

PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved
January/February 2025



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Welcome

A Happy New Year from all of us at Age UK Barnet.

It's a time for new beginnings and a chance to make some positive changes in your life! Maybe try a new activity from our What's On guide which you'll find in your local library and at community hubs around the borough.

You can also phone us on 020 8203 5040 and one of our lovely volunteer receptionists can talk you through our activities. Everything from Tai Chi to cookery, social walks, art and bridge, we have something for you!

We understand that many people might struggle to pay for activities during these tough times - so we try to keep costs low, and free if possible.

Hope you enjoy the issue!

Helen Newman
Chief Executive
Age UK Barnet



Beautiful young people are accidents of nature
But beautiful older people are works of art



At the start of each new year an array of healthy eating campaigns vie for our attention. ‘Veganuary’ in January and ‘World Pulses Day’ and ‘National Cabbage Day’ in February all stand out. “They generally aim to motivate us to eat more fruit, vegetables and beans, and less ultra-processed edible items high in fat, sugar and salt,” says trainee dietitian Kato. “While greens and beans may not be at the top of our comfort food list on cold dark days, ‘eating the rainbow’ is a proven antidote to low mood and infections, which are more common in winter.” For regular meat eaters, filling more of your plate with these foods will likely push meat to second place, mostly to add flavour or texture. Lowering red meat intake has many health benefits such as improving heart and brain health and reducing the risk of bowel cancer. These are all good reasons to try out the recipes below.



Lentil and mushroom cottage pie (serves 6)

Finely chop 1 stick celery, 2 small onions, 2 large carrots and 3 cloves garlic. Sauté the celery, onions and carrots on a low heat for 12 minutes, then add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Pour 150ml red wine into the pan and simmer for 3 minutes. Add 250g finely chopped chestnut mushrooms and 250g washed green or brown lentils. Add a 400g can chopped tomatoes, 400ml vegetable or beef stock, 2tbsp miso (fermented soybean) or mushroom paste, 2tbsp soy or Worcester sauce, 1tsp Marmite, and 2 bay leaves. Season, cover pot and simmer for 30 minutes. Mash 800g boiled potatoes or mix of root vegetables such as sweet potato, turnip and celeriac with butter and milk to taste. Top the lentil mix with the root mash and 100g grated cheddar cheese, and bake in an oven preheated to 200°C for 30 minutes.

Borlotti beans with pancetta and tomatoes (serves 4)

Slowly fry 200g chopped bacon or lardons in 1/2tbsp olive oil until crisp. Remove. Add 1 finely sliced onion to the oil and fat, and sauté for 6 minutes until soft. Stir in and fry for 2 minutes 3 peeled and crushed garlic cloves and 2tbsp tomato puree. Add 500g cherry tomatoes, 3 cans drained borlotti beans, 500ml chicken stock, 2tsp dried rosemary and the reserved pancetta. Simmer on low heat in covered pan for 10 minutes, then uncover and simmer for another 20 minutes. Scatter with 15g grated parmesan cheese. Serve with mashed potato, cooked barley, or pasta.



Chickpea and aubergine one pot bake (serves 2-4)

Mix 1 thinly sliced aubergine in a bowl with 1/4tsp salt, 1/2tsp chilli powder and 2tbsp vegetable oil. Let it rest for 15 minutes. Heat 2tbsp vegetable oil in a pan and add 2 medium chopped onions. Sauté for 5 minutes over a medium heat until soft. Add 4 finely chopped garlic cloves and cook for 1 minute. Add 1 can chopped tomatoes, 1 can drained chickpeas, 2tsp harissa or other chilli paste, 1tsp cumin and 1/2 tsp honey to the onions with 100ml boiling water. Transfer to a baking dish, add aubergine slices on top and bake in a 200°C preheated oven for 30 minutes. Rest for 5 minutes, and serve with flatbreads or rice.

Sweet potato and tomato soup (serves 6)

Cut 600g sweet potatoes in 4cm thick disks (skin on). Arrange on a baking tray, with 1 onion cut into wedges, 4 garlic cloves unpeeled and bashed, and 8 sprigs fresh thyme. Coat vegetables with 1tsp sugar and 4tbsp olive oil and roast in a preheated 200°C oven for 40 minutes. Transfer to a pan (discard garlic skins and herb stems) and add 400g can cherry tomatoes, 500ml chicken stock and 500ml water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Use a stick blender to whizz to a smooth soup. Dry fry a mix of pumpkin and sunflower seeds in a pan for 3-4 minutes. Add 1tbsp to each serving and top with fried sage leaves (optional).



