

# PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved

May/June 2024



P2 Nutrition Bites

P3 Scam alert

P4 A day in the life of Suki the cat!

P5 Over to you - Your lives & stories

P6 Recipe time

P7 Exercises for the brain

P8 Quiz time

P9 Easy crafts

P10 Nostalgia page - Barnet Museum

P11 How can we help?

P12 Me - and my friends

P13 Wellbeing - The second brain

P14 Gardening column

P15 Disco at Age UK Barnet

P16 Quiz answers



## Welcome

We're delighted to announce that that thanks to funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, we are able to keep publishing Pigeon Post. We've received so many lovely letters, poems and stories from readers over the years and it's been a privilege to interview some of

you for our 'Over to you' slot.

Speaking of which, our profile writer Ed had a wonderful chat with one of our Bridge Club goers for this issue. Ruth is a former Bletchley park code breaker - turn to page 5 for her amazing story.

You'll also find out about the fascinating gut-brain connection, the bathroom mirror workout and how to detect a phone scam.

On top of this, you can read (possibly) the first column in UK publishing written by a cat - Pigeon Post regular Suki!

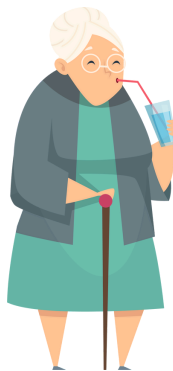
Enjoy the issue!

Helen Newman  
Chief Executive  
Age UK Barnet

**Each person must live  
their life as a model for  
others**

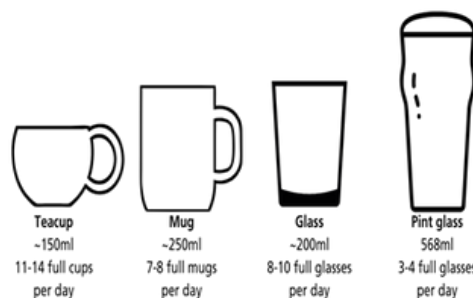
Rosa Parkes





As the days get warmer, we all tend to become more aware of drinking enough fluid – but in fact we should think about taking in enough fluid every day of the year, according to trainee dietitian Kato. ‘This is important to maintain good health by helping with alertness and concentration and preventing constipation, kidney stones, and urinary tract infections,’ says Kato. ‘Even mild frequent dehydration can lead to kidney damage and will also cause headaches, tiredness and confusion.’ However, as we get older, the thirst sensation, which is our body’s natural way of keeping us hydrated, becomes less effective. Hence older adults are more at risk of chronic mild dehydration.

As a rough guideline, women should aim to consume about 1.6 litres of fluid a day, and men 2 litres. The good news is that all fluids count, including coffee, tea, soup, smoothies, milk, hot chocolate, squash, fruit juice, and fizzy drinks. And yes, alcoholic drinks do count, but only up to 4% of alcohol by volume, so NOT wine unfortunately. Watery fruits and vegetables and yoghurt also contribute towards your daily fluid intake.



## Top tips for keeping hydrated:

- Make a point of having a drink with every meal and one in-between
- Add mint leaves and a few slices of cucumber OR fresh berries and a slice of orange, to your jug of fridge water when you feel bored with water
- Freeze your favourite fruit juice in ice cube trays and add to a glass of water for extra flavour
- Have a drink when meeting friends and family for social occasions, or when watching television
- Have a full glass of fluid when you take medications instead of just a few sips
- Snack on a watery fresh fruit or watery vegetables (cucumber, peppers, celery) once a day
- Replace a non-watery snack (such as biscuits) with a nutritious drink (such as a smoothie)
- Keep a soup in the fridge for a quick hydrating meal when time or motivation to cook is low

## Hydrating soup recipe:

This soup provides 4-5 servings, which can be frozen in portions or kept in the fridge for 3-5 days. Or halve the recipe for a smaller amount. Finely chop 1 onion and 2 cloves of garlic and fry on a low heat in 1tbsp of olive oil until soft and fragrant. Chop 5 stalks of celery, 3 medium carrots and 2 deseeded red, yellow or orange peppers into bitesize pieces. Add to the onions and fry for 5 minutes. Rinse  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of red lentils and add to the vegetables. Add 1 litre of vegetable stock (2 cubes), cover and simmer for 25 minutes. Add one peeled and chopped cucumber and 1 shredded head of romaine lettuce and simmer for another 5 minutes. Blend to desired consistency with a hand or jug blender. Serve with 1 tsp lemon juice, fresh parsley leaves, chilli flakes or a sprinkle of toasted seeds.

