

PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved
September/October 2026



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Hello

Hope you're all keeping well and looking after yourselves in the heat. Welcome to our autumn issue of Pigeon Post - we're delighted to introduce our expert panel, who share their wisdom and guidance throughout this issue. Joining them for the first time is Dr Wakana Teranaka, who'll be answering your health questions in our new Ask the Doctor column.

If there's something you've always wanted to ask, please do get in touch.

Dr Teranaka will also be speaking at our Silver Sunday celebration at Middlesex University on Sunday 6 October. Last year over 800 people joined us for music, dance, workshops, health checks, talks and free refreshments - we'd love to see even more of you there this time.

Hope you enjoy the issue.

Helen Newman
Chief Executive
Age UK Barnet

Meet our expert panel - sharing trusted advice throughout this issue.

Professor Catherine Loveday



Professor of Neuropsychology at the University of Westminster

Doctor Wakana Teranaka



Senior registrar in Geriatric medicine at Barnet Hospital, and the British Geriatrics Society regional co-chair for London and South East region

Kato Lambrechts



Acute dietitian at the Lister Hospital in Stevenage



Karen Williamson
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Teresa Gallagher
Designer



We are all aware that eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables (including beans) a day is the foundation of a healthy diet, says dietitian Kato. “Yet only about one in three adults manage this, partly due to the high cost, as well as not having enough time, confidence or skills to cook with vegetables.” One solution is to consider using more frozen and canned vegetables when cooking. Not only are they cheaper and will cause less waste, but they save cooking time because they have already been heated or blanched, or are already chopped. Most importantly, the nutritional content of frozen and canned fruit, vegetables and beans are similar to or sometimes even higher than their fresh counterparts, with only small amounts of Vitamin C or Vitamin A being lost in some vegetables due to canning or blanching. Here are three recipes to get you started.

Fish and green soy bean (edamame) bean salad (serves 2)

Mix together in a bowl 1½ tbsp soy sauce, ½ tsp ginger, minced or powdered, 1tbsp rice vinegar, 2tsp sesame oil and 1 tsp sugar. Pour this dressing onto 250g cooked basmati rice (80g dry rice – if you want to make more, store the rest in the fridge for 3-4 days for another dish). Defrost 2 pollock fillets (or use fresh white fish fillets) and rub with 2tbsp sesame oil and 1tsp sesame seeds per fillet. Heat a non-stick pan and fry fish fillets on one side for 2 minutes. Add 1tbsp soy sauce, 2tbsp brown sugar to the pan and cook until the mixture starts to caramelise and glaze the fish. Flip over carefully and cook for another minute. Put 120g frozen edamame beans in a microwave bowl, add 50ml water, and steam for 3 minutes. Drain the beans and add to the rice with ¼ cucumber, diced, 4 sliced radishes, 1 finely chopped red chilli, toss all together. Serve the rice salad topped with the fish fillet.



Lentil and spinach curry (serves four, left-overs freeze well)

Dice 1 yellow onion finely and gently fry in 1 tbsp vegetable oil in a frying pan until soft. Add 2 diced garlic cloves and fry for 1 minute. (OR add 1 cup frozen diced onion and 2 tsp frozen diced garlic, available at most south Asian shops). Stir in 1 tbsp of your favourite curry paste from a bottle (Balti, Tikka Masala - the remainder can keep in an open bottle in the fridge for up to 2 months), and gently fry for 1 minute. Stir in 1 can chopped tomatoes, 150ml vegetable stock (1/2 cube) and 1 can green lentils (drained). Bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in 400g frozen leaf spinach and heat through. Remove from the heat and stir in 20g fresh chopped coriander. Serve with rice or naan bread.

Broccoli and sweetcorn pasta bake (serves 4, leftovers keep well in the fridge)

Cook 300g dried penne (or any other shape) according to pack instructions. After 10 minutes cooking, add 350g frozen broccoli pieces plus 200g frozen sweetcorn, and cook for a further 2 minutes, until the pasta is cooked and the broccoli is tender. Reserve 150ml of pasta water in a bowl. Drain the pasta and vegetables, then return to the pan. Pour the reserved water over the pasta, add a 200g tub of cream/soft cheese (and a can of drained tuna if you want a balanced casserole with protein), and the zest of ½ lemon. Stir well until the cheese melts. Sprinkle with 50g cheddar cheese, toss over low heat until the cheese melts. Add pepper to taste and serve sprinkled with 50g cheddar cheese.