SCAMS UPDATE

With criminals becoming more sophisticated all the time, it's so important to do what you can to stay scam safe - particularly considering that Barnet residents were scammed out of over £1.3 million in October! These four rules, taken from the BBC's recent Scams Safe week, are a good start.

HOW TO STAY SCAM SAFE

- 1 IF IT'S OUT OF THE BLUE CHECK IT IS FOR YOU**
Treat unexpected calls, texts and emails with caution. Always call back on a number you trust
- 2 GET A SECOND OPINION**
Talk to someone you trust before giving away personal details or money
- 3 CONTACT YOUR BANK**
Dial 159 for your bank's fraud department, or use the number on the back of your card
- 4 SHARE YOUR STORY**
Tell friends and family to keep them Scam Safe. Report suspicious texts to 7726 and emails to report@phishing.gov.uk

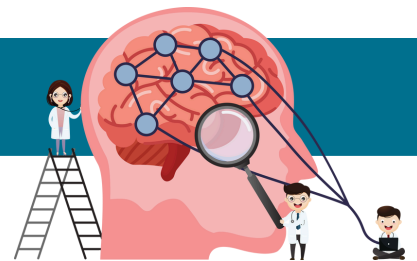
BBC SCAM SAFE

For more advice on scams prevention, please contact Joyce and the Age UK Barnet scams support team on 020 8203 5040. They can give you the tools to spot a scam and support you if you have been a victim of a scam.

THE LATEST BRAIN RESEARCH

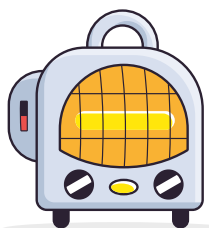
The long term use of common cardiovascular drugs - for five years or more - is linked to a 4 to 25 per cent lower risk of dementia in older age, according to a new study from Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

The researchers used Swedish national registers. Around 88,000 people over the age of 70 who were diagnosed with dementia between 2011 and 2016 were included in the study, as well as 880,000 controls.



FOCUS ON: ELECTRIC HEATERS

Are you in need of a stopgap stand-in for your central heating? Or perhaps you're looking for an efficient appliance to heat a small space. An electric heater might be the answer, but check out these tips from Which? magazine before you buy.



Heaters with an LED screen showing the power setting and temperature are much easier to use and control

- Cheap heaters usually have a dial thermostat with a minimum and maximum setting, rather than letting you choose a specific temperature in degrees centigrade. They're rarely 100% accurate so you'll probably want to set them higher than you think.
- Programmable timers are very useful for controlling when the heater is on and off. They allow you to preheat rooms and more easily control running costs.



At our recent Men's Health event, we looked at male mental health and the groups around Barnet that have been tackling this head on. According to Alex from Mind in Barnet, women are more likely to seek help for their mental health but men are more likely to have a crisis and end their life by suicide. They are also more likely to have drug and alcohol problems. "Good mental health includes understanding our limits, taking notice of the world around us and connecting with others," says Alex. "Men should also get in the habit of talking about their feelings."

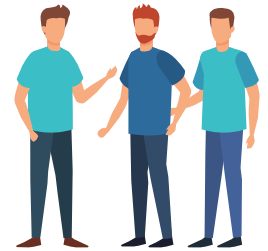
The three groups in Barnet who came along to our event emphasize the importance of talking and connecting:



Men Walking and Talking - Barnet combines physical activity with social interaction. "There's no pressure to talk about our mental health – we might just talk about the football or what's on TV," says Scott. "One man knows a lot about local history which we all find fascinating."

The idea is that walking in a relaxed, natural setting reduces the pressure of face to face conversations making it easier for people to share their feelings, thoughts and experiences. "And over time, as people feel more relaxed, and things just come out," says Scott.

Andy's Man Club, another peer-to-peer support group that meets once a week, has a slightly more structured approach. The group always starts with the question – 'How's your week been?' Then they end with something a bit more light hearted – for instance, a discussion on whether a Jaffa cake is a cake or a biscuit? "We know how hard the first step can be so we even have someone waiting outside to encourage those who find it hard to walk through the door," says Andy's Man Club member John.



