

PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved
March/April 2025



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Welcome



We've got a great line-up this issue including an exclusive interview with our very own Lesley, who has been bringing showbiz sparkle to Age UK Barnet's exercise and dance classes for an incredible 26 years! Lesley was part of the Second Generation dance troupe in the 1970s and 1980s and a regular on hit shows like *Moercambe* and *Wise*. It's a wonderful trip down memory lane, complete with some fabulous photos.

In Nutrition Bites, we explore clever ways to satisfy cravings with healthier alternatives, while gardening columnist Kevin shares his expert tips on getting your garden spring-ready. And don't miss our Quiz Night fundraiser in support of the Mayor of Barnet's chosen charities—Macmillan Cancer Care, the Royal Free Charity, and Age UK Barnet. It promises to be a fun evening for some great causes! Find all the details on page 11.

Enjoy the issue!

Helen Newman
Chief Executive
Age UK Barnet

"Despite the forecast,
live like it's spring."

— LILLY PULITZER



NUTRITION BITES SIMPLE SWAPS FOR HEALTHY SNACKS

Making dietary changes to improve our health is a common New Year's resolution – but many of us will have slipped back into old habits by March. Regular readers will know that when growing older, taking more care with our diet can prevent, delay or help with the management of cardiovascular and kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and dementia.

A healthy diet contains MORE wholegrains, vegetables, legumes, and unsaturated fats (found in nuts, seeds, oily fish and vegetable oils) and LESS salt, added sugars, and saturated fats (found in butter, cream and shop-bought biscuits, pastries and cakes). Try trainee dietitian Kato's simple swaps to similar but healthier food choices – more achievable than big resolutions.

Usual Snack	Try this swap	Why?
Biscuits and pastries	Home-made flapjacks (see recipe below) Mini wholegrain pancakes (try spelt or buckwheat), topped with cream cheese and a berry coulis (heat a handful of frozen berries with 1-2tsp honey or maple syrup), or peanut butter and 1tsp jam. Sliced apples or pears with nut butter	Butter, sugar and white flour provide very little nutrition. The pastries contain up to six times the amount of saturated fat than the flapjacks. The swaps all contain more fibre, vitamins, minerals, good fats, and protein. They are more filling, while satisfying the desire for something sweet and starchy.
Crisps	Wholegrain crackers and cheese/ humous Toasted sourdough bread topped with pesto and grated mozzarella, melted in the microwave oven (mini pizza). Home-made popcorn, lightly salted	It is easy to eat too many crisps, which are high in energy and salt. The swaps provide more fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals, while also satisfying the desire for something fatty and crunchy.
Fruit yoghurt pot	2 scoops Greek yoghurt with a teaspoon of honey and chopped nuts and fruit – much tastier!	Supermarket fruit yoghurts can be very high in sugar. The home-made yoghurt pot has more protein and fibre.
Chocolate bar	A handful of home-made trail mix consisting of equal parts of dried fruit such as apricots, cranberries, and raisins, plain nuts (half can be salted), and bits of dark chocolate.	Milk chocolate bars provide no nutrition, whereas the trail mix is rich in good fats, vitamins and minerals, while also satisfying the need for a chocolate hit.
Salted roasted nuts	Handful of homemade roasted nuts or seeds. Mix 4 cups mixed nuts with 1tbsp olive oil, 1tsp chilli powder, and ½ tsp each garlic powder, cumin, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper. Roast on baking sheet at 180°C for 15 minutes.	Shop-bought roasted nuts can be very high in salt and it is easy to eat too much. Roast your own nuts or seeds – the spices will provide a flavour hit.

Nutty flapjacks (makes 12 portions)

Preheat oven to 180°C. Place 120ml rapeseed oil and 5 tablespoons honey in a saucepan and over a moderate heat, stir until the mixture is runny. Remove from heat and add 200g porridge oats, 160g chopped roasted hazelnuts, 50g roasted almond flakes, and 100g dried cranberries or raisins. Stir well and place mixture in a 9-inch or 15cm square tin (oiled and lined with greaseproof paper). Press down firmly. Bake in oven for 20-25 minutes until golden brown on edges. Leave in the tin to cool completely. With a sharp knife slice into 12 bars



Last month, Barnet residents lost over £45,000 to door-to-door fraudsters offering fake or overpriced services. These scammers pressure people into unnecessary, poor-quality, or unfinished work, often demanding payment upfront.

Common Tricks:

- ◆ Claiming they worked on a neighbour's house and have leftover materials.
- ◆ Showing fake photos of your roof or loft needing urgent repairs.
- ◆ Pouring water to fake a damp problem.