Retirement can feel exciting for some and unsettling for others- research shows 32% of people feel positive about it, while 47% feel negative. That's because work gives us routine, identity and social connection, and losing that suddenly can be tough.

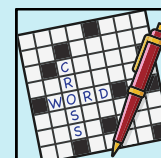
In a recent talk for us, Professor Catherine Loveday shared research that showed why hobbies make a huge difference. People with one hobby in midlife have a 19% lower risk of disabling dementia, and those with multiple hobbies see a 23% reduction. Arts, culture and physical activity are even linked with slower biological ageing.

Why? Because hobbies keep us socially connected (which can increase survival rates from disease by 50%), stimulate the brain, reduce stress and give us meaning and purpose. Loneliness, meanwhile, is as harmful as smoking 11 cigarettes a day.

Cooking, knitting, puzzles, learning a language, playing an instrument, gardening, art, going to museums - anything that challenges your brain, lifts your mood or connects you with others - all count.

Here's a simple checklist for choosing the right hobby. If a hobby ticks even two or three, you're on the right track:

- ✓ Gets you moving or lifts your mood
- ✓ Makes you feel socially connected
- ✓ Gives you purpose or a sense of achievement
- ✓ Makes you feel happy or content
- ✓ Provides a mental challenge
- ✓ Offers rest or peace
- ✓ Connects you with the wider world
- ✓ Gives you moments of flow — that “lost in the moment” feeling



THE AGE UK BARNET VINYL CLUB HAS GOT OFF TO A ROCKING START



Volunteer Phil Hilton hosts our Vinyl Club and lets us know how sharing and talking about music has become a truly life-enhancing pleasure for all involved.

At the start of the year, a member of the Age UK Barnet team had the idea of a music-listening group and my wife, who also works there, suggested this might be a constructive use for the countless hours I waste on rock-based books, podcasts and documentaries.

It's instantly become a magical space where people bring Andean pan pipes, original Beatles singles and Eighties dance hits. We listen together, all the way through (unless the owner signals they've heard enough). If they don't have vinyl, Spotify is always on hand as backup.

Every track evokes both an era and a specific memory. The conversation is a mix of personal recollection and living history. Someone told us how disruptive the battling Mods and Rockers were in her dad's cafe, someone else told us they'd attended Eric Clapton's 21st birthday party. One regular brought in an immaculate, alphabetical index of all his incredible rarities.

I start each session with a half-hour PowerPoint presentation accompanied by some tracks. I try to find a theme that allows us to cover different genres across different decades: it's a very mixed group with a real variety of ages and tastes. We've had: the politics of long hair in the 1960s, two very different songs from Harlem, hit albums made by people who couldn't stand each other...

When that unmistakable vinyl crackle leads us into another song, everyone is immersed in the moment and experiencing the music together. It's a very special collective human pleasure. Each track creates a new mood and evokes a new set of emotions. And if I place the needle badly, even better.



Vinyl Club takes place every Tuesday at 5pm at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. To come along, just email activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 07379 331807.

A simple guide to beautiful flowers

**What you need:**

- Fresh flowers
- A clean vase or container
- Flower food (if available)
- Scissors or flower shears
- Greenery (leaves, ferns, etc.)

**1. Prepare your flowers**

Remove any leaves that will fall below the water line. Trim stems at an angle (about 2–3 cm) to help flowers drink water.

**2. Prepare your vase**

Make sure your vase is clean. Fill it with fresh, cool water and add flower food if you have it.

**3. Create a shape with greenery**

Add greenery first to create the shape and structure of your arrangement. This is your foundation.

**4. Add focal flowers**

Place your largest or most beautiful flowers in the centre or slightly off-centre. These are your focal points.

**5. Add more flowers**

Add medium and smaller flowers around the focal flowers. Vary the heights for a natural and balanced

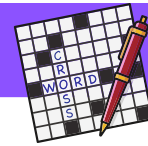
**6. Step back & adjust**

Step back and look at your arrangement from all sides. Adjust stems, height and spacing until it looks just right!

Tips for success:

- Use odd numbers of flowers for a natural look.
- Vary the heights and angles of stems.
- Change the water every 2 days.
- Keep your flowers in a cool spot, away from direct sun.





