

PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved
November/December 2025



P2 Nutrition Bites

P3 Wellbeing -
Early memory loss

P4 Childhood memories

P5 Quiz time

P6 Recipe time

P7 Exercise time

P8 Over to you

P9 Crafts

P10 We meet the stars!

P11 How can we help?

P12 Me - and my friends

P13 Nostalgia page

P14 Gardening column

P15 Cat Moss!

P16 Quiz answers



Welcome

The festive season is approaching and although this can be a lovely sociable time for many of us, our usual budgets can feel a bit stretched! From extra food and decorations to presents and more trips out, it all adds up.

That's why this issue has a "Living Well for Less" theme, packed with money-saving tips to help you stretch your budget without losing any festive cheer. Just look out for the Living Well for Less logo throughout the magazine. We've also got plenty happening to get you in the Christmas spirit - including another feel-good disco at our Ann Owens Centre in East Finchley on Tuesday 2 December, and a Christmas concert and singalong on Monday 15 December. We'd love to see as many of you as possible joining the celebrations!

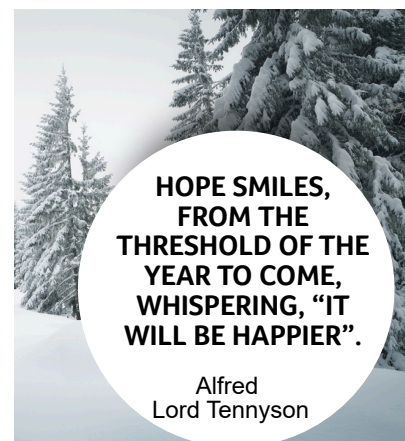
Wishing you a warm, happy and joyful festive season - and hope you enjoy this issue of Pigeon Post!

Helen Newman
Chief Executive
Age UK Barnet



"How beautifully
leaves grow old.
How full of light
and color are
their last days."

John Burroughs



HOPE SMILES,
FROM THE
THRESHOLD OF THE
YEAR TO COME,
WHISPERING, "IT
WILL BE HAPPIER".

Alfred
Lord Tennyson



We've all felt the pinch of food price hikes, particularly for fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, healthy oils and dairy products, says dietitian Kato. "According to the UK Eatwell Guide, these are the foods that should make up the bulk of our diet to keep us healthy. The 'plate' below shows the proportion of daily food intake that should come from fruit and vegetables, wholegrains and starches, high protein foods, dairy products, and healthy fats."

Kato's buy smart strategies for a healthy and balanced diet.

TOP TIPS! Fruit and vegetables

- Invest in freezer bags and airtight plastic containers of different sizes
- Buy cheaper 'wonky' brands and 'too good to waste' discounted fruit and vegetables - they are as nutritious as the more expensive ones!
- Chop and blanch (in boiling water for 2 minutes) surplus fruit and vegetables you are not planning to use, and freeze in portions. Use straight from the freezer in soups, stews, casseroles, smoothies, bakes, and puddings.
- Canned and frozen fruit and vegetables can be as nutritious as their fresh counterparts but cost less and cause less waste. You can freeze canned leftover fruit, beans, and vegetables.
- Chop and freeze fresh onion, garlic, ginger, celery, chillis and herbs (including stems) and use straight from the freezer. They are often cheaper from local multicultural food stores.
- Larger packets of dried herbs and spices, available from the World Food supermarket aisle or local multicultural food stores, are cheaper than supermarket jars.
- When using the oven, roast a spare tray of stray vegetables rubbed in oil and herbs or spices and refrigerate or freeze to use in salads, casseroles, pasta sauces or as a side dish.
- Use up ripe tomatoes in salsa, pasta sauces, and stews, and stew overripe berries, pears, apples and stone fruits with sugar and use in desserts, porridge or as yoghurt toppings

TOP TIPS! Healthy protein-rich foods

- Halve the meat in stews, casseroles, shepherd's pie, bolognese sauce or curries and substitute with much cheaper pulses and/or vegetables - for example chickpeas in chicken curry, or lentils in bolognese for a greater nutrient punch.
- Replace two red/processed meat dishes a week with dishes using canned oily fish such as sardines, mackerel or salmon – a 100g can of sardines is half the price of 100g beef mince and packed with essential nutrients.