## Smoothies

·With a hand blender whizz together  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup unsweetened juice (coconut, orange, apple), 1 cup spinach leaves,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup frozen diced mango, 1 peeled and chopped kiwi and  $\frac{1}{2}$  sliced banana. Add more or less juice based on the consistency you prefer.

·Whizz together  $\frac{1}{2}$  frozen/fresh banana, a small handful of frozen/fresh berries, 1 tsp nut butter, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk. Add more or less milk based on your preferred thickness.





It can be challenging to detect phone scams, as there are so many different types, says our scams coordinator Joyce. 'One common example is when fraudsters mask their phone numbers to disguise themselves as your bank's fraud department – known as spoofing,' she says. 'They then urge you to transfer your money to a 'safe' account before disappearing with your cash.' Below are some common phone scams and how to protect yourself.

**Tech support scams:** These scams also involve remote access software. The fraudster impersonates a tech company such as Microsoft and informs you that your device has been infected with malware. To fix the issue, they will either ask you to download remote access software to give them control over your device or trick you into installing malware.

**Prize draw scams:** A fraudster calls you claiming that you've won a prize or the lottery. They'll invent a story to make up for the fact that you don't remember entering a competition. You'll usually be asked for your personal or financial information to receive the prize or money.

### How to protect yourself

'Scammers can be persuasive, so don't trust calls that come out of the blue,' says Joyce. 'Never disclose financial information over the phone and be aware that scammers may be able to keep your phone line open even after you've hung up. So if you hang up on a dodgy call, use a different phone to call the company back on a trusted number or wait for at least 10 to 15 minutes.'

For more advice on scams prevention contact Joyce and the scams team on 020 8203 5040.



## PIGEON POST LIVES ON!!

We're delighted to let you know that thanks to a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund we have the money to keep Pigeon Post going for another two years. Thanks too to everyone who has donated over the last few months – we're incredibly grateful. And please keep writing in with your poems and stories – and let us know if there's anything you'd like to read more about. Your input is really important to us!



### Quick question

#### What's more efficient – dishwasher or washing by hand?

According to in-depth testing by Which? magazine, dishwashers are, on average, four times more water efficient than washing by hand per place setting. The most water-efficient full-sized dishwasher uses almost 10 times less water to wash the same amount of dishes as hand washing them.



Hallo lovely Pigeon Post readers! I know many of you have enjoyed seeing photos in Pigeon Post of me looking very gorgeous so I thought I would put my paws to work on my human's laptop keyboard and share with you my wonderful life in High Barnet.

My human (aka Mad Cat Woman) is called Charlotte and she adores me (of course she does). She also loves volunteering at Age UK Barnet where she can be found on reception at the Ann Owens Centre on Tuesdays and Fridays. As you can imagine it is very busy working on reception but Charlotte finds lots of time to chat and have a laugh with staff and visitors and show photos of me to everyone.

I thought I would give you a cat's eye view of my day when Mad Cat Woman (MCW) is at Ann Owens Centre (AOC).

MCW staggers out of bed and pretends she is looking for me by whistling a silly tune. She doesn't have to look far as I am in the sitting room lying prostrate on the wooden floorboards enjoying the underfloor heating. The silly whistling is a cue to gracefully arise and wrap my body round her legs and demand breakfast. Yesterday's remainders have to be thrown away as I will only eat fresh food and drink fresh water from the bowl. Having said that, when I am in the garden I am very happy to drink puddle water and water in watering cans.

MCW crashes about ranting and raving to herself as she gets ready to leave for AOC which she, thankfully, does at 8.50am to catch the bus at 9am when she can use her Freedom Pass.

PHEW! I have MY flat to myself until she returns at 2.45pm. So, what does a typical day entail? A lot of feline hard work. After a leisurely breakfast of FRESH food and water I need to decide whether to have a nap back on the underfloor heating, on MCW's bed, in the armchair or on the bottom shelf of the bookcase behind said armchair.

Decisions, decisions. I tend to rotate the napping spot weekly.

As you can imagine I work very hard at having a nap. I probably turn around about four times during the day

At 2.45pm the key can be heard turning in the lock and MCW staggers in the front door calling my name. She does make a racket with no regard for my wellbeing, waking me up from my beauty sleep. I do forgive her though because she loves me very much. We have a little play and I get fed and let out. There is a cat flap but I prefer personal service. And so we spend the rest of the day together. It's a tough cat life in High Barnet!