**Stay Safe:**

- ✓ Always check ID—call the company using a verified number, not the number on the person's ID card.
- ✓ Take your time—get multiple quotes before agreeing to work.
- ✓ Never pay upfront for goods or services you haven't received.

Of course, some callers will be legitimate. Gas, electricity and water companies may visit to read your meters. Charities may visit to ask for donations and council officials may contact you regarding local issues. But stay vigilant—don't be rushed into decisions. If in doubt, say NO and report it!

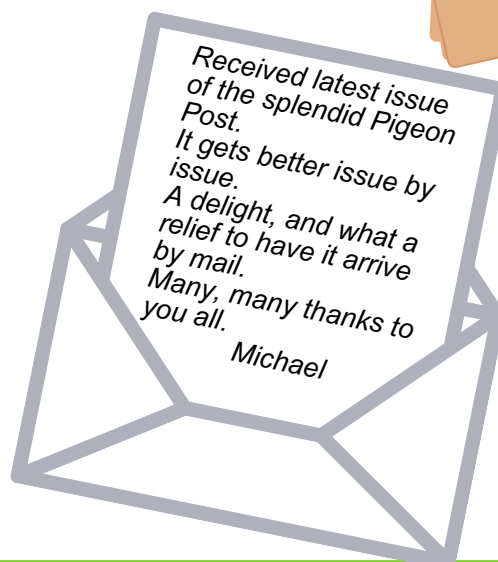
For more advice on scams prevention, please contact Joyce and the Age UK Barnet scams awareness support team on 020 8432 2217. A member of the team can give you a one-to-one session and review your regular activities. They can give you the tools to spot a scam and support you if you have been a victim of a scam.

**COFFEE MORNINGS**

New Coffee Mornings! Join us for a cuppa and a friendly chat at one of our new coffee mornings for over 55s which are all held between 10.30am and 12 noon around the borough. A chance to meet neighbours and new friends, join a creative activity, play games, hear from local speakers, or get advice on later life planning.

- All Saints Church, Church Walk, Childs Hill, NW2 2JS (Thurs 13 March, Thurs 17 April, Thurs 15 May)
- North Road Community Centre, 230 Burnt Oak Broadway, Edgware HA8 0AP (Tues 18 March, Tues 15 April, Tues 13 May)
- Lane End Medical Centre, 2 Penshurst Gardens, Edgware HA8 9GJ (Wed 19 March, Wed 16 April, Wed 14 May)
- Kingsley Court, Tayside Drive, Edgware HA8 8RE (Wed 26 March, Wed 30 April, Wed 28 May)
- Mill Hill Library, Hartley Avenue, London NW7 2HX (Thurs 6 March, Thurs 3 April, Thurs 1 May, Thurs 29 May)
- The Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane N2 8LT (Saturday 1 March, 5 April, 3 May, 31 May)

For further info call Louise on 07379 331807) or email: Activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk

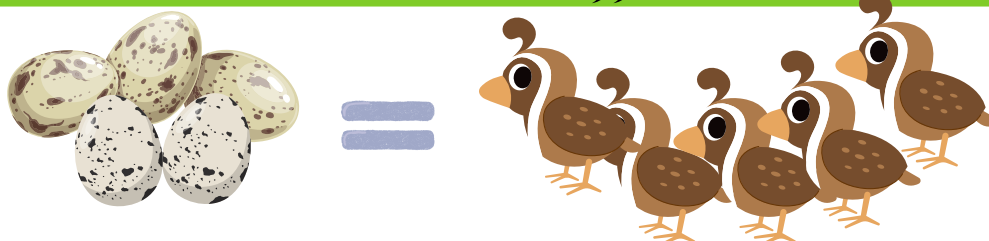


“On a holiday in the Isle of Wight, we visited a farm with many animals. They had a quail area and after talking to the owners we decided to bring some eggs back and try to hatch them. We came home with 17 eggs and an incubator waiting on the doorstep from Amazon. We fitted up the incubator a great piece of kit and waited.

After 17 days the most amazing thing happened. We watched four chicks hatch and the fifth the next day. We had to dip their beaks in water. This is called 'The drink of life'! What a lovely saying! We transferred the chicks to a cardboard box and put them on the boiler with a heat lamp and fed them on quail chick food.

It has been a fascinating experience watching them grow. Now adults, they are laying nine eggs a day so we must have at least two females. We have registered with DEFRA so they're now legal.

We have named them Dave, Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Titch, after a 60s band. We have loved every minute of raising our chicks. A wonderful thing to do.” - Mrs R



60 HAPPY YEARS!

HAPPY
Anniversary!