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Across

- 1 Retained (4)
- 3 Drive to succeed (8)
- 9 Remedy for all ills (7)
- 10 Confronted (5)
- 11 Accumulate (5)
- 12 Most uncommon (6)
- 14 Large seas (6)
- 16 Little angel (6)
- 19 Castor and Pollux (6)
- 21 Idiot (5)
- 24 Go away (5)
- 25 Dried seedless grape (7)
- 26 Former sweetheart (3,5)
- 27 Leave out (4)

Down

- 1 Australian marsupial (8)
- 2 Penne, rigatoni, etc. (5)
- 4 Remembrance (6)
- 5 Deduce (5)
- 6 Narrow-edged tooth (7)
- 7 Naked (4)
- 8 Jail (6)
- 13 Plentiful (8)
- 15 Green gem (7)
- 17 Lowly (6)
- 18 Chinese dumplings (3,3)
- 20 Perfectly suited (5)
- 22 Domain (5)
- 23 In addition (4)



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Which is the English language newspaper with the largest daily circulation?
2. When did Four Weddings and a Funeral premiere?
3. What is the chemical symbol for cobalt?
4. In which 1963 classic film did Charles Bronson appear?
5. Who was the British monarch at the time of the Abdication Crisis?
6. What is the tallest type of tree?
7. Who is Bibendum better known as?
8. In which year did the Battle of Leipzig occur?
9. What is the main ingredient in a quiche Lorraine?
10. The Velocipede was a nineteenth-century prototype of what?

CROSSWORD

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Healthy Eating Late Summer Recipe

Nourishing • Low in Fat • Easy to Digest • Full of Flavour

Late summer is the perfect time for fresh produce – enjoy the best of the season in this healthy, tasty meal.



LOW FAT MINCE & SUMMER VEGETABLE RAGU

with wholewheat pasta

A hearty, comforting and low fat ragu packed with late summer vegetables. High in fibre, low in saturated fat and full of flavour.



Serves 2



Prep time 15 mins



Cook time 30–35 mins



High in fibre



INGREDIENTS

For the ragu

- 250g extra lean beef mince (5% fat or less)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 courgette, diced
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 1 celery stick, finely chopped
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried basil
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

To serve

- 150g wholewheat pasta (dry weight)
- Fresh parsley or basil (optional)



METHOD

- 1 Cook the pasta**
Cook the wholewheat pasta according to pack instructions. Drain and set aside.
- 2 Brown the mince**
Heat the olive oil in a large non-stick pan. Add the mince and cook over a medium heat for 5–7 minutes until browned, breaking it up with a spoon.
- 3 Add the vegetables**
Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes. Add the garlic, carrot, celery and red pepper. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 4 Simmer**
Stir in the courgette, chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, oregano and basil. Season with pepper (and a little salt if needed). Bring to the boil, then simmer gently for 15–20 minutes until the vegetables are tender.
- 5 Serve**
Toss the ragu with the pasta and serve hot, sprinkled with fresh parsley or basil.

GOOD TO KNOW



Low in saturated fat
Using extra lean mince keeps this dish heart-friendly.



High in fibre
Wholewheat pasta and plenty of vegetables support good digestion.



Rich in nutrients
Packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants to support immune health.



Easy to digest
Soft, well-cooked vegetables make this meal gentle on the stomach.

PERFECT PAIRINGS

Serve with a side salad and a squeeze of lemon.



TIPS FOR EASY COOKING

- Chop vegetables the night before and store in the fridge.
- Use frozen chopped vegetables to save time.
- Make extra and freeze portions for quick meals another day.



MAKE IT YOURS

- Swap beef mince for turkey mince or quorn mince.
- Add spinach or kale in the last 5 minutes for extra greens.
- Top with a little grated reduced fat cheese before baking if you like.



NUTRITION PER SERVING (approx.)

Calories: 430 kcal
Protein: 30g
Fat: 9g
Saturates: 2g
Carbohydrate: 55g
Fibre: 8g
Salt: 0.6g

Low in fat



Good food, made simply – to help you stay well, strong and independent.

Enjoy every bite!



EXERCISE

CALF MUSCLES – THE KEY TO GOOD BRAIN HEALTH!

It's commonly known that regular exercise lowers your risk of dementia, but scientists have now found that stronger leg muscles – and particularly calf muscles – are a good sign of better brain health. In fact, some studies suggest that weaker calves could be linked to a higher risk of developing dementia.