My human - Charlotte

## ART THERAPY

An NHS-supported art programme has been shown to cut the number of GP visits with chronic pain by 29 per cent. Participants with mental health issues or chronic pain also said the programme – which included painting, drawing, music and dancing - cut their reliance on medication.

This just confirms what we know – our art classes have improved the health and wellbeing of so many of our participants. We run art classes in East Finchley on Wednesdays and Fridays as well as our Knit & Natter Social Drop in-group on Wednesdays.

Please phone Teresa on 07502 989 403 to find out more and book a space.





Each month former journalist Ed Newman has a lovely chat with a Barnet resident and share their stories with the rest of us. This month Ed speaks to former codebreaker Ruth Bourne who now attends our Bridge sessions.

**WOMEN** played a vital role in the Allied Victory in World War Two although it took many years for that contribution to fully come to light.

Ruth Bourne was still a teenager when she was recruited to join a brilliant group of young women codebreakers working out of Bletchley Park. It was their exposure of German military secrets that ultimately made a crucial difference to the course of the war. In 2018, Ruth was awarded France's highest honour when she was presented with the Legion d'Honneur for her remarkable work.

Talking to Ruth, 97, who has lived in Barnet since just after the end of the war, you can tell just why she became part of that elite group. Even eighty years on from when she joined up, she can still recall her duties in great detail.

"I was a Turing bombe operator," Ruth tells me. "It's the machine that was featured in the film *The Imitation Game* with Benedict Cumberbatch as Alan Turing.

"We were trained in every aspect of working those machines. My job was to follow instructions, put on the wheels and plugs that made it work and make sure it didn't short-circuit. Every fifteen minutes, we would change the wheels and go again.

"The machine could produce 36 possible answers. When we found what was called a good stop, we'd call it through on the red scrambler phone to one of the huts at Bletchley Park. They'd then put it through one of the enigma machines, either British or German, and if the message came through in clear German we knew we'd got the answer."

Ruth had actually been studying German, as well as French and Spanish at school in North Wales. She'd been evacuated there at the start of the war, along with her younger sister, to live with her grandparents. A place at the University of London was offered to her but she decided she wanted to play her part in the war and joined the Women's Royal Naval Service.

"I was only thirteen when the war started," Ruth recalls. "As a Jewish family, we'd been talking about what was going on in Germany for a few years and knew all about those thugs in the gestapo. We almost took it for granted when war was declared. For a while, things went on as normal and I can remember we used to keep lipstick and hankies in our gas mask holders and use them as handbags. Then, when I got older, I wanted to help out and that's when I joined the WRNS.

"At school, I'd always been a quick learner and that's probably why I was recruited to work as a codebreaker," says Ruth. "By the time I got there, the second front was opening up with D Day and, for security reasons, they started to move people away from Bletchley Park to places like Eastcote and Stanmore. I worked at all of those, and the accommodation everywhere was awful. At Eastcote, there were about 72 of us in double-bunks in one huge barracks. You'd have to walk down a very long corridor to get to wash basins and loos in what was known as the ablutions, and you were very lucky if you got a bath. It was hard work with long shifts and it wasn't surprising that many of the girls got sick. We all got burn-out at one time or another."

Thankfully, Ruth did occasionally get leave and that allowed her to see her family in Birmingham and also make the occasional visit to London. It was on one such trip that she met her future husband Bentall at the services club. They would get married soon after she was demobilised in 1946.

Ruth was under strict instructions never to discuss her work as a codebreaker. She didn't find it a problem sticking to the rules, not even telling her husband, until the embargo was finally lifted in 1974. Even then, Bentall wasn't that impressed by his wife's revelation.

"He said 'that's interesting, now what's for tea?' she laughs. "Others might have found it a challenge to keep quiet but I was told not to talk about it so I just switched off. But, once the wraps came off, I was happy to talk about it. When I heard that Bletchley Park was opening up again, I took the opportunity to train as a guide and I did that job for 24 years until I was ninety. I really enjoyed sharing stories with the people who came to visit. We didn't really know the significance of our work at the time or just how important women were to the war effort – but we do now."



Ruth at Bridge Club today



Ruth (r) in Brighton 1945



Codebreaking machine reconstructed for *The Imitation Game* film



Ruth in uniform 1945



This local treat is known as **Geordie caviar**, because it's so well liked in the area. If you haven't had **pease pudding** before, it's fantastic with a ham sandwich or as a base for winter soups.