It was a privilege to celebrate the Diamond wedding anniversary of Mr and Mrs Wadhia in a day club session!

Sheila and day club member Ajit were just 16 and 24 when they had an arranged marriage - 60 years later, and with a great grandson, they could not be happier. The secret to a long and successful marriage? 'To learn to love each other,' says Sheila.

A huge thank you to Sheila for sharing her beautiful cake and for the generous donation.





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Across

- 1 Orange-yellow colour (7)
- 5 Put off till later (5)
- 8 Beasts of burden (5)
- 9 Outside (7)
- 10 Conundrums (7)
- 11 Conceals (5)
- 12 Rove (6)
- 14 Bicycle for two (6)
- 18 Jittery (5)
- 20 Feeling, sentiment (7)
- 22 Ruffian (anag.) (7)
- 23 More pleasant (5)
- 24 Shouts (5)
- 25 Spendthrift (7)

Down

- 1 Common garden bird (7)
- 2 Combined (5)
- 3 Make a firm decision (7)
- 4 Most recent (6)
- 5 Drainage channel (5)
- 6 Deluged (7)
- 7 Council tax (5)
- 13 In name only (7)
- 15 Sums (7)
- 16 Cur (7)
- 17 Language of Israel (6)
- 18 Instant (5)
- 19 Renowned Irish poet (5)
- 21 Become liable for (5)

FUNNY RIDDLES

- a) What do you call a bear with no teeth?
- b) What has many rings but no fingers?
- c) What can you break without touching it?
- d) I sometimes run, but I can't walk. What am I?
- e) It has keys, but no locks. It has space, but no room. You can enter, but can't go inside. What is it?
- f) I have pointed fangs, and I sit and wait. I have piercing force, and I crunch with weight. I grab my victims, but they do not fight. I join them each with a single, quick bite. What am I?
- g) Pronounced as one letter, And written with three, two letters there are, and two only in me. I'm double, I'm single, I'm black blue and gray, I'm read from both ends, and the same either way. What am I?

CROSSWORD

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RECIPE TIME

ROAST MACKEREL WITH A CURRIED CORIANDER CRUST



Some of our readers have asked us to include recipes which are suitable for one person. As part of our 'You said, we did' campaign, here's our first one!

Ingredients

2 squirts spray oil
1/4 red onion, peeled and finely sliced
1/4 red pepper, finely sliced
1/4 green pepper, finely sliced
1/4 yellow pepper, finely sliced
2 mackerel fillets (total weight 200g)
1/2 tsp curry paste
6g coriander, finely chopped
1/4 lime, zest, juice and lime wedge to serve



Method

Step 1

Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Lightly spray an small oven tray with oil.

Step 2

Place the onions and peppers onto the tray and bake for 5 minutes, mixing around a couple of times to ensure even cooking.

Step 3

Meanwhile, drizzle the fish with lime juice and spread the curry paste carefully over each fillet.

Step 4

Mix together the coriander and lime zest and press onto the mackerel fillets, on top of the curry paste.

Step 5

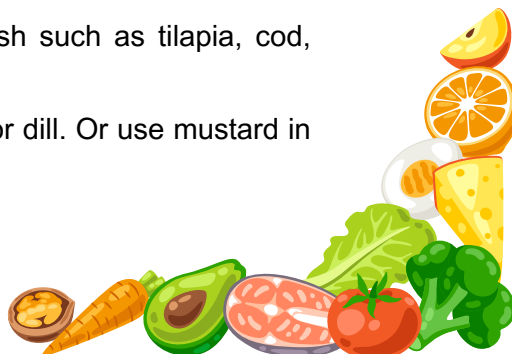
Place the fish on top of the peppers and bake for a further 10-12 minutes, until the fish is cooked through. Serve with wedges of lime.



Tips:

Experiment with other fish for this dish such as tilapia, cod, bream, haddock or salmon.

Try with other herbs such as parsley or dill. Or use mustard in place of curry paste.