TOP TIPS! healthy fats and dairy

- Use extra virgin olive oil for drizzling over vegetables or salads or in dishes where the taste matters. For all other frying and roasting, use vegetable/rapeseed oil, which is a heart-healthy substitute at less than a quarter of the price.
- Freeze milk and hard cheeses that are about to go off and use straight from the freezer in soups and casseroles or in cooked puddings
- Use full fat yoghurt instead of cream in curries, desserts and casseroles. It is half the price, has less than 1/6th of the saturated fat content, and packs in a lot more nutrients.



As a memory scientist and professor of neuropsychology, Professor Catherine Loveday shares five strategies she used during the early years of her mother's memory loss. "Everyone is different and what worked for me may not work for you, but I hope you find some of these suggestions helpful," says Catherine.

1. Write a short journal every evening – it doesn't have to be much, but just jotting down something about the day helps to reinforce the memories. Then each night, read back over the last few days entries. It takes a bit of discipline and some days are bound to be better than others but my mum did this for at least 8 years and it really made a difference to her everyday memory.
2. Capture and curate important memories – one certain thing with a progressive dementia is that memories will gradually fade, especially in Alzheimer's Disease. Mum and I worked together to capture and talk about some of her most important memories. These have turned out to be so valuable in terms of understanding some of her feelings and responses as the dementia develops, but also it helps us to scaffold her identity with memories that she has chosen, rather than ones we think might be important.
3. Stay active and eat well – anything we can do to support general health will have knock on impacts on the brain. Exercise and movement has been shown to be particularly valuable. We're not talking about running marathons, but just keeping walking as much as possible and keeping muscles active and strong.



4. Reduce cognitive load around the house – label cupboards, use a whiteboard, have a big desk diary with a moveable "today" sticker; use medication sorters; get a dementia clock, put lights and heating on timers, plus avoid rearranging belongings and kitchen equipment



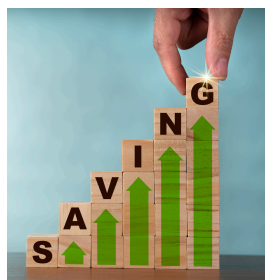
5. Plan for the future now – get power of attorney in place for both health and finances; discuss preferences around ongoing and later care plans; (and see point 2 above). Thinking and talking about the future is difficult for people with memory loss.

Catherine's Mempatthy podcast is a must listen for anyone who has friends or family living with dementia. Episodes cover everything from when memory is something to be concerned about to whether to contradict someone living with dementia, or not. Just search for Mempatthy, wherever you get your podcasts

HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON GROCERIES



Ben from our Household Support team offers tips on how to save on your groceries



- ✓ Stock up on non perishables when they're on offer.
- ✓ Work out what's worth paying more for and what isn't – you'll probably find own label versions of olive oil, cereal, butter, baked beans and tinned fruit are fine.
- ✓ Be flexible when buying branded items – buy a refill rather than a jar, buy the version that's on promotion.
- ✓ Look at the price per 100g or 100ml – it's an easy way to instantly spot the cheapest deal.

THE BIG KNIT

YOUR KNITTED HATS ARE OUT THERE!



The lovely hats made by all our wonderful knitters for The Big Knit are now on the shelves of Sainsbury's and the Coop and 30p from every innocent smoothie with a hat on goes to local Age UKs like ours to help us reach out to more people with our services, activities and events.



Age UK Barnet staff share a few fond Christmas memories from childhood



Best present ever – my bright blue Petite Super International typewriter which I first used to write news stories about the Christmas events, inevitably focussing on the naughty things my brothers had got up to. I also got a huge dictionary - my dad said it was the only book that would take me longer than a couple of hours to read! *Helen*

My dearest memory of my childhood during Christmas is creating our nativity scene. In Spain it's very popular to create the full nativity scene (with houses, animals, and different figures). For us, this would be a family thing - we would all get together and go to the countryside to get some soil, moss, stones and tree branches. Once back home, we would create the landscape - everything from land and rivers to houses and sky. Once the background was done we would add all the details like the little shepherds, the animals and the farmers. Then we'd finish it with the nativity scene and each day we'd move the Three Wise Men a step closer.... *Jose*



Making special sweets and Christmas cookies to hang on the tree and leaving out milk and cookies for Santa. My children updated this tradition and left carrots and a glass of wine!
Pat