### Ingredients

- 500 g Yellow split peas (soaked overnight according to instructions on pack)
- 2 litres water
- 1 Large ham shank or gammon joint
- (OR if not using gammon, just use 2 ham stock cubes)
- 2 Medium brown onions (Chopped roughly)
- Pepper and salt added at end if required



### Method

- Add the 2L of water to a pan and bring to simmer
- Add all of the ingredients to the pan and simmer on a medium to high heat for 1 hour
- Remove the ham and set aside (Use for sandwiches or soup)
- Boil uncovered for 30 minutes to reduce mix. Keep stirring mixture.
- Blend the mix and return to lower heat for 15 minutes
- Portion out into one large container or smaller lidded containers and leave in fridge overnight.
- This will keep for around a week in a fridge.

For extra flavour you can always chop up some of the ham and add that to the peas pudding before it sets.

***"Pease Pudding hot ,Pease Pudding cold, Pease Pudding in the pot nine days old  
Some like it hot, some like it cold, some like it in the pot nine days old"***

The nursery rhyme quoted above suggests that Pease Pudding had quite a good shelf life, being "in the pot nine days old", however it is more likely that the leftovers cut into slices, would be ok to eat hot or cold for well over a week.

Pease Pudding is recognisably a Northern dish, however there was a rich pre war history of Pease Pudding shops that sat along side Pie & Mash and Fish & Chips. Sir Walter Besant, English novelist and historian, recorded that in East London 1901 the menu choices of an average "cockney" eatery was fried fish & pickles, meat pies, German sausages and **blood pudding**, but also **Pease Pudding and Saveloys**.

***Remember the famous "Oliver" song....***

*"Food glorious food, hot sausage and mustard, while were in the mood, cold jelly and custard, Pease Pudding and Saveloys, what next is the question?"*

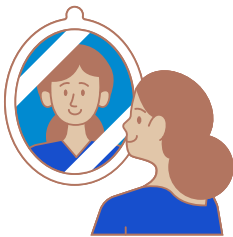


***“Life is like a mirror smile at it and it smiles back at you” - Peace Pilgrim***

**Good morning! Former physiotherapist Gillian on how to make a positive start to your day in front of the bathroom mirror! Instead of gazing blearily at it, wondering what the day has in store, here are some ideas for a more optimistic start.**

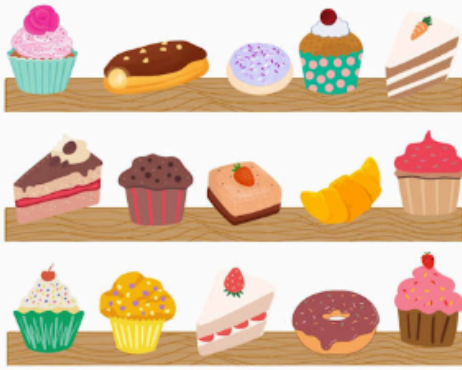
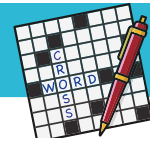
1. Start by making sure you are taking your weight equally between both legs and look at yourself in the mirror. If necessary, hold onto the wash-basin. Straighten up by pulling your tummy muscles in, and gently lengthening your spine; roll your shoulders back, making the back of your neck as long as you can. Tuck in your chin as if you are closing the top drawer of a chest of drawers, so your head is sitting on top of your spine.
2. Now, from this upright dynamic position and using the mirror to check your tall straight stance. Take 2 or 3 deep breaths, feeling the air getting to the bottom of your lungs.
3. Next, check your lovely tall position again and gradually take more weight on one leg, then the other so that you are swaying slightly from side to side. If you find this easy, raise one foot off the ground as you transfer your weight to each side. Only do this if you feel quite confident and safe.

4.



This is the important one; - Look at yourself in the mirror and...SMILE! – several times, making each smile broader than the previous one. Did you know that smiling releases endorphins – our happy hormones - even if it is a fake smile to start with. And fake smiles can easily become genuine smiles – so keep smiling, looking in the mirror and before long you will be genuinely smiling and making a great start to the day!

5. Next, check your lovely tall position again and gradually take more weight on one leg, then the other so that you are swaying slightly from side to side. If you find this easy, raise one foot off the ground as you transfer your weight to each side. Only do this if you feel quite confident and safe.
6. Be sure to finish with some smiles and, hopefully, you will leave the bathroom feeling a little happier than when you first looked in the mirror!
7. And when anyone comes to your home or you're out and about, remember to smile at people you meet or pass – you might improve their days too!