If you only do one exercise, make it a squat! Squats improve balance, mobility, and strength, working everything from your hips and knees to the muscles in your legs, bottom and core as well as strengthening bones. They're essential for everyday movements like standing up and getting up from a chair or toilet to walking up the stairs and reducing the risk of a fall



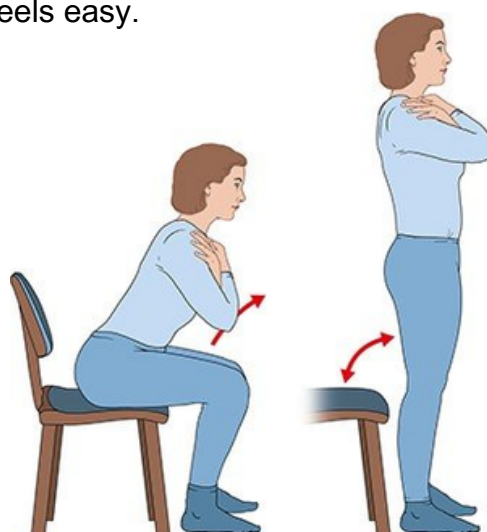
To perform a squat, stand with your feet slightly greater than shoulder-width apart and your toes pointing ahead. Slowly descend, keeping your back straight, bending your knees, like you are trying to sit on a chair. Lower your knees until a comfortable depth. Then return to the starting position.

Start with 5 squats, once a day and build on this once the move feels easy.

Variations

Extra support. If balance is an issue, you can support yourself on the back of a chair while performing the squat. Alternatively, you can squat over a chair, so you hover above the seat on the down move but not sit down.

Sit to standing squats. Sit on a chair and slowly stand up from a chair, then back down again. Perform the move up to 5 times every time you get up off your chair.



Research on 70 – 79 year olds showed that strong leg muscles are linked with a longer life

LOVING LIFE

AN ARTS PROJECT FOR OLDER ADULTS IN LIBRARIES!



Look out for a wide range of fun and stimulating activities for older adults in Chipping Barnet and Colindale Libraries throughout 2025. The Loving Life arts project, part of the libraries' wider Creative Communities programme, gives you the chance to explore new art forms - from landscape painting, pottery and dance to candle making or 'Ikebana', the Japanese art of flower arranging. People living with dementia and their carers are particularly welcome to the Loving Life events and activities.

Collect a copy of the Creative Communities Booklet from your local library - or pop into Chipping Barnet or Colindale library.



Each month former journalist Ed Newman has a lovely chat with a Barnet resident and shares their story with the rest of us. This month Ed speaks to Lesley Ann Chowen, née Wootten, who has been bringing showbiz sparkle to Age UK Barnet's dance classes for the last 26 years.

Back in the 1970s and 80s, Lesley was a regular on Saturday Night television, dancing, singing and acting alongside some of the legends of entertainment such as Morecambe

and Wise, The Two Ronnies, Little and Large and Bruce Forsyth. She also toured the world performing cabaret shows in glamorous places like Monte Carlo, Hong Kong and Mauritius.

After being taken to her first class by her mother at the age of three, Lesley fell in love with dancing and has been tripping the light fantastic ever since. She couldn't wait to leave school at fifteen, although her parents did insist she did her O levels first. As soon as they were done, she stepped out on the path to become a professional dancer.

"The training was for three years and we did everything during that time," Lesley tells Pigeon Post. "You name it, we danced it – tap, modern, ballet, jazz, as well as singing and acting. "Then, after about two and half years, I was offered my first job. It was in a brand-new cabaret club in Sheffield called Aquarius. People would come and eat chicken in a basket and then watch the show with a comic, a band and I was part of the resident dance group.

"They had some top stars there including Shirley Bassey. Of course, some say she was a bit of a diva who wanted things done her way but she was, and indeed still is, an amazing talent with a fantastic voice. I worked with her many times after that and she was actually on the last television show I ever appeared in."

The biggest influence on Lesley's career as she learned the ropes in the business was the renowned choreographer Dougie Squires. She joined his Second Generation company and, over the next five years, she would travel around the world doing shows. Then, in her 60s, she was back with Squires and her former colleagues performing a 100th birthday tribute to Dame Vera Lynn in front of Queen Elizabeth. "Dougie was the man I always wanted to work with when I was young," recalls Lesley. "He was an absolute legend."

Second Generation was like one big family with twelve boys and twelve girls. We didn't get paid very much but we went to some wonderful places.



Sometimes, we would have to rehearse through the night and then sleep during the day before getting ready for the next show. The adrenalin kept us going. We absolutely loved it because we were living our dream. "Then, one day, I had to make a decision between going on tour with Dougie to Cannes or doing a Summertime Special for the BBC. Thankfully, I made the right decision because it was in Cannes that I met my husband Max who was working as a stage manager on the show. After we got together, we made a pact that we wouldn't spend more than a month apart on tours. That's also when I started to work more in television in the second part of my career."