My dad and me, walking through the crisp, silent, evening snow on a Christmas night, my hand kept warm in his. Feeling like there was nowhere else I could ever be that would be as special as that night's walk. *Teresa*



From a very early age I used to LOVE just sitting by myself in the dark just staring at the Christmas tree, while listening to Christmas songs like Mary's boy child or When a child is born.... I didn't have the words to describe the feeling then, but I think it was realising the importance of Christmas, that it was a special time, and I found the whole experience of being solitary very happy and moving. *Fiona*

I have a strong memory of being 5 or 6 and being woken up by the sound of a bell, then rushing to my bedroom window to see Santa and his sleigh flying across the sky. I know this is not possible - but the memory of this is so vivid, it's like it happened yesterday
Karen



One Christmas Eve around 2am when I was 7 or 8 years old, I remember seeing my dad slip into the bedroom I shared with my brother and leave boxed presents at the end of our beds, clearly doing Father Christmas' job. I was incredulous that he should be doing this as my parents had just given me a gift that evening. I told my dad at breakfast that I felt sure I had seen him deliver the gifts and he completely denied he had been anywhere near our room in the night and reminded me I had been given his gift the evening before.
Howard





SUDOKU

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Across

- 1 Shout loudly (6)
- 4 Call off (6)
- 8 Freshwater fish of the carp family (5)
- 9 Devilish (7)
- 10 Stuck (7)
- 11 Wash in clean water (5)
- 12 Mocked (9)
- 17 Bring upon oneself (5)
- 19 Fishing vessel (7)
- 21 United in matrimony (7)
- 22 Drained of colour (5)
- 23 Momentary pain (6)
- 24 Quick look (6)

Down

- 1 Interment (6)
- 2 Shoe material (7)
- 3 Different (5)
- 5 Naval rank (7)
- 6 Cathedral cleric (5)
- 7 Servile follower (6)
- 9 Devoted (9)
- 13 Beloved (7)
- 14 Marine mammal (7)
- 15 Fate (6)
- 16 Citrus fruit (6)
- 18 Welsh breed of dog (5)
- 20 Be of use (5)

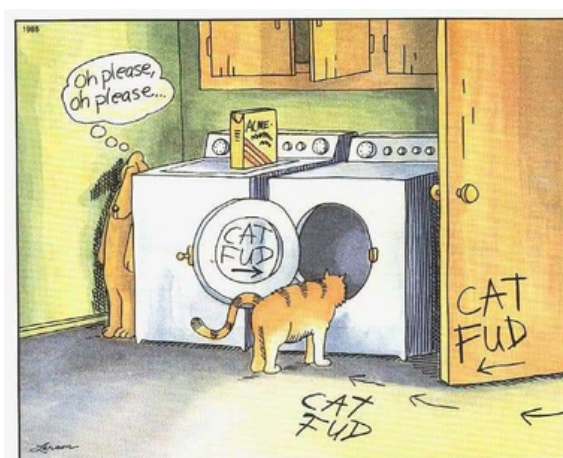


How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?

Nothing. It was on the house!

FUNNY RIDDLES

- 1: Santa Claus' mother had three children. The first child was named Fred. The second was named Annette. What was the name of the third?
- 2: I'm at every house Santa visits and when he finds me he knows he's in for a treat. What am I?
- 3: In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," what was Scrooge's first name?
- 4: I can travel all around the world just like Santa Claus without ever leaving my corner. What am I?
- 5: What happens every time a bell rings in the film "It's a Wonderful Life"?



CROSSWORD

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The potatoes in this recipe take on the spicy flavours beautifully

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil
- 1 onion chopped
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- 700g potatoes peeled and cut into chunks
- 4 carrots thickly sliced
- 2 parsnips thickly sliced
- 2 tbsp curry paste or powder
- 1 litre /1¾ pints vegetable stock
- 100g red lentils
- a small bunch of fresh coriander roughly chopped
- low-fat yogurt
- naan bread, to serve



Method

Heat the oil in a large pan and cook the onion and garlic over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes until softened, stirring occasionally. Tip in the potatoes, carrots and parsnips, turn up the heat and cook for 6-7 minutes, stirring, until the vegetables are golden.

Stir in the curry paste or powder, pour in the stock and then bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, add the lentils, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the lentils and vegetables are tender and the sauce has thickened.