For others, **Barnet Walking Football Club** is the answer. "Our club offers people a chance to keep playing the game they love, but it's a social group as well," says Shaun. "We've found that men will talk when they're in a group together and many other community ventures and activities have sprung from walking football including gardening groups, a curry club and meet-ups in the pub."

THE DETAILS

Men walking and talking - Barnet meets on Wednesdays, 7pm at the War Memorial by St. John the Baptist Church, Chipping Barnet EN5 4BW. Andy's Man Club meets on Mondays, 7-9pm at the Meritage Centre, Hendon NW4 4JT. Email: info@andysmanclub.co.uk Barnet Walking Football takes place at The Hive London, Camrose Avenue London HA8 6AG. For more info email info@thebeesfootball.com or call 07870 205940.

DID YOU KNOW!

RETRO ROAMS!



Did you know between 1957 and 1976, there was a regular bus service between London and Calcutta, India. The 32,700km, 50 day, 2-way bus Route is the longest in the world.

The bus had sleeping bunks and even a kitchen! The fare cost just £145 including food and accommodation. The bus would stop at attractions and for shopping in Vienna, Istanbul and Iran.

The bus ride took passengers from England to Belgium, West Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Northern India.

DO YOU REMEMBER VE DAY? If so the RAF Museum would like to hear from you! The museum will be marking the 80th Anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2025 with a street party for local primary schools to enlighten pupils about how VE day was celebrated. If you have memories of VE day or can share stories of family members please contact the museum on learning-london@rafmuseum.org or call Rhiannon on [020 8358 4958](tel:02083584958).



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 Pat Jobson who has just celebrated her 102nd birthday.

Pat Jobson was one of the first people to receive a special birthday card from King Charles III when she completed her century in November 2022. Sadly, Queen Elizabeth died just a few weeks before she reached that momentous landmark but Barnet resident Pat was still delighted to receive her own royal message.

Two years later, she's just celebrated her 102nd birthday with fish and chips and a glass of wine. That's not her secret for long life though and she's not going to be telling anybody what it is either.

"Everybody always wants to know how I've lived this long," Pat tells Pigeon Post. "I'm not letting on but I have lived a very healthy life. When I was younger, I used to go dancing all time and the tango was one of my favourite dances. We always used to dress up, I had some lovely dresses and we would go anywhere to have a night at the ballroom."

Despite her love of dancing, Pat is definitely not a fan of Strictly Come Dancing.

"What's on the television now is a complete write-off," Pat insists. "I think it's all rubbish compared to what we used to do years ago."

Pat was brought up in East Finchley and attended St Mary's School. She still has very fond memories of her schooldays that, even at 102, she insists she will never forget. When war was declared in September 1939, she was still only 16 but it wasn't long before she was doing her bit for the war effort.

Along with hundreds of East Finchley residents, she was called up to work in munitions at the Simms motor parts factory, the site of which was just around the corner from where Age UK Barnet's offices are today in Oak Lane.

"My job at Simms was to make the tiny little screws that were needed to make planes for the RAF," Pat recalls. "It was hard but important work but we had a lot of fun and laughs with the girls along the way. I made some good friends from that time but sadly they've all gone now. They all did their bit for the war effort.

"It was a frightening time for all of us in the war, especially when the bombing started and the guns were blasting out at night. At home, mum and dad and I would shelter under the staircase when the raids started. We didn't have an Anderson shelter."

May 8th 2025 will mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day with celebrations planned across the country. It was a day to remember for anybody alive in 1945 after six years of war but, for Pat, it was just one of several special days at the time.

"We all joined in with other people to celebrate the end of the war," she recalls. "I think we were all just very relieved it was over at last."



Pat's first husband Stanley was quite a hero himself. He made 21 parachute drops in total during the war but sadly died a while after due to heart failure. She later married her second husband Vic and enjoyed working in a Finchley shoe shop until her son Brian was born. After being widowed for a second time, Pat got the travel bug, teaming up with a friend to make a number of foreign excursions, including a memorable trip to Rome.