Saturday night TV was huge at the time and Lesley regularly appeared on our screens doing dances and sketches with big stars like Morecambe and Wise, The Two Ronnies, Little and Large, Bruce Forsyth and Kenny Everett. They were all famous for making the nation laugh and Lesley clearly had an affection for them but, as she points out, they were deadly serious about their work.

"Eric and Ernie kept themselves to themselves but they were incredibly professional," she remembers. "It was the same with the Two Ronnies. I can remember those big dance numbers they did at the end of the show and woe betide if you went wrong. Even though they were there to make people laugh, there was no messing around and they were always spot on. Little and Large were funny but you got any laughing out of your system in rehearsals. The pressure was on when it came to show night because much of it went out live and you'd always be a bit nervous."

It was when Lesley had her three children that she decided it would be a good idea to switch from performing to teaching. She lives in East Finchley and that meant that Age UK Barnet as well as several local schools and disabled groups have benefited from her skills and enthusiasm over the years. The fact the classes are currently full-up shows how popular they are and Lesley remains a huge advocate for the health and well-being benefits of dance.

"I'm still at Age UK Barnet 26 years after first taking a call from them," says Lesley. "I always say to older people you've got to keep moving because if you don't use it, you'll lose it."

"Dance is good for so many things like your balance and energy levels. It's not just your body either – you have to really focus when you're dancing so it's good for your brain too at whatever age. I've been dancing with my grandchildren ever since they were born and I'm not going to stop."

Lesley runs two exercise classes for Age UK Barnet on a Wednesday afternoon. For more information call Wendy on 07741 877 027.

TOP UK ENTERTAINMENT SHOWS OF THE 1970S A NOSTALGIC RIDE!

The Morecambe & Wise Show (1968–1977) – The ultimate double act! Eric Morecambe's cheeky humour and Ernie Wise's straight-man routine made this variety show a national treasure, especially their legendary Christmas specials.

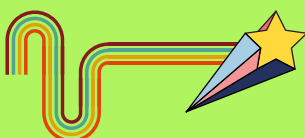
The Two Ronnies (1971–1987) – Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett brought us clever wordplay, hilarious sketches, and unforgettable catchphrases. Who could forget the classic "Four Candles" sketch?

The Generation Game (1971–1982) – Hosted by Bruce Forsyth (and later Larry Grayson), this game show had families tackling wacky challenges, with the catchphrase "Didn't they do well?" still ringing in our ears!

Top of the Pops (1964–2006) – Every Thursday night, music lovers tuned in to see the latest chart-toppers perform live (or at least mime convincingly!).

This Is Your Life (1955–2003) – The heartwarming show where celebrities were surprised with a deep dive into their lives, hosted by the ever-reliable Eamonn Andrews.

Come Dancing (1949–1998) – The glitzy forerunner to Strictly Come Dancing, where ballroom dancers dazzled in sequins long before the reality TV era. The '70s were a golden age of entertainment – full of laughter, music, and good old-fashioned fun! Which was your favourite?





Use the extra safety pins lying around your house to make this one of a kind, easy safety pin bracelet!

What you will need

What you need

Safety Pins (enough to fit around your wrist)

Beads/Small seed beads

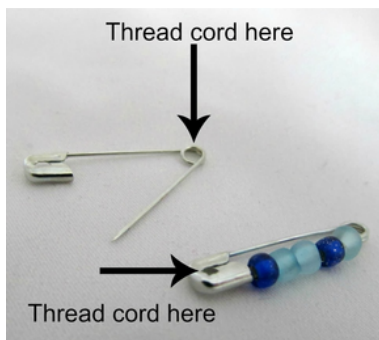
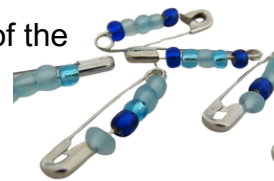
Super Glue

Elastic cord .7 mm or above recommended



Instructions

1. Open one of the safety pins, and thread beads onto the open prong, leaving enough space to refasten the pin. Repeat the process until all of the safety pins have been beaded.
2. Glue the pin so that it wouldn't open when you're wearing it.
3. Next, cut two 12" pieces of elastic cord.
4. Thread one of the cords through the hole in the top of a safety pin, then through a spacer bead (to link the safety pins), and then through the hole in the bottom of another safety pin. Continue to thread in this manner until your bracelet is long enough to go around your wrist.
5. Then, take the second cord and thread it through the bottom of the bracelet, adding a spacer bead between each safety pin.
6. Finally, tie the ends of the bracelet together, and it's ready to wear!



Further information on where to place the cord.