Stir in most of the coriander, season and heat for a minute or so. Top with yogurt and the rest of the coriander. Serve with naan bread.

PEPPERMINT CREAMS

Simple, creamy, peppermint treats you can make with just a handful of ingredients

Ingredients

- 250g icing sugar
- 1 egg white
- few drops of peppermint essence
- dark chocolate or milk chocolate



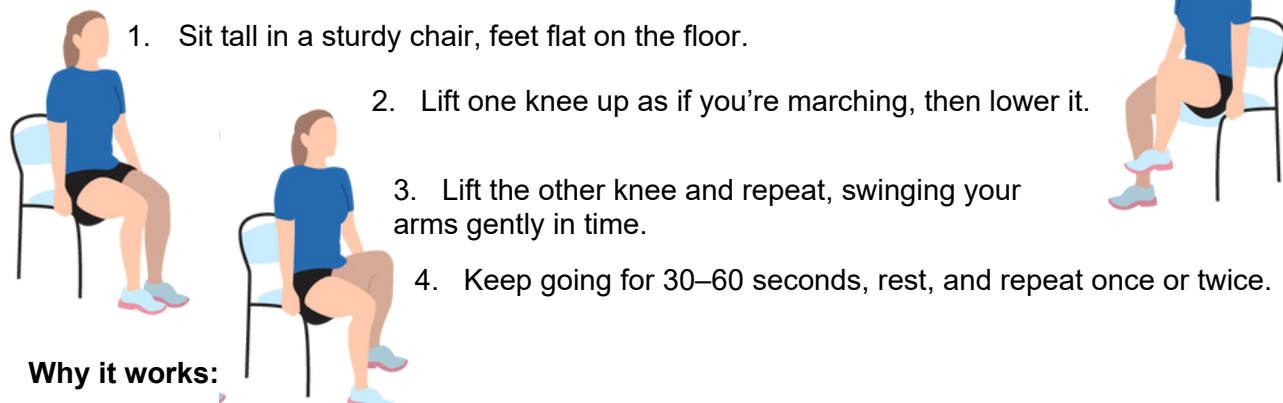
Method

Sieve the icing sugar into a large bowl. Add a little of the egg white and a few drops of the peppermint essence and mix really well. You want the mixture to come together as a soft dough, so keep adding a little egg white until this starts to happen (you might not need to use all of it). Taste the mixture and add more peppermint essence if desired.

Divide the mixture into 20 small balls, then flatten them gently with your fingertips into discs.

Place baking parchment on a large board or tray and space out the discs. Meanwhile, tip the chocolate into a microwavable bowl and heat in 30 second intervals in the microwave until melted, stirring after each blast. Once melted, leave the chocolate to cool for 5-10 mins then carefully dip the peppermint creams in the melted chocolate until they are half coated. Lay them back on the baking parchment to set for 3-4 hours or overnight.

Feeling sluggish and need a quick pep me up? Try this seated marching mini circulation booster



1. Sit tall in a sturdy chair, feet flat on the floor.

2. Lift one knee up as if you're marching, then lower it.

3. Lift the other knee and repeat, swinging your arms gently in time.

4. Keep going for 30–60 seconds, rest, and repeat once or twice.

Why it works:

This gentle movement gets your heart rate up, boosts circulation, loosens stiff joints, and sends more oxygen to your brain and muscles - all helping to shake off that sluggish feeling and give you a burst of energy.

YOUR LETTERS



EVENTS

Disco for over 55s - Tuesday 2 December (6-8pm). Join us for a feel-good festive Disco for over 55s at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane East Finchley N2 8LT. Dust off your dancing shoes and boogie to the best hits from across the decades! Suggested donation: £3. Licenced bar and free sandwiches made by Candlewood House chefs. To book, contact teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call her on 07502 989403

LIVING WELL IN BARNET event - 4 December 2025 (10am-12pm) Join us for a morning of talks and activities focusing on memory, dementia prevention and living well with dementia - including Professor Catherine Loveday who will be sharing the science behind food and memory. Free entry and free refreshments too! Takes place at The John Keble Church (Baden Powell Room) Deans Lane, Edgware HA8 9NT. To register, email fiona.cronin@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 862 0269. Buses that are near to John Keble 221, 240, 292, 303, 384.