This is because of how the body and brain are connected. When you move your legs (through exercise such as walking, running, or squats), the soleus pumps blood back up towards the heart and brain. This blood carries oxygen and nutrients, helping to keep the brain sharp.

If your calf muscles are weak then that pump isn't as effective, meaning circulation slows down. Over time, this means the brain isn't getting the oxygen-rich blood that it needs, which may affect how well it functions.

Do the following exercises whenever you have a chance - while watching TV, reading or sitting at the kitchen table. Start gently and build up gradually..

1 SEATED HEEL RAISES

Sit upright with your feet flat and knees bent. Keeping your toes on the floor, slowly lift both heels as high as you comfortably can. Pause, then lower. To make it harder, make the move slower and more deliberate.



Do: 10–15 times.



3 STANDING HEEL RAISES

Stand tall behind a chair or near a wall for support, keep your feet hip-width apart and slowly rise up onto the balls of your feet, lifting your heels as high as you comfortably can. Pause for a moment at the top, then lower your heels back down with control.



Repeat for 10–15 repetitions.



SILVER SUNDAY

a celebration of ageing well in our community

TALKS

MUSIC & DANCE

INFORMATION
STANDS

**SUNDAY 4
OCTOBER
2026**

HEALTH
CHECKS

FREE
REFRESHMENTS

FREE

Kindly sponsored by



**11am-
3pm**

**SAVE
THE
DATE!**

**Middlesex University
The Burroughs, NW4 4BT**



Each month former journalist Ed Newman has a lovely chat with a Barnet resident and shares their story with the rest of us. Today he chats with our finance manager Carole Cooper about her family history, her travel adventures and the importance of staying strong as we get older.

October is Black History Month and, as usual, there will be a number of 'not to be missed' events taking place at the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane, East Finchley.

Some people question the need for this annual celebration but one person in no doubt about its value is Age UK Barnet's Finance Manager, Carole Cooper. In the 1950s, Carole's grandparents were part of the Windrush generation who travelled by boat from Jamaica and other Caribbean countries to play their part in the continuing rebuild of Britain after the devastation of World War Two

At first, they only planned to be here for five years before returning to Jamaica. However, having got themselves established in jobs and buying a house in Birmingham, they decided to stay.

"When my grandparents first came to England, they left my mum and her siblings in Jamaica with their grandparents," Carole tells Pigeon Post. "It was an adventure for them and they thought they would find a better life for their family here. It was hard at first, they worked in factories and it wasn't easy to find somewhere to live because there were those awful signs saying no dogs, no blacks and no Irish.



Carole on solo adventure to Vietnam

"They obviously suffered a lot of racism but they persevered, stayed and eventually managed to buy a house in Birmingham. I think they'd been in the country about three years when they were able to send for their children who would be my mum, aunty and uncle. My mum was about twelve when she came over on the boat which took three weeks to get here. She can remember she went to secondary school soon after arriving.

"My grandparents, along with a lot of Caribbean people, were over to help rebuild the country. They took on so many jobs like bus drivers, train drivers, nurses and cleaners, all vital to the infrastructure. People need to remember

what black people did for this country after the war. That's why Black History Month is so important, especially when learning about the contributions of black Britons are still not routinely part of the curriculum"

The family became well established in the Birmingham area and that's where Carole herself was born in the mid 1960s. She doesn't remember experiencing much racism when she was growing up. Indeed, with so many Jamaican, Indian and Irish people in the neighbourhood, white British were very much in the minority. "However, my brothers along with a lot of black boys in Birmingham would get stopped and searched by the police on a regular basis, for no apparent reason."

Three ways in which Caribbean culture started to establish itself were through sport, music and food. Carole admits she had no interest in the cricket her uncles played with workmates from the factories but music and food were a different matter.

"I was very much into the music scene when I was growing up and I still love reggae and soul music," says Carole. "Black music has had a huge influence on Britain over the years. Look at how many people attend the Notting Hill Carnival every year. There's also an event in Margate that I attended this year which has been playing black music for over 25 years."