You place the cord into the top hole of the safety pin that forms once you have closed the safety pin. Place a spacer bead. Then you take your next safety pin and thread the cord through the opposite end (the hole on the other end of your safety pin, NOT the top hole that forms once you close it.) Continue to thread your bracelet the same way, making sure to alternate between "top hole that forms when you close safety pin" and "bottom hole of safety pin"



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
- 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
- **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

EVENTS

MUSICAL AFTERNOON with and tenor and entertainer Geoff Strum on 13 March 2025 (2-3pm). At Avery at Barnet Grange, 59 Wood Street, Barnet EN5 4BS. £5 on door for non residents, includes refreshments. FREE parking onsite. Bus: Manor Road Barnet is the closest stop to the venue. Routes 263, 107, 307 and 84B stop here. To book contact Helen Nicolaou on 07384 466 840 or email activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Living Well in Barnet - 18 March 2025 (10.30am-12.30pm) Join us at the RAF Museum in Hendon for a morning of talks and activities focusing on memory and dementia prevention - including Professor Catherine Loveday who will be sharing her science backed memory strategies. Everyone who comes to our event will be entered into a FREE raffle for a chance to win an air fryer. free refreshments! To register, email fiona.cronin@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 8629 0269. The RAF Museum is on Grahame Park Way NW9 5LL and there's free parking for all attendees.

TALK: love and relationships - Wednesday 26 March 2025 (6.45-8pm) Professor Catherine Loveday talks about the connection between memory and love and how we can use this to improve our relationships and memories. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. To register, call Teresa on 07502 989 403 or email teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Quiz Night Fundraiser – 2 April 2025 6pm-9pm. A fun quiz and two course meal (from Da Franco restaurant in Friern Barnet) – takes place at The Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane N2 8LT. All money raised goes towards the Mayor of Barnet's chosen charities – Age UK Barnet, Royal Free Charity and Macmillan Cancer. £20 a ticket. Book a team of 8 or we'll add you to a team. Contact Teresa on 07502 989403 or teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk to book your place.

TALK: the power of swearing - on Wednesday 23 April 2025 (6.45-8pm) Professor Catherine Loveday shares why we swear and how the use of taboo words can deeply affect the way we think, act and relate to each other plus why swearing can make us feel better. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. To register, call Teresa on 07502 989 403 or email 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 they tackle the tricky topic of birthday celebrations and the mysteries of weight loss!



"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Barb....."

"Oh, shut up!" snapped the (obviously not) happy birthday girl.

"I'm not happy being 90, I didn't ask to be 90," she complained, "I've never been defined by a number and I've no intention of starting now! Another ten years and I'll be getting a Tik Tok from the King – or whatever they send nowadays."

"Well it's ..." began Pauline.

"And if anyone says it's better than the alternative, I'm going home!" And with that, Barbara stomped into the hall to hang up her coat, while we glanced at each other in dismay. Ooops!

Barbara is the oldest member of our little group, the rest of us languishing in our late 70s and 80s. Her slim figure and upright posture totally belie her age, testament to her twice weekly Pilates sessions. She is also a fiercely competitive bridge player and still attends tournaments if the venue doesn't involve too much travelling.

"Do you think the shop will take the cake back?" I asked Nancy, who had arranged this informal little tea party.

"Only if they have a customer with an imminent 90th birthday whose name happens to be Barbara," she replied, "with pink icing."

"This reminds me of an awful surprise party I went to some years ago," said Pauline. "My friend Sandra arranged a secret party for her husband, Eddie's 60th birthday. There were about 50 of us and when we heard his car in the drive, she turned out the lights and we all crouched down and hid behind furniture and curtains. Eddie opened the door, shouted, 'Hi, I'm home' and disappeared into the downstairs loo! We waited – and waited – for about half an hour, getting more and more uncomfortable. Finally, he emerged and stood, blinking in the lights and shouts of 'Happy birthday', with one hand clutching his almost done-up trousers and the other holding a newspaper and looking absolutely mortified. It was not a good start to a party!"

Barbara joined us at the table and cheered up when she opened her present. We had all clubbed together to buy her an Apple watch.

"You can set it so that if you fall over or anything, it will call your daughter," said Laila. "A fat lot of good that will do," said Barbara, "she lives in Dubai."

"Talking of fat," said Deely, who was – very - 'I'm thinking of having that fat-loss jab, Ozempic. I just can't lose weight'.

We glanced at her plate bearing the crumbs of her third, huge, chocolate chip cookie, and she shrugged.

"I've tried every diet under the sun," she protested, the 'five-two', high protein, time restricted, intermittent fasting – I've joined Weight Watchers nine times! Nothing works."

"Maybe you should stop using custard as a beverage," suggested Nancy.