Which sweet is missing?



		9	3			2		
							6	5
			4					
			8	3				2
8		3	5			7		9
	1							
4		8				6		
6	2						1	
		5			3			

**Across**

- 1 On the go (6)
- 4 Academy awards (6)
- 8 Roman goddess of love (5)
- 9 Program for accessing the World Wide Web (7)
- 10 Nasal aperture (7)
- 11 Sudden uncontrollable fear (5)
- 12 Large sea bird (9)
- 17 Sham (5)
- 19 Hermit (7)
- 21 Enjoying a winning streak (2,1,4)
- 22 Items of jewellery (5)
- 23 Science of plant life (6)
- 24 Distress signal (6)

**Down**

- 1 Period before Christmas (6)
- 2 North African country (7)
- 3 Eye shield (5)
- 5 Eighth sign of the zodiac (7)
- 6 Fire-raising (5)
- 7 Rigorous (6)
- 9 Two-sided (9)
- 13 Woodwind instrument (7)
- 14 Dazed (7)
- 15 Engross (6)
- 16 Largest of the Channel Islands (6)
- 18 Hard work (5)
- 20 Approximately (5)

1		2		3			4	5		6		7
8							9					
10								11				
		12		13							14	
15												16
17		18					19		20			
21									22			
23								24				



## What you will need

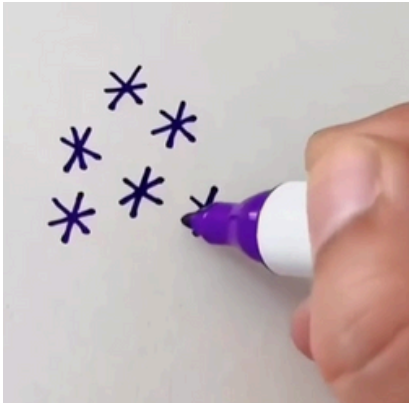
Coffee filters for circular base, Washable marker pens  
Permanent yellow pen for dots, Cotton buds, Water



## Instructions

Start off by drawing some cross stars on your coffee filter and make the shape of the flower

Wet a cotton bud in some water and dab onto the centre of each star



Draw a second set of stars in a different colour and repeat steps above

Then draw a third star flower and repeat. Add green leaves and then dab with cotton bud and water



Dot flowers with the yellow permanent pen



Step back into the heart of nostalgia at Barnet Museum - 31 Wood Street, Barnet EN5 4BE, where time stands still, and memories come alive. Admission is FREE. Call 0208 440 8066 for opening times.

Unlock the door to a journey through the ages, and delve into a treasure trove of artifacts, each whispering tales of Barnet's vibrant history.



## HOW CAN WE HELP?

## AGE UK BARNET SERVICES

- For advice about benefits, grants, housing and money concerns, phone our **Later Life Planning Service** on 020 8432 1417.
- For scams advice and support, call our **Scams Prevention Service** on 0208 432 2217.
- If you can't get out without help and would enjoy a regular chat with a friendly volunteer, try our **Befriending Service** on 020 8432 1416
- For essential jobs in the home please phone our **Handyperson Service\*** on 020 8150 0963. Some jobs such as changing a lightbulb are free of charge.
- Unable to get out to the shops and cannot shop online? We have a **Shopping Service\*** for people who need a light weekly shop. For more info, Tel 020 8150 0963
- **Living Well Dementia Hub—dementia adviser service** and **day clubs** for people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Phone 020 8203 5040. Our **Dementia Befriending Service** offers companionship—phone 020 8150 0967.
- Our **Stepping Out Service** for those who have early stages of dementia or confirmed memory issues, we offer short weekly walks with a volunteer. Phone 020 8150 0963.
- **Foot care\*** We offer basic nail-cutting (£15) at the Ann Owens Centre in East Finchley and, for people with diabetes, taking steroids or warfarin, we have nailcutting with a podiatrist (£20). For an appointment, phone 020 8203 5040.