Christmas concert and singalong - Monday 15 December (3-5pm). There'll be musical performances, a singalong, mince pies and nibbles, a glass or two of hot spiced apple juice, a raffle, puzzle stall and a chance to buy cards designed by Age UK Barnet's art group. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT It's free but it would be great if you could let us know you're coming - just email: teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call Teresa on 07502 989 403.



Rob Rinder proved to be the perfect guest when he joined Pigeon Post in October for an evening of stories, opinions, inspiration and, of course, laughter in front of a sell-out audience. Interviewed by Pigeon Post interviewer Ed Newman, it was our first Pigeon Post live event

As soon as the barrister turned television star and best-selling author arrived at the Ann Owens Centre, he wanted to know all about the work of Age UK Barnet and, throughout the evening's conversation, he continually cross-referenced the knowledge he'd acquired. Nobody would have been left in any doubt that he was very keen to promote the work done for older people in our borough.

Now, people paid good money to listen to Rob Rinder on the night so we're not going to repeat it all here. Suffice to say, there were plenty of wonderful and sometimes mischievous stories about his education in Barnet, his Jewish upbringing and family history, his short-lived acting career, the legal profession and his views on jury service. Also, his crime fiction books, his time in television including *Strictly Come Dancing* and his absolute passion for art, music and his hero Leonard Bernstein and history. Oh yes, there was also a bit of chat about his good friend Rylan Clark and their memorable trips to Italy and India to make their BAFTA winning series. I'm afraid you had to be there to get the full inside story and gossip.

At the start of the evening, Rob acknowledged that his visit came at a time when there are many challenges for the country and individuals alike. It was obvious that, despite the light-hearted nature of some of his television work, he considers the state of the world very deeply.

"It feels like there are complex and quite dark conversations going on out there," he told the immediately engaged audience. "I'm one of those people thinking about things and perhaps some of you are too. We seem to be scrambling around to discover who we are and finding examples to remind people of the very best of us. "I've just walked into this extraordinary community space that is seeking to invite the broadest community in with one mission - a place of inclusion, a place of healing and, above all, to share the wonderful gifts of the people here. It's about going out into the world and spreading light and goodness. My friends, this place (the Ann Owens Centre) is what Britain is at its core and its heart. It's who we are at our very best. So, thank you for having me, what a delight it is to be here."



Rob knows from experience the difference one person can make to your life. That's how it was for him when he encountered a particular teacher while studying for his A levels at Woodhouse College in North Finchley. He hadn't enjoyed his education much until he met Mrs Grice.

"She just had this extraordinary charismatic capacity to make every single student that came within her orbit believe they had the power and limitless potential to be their best selves," Rob recalled.

"From the moment I met her, I started reading and I haven't stopped since. She had studied politics and modern history at Manchester University and I decided to do the same thing. I followed her journey and I really loved it. It's fascinating what an impact she's had on my life.

"I think community and teaching are so important as I've discovered with people in various parts of the world. It also speaks to the work being done here at Age UK Barnet."

At 47, Rob isn't yet old enough to access Age UK Barnet's services but he was immediately struck by the opportunities provided at the Ann Owens Centre and how important they are to the process of ageing well. "It's a conversation about how to have a better old age," Rob commented. "I noticed in the buffet of information in the centre that this space provides opportunities for people living with dementia and the inevitable experiences of old age. We live at a time when we've rather failed to adjust to the human timeline. When I was young, 55 seemed old but now I have friends in their 70s and 80s and they all have various ways in which they keep themselves culturally and spiritually curious. I think it's important to be open-minded to go into a space and meet new people. That's the sort of thing that will fuel a quality old age.

"One thing I'm looking forward to when I'm older is making it all a lot bigger. I heard somebody on Desert Island Discs saying they might get a smaller flat but that didn't mean they were going to downsize their life. I can also remember watching a documentary about the American fashion editor Diana Vreeland who said she didn't know what age she'd be when she died but that she would be very young.

"I think that state of mind is what matters to me. So, I'm going to go large as I get older, everything will be bigger, I want to take more opportunities and have the chance to meet more people and become more open minded. I think it's about doing the business of ageing well and that's exactly what you're trying to deliver here at Age UK Barnet."



What you will need

Wood slice, Pebbles, Acrylic paint - white, grey, black, paint brush, Glue gun or strong glue, Fine tip black marker, Ribbon

Instructions

Paint the flat surface of the wood slice in a pale grey and let the paint dry. Afterwards paint the lower section in white and dab small white dots to resemble snow falling all over the grey portion. Use the back end of a small paintbrush to dab the white dots.