One significant figure in Black British culture is the actor/comedian Sir Lenny Henry, who has been rightly acknowledged for his huge contribution to the country, particularly for his work with Comic Relief. Like Carole, he was among the first generation of his Jamaican family to be born in Britain, in his case the Midlands town of Dudley. He was just 16 when he became a big hit with his impressions on the New Faces talent show on ITV. However, as Carole points out, his act didn't always go down too well with his fellow Caribbeans.

"When he was young, Lenny Henry used to poke fun at black people," says Carole. "He even appeared on the Black and White Minstrel Show, which he's since said he's ashamed of doing. So, some people didn't like him back then but others did because he was a success. I can remember my mum would always call us saying 'come on, there's a black person on the telly'. Whatever, he did when he first started, Lenny Henry's more than made up for it with his achievements since and proved that he gets black culture."

Carole's nan and grandad with siblings in Jamaica.

Carole's own career choice was shaped by the fact she was always very good with figures. After school, she started studying to be an accountant, determined that she would make the sort of money denied to her parents and grandparents' generations. She quickly showed her acumen in the job but, despite that, there were still some barriers placed in her way.

"At some of the companies I worked for, I was the only black person there," Carole recalls. "I was definitely treated differently to my white peers. That made me feel uncomfortable and sometimes I left as a result. I can remember one time when there were eight roles at the next level up available to accounts clerks like me. We all got interviews and they all got jobs but I didn't, even though some of them had failed their exams and I'd passed. When I was 29, I moved to Palmers Green and I'd still find myself the only black person in an office but I was better received. One way or another, I've always felt I had to work that bit harder to get on."

Carole has never been one to stand still. She loves travelling on her own and has experienced the thrill of riding pillion on a motorbike in Northern Vietnam and taking a driverless taxi in America. The place she loves more than anywhere though is Italy and she's even attended a language school in Florence to help her improve her Italian.

"I love all things Italian – the culture, the fashion, the architecture, the food and the people, even if some of them can be a little blunt!" laughs Carole.

She is also a qualified personal trainer. Having reached a certain age herself, she wanted to particularly help women coming through the menopause.

"I realised just how important resistance training and working with weights could be for women's fitness and well-being," she says. "It can really help with falls prevention and conditions such as osteoporosis. If you haven't got weights, you can start with simple squats and even chair exercises are better than nothing. It's very important for women over fifty, especially as it can keep your weight under control. At the moment, it's hard to juggle accounting and personal training work but I hope to get back to it in the future and help more women."



**Carole -
proving that
staying strong
is the secret
to ageing well**



HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF BOWEL CANCER

Former dietitian Caroline Morrison on science-backed diet and lifestyle strategies

Bowel cancer is the UK's fourth most common cancer. While some risks - like age and genetics - can't be changed, research shows around half of cases could be prevented through healthier lifestyle choices.

Diet - A plant-rich, high-fibre diet is strongly linked to lower risk. Aim for five portions of fruit and veg daily, choose wholegrains, include beans and lentils, and limit red and processed meat. Use small amounts of unsaturated oils.



Weight & movement - Being active reduces risk. Aim for 30 minutes of activity five times a week - or start with 10 minutes and build up. Small changes, like getting off the bus a stop early, really help. Wearing a fitness monitor can be motivating too.



Alcohol and smoking - Both increase bowel cancer risk. Keep alcohol to no more than 14 units a week, with at least two alcohol-free days. Smoking raises the chance of bowel polyps, which can develop into cancer.

These steps are all supported by strong scientific evidence - and even small changes can make a meaningful difference.



SCAMS UPDATE SUPERMARKET SCAMS

Distraction thefts in supermarket car parks

Shoppers in Barnet have reported distraction thefts while loading shopping or returning trolleys. Offenders may work in pairs - one engages you with questions about parking, directions or local info while the other steals a purse or wallet from your car. Stay alert:

- Keep your purse or wallet on you until you leave.
- Never leave valuables on the seat while loading shopping.
- If someone approaches you unexpectedly, stay aware of your surroundings.
- Report suspicious behaviour to supermarket staff or police.



Beware of bag dipping

Thieves are also targeting handbags left in trolleys or baskets. They can remove purses or valuables quickly and without being noticed.

Keep bags secure:

- Don't leave your handbag unattended, even briefly.
- Keep it closed and with you at all times.

For a free one hour consultation to reduce your risk of being scammed, contact our scams prevention service on 020 8129 7615 or 020 8129 7627 to arrange a session.