These days, Pat enjoys nothing more than a visit from her Age UK Barnet befriender Lindsay. Like hundreds of Age UK Barnet volunteers across the borough, Lindsay has made a huge difference to Pat's life, helping to make sure she's got everything she needs and, most importantly, being around for a catch-up.

"Lindsay is like a precious bag of gold to me when she comes to visit," Pat enthuses, with Lindsay listening by her side. "She's been such a good friend to me and I wish she was my daughter. The carers who come to see me don't really have time to stop so it's great to have some company when Lindsay comes round for a chat."



Ingredients

8 ounces gluten-free penne pasta or whole-wheat penne pasta
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 500g boneless, skinless chicken breast or thighs, trimmed, if necessary, and cut into bite-size pieces
 ½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground pepper
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 ½ glass dry white wine
 2-3 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 tablespoon lemon zest
 1 Bag chopped fresh spinach
 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese for each serving.

Method

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a large high-sided pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken, salt and pepper, cook, stirring occasionally, until just cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes.

Add garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in wine, lemon juice and zest; bring to a simmer.

Remove from heat. Stir in spinach and the cooked pasta. Cover and let stand until the spinach is just wilted.

Makes 4 portions. Top with 1 tablespoon Parmesan.



EASY BANANA ICE CREAM

Ingredients

4 very ripe bananas

Method

Peel and slice the bananas – use 1 banana per person. Freeze for at least 2 hours, or overnight.

Add to a food processor and blend until smooth and creamy.

Scoop into bowls and tuck in!

For an extra twist, add a sprinkle of cinnamon or a handful of frozen fruit.

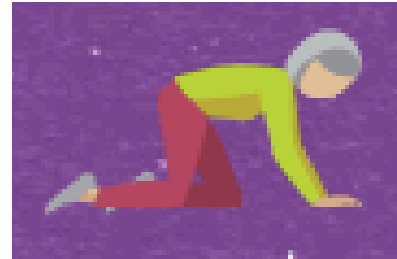


If you should fall, lie still for a minute, stay calm and check for injuries. If you are unhurt and think you can get up, follow the steps opposite (rest between each one if you need to). If you know you can't get up, or feel pain in your hips or back if you move, see below for ways to summon help.

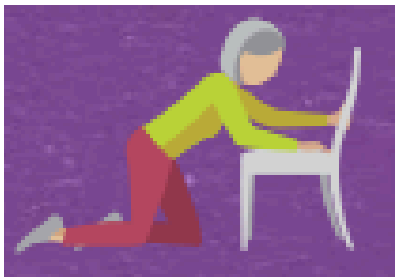
1. Roll on to your side, then push up on to your elbows.



2. Use your arms to push yourself on to your hands and knees.



3. Crawl to a very stable piece of furniture (a sturdy chair or bed) and hold on to it for support.



4. Slide or raise the foot of your stronger leg forwards so it's flat on the floor.



5. Lean forwards and push up using your arms and front leg, slowly rising to standing position.



6. Turn around and sit down. Sit for a minute or two to rest.

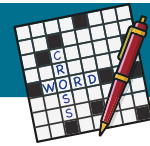


"I slipped in the kitchen and couldn't get up. Afterwards, my daughter suggested I practiced while she was there to help. I felt silly crawling around the house, but now I feel much more confident about getting up on my own."



TOP TIP

If you can't get on to all fours, bottom-shuffle or roll to a low surface like the bottom stair or sofa. Sit with your back to it, put your arms behind you on to the surface and push up with your hands and feet, lifting your bottom onto the surface. If using the stairs, go up to the next step before standing up.



SODOKU



How to cut the cost of tumble drying?

Use a speedy spin cycle first. Run an extra spin cycle to drain as much water as possible before you tumble dry. The spin cycle will be cheaper to run than the tumble dryer and you'll reduce the amount of time the dryer will need to be on.