Paint the pebbles to look like penguins and set aside to dry. You can also follow the tutorial for making these larger. Keep in mind that the baby penguins have grey painted bellies while the adult penguins, also larger in size have white bellies.

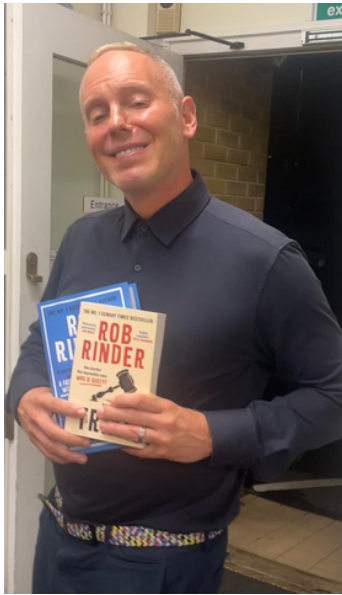


Once the wood slice and pebbles are completely dry, using the hot glue gun or strong glue and glue down the penguin pebbles to the wood slice.



Glue the ribbon to the back for hanging.

STAR-STUDED ANTICS AT AGE UK BARNET



It's been quite the celebrity season for us at Age UK Barnet!

We kicked things off with our very first Pigeon Post Live event, where the brilliant Rob Rinder - barrister, author and TV personality- joined us for an inspiring and entertaining conversation (read all about it on page 8).

Our Silver Sunday celebration was equally dazzling, featuring Strictly Come Dancing star Katya Jones and actor Carolyn Pickles, known for her roles in Emmerdale, The Bill, Broadchurch and the Harry Potter films.

Katya got everyone moving with a fun warm-up session, while Carolyn shared her thoughtful and uplifting reflections on ageing. "Keep telling your stories," she urged the audience.



And to round off the month, our Black History Month event welcomed actor, comedian and author Andi Osho. Andi spoke candidly about her early battles with imposter syndrome, how stand-up comedy helped her find her voice, and how setbacks can build strength. She now stars in the BAFTA-winning BBC drama Blue Lights.



Congratulations to Penny, winner of our flower arranging competition!

Our budding florists were challenged to create an arrangement in an unusual object - and Penny's brilliant display in a Croc shoe stole the show!

A big thank you to Ursula from The Flower Bank for setting such a fun and creative challenge for our flower arranging groups. To join one of our flower arranging sessions, please contact one of our activities team on 020 8203 5040 or email activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk





- 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
- 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.
- **Advice clinics at Chipping Barnet Library** - 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month. The Age UK Barnet advice team will be giving benefit checks, pension credit checks and winter fuel payment advice. Drop in from 10am-1pm and bookable appointments in the afternoon (you need to book during the morning drop in). Speed up the process by bringing rent, service charge and bank statements. Takes place at Chipping Barnet Library, 3 Stapylton Rd, Barnet EN5 4QT
- **Advice Clinic Burnt Oak Library**, 99 Watling Ave, Burnt Oak HA8 0UB - 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month. The clinics are open from 10am-1pm and 2-4pm. To book an appointment, please call us on 0208 432 1417 or email us at laterlifeplanners@ageukbarnet.org.uk
- 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.

*There is a charge for this service

MAKE CHRISTMAS SPARKLE ON A BUDGET



We asked a few of our activity participants for their tips

"Swap expensive gift wrap for brown paper and ribbons, or reuse last year's cards as tags. It's thrifty, sustainable, and charmingly old-fashioned." *John*

"Personal gifts go down much better than pricey ones I think. A framed photo, a knitted scarf, or a homemade chutney will mean far more than something off the shelf. Local charity shops and festive markets are also treasure troves for unique finds." *Lesley*



"I make homemade decorations: dried orange slices, pinecones from a local park, and a few fairy lights can make any room glow" *Joan*



"For festive food, plan ahead and keep it simple - one showstopping dish, plenty of veg, and maybe a few homemade mince pies. Invite friends or neighbours to share the cooking (and the washing up!)"

Rosemarie





Writer Lee Janogly, an 86 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, the talk turns to death but in true Lee style, it's less doom and gloom and more giggles and gallows humour.