"Or try moving around a bit more," added the fit birthday girl.

"I know," sighed Deely, "I couldn't get to the gym again this week."

That's three years in a row."

"Have you tried eating less?" I enquired, mildly.

She looked puzzled. "What do you mean?"

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



YOUNG AGAIN!

ADVICE TO YOUR TEENAGE SELF



In BBC Radio 4's Young Again, Kirsty Young asks celebrities what advice they would give their younger self. Inspired by this idea, we asked a few of our clients and participants the same questions. Art class participant and volunteer Donna kicks off.



"Have more confidence. It's the time when you have the most energy, fitness and good looks. Get out and explore the world - life is precious and flies by really quickly."

Let us know what you would tell yourself!



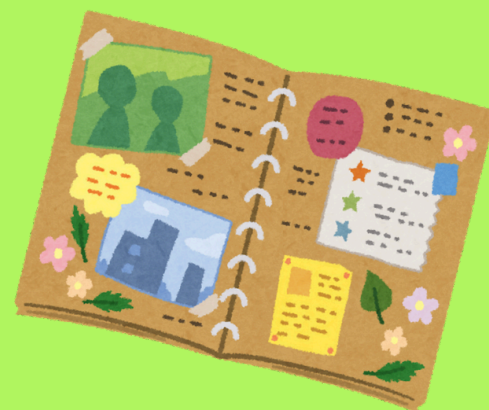
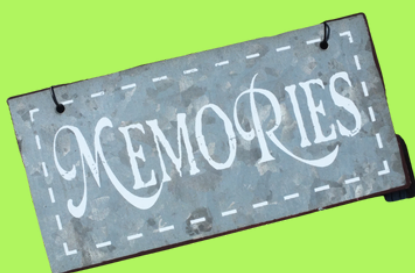
Professor Catherine Loveday on how curating and writing down our life stories can strengthen our memories.

"Autobiographical memories are the stories of our lives - our narrative. They give us a sense of identity, help us feel connected to others, and guide us in setting goals and making decisions," says Catherine. "Recording these memories, or 'curating your life', isn't just an insurance policy against memory loss, actually reflecting on meaningful moments can boost brain health, keep memory networks active, and preserve these memories."

Some forgetting is not only normal, it is helpful and having too much to sift through can make our brains less efficient, according to Catherine. "We are naturally quite good at remembering the more important experiences," says Catherine. "For example, when something is particularly exciting, novel, fun or meaningful we are more likely to talk to someone about it, think about it, or take photos, all of which strengthen the memory."

In a recent workshop, Catherine shared a few techniques to help trigger our most vivid memories and make our recollections richer.

1. Decide how you'd like to store and build your memories - a ring binder or folder which you can add pages to as well as photos and memorabilia. Think about who you want to see it and what level of confidentiality or privacy you want. If you are doing this purely for yourself and do not want others to read it then make this clear and keep it somewhere safe.
2. Don't get hung up on trying to write things in order or start at the beginning. Just start to record moments and experiences that have been interesting or valuable to you.
3. It can be difficult to know where to start, so one technique is to reflect on songs, objects, pictures, clothing, foods that are important or that you might take to a desert island – what memories do these hold?
4. You can also think about themes in your life, such as holidays or birthdays, or it can help to focus on location – imagine yourself walking through a familiar place from the past
5. When recollecting an event or experience, think about what you were seeing, hearing, tasting, or smelling. What thoughts or feelings did you have? Who was there? What was the context—what happened before or after?



A word of caution: whenever we tap back into old memories, there is always a danger that we are reminded of less happy, sometimes even traumatic experiences. "I advise not writing about this for now unless you have good support and are confident that you feel able to do this without it having a detrimental effect," says Catherine. "Instead, you could make a note that there is a difficult memory that you would rather not think about, and then turn your focus to a different theme or a memory from a happier time."

Catherine will hopefully be running another workshop later in the year. To register your interest, please email Memory.Matters@ageukbarnet.org.uk or telephone 020 8129 7624.



HELLO SPRING



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...

March and April are a busy time in the garden as spring begins to take hold. The days are longer, the soil is warming up and everything starts coming back to life.



I love to spend time, whether in the garden or at the allotment, on satisfying jobs such as preparing beds, sowing seeds and seeing the first shoots appear. At this time of year, I find it very rewarding contemplating all the possibilities to come, while hopefully soaking up the early spring sunshine.

