilots being run in the USA, for example, and I believe these fields of positive and integrated health hold great promise for the future”.

It's all Greek to Ghada!

Long-time tutor Ghada Gaylani has started a class in Greek Mythology, from 10am to 12 noon every Tuesday from Sep 17. She has discontinued her English EFL class, but her popular Book Break class, in which members read a chosen piece together and discuss it, continues every Monday from 2pm–4pm. Ghada explains why she has chosen Greek myths:

I've always been interested in Greek mythology, with its strange and wonderful stories of monsters, heroes and magical metamorphoses.

I find that English literature is scattered with references to Greek mythology. Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Romantics, Wilde, Eliot and even novelists and poets of the 21st century name-dropped heroes and gods and goddesses of Greek mythology in their works.

When classical antiquity was discovered

in the Renaissance, Western art was influenced by subjects of Greek mythology, along with the portrayal of Christian themes. The English language itself owes a lot to Greek myths. Here are a few:

- He is so concerned about his appearance, he's quite narcissistic
- X has the body of an Adonis
- Clearing the mess is a Herculean task
- Do you need a muse to write poetry?

I would like to explore who were these heroes and gods and monsters, what were their stories and do they have any relevance to the present day?

The Mythology class on Tuesday will be a friendly and informal journey of discovery. We will begin with the Odyssey and move on with other stories of heroes and gods in Greek mythology. No prior knowledge of classical Greek is necessary!

Ghada Gaylani



Regent's Park secret garden

On Saturday 3 August I went to a garden which I would never have been able to visit without the National Garden Scheme, which organises the opening of privately owned gardens on certain days and donates the entry fee to charity. I had the chance to see a spectacular London garden only open during two weekends a year, called The Holme, in Regent's Park.

The house (not open to the public) faces the Regent's Park boating lake and was designed by Decimus Burton for his father in 1818/19. It is now owned by Prince Khalid bin Awaleed bin Talal, a member of the Saudi Arabian royal family.

The four-acre garden is filled with interesting and unusual plants and sweeping lakeside lawns are intersected by islands of herbaceous beds. There is also a rock garden with waterfall, stream and pool with huge koi carp.

The formal flower garden has unusual

annual and half-hardy plants, a sunken lawn, a fountain pool and arbour. My only criticism would be that there are too few labels telling what the plants are.

We were warned twice not to take photographs of the house, and were aware of CCTV cameras peppering the landscape. I tried to take a picture of the American Ambassador's residence from the edge of the boating lake, but the stink from the stagnant water was too pungent. With all the Canada geese, assorted ducks, coots and seagulls 'emitting' and the hot weather, this is hardly surprising. It certainly did not deter the many people afloat on pedalos.

The garden never felt overcrowded and there were a few welcome low rattan benches with matching side tables. Very civilised. I cannot think of a more pleasant way to spend a Saturday afternoon. The £5 paid was well worth it.

A.M.

Super memorable summer party

It was a hot August day. Arriving to see a mass of people seated on tables outside amid the colourful blooms in the New Horizons garden, I was beset by a feeling of initial apprehension as I didn't see a soul I knew.

But I saw someone I recognised from the Web Design class and we found seats before basking in the sun to have lunch.

Cool salads were on offer beside the Bar-B-Q food cooked by Hannah and a delicious smorgasbord ended up on our plates, with a choice of wine or juice to drink. All this topped off by strawberries and home-made cakes for dessert.

Lunch over, we went inside and were able to watch the lovely cabaret singer and her guitarist friend singing songs from the days when we were young.

The afternoon was a revelation, as shyness was overcome by a feeling of "make the most of life" and a handful of otherwise sedentary people took to their feet (see page 1). The handful increased to a motley crowd of ladies, all dancing, jiving and doing the salsa. It was invigorating to join in and feel part of the "in" crowd!

Three o'clock came round, the singer and guitarist adjourned, and it was time for the raffle numbers to be drawn. The raffle organised by Gladys was the best I've ever known. So many prizes and so many delighted faces!

Simon invited different people to draw the raffle tickets and fortunately Hannah our cook won a prize which she richly deserved. At my table of five, there were three people who won a prize. And the prizes were MAGNIFICENT – pashminas and watches, lunches for two in Earls Court and teas for two at Peter Jones were all given out and gratefully received.