"I've just come back from a funeral," said Sheila. "It was wonderful, everyone was so happy." We looked at her enquiringly. After all, it was rather a strange thing to say.

"It was my horrible neighbour of 60 years," she said, accepting a cup of coffee from Laila and a slice of her sticky honey cake. "He caused nothing but trouble for the whole street, and we all hated him."

"Why did you go to the funeral then?" I asked.

"Because his sister, who I really like, needed a lift to the cemetery as she doesn't drive. She hated him as well and we amused ourselves on the way home inventing suitable inscriptions for his tombstone, such as 'Gladly missed' and 'To know him was to dislike him!'"

This invariably led to our little group inventing what they would want engraved on their tombstones and someone recalled the old inscription used by Spike Milligan, 'I told you I was ill!' And that started them off:

"I knew this would happen!"

"She made the best Yorkshire puddings."

"This isn't funny, let me out NOW!"

"I wanted a pyramid."

"Which one is the brake pedal again?"

"I'm not having any of that," said Barbara. "It's cremation for me. Have you seen the price of coffins?"

"Don't mention coffins," said Jess, "that's the last thing I need." (I knew she had a sense of humour)

After more coffee, and as this was such a cheerful subject, the conversation turned to what music we'd like played at our funerals, eschewing the old standards, 'My Way' by Frank Sinatra, and the predictable 'Time to say Goodbye' by Andrea Bocelli. This subject was abandoned when the only thing we could think of was 'Another one bites the dust' by Queen.

Someone suggested we would probably have to die before all this happened and, as usual with these discussions, the best way to achieve this degenerated into the typical farcical nonsense produced by any group of women after too much coffee - or alcohol:

"I'm going to die on a Mediterranean cruise, so they can chuck me overboard to save on funeral expenses."

"I'd like to collapse on the golf course like Bing Crosby - or was it Bob Hope? - I can never remember."

"Drunk, very drunk, sloshed - just a couple of glasses more than usual, actually."

"I'm going into hospital for a facelift and not come round. It's under an anaesthetic for me!"

"Under no circumstances!"

"Under Brad Pitt."

"Under a spreading chestnut tree."

"Underneath the arches."

"By the light of the silvery moon."

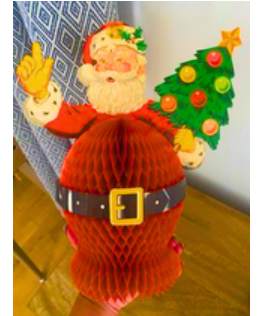
"Old Man River."

Deely said to me, "I'll write your obituary if you like." I answered indignantly, "Over my dead body!"

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



VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS



1940s CHRISTMAS



1960s CHRISTMAS



1970s CHRISTMAS





Since retiring, our gardening columnist Kevin loves spending time in the garden and his allotment. He normally lets us know about what he's been up to but this time he's on a mission to defend the pleasures of gardening, following Lee Janogly's column *Me and My (Very) Old Friends* in our last issue, where she confessed her indifference to gardens, plants, and flowers!

Your aversion to sunshine is highly commendable. In a world obsessed with looking tanned and Vitamin D, you remind us of the importance of shade and SPF 1000. So after the long, hot, dry and very sunny summer we have had this year - I can feel your sunburned despair from here.

But before you condemn the noble art of gardening to the compost heap of our endeavours, allow me to put forward the case for the defence (armed only with a trowel and a slightly leaky watering can).

You say you don't know one flower from another - daffodils are yellow, tulips aren't. Fair enough. But that's like saying, "I don't know one song from another - some are loud, some aren't." You're missing the melody, the rhythm - the whole enjoyment of it!



Gardening isn't just a hobby, it's character-building. It teaches patience, humility, and the ability to swear fluently under your breath when knock a tray of seedlings over or when the slugs have eat your prized plants. Sure, it might give you backache, but so does working in the kitchen for hours when entertaining and at least gardening gives you tomatoes.

As for flowers as gifts - yes, they die. But so does chocolate. At least with flowers you get a few days of fragrant beauty and the gift of a plant can last for years; chocolate tends to quickly vanish the same evening, usually around 8.45pm with a cup of tea and a sense of guilt.