\*There may be a charge for this service

## OUT & ABOUT

## AGE UK BARNET EVENTS



### **QUIZ NIGHT FUNDRAISER** - Wednesday 22 May – 6.45pm (7.15pm start)

Join us for our next quiz night at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane East Finchley N2 8LT. Tickets cost £20 per person which includes a tasty two-course meal, plus there'll be a raffle during the evening and a bar selling drinks. Make up your own team of 8 or join another team. Places will be limited so book yours soon! All funds raised on the night go towards helping us to reduce social isolation among older people in Barnet and ensure we provide our essential services and activities. Please contact Teresa on 07502 989 403 [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk) to reserve your place.

### **Talk: Improving everyday memory - Wednesday 12 June 2024 (7-8pm)**

Whether it's remembering someone's name or holding onto important personal memories, Professor Catherine Loveday shares science-backed ways to boost everyday memory - whatever your age! Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. To book your free place, **contact Teresa on 07502 989 403 or email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk)**

### **Your Money, Your Way - how to manage your money in later life.**

**Weds 26 June 2024 (2-4pm)** - Join us for an afternoon of useful talks and advice. Talks on lasting Power of Attorney, making a Will and avoiding scams. There'll be information stands and refreshments. All over 55s welcome. Free entry. Takes place at The Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane N2 8LT. To book your place, just phone Teresa on 07502 989403 or email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk)

**Talk: Changing times - Wednesday 10 July 2024 (7-8pm)** Professor Catherine Loveday on the mysteries of time from why time speeds up as we get older to why first week of a holiday always seems so much longer than the second week. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. To book contact Teresa on 07502 989 403 or email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk)

**SUMMER CARNIVAL - Saturday 13 July 2024 (11am-3pm)** Fantastic live music all day, tombola, nearly new stall, food, cakes, cream tea. £2 entry. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. Any questions, contact Teresa on 07502 989 403 or email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk)

**Writer Lee Janogly – an 84 year old semi retired fitness instructor and author – shares the conversational highlights of her regular meet ups with a group of good friends. This time she talks about the man who’s been doing odd jobs for her for the last two decades.**

Every family should have a handyman – that is, someone you can call on to fix things that go wrong in your home, from a washing machine to a leaking gutter. My friends and I share Pete, who we have used for over 20 years. (not as sexy as it sounds!)

Pete is not only a builder, painter and decorator, but a plumber, carpenter and electrician. The phrase ‘Jack of all trades’ is very apt in this case as he is not very good at any of them. For example, having installed a new sink, you turn on a tap with red markings and reasonably expect hot water to flow. No such luck. But turn on a tap with blue markings, you could scald your hand. But nothing he has erected has ever fallen down.

So how is he ‘handy’ you could ask? Well, it’s like the old joke: he lives round the corner!

Pete liked to start early, around 7.30 am with ‘milk and two sugars please, love, and maybe a couple of them chocolate Hip Hops’.  
‘Hobnobs?’  
‘Yeah.’

He would then follow me obediently round the house and shake his head sadly when I pointed out what needed doing. ‘Nah, you don’t wanna do that’.

I do actually. He would then ‘bring in a couple of the lads’ (men in their fifties) and get the job done ‘in no time’. Pete’s concept of ‘no time’ is fairly accurate as it could be anything from two weeks to nine months.

Strangely, there always seemed to be something extra to do, which is beyond my comprehension as I don’t speak ‘builder’.

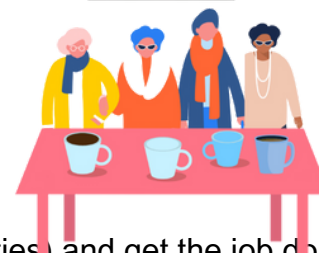
‘See that crack’ he would say, pointing upwards, ‘that means the interweaving flange-sprocket has come loose and I may have to fit a reinforced cranial double-ratchet intersplit’. Really? ‘Yeah’.  
Weary sigh. ‘In which case I’m going to need a Morton’s rotary speculator with a G40 thrust nozzle’. Right. Fine. Whatever. ‘I’ll just nip dahn the yard and get one’ – adding ominously over his shoulder – ‘don’t touch that exposed wire, love’ – before disappearing for three weeks.

I remember the time Pete announced he was on a diet, patting his now noticeable paunch. ‘I only take one and a half sugars now’, he announced proudly, and to demonstrate his steely resolve, he broke a sugar cube in half and put half in his cup. Not sure with what to do with the other half, he put it in his mouth.

Pete is an amiable presence to have around and I would give you his number, Reader, but he is greatly in demand. But once you get hold of him, he’ll get the job done in no time.