Although I was not surprised to learn that according to the Met Office, this past winter in the UK has been considered "slightly duller than normal". We had significantly below average sunshine hours, despite experiencing warmer than average temperatures and a lot of rain, making it one of the wettest winters on record; essentially, a mild but rather dreary winter with limited sunny days. I would absolutely agree about the dullness and this was very apparent when trying to get jobs done in the garden or at the allotment. The dull damp weather really didn't help with motivation to get going on a murky day.

The lack of sunlight became very evident at our allotment site as our newly installed solar system struggled to maintain enough power to charge the batteries and keep the electricity running. We are hoping that by increasing the number of solar panels it should enable us to have a more secure power supply.

Looking forward to the spring, something we can all do is to consider adding a new feature, like a wildlife corner, ideally in a small quiet undisturbed spot. You can leave the area untidy and add piles of leaves and logs to provide shelter for insects and, if you are lucky, hedgehogs.



If you only have a balcony, you can still add a bug hotel by filling an old flower pot with leaves, twigs, dead wood, pinecones, straw or old bamboo canes.

A few other jobs for March/April.

Weeding – Start tackling weeds before they get established.

Mowing – Start mowing the lawn on dry days, with the mower set high. If the lawn is compacted, aerate it and add sand to improve drainage.

Divide perennials – Split up overgrown clumps of perennials like hostas, phlox and hardy geraniums.

Clean out bird boxes – Get them ready for nesting birds.

Check pond health – Remove fallen leaves and debris and also start feeding fish as temperatures rise.



THE SWEET TRAP:

HIDDEN SUGARS AND YOUR HEALTH

At our recent Eat Well to Live Well event, Nila from Diabetes UK spoke about the dangers of hidden sugars. 'Cutting down on cakes and biscuits, swapping sugar for sweetener in your tea, is not enough to reduce the sugar in your diet,' says Nila. 'Sugar is lurking in food that you might least expect.'

Read the labels and you'll find sugar disguised under names like fructose, dextrose, and maltose in foods you might think are healthy - low-fat yoghurts, breakfast cereals, even "wholegrain" bread. That fruit smoothie you love? It can contain as much sugar as a can of cola!

And honey – a favourite on toast and as a sweetener in cooking - is just another form of sugar, and it should be consumed only in moderation.

Studies show added sugars can be empty calories that can lead to weight gain, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes, especially as we age.

The message? Not all sugar is obvious - so it pays to check the label!



WE NEED MORE KNITTED HATS!



It's time to grab your knitting needles and crochet hooks and get involved - for every little hat knitted, Innocent Smoothies gives us 30p to help Age UK Barnet provide much-needed services, activities and support to over 55s in the borough.

Drop off or send your hats to us at Age UK Barnet, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT by 31 May 2025. We are aiming for 7,000 hats.

We may be able to pick up your hats if you can't drop them off so do contact us on 020 8203 5040 or email info@ageukbarnet.org.uk



CAT POWER

ANOTHER CAT COLUMN!



I'm Betsy, stepping in for Raven while she looks after her accident-prone human (who seems to attract disasters like a magnet). She's keeping her spirits up with plenty of purrs. Life in my multi-cat household is never dull! With six of us plus a parade of foster kittens, it takes a well-placed paw swipe to keep the little upstarts in line.

I was particularly helpful in 2024 - delaying the Poppy Appeal by several days and attempting a festive redesign of the Christmas tree (apparently, not appreciated).

If you enjoy a good mystery, The Cat Who Caught a Killer by L.T. Shearer is a must-read (mentioned by Suki in her cat column). Conrad, the detective cat, is fascinating -though I'm baffled by his ability to speak human. My owner keeps saying, I wish I could understand you!

On a serious note, UK shelters are overflowing, and the myth that cats can fend for themselves is sadly persistent. We need more caring humans to step up!

On cold nights, fellow felines, remember: sleep on your human. Not only is it warm, but if you bring a friend, you can claim maximum bed space. Stay cozy!

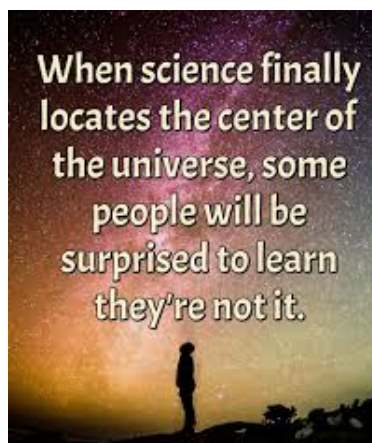
Betsy

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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A
READER
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Funny Riddles Answers

- a) A gummy bear
- b) A phone
- c) A promise
- d) A nose
- e) A keyboard
- f) A stapler
- g) Eye



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