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7	6						8	

Across

- 1 Loosen (4)
- 3 Friendly (8)
- 9 Haven (7)
- 10 More competent (5)
- 11 Something of value (5)
- 12 Gas essential for life (6)
- 14 Fisherman (6)
- 16 Out of sorts (6)
- 19 US island state (6)
- 21 Bait, rag (5)
- 24 Longest river in France (5)
- 25 Exact (7)
- 26 Pacts (8)
- 27 Nuisance (4)

Down

- 1 Great disturbance (8)
- 2 Pub game (5)
- 4 Looking-glass (6)
- 5 Mad (5)
- 6 Credit (7)
- 7 Multi-national currency (4)
- 8 Container for liquid (6)
- 13 Use badly (3-5)
- 15 Hard stone (7)
- 17 Aromatic spice (6)
- 18 Small wave (6)
- 20 Turn aside (5)
- 22 Join together (5)
- 23 Conspiracy (4)

CROSSWORD

1		2			3	4		5		6		7
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What you will need

vintage handkerchief or other scrap of fabric
 scrap of thick fabric, such as canvas or duck cloth - (this is a heavy, plain-woven fabric made from cotton that is also known as duck canvas or duck fabric)
 paper backed, no-sew, fusible interfacing (Heat 'n Bond Ultrahold)
 ruler
 pen or pencil
 parchment paper
 scissors
 scallop fabric shears or pinking shears



Instructions

Start by drawing a 2 x 6 inch rectangle on the paper side of your interfacing.

Position the interfacing, paper-side-up, on the "wrong" side of your handkerchief. Iron it down and let it cool. If your handkerchiefs are thin, use a piece of parchment paper to protect your ironing board from the interfacing. Cut out the rectangle.



Peel off the paper backing. Place your rectangle on top of your thicker fabric, with the interfacing side down.



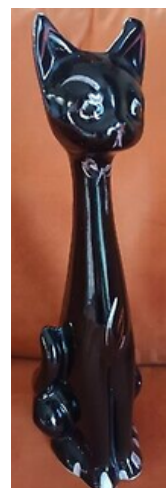
Make sure it's a solid fabric with no print. White would be a good idea! Iron it down and let it cool.

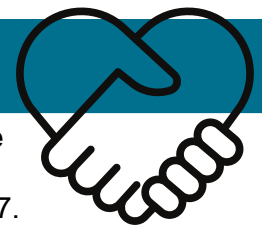


Cut out your rectangle again, with some fabric scissors. Then trim both sides with the scalloped shears, to make a pretty design on the edge. You can use regular pinking shears for this as well.

You can make a variety of bookmarks using different scraps of material. Finish them off with a little tassel or ribbon at the top to make them extra special.

Did you grace your home with any of these ornaments at one time - maybe you still have them?





- 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 singer Katie Hainbach on 16 January 2025 (2-3pm). Shake off the January blues with a singalong lead by Katie. Takes place at Avery at Barnet Grange, 59 Wood Street, Barnet EN5 4BS. £5 on door for non residents, includes refreshments. To book contact Helen on 07384 466840.

Eat Well Stay Active information event - Tuesday 4 February 2025 (9am-1pm) at Nanak Darbar North London, 136 High Rd, Arnos Grove, London N11 1PG. Call Salima on 07503 353157 for more info.

Talk: the science behind New Year's resolutions by Professor Catherine Loveday - Wednesday 19 February 2025 (6.45-8pm) at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. Call Teresa on 07502 989 403 to book.

ADVENTURES OF SUKI



Hallo lovely Pigeon Post readers, it's Suki aka Cat Moss, checking in. As you know I live with Charlotte (Age UK Barnet volunteer) in High Barnet. Well, in my opinion she lives with me!

I hope you are all keeping well! I am a senior cat and like senior humans I also need to keep myself in tip top shape, especially during the winter months. I think I am due my annual check-up very soon but Charlotte always leaves it to the last minute to let me know when she is taking me as she worries that I will not go into the cat basket and cause a rumpus (or should that be rum puss? hahahaha).

At this time of year I mostly stay at home and sleep. Favourite places are Charlotte's bed or her lap in the evenings when we watch television together. We love Quiz Night on Mondays and any programmes about Big Cats. The vet says I am a big cat but these are seriously Big Cats like lions and tigers.

Have you heard about cat cafes? Yes, cafes where you can meet cats and have a cuppa and piece of cake. It's such a brilliant idea that I am surprised they haven't popped up before. There are a couple of cat cafes in London and the nearest one to Barnet is in Holloway and is called Whiskers and Cream. Isn't that a brilliant name for a cat cafe?



I would like to wish you all a very Happy, Healthy and Miaowvellous 2025.
Lots of love and purrs

Suki

Writer Lee Janogly – an 84 year old semi-retired fitness instructor and author – shares the conversational highlights of the regular meet-ups with a group of good friends. This time she focuses on those not-so-helpful comments we all make when we're just trying to help.