ASK THE DOCTOR

Q&A



In a new column for Pigeon Post, Doctor Wakana Teranaka, a senior registrar in geriatric medicine at Barnet Hospital, answers all your burning questions and about health, medicine and treatment.

Q Do I need to continue taking medications prescribed 10 years ago?

A This depends on what the medication is for! If this is for heart failure which is ongoing, the answer is likely yes, but if they are pain medications for arthritis you've had surgery for since and have less pain, then the answer is no.

There are usually three reasons why people take medications: (1) improving symptoms such as pain, constipation, continence issues; (2) long term benefit from a life-long condition, such as heart failure, diabetes, high blood pressure; (3) managing the risk of complications that might occur in the future, such as blood thinners after a 'mini stroke'. If your medication doesn't fit into one of these categories, or you don't know that they are for, please ask your GP or GP pharmacist to check your medications. They can do something called a 'medicines reconciliation' and check with you how you are getting on.

Q How can I stop food from sticking in my throat?

A This is a common problem and there are lots of reasons why food could be sticking in your throat. Is it better when the food is more moist? Is it better when the morsel is smaller? Is there a problem with your chewing or swallowing? How are your teeth, dentures, or the fit of your dentures? Do you have problems with drinks too? Do you choke or cough when you swallow?

A simple change to the moisture level of your food, or changing the size of each mouthful might help. For those with a dry mouth, it may be a side effect of some of your medications, particularly those that improve an overactive bladder, so it is worth asking your GP about this. You can also try something called 'artificial saliva' to lubricate the inside of your mouth.

Muscles used to swallow are the same as muscles all over your body, and as you get older these get weaker and coordinate less well.

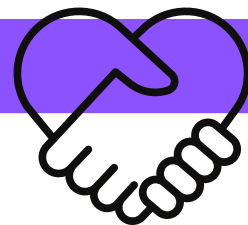
In more serious cases, where there is a risk that what you eat or drink is going the wrong way and into your windpipe rather than gullet, you may need to see a swallow specialist called a speech and language therapist (SALT).

Send in your questions to Ask The Doctor, Age UK Barnet, Oak Lane, N2 8LT or email teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk



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.
- Our **Enabling Connections Service** offers short term volunteer-led befriending to help rebuild confidence in older people who may have become isolated and disconnected. Phone 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
- **Dementia day clubs*** for people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Phone 020 8203 5040.
- **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.

*There is a charge for this service

EVENTS

Silver Sunday 2026 – Sunday 4 October 2026 (11am-3pm) Age UK Barnet's much-loved celebration will be held again at Middlesex University, The Burroughs NW4 4BT. Join us for a joyful day packed with music, dance, workshops, health checks, talks plus free refreshments and plenty of chances to connect, celebrate and feel part of our vibrant Barnet community. More details coming soon - but for now, pop the date in your diary. For more info, contact salima.jiwa@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 8203 5040.

Black History Month celebration – Monday 26 October (2-4pm) at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane N2 8LT. Join us to celebrate the music, food, stories and culture of African Caribbean life. To register, contact Teresa on teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 07502 989 403

OLDER AND BETTER

A GREATER VOCABULARY



In a landmark study by researchers at MIT and Massachusetts General Hospital, participants aged 10 to 71 were given a battery of cognitive tests. Vocabulary performance peaked between ages 60 and 70. The researchers noted that this finding surprised even them, and it's been replicated in numerous subsequent studies.

Writer Lee Janogly, an 87 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 her friend has a fit of the grumps.



You just know when my friend, Jessica is in a bad mood just by her general demeanour; thin lips pressed together, narrowed eyes darting around as if to say, “Don’t mess with me today, okay!” Admittedly her chronic arthritis does sometimes play up in the cold weather, but that’s no reason to take it out on everyone else.

Her ire one day was directed at the hapless waiter in the recently opened restaurant, ‘Bistro!’ in the High Street, that Nancy and I wanted to try out, and Jessica opted to accompany us. The young staff wore T-shirts emblazoned with the words ‘Aaah, Bistro!’ - which only those of a certain age would recognise as a pun on an advert for a gravy seasoning.

Once seated, a cheerful waiter approached our table.

“Hello ladies, can I bring the menu for yourselves?”

Jessica winced. As a former English teacher for many years, any lapses of grammar, particularly involving reflective pronouns, caused her much anguish.