**Lee’s very funny book, ‘Getting Old, Deal with It’ is published by Mensch Publishing.**

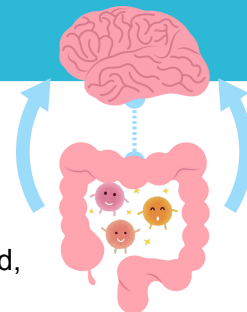
**For a reliable handyperson, get in touch with our Handyperson Service – our guys can’t do any plumbing or electrics but they can reliably do most other things. Call Karen on 07508 801 576**



## WHY IT’S GOOD TO GET OLDER



An ageing brain can better tease out patterns and see the big picture, according to Dr. Gary Small, professor of psychiatry and director of the UCLA Center on Aging. Whereas younger people may have better short-term and get-to-the-point-quickly memory, older people have had a greater variety of experiences and are better able to build a wider image out of a lot of different parts of memory. They can make more connections because they have more memories as more things have happened to them.



## Neuropsychologist professor Catherine Loveday on the gut brain connection and how keeping your gut bacteria healthy may help reduce the risk of conditions including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and memory loss.

Our gut is often called the second brain because it uses similar chemicals, hormones and neurons to those used in the brain to do a huge number of jobs including digesting our food, regulating blood flow and even influencing our mood and emotions.

The gut is connected to the brain via the vagus nerve, one of the longest nerves in the body. However, 90 per cent of the traffic goes from the gut to the brain, not the other way around, and the gut is actually able to operate entirely independently of the brain. So the gut is a wonderful self contained organ that does just what it needs to do and keeps the brain informed about what is going on in other parts of the body.

'The brain sends important signals to our digestive system – for instance, when we're full up, when we're hungry and when food doesn't taste right so we avoid it,' says Catherine. 'But it's much more of a two way relationship and a lot more complicated.'

For instance, hormones produced in the gut can influence appetite and mood - and hormones produced in the brain can affect our gut and bowel function.

'Often called a gut reaction, there's a connection between what we're experiencing and what's going on in our stomach', says Catherine.

'It's your body's way of telling you that something is not quite right - our scientific sixth sense. This occurs when the brain subconsciously registers things that are important and the body responds. We all know that feeling of butterflies when we feel nervous or abdominal pain if we're stressed.'

**Gut bacteria** - A key part of this two-way communication is our gut bacteria - or microbiome – which sit in the lining of the colon, and communicate with the gut and the brain.

Our gut bacteria performs a catalogue of useful jobs from making vitamins to cleaning the gut, breaking down toxins, supplying energy and strengthening our immune system.

And that's not all!! 'Good bacteria also help fight inflammation in the gut which has been linked to conditions such as depression and Alzheimer's,' says Catherine. 'And improving microbiome may reduce the risk of depression, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and stress.'

**Making our gut happy** - So what can we do to boost our gut health and improve mood, overall health and decrease inflammation.

- \* Maintain a healthy lifestyle, get good sleep and exercise
- \* Eat a diverse range of brightly coloured fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and fibre rich foods and well as nuts and berries which have been shown to boost memory function. There's strong evidence that Mediterranean diet is good for our general health and gut bacteria.
- \* Try probiotic foods, such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and kombucha, which add good bacteria straight to your gut.
- \* Have foods rich in prebiotic fibres, such as garlic, onions, bananas, asparagus, and whole grains which feed the beneficial bacteria in your gut.
- \* Limit sugary foods or if you need to have sweet stuff, have it with a meal to avoid spikes in blood sugar.
- \* Reduce your intake of ultra processed foods and be suspicious of so called healthy low-fat or low sugar labels - they often contain unhealthy alternatives and studies have shown that the brain can't distinguish between sugar and sugar replacements.
- \* Try to have healthy snacks to hand such as a small bag of nuts, yogurt and fruit, or rice cake and peanut butter
- \* Focus more on adding healthy things to your diet rather than getting too hung up on what you need to give up – and plan ahead.
- \* Limit processed foods: Reduce consumption of processed foods, sugary snacks, and beverages, as they can negatively impact gut health.
- \* If you have a diagnosed problem with the gut, such as IBS or other inflammatory bowel disorders, don't underestimate the benefits of talking therapies and relaxation. With the brain and gut so intertwined, standard medical treatments often now include solutions such as counselling, hypnosis or relaxation techniques. Lowering stress levels can boost levels of good bacteria.