Your Busy Lizzie story did make me laugh though. Every gardener knows the creeping horror of the plant that thrives, especially if it's an unwelcome weed. We long for things to grow, then panic when they do. My allotment neighbour once nurtured a single pumpkin plant that colonised half of Barnet - he's still missing a wheelbarrow!

So I get it, gardening isn't for everyone. But for some of us, there's nothing better than dirt under the nails, birds singing in the background, and the smug glow of knowing we've grown something that looks or tastes better than you can buy in a shop.

Still, if you ever tire of looking out of the window at rhodedoddlums (or laburnums, for that matter), come and visit the allotment site. I'll be the one crouched behind the dahlias, hiding from my own success.

A few jobs for November / December

- **Gentle tidying.** Sweeping paths, clearing fallen leaves from ponds, or pruning back any damaged branches after storms. These small efforts keep the garden safe and tidy without being too demanding.



- **Add some festive cheer.** Twinkling fairy lights in trees or shrubs can bring a little sparkle outside, or even a few lanterns can create a warm, festive glow.

- **Plan ahead.** As the year draws to a close, now is the perfect time for reflection and planning. Consider what thrived in your garden this year, what changes you'd like to make, and what seeds or plants to try next year.

- Finally, now that there is a limited amount of daylight hours we can spend in the garden, why not pick a bunch of interesting evergreen foliage like holly, ivy, fir tree and stems with vibrant berries like Pyracantha for a festive indoor display. You could also make up a bouquet to take when visiting a friend!





Hallo Pigeon Post readers, I hope you are all well. Summer is well and truly behind us and I must confess that I miss lying on Charlotte's terrace for hours on end soaking up the sun's rays. However, after days of moral blackmail and looking soulful, Charlotte has capitulated and switched on the underfloor heating which is an acceptable substitute for sunshine.

The period between now and the Festive Season is fraught with danger and anxiety for the four-legged community. The dreaded fireworks at Halloween and Guy Fawkes and New Year. Hopefully, most of the fireworks will have exploded or fizzled out by the time you read this article. I hate these 'festivities' but hope all pet owners keep their furry friends indoors. Relaxing, soothing music always helps as well as lots of cuddles and suitable, edible treats.

Cats do 'their own thing' but dogs need regular walks and exercise. If you or anyone you know is finding it increasingly difficult to get out and about with a pet, there is help available. The Cinnamon Trust (phone 01736 757900) can provide volunteer dog walkers.

Anyway, enough musings (miaowsings?) from me. The underfloor heating requires further inspection. Oh, I almost forgot.... The musical 'Cats' is coming to the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre next summer. Charlotte is counting the hours until public booking opens.

Love and purrs, Suki your cat correspondent (aka Cat Moss)

OLDER AND BETTER

A VISIT TO AN ART GALLERY COULD BE JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED!



According to a study from King's College London, looking at original paintings in a gallery doesn't just lift your spirits - it can actually help relieve stress and boost your immune system, meaning fewer potential colds this winter!

MY SMARTWATCH SAVED MY LIFE



Two years ago, cookery class regular Roger had a health scare – and since then he's on a mission to let the world know how this simple technology could save your life.

"It was a Sunday morning when I noticed something unusual. I felt far more tired and lethargic than normal. At first, I dismissed it as nothing serious - just a slow start to the day. I sat down to have breakfast, still feeling I wasn't myself.

"Both my Apple Watch and Iphone issued clear alerts. It gave me a warning to get medical attention. My normal resting heart rate is around 50. That morning, it was reading 130!

"I followed that guidance and arranged to see my GP. After undergoing a series of tests, I was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation - a heart rhythm condition that, if left untreated can significantly increase the risk of a stroke.

"What strikes me most is that without that technology, I might have ignored the early warning signs. The follow up from the NHS has been very thorough with regular check ups and just taking two blood thinners a day which have no side effects."

Further information

Smart watches can record extensive health and activity data. There are various types of smartwatch, fitness tracker, hybrid, and dedicated heart-rate monitor.

It's worth doing some research using a reliable source such as Which? magazine.



If you have enjoyed this newsletter, or have any suggestions, please let us know. Just drop us a line at Pigeon Post, Age UK Barnet, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT



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1	2	3	9	4	5	6	8	7



Funny Riddles Answers

- 1) SANTA
- 2) MILK & BISCUITS
- 3) EBENEZER
- 4) A STAMP
- 5) AN ANGEL GETS ITS WINGS



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