“It’s ‘can I bring the menu for you’,” she corrected.

He looked puzzled. “No, it’s okay, I know what’s on it.”

Jessica studied the limited menu. “What on earth do ‘surf’ or ‘turf’ mean?”

I explained that the fish dishes were under the heading ‘Surf’ and the meat under ‘Turf’.

She frowned, exasperated. “I’ll have the sea bass - but without all the fiddly bits.”

The waiter looked a bit dubious as to what the ‘fiddly bits’ could be but smiled with a cheerful “No worries”, and went off to comply.

“What does he mean, ‘no worries’?” said Jessica irritably. “Is he indicating that something I say is likely to cause him some emotional trauma?”

Well, if he’s not, he should be, I thought. Fortunately, the fish was to Jessica’s liking and the meal passed without incident. I called the waiter and said, “Please could you bring the bill for ourselves” and she glared at me.

Jessica’s grumpy mood carried over to the following day when our little group met at Pauline’s for our usual coffee meeting. “Can’t you control that bloody dog!” she snapped, as Pauline’s spaniel, Johann Sebastian Bark (known as Yoyo to everyone, except, apparently, himself!) kept jumping up and yapping.

“Don’t shout at him,” said Pauline, “he’s neurodiverse and on anti-depressants.”

“So am I,” countered Jessica, “and they’re obviously not working for either of us! I don’t know what the doctor’s given me, but they’re useless.”

“He probably prescribed a gazebo,” said Barbara, “on the assumption that if you think it’s going to work it probably will.”

“It’s placebo!” said Jessica crossly.

“Oh placebo,” said Deely enjoying winding Jessica up. “I saw him at the Royal Opera House, lovely voice. He was with that other tenor, what’s his name?”

“Pavlova,” said Nancy. “He sang that beautiful aria, ‘Pomodoro Tortellini’ from Rigatoni alla Carbonara by Gordini Ramazzi.”

“That’s the one!” cried Deely, clasping her hands to her chest with exaggerated ecstasy.

“I prefer ballet,” said Laila “especially that Swan in the Lake. The music is so beautiful, does anyone know who composed it?”

“I think it was Barry Manilow,” said Barbara.

Jessica snorted and stood up. “You’re all being stupid - I’m going home,” and stormed out. Best let her sleep it off, we all agreed.

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



We asked out activity goers what hobbies they had as a child and what they loved about them



"Climbing trees - I loved the feeling of freedom and being up high where no one could find me." - John



"Skipping with my friends. We'd make up rhymes and laugh for hours - it was pure joy." - Mavis



"Riding my bike everywhere. It felt like my first taste of independence." - Syd



"I just loved drawing and colouring - I could disappear into my own little world for an afternoon." - Peter



"Playing football in the street and playing marbles in the school playground. I'll never forget winning my friend's best marble." - Carol

"Knitting with my gran. I loved the rhythm of it and the pride of making something myself." - June



"Making scrapbooks. I liked collecting bits and pieces – especially when we went on holiday to." - Deborah



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 this time he's getting excited about a local project that's encouraging us to create mini wildflower meadows

Along with some of my fellow allotmenters and especially our bee keeper I've signed up to a lovely local project, Barnet Mini



Meadow Movement and thought that you might be interested too.

The aim is to turn a small patch of your garden, pot on a balcony, window box or any small outdoor space into a pretty haven of flowers for bees and butterflies. That's the idea behind the Mini Meadow Movement and it's something we can all easily get involved with.

A Mini Meadow is a small area planted with wildflowers and other nectar-rich plants that provide valuable food for pollinating insects. Bees, hoverflies, butterflies and other insects play a vital role in our environment, helping to pollinate many of the plants that produce our food. While our allotment site does have an abundance of flowers throughout the year, including all the native weeds the bees love, but we try so hard to remove, other suitable habitats are increasingly under pressure and with this project we can help to support them.

The Mini Meadow Movement is also giving away free wildflower seeds to Barnet residents to help create mini meadows across the borough. The aim is to create a connected network of habitats for bees, butterflies and other pollinators. You don't need a huge garden to make a difference. A sunny corner, a container, a strip of lawn or even a window box can become a miniature wildlife pit stop. You can sign up to receive free wildflower seeds and simple, friendly guidance to get started on their website. Just google mini meadow movement.