New Horizons were not going to let us depart for the summer break without giving us a day to remember! It was a truly wonderful afternoon. Thank you so very



Partygoers relax in the New Horizons garden much to Simon, Serena, Hannah and all the team!

Josie Jenkins

- *Daphne Morgan has made a fabulous 5-minute movie of the summer party and uploaded it to the internet. Don't miss! It's hilarious and fun! To view it, go into YouTube and input the words: **simserena party***

Hannah's Fund

This was the last event involving popular chef Hannah Munns before she left New Horizons in August (see page 1). AM writes:

"Thank you to all members for your generosity. The total collected for a farewell gift came to £130, plus an extra 20 dollars (handy for her planned trip to Orlando), while more was donated privately. Hannah has used the money to buy a pair of top-of-the-range special edition trainers to help her keep fit."

Temporary manager of the Orangery Café is Jhelisa Scott-Herley, assisted at times by Danilo Salemhamed and Semhar (Sam), until a new chef-manager is appointed.

Will you join the CHARIOT register?

Dementia affects 850,000 people over the age of 65 in the UK. Currently there is no cure, although research into dementia is a global healthcare priority.

The CHARIOT Register has been organised by the School of Public Health at Imperial College, London. It is a list of healthy volunteers aged 50–85. Its aims are to understand risk and protective factors for dementia and help develop methods for early prediction and prevention.

Once a person has agreed to be on the Register they will receive information about CHARIOT and studies looking at dementia

prevention. If a study is developed, they will be contacted to ask whether they would be interested in taking part.

Studies vary from simple questionnaires to clinical trials investigating new preventative treatments. You are under NO OBLIGATION to take part just because you are on the Register.

More volunteers are still needed. Please call: 020 7594 8886, email: dementia.prevention@imperial.ac.uk or visit the website: www.chariotregister.org

Christine Ozolins

Dates to watch (See also posters and brochures in reception)

- ☞ **Tues Sep 24** onwards: In the News tutor Ivan Gibbons is back at New Horizons this month after leg surgery. Members ran the class in his absence.
- ☞ **Sep–Dec:** Open Age runs a variety of outings facilitated by volunteers. Payment required. October trips include The Changing of the Guard, the Fashion & Textile Museum, Westminster Cathedral, and theatre shows. Look for copies of the Trips Programme in reception.
- ☞ **Sun Oct 6:** Silver Sunday launches the annual week of free activities for older people, including a visit to the Science Museum (Wed Oct 9).
- ☞ **Tues Oct 8:** Are you a carer? The Carers Group and Social has a monthly meetup in New Horizons café, 2–4pm. Today's theme: arts and crafts. Make a coaster or fridge magnet. Contact Vennetta on 0208 962 4536, or email: vroyal@openage.org.uk
- ☞ **Wed Oct 16:** An evening of 5-minute stand-up comedy routines by Open Age members from 6pm–9pm at Imperial College, Wood Lane, following 4 scriptwriting classes. To book, call Open Age on 020 8962 4141.
- ☞ **Thurs Oct 24:** Breakfast discussion “When Science Meets Art” at the Second Half Centre, North Kensington.

Editor: Kay Shelley. **Contributors:** Iain Cassidy, Ted Waight, Josie Jenkins, Ivor David, Susan Kaidi, Carol Allen, Dean James, Ghada Gaylani, A.M., Daphne Morgan, Christine Ozolins. **Designer:** Christabel Gurney. NH staff: Simon Shum, Serena Dicks, Maude Chinery, Vennetta Royal. The **New Horizons Members' Newsletter** is written and edited by volunteers meeting in the I.T. room every Wednesday, 10am–12noon, and printed and distributed by staff at New Horizons. The Newsletter online can be viewed (or downloaded) at <https://www.openage.org.uk/new-horizons> (see under Activities). To contribute, please email: kayonhold@hotmail.co.uk, or text Kay (07748 662213).

New Horizons is a pioneering activity centre for older people delivered by a consortium of three charities, Open Age, Age UK Kensington and Chelsea and the Guinness Trust, in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and NHS Kensington and Chelsea. Lead organisation: Open Age, Registered Charity No 1160125.

Open: Monday–Friday 9.30am–4.00pm
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