### Fast facts

- \*1g poo contains more bacteria than there are people on the earth
- \*Most genetic variation between people is not in our own DNA but in that of our gut bacteria
- \*The gut contains 5 million neurons – 5 times as many neurons as in your brain.
- \*Gut microbes outnumber human cells, can weigh up to 2kg and contain 100 trillion bacteria!



Since retiring, our gardening columnist Kevin loves spending time in the garden and his allotment. Each issue he lets us know what he's been up to and shares a few seasonal gardening tips...

The list of jobs to do at this time of year is ever increasing. Bringing on seedlings and planting out is at full pace and I boxed up the dahlia tubers I stored last year and have been taking cutting to create new plants.

At home in the garden the pots of bulbs I planted up back in October have been a great source of enjoyment, from when they first poked through the surface to watching the flowers develop and open. When they finish flowering I will snap off the seed heads so that the energy goes back into the bulb and put them out of the way until the tops have died down.

Since the clocks went forward and the temperature warmed up, I've enjoyed spending more time out in the garden. Whether working or, importantly, sitting and enjoying everything that is bursting into life, try and enjoy the longer days. I think it would be a good idea if we stayed on summer time all year round!

### A few other jobs for May/June

If you have limited space you can plant up pots and tubs with annual bedding plants for a summer display. Fuchsias and geraniums and a real splash of colour.

Now is the time to plant out tender vegetable plants as the chance of a late frost should have passed.



You can sow small batches of herbs and salad seeds every 2-3 weeks for a continuous supply. They can go in pots, troughs or direct in the ground.

When going food shopping, if you bring your groceries home in a cardboard box you can soak the box and add it to the compost heap. It's good to balance 'brown' material with all the 'green' material like grass cuttings.

Also, don't forget your house plants, increase the watering and give them a feed with liquid houseplant food.

## TOP 20 THINGS WE MISS ABOUT BEING A CHILD

A study of 2,000 Brits revealed the activities adults miss most from their youth, with more than half (56 per cent) admitting they have lost their sense of fun with age.

The research, commissioned by Tropicana, also found that people wake up with four things on their mind, including the weather, tasks at work for the day ahead, money and bills.

### What we miss the most

1. School holidays
2. Waking up without a care in the world e.g. no worries about the day ahead
3. No life admin
4. Being cooked for
5. Being looked after when unwell
6. Waking up on birthday mornings feeling excited
7. Spending a lot of time outdoors
8. Playing in the park
9. Getting pocket money
10. Seeing friends every day at school
11. Falling to sleep quickly and easily
12. Washing being done
13. Watching kid's TV shows
14. Not knowing the concept of money
15. The newness of everything e.g. flying for the first time, going to the cinema for the first time
16. Waking up feeling excited
17. Having friends over after school / going to friend's houses
18. Feeling like you could be anything you wanted when you grew up
19. Not having to do food shopping
20. Watching TV after getting home from school



# AGE UK BARNET'S FIRST DISCO FOR OVER 55s

**DISCO**  
*Night*



Everyone enjoyed a fantastic night of dancing and socialising to celebrate Age Without Limits Action Day - proving that age is no barrier when it comes to having a good time on the dance floor.

To make sure there was something for everyone, disco-goers got a chance to add their favourite tunes to the playlist on the way in.

'I love dancing and have been looking for something like this for ages,' said 70 year old Saj. 'I absolutely loved the disco and it was just so great to see people having such a good time.'

Some were a bit hesitant at first but once things got going, it was hard to keep everyone off the dance floor!

70-year-old Leo said: 'To be perfectly honest – I wasn't looking forward to going but thoroughly enjoyed it after the initial "wallflower" stage !!!'

And Raquel added: 'I had a wonderful time and I even forgot my body aches and joint stiffness!'

One man, with mobility issues, said. 'I love music and it's hard for me to go to gigs as I find it more difficult to get out and live in sheltered accommodation but this was brilliant. I had a seat and could still get up for the odd dance.'

Councillor Gill Sargeant came along for the fun joined by her aunt Arabella who was celebrating her 91st birthday!

Age-friendly Barnet coordinator Pippa says: 'We came up with the idea because the over 50s we speak to still want to go out, be sociable, listen to music and dance That part of their life is not over. As we get older, we still want to do the things we used to do which is why Age UK Barnet aims to make this a regular event.'

If you'd like to be added to the disco list, please phone Pippa on 07379 331807 or email [agefriendly@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:agefriendly@ageukbarnet.org.uk). The next disco will take place on Friday 11 October 2024 at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT.