You could also collect and scatter ripe wildflower seed harvested from suitable plants and sow them in some bare soil. Many native wildflowers benefit from being sown in autumn. Alternatively, wild flower seed mixes are increasingly available on-line and in garden centres.

By sowing your seeds during September and October, all being well, by the spring, your mini meadow will begin to grow and bloom, helping to support pollinators, bringing more colour into our gardens and increasing the biodiversity in Barnet.

The Mini Meadow Movement is about many small actions adding up to a much bigger borough wide impact.

A few other jobs to help our pollinators in September and October

- Plant nectar-rich shrubs and perennials
- Mahonia, Ivy, Hebe and winter-flowering Honeysuckle can provide valuable late-season or winter food when little else is flowering.
- Plant some spring-flowering bulbs
- Plant Crocuses, Grape Hyacinths, Snake's-head Fritillaries and other bee-friendly bulbs now, ready to provide an early nectar source next spring.
- Leave some fallen leaves
- Don't make the whole garden spotless. Leaf litter provides shelter for many insects and other small creatures over winter.
- Don't tidy every dead seedhead
- Plants such as Sunflowers, Teasels and Fennel provide seeds for birds, while their hollow stems can offer overwintering sites for insects.



Sparkling

by Christopher Hurwitz

Gatherings of light, beloved at the core
Let me count the many coats and shoes
Resting together, quietly at our front door
Escaping the darkness, time for good news

Counting on our friends mingling here
Warming each to each, but a little afraid
Acceptance, forgiveness, find some near
Gentle conversations, confessions made

Meet again, surprised, our comfort remains
Hand in hand, dancing, swirling affection
Reminders, wildflowers along country lanes
So many stories in this time for reflection

Food and drink against the outside cold
Candles lit, remembrance, never old



Knitting for a good cause!

One of our lovely Knit & Natter ladies, Marjorie, has been busy knitting beautiful toys for a wonderful charity called Knit for Peace. She has now inspired other members of the group to get involved.

The charity originally distributed knitted toys to soldiers serving in war-torn areas, so they could give them to children who had been affected by the trauma of war. Today, Knit for Peace distributes donated toys throughout the UK, supporting children and families who need a little extra care and comfort.

Donated toys are given to children's hospitals, baby banks, family support services and other organisations supporting children and families in need.

We think Marjorie's knitting is a wonderful example of how a simple act of kindness can make a real difference.

How you can help

Knit for Peace welcomes knitted donations, as well as yarn and knitting supplies. Donations can be sent to:

Knit for Peace, Radius Works, Back Lane
London NW3 1HL. Tel: 020 7794 9835

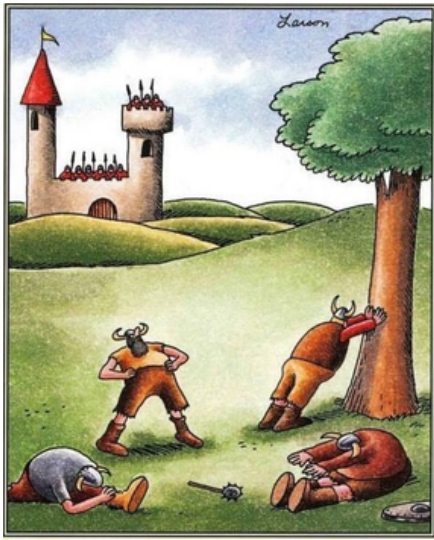


Toys knitted by our Knit and Natter members for the charity Knit for Peace



The Big Knit is back! We receive 30p for every little knitted hat sold on Innocent smoothie bottles - so whether you're a seasoned knitter or fancy giving it a go, get involved and get stitching. Deadline: 1 July 2027 Send or drop off your hats at: Age UK Barnet, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, N2 8LT. For patterns see our website or phone 020 8203 5040.

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



The Vikings of course, knew the importance of stretching before an attack.

If you hold the sole of your foot to your ear, you can hear the sound of your hip dislocating!



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. The Times of India (3,146,000 according to the World Association of Newspapers)
2. 1994,
3. Co
4. The Great Escape,
5. Edward VIII
6. Redwood,
7. The Michelin Man
8. 1813,
9. Eggs,
10. A bicycle

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



Spotted by one of our readers whilst on holiday... Wonder if they also do spin cycle!



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26	O	L	D	F	L	A	M	E				27	O	M	I	T			