"Well, you had them when you came in," said Jessica

"Obviously," replied Sheila, "I drove here."

We all joined in:

"Where did you last see them?"

"What do they look like?"

"Have you looked in your coat pockets?"

"They'll be in the last place you look"

Each suggestion getting an increasingly exasperated glare from Sheila. She went outside to see if she had left the keys in the ignition in her car. We agreed it's easily done.

I poured some more coffee and wondered aloud if it was only older women like us who made inane suggestions under the guise of trying to be helpful?

"Not only women," said Nancy. "My husband thinks I'm a mind reader. Whenever the phone or the doorbell rings he says, 'who's that?' How would I know?! Since he retired, he's driving me nuts. I married him for better or worse, not for lunch! We would have got divorced years ago but neither of us wanted custody of the children."

"That reminds me of my doctor," said Barbara. "Whatever symptom I consult him about he tells me it's very common for someone of 89. I told him so is dying!"

Barbara's comment jogged my memory: Oh Lord, it's her 90th birthday in a few weeks and I have no idea what to get her. Discreet discussions with the others in our group came up with everything from sexy underwear from Victoria's Secret to tickets for Glastonbury music festival. Not exactly helpful.

Sheila stomped back into the house looking frustrated – no luck. "They must be somewhere," said Nancy and the furious look Sheila gave her would have floored a raging bull at fifty yards.

"It's younger people as well," said Jessica, going back to the subject. "My three daughters all sound the same on the phone, and every time one of them calls me, she says, 'Hi Mum, it's me' – then gets irritated when I say, 'which me?'"

Sheila upended her handbag onto the table with the contents flying all over the place: purse, travel card, a negative Covid test (?) and a discretely wrapped panty liner (So I'm not the only one...) "There must be a hole in the lining," she said, poking around inside.

We left her to it and started a game of Rummikub, taking turns to lay down tiles of consecutive numbers on the table, and adding to those already there. The winner is the first to discard all their tiles. It's a simple game, thought to be good to keep your brain active, but somehow, I always end up losing.

It's nearly-90-year-old Barb who is the champ here, after five minutes saying, "the 3 goes there, put the 9 there, this goes there, that goes there, and I'm done!" – leaving the rest of us thinking "What just happened?!"

I lost every game – then it was time to go home.

Sheila found her keys; she'd put them in the fruit bowl so she'd know where they were.

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



WHY IT'S GOOD TO GET OLDER

ACCORDING TO BBC RADIO 4
WOMAN'S HOUR LISTENERS

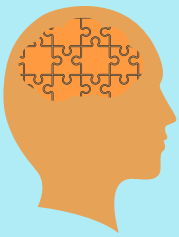


- "I have much more clarity about what's really important to me and am less bothered what people might think of me"
- "Seeing the interesting people your children grow up to be and learning stuff you didn't know from them."
- "Life experience and old friends"
- "Since I retired I feel the same sense of infinite possibility I felt as a student"
- "Getting older rocks! Calmer, better, stronger: happy!"
- "You appreciate every moment in life and don't let the little things bother you."

Neuropsychologist Professor Catherine Loveday used science to set the record straight on some common brain myths in a recent talk for us!



1. Many people think we use only 10 per cent of our brains – in fact we use most of our brain all day, even when we're daydreaming.
2. Our brains are amazing and always busy but they are also malleable and continue to grow throughout life.
3. People aren't left or right brained – both sides of the brain work together. So if you're creative, for instance, it's wrong to say the left side of the brain is more dominant.
4. Male and female brains are not that different – differences are more to do with the way we are brought up. Only 8 per cent of people have a typical 'male' or 'female' brain.
5. No one has a photographic memory but we can all develop better memories through practice.
6. A bang on the head can't cause someone to forget who they are. Memory can be affected in various ways but they won't forget who they are. Memories of our identity are very well protected.
7. Listening to Mozart may not make us more intelligent but music often makes us happier and more connected.
8. Getting older might mean we're not so good at multitasking or learning a new language and it might mean we take longer to recall a word. However, some things get better with age – we know more, we have a better vocabulary, we are better at problem solving and conflict resolution and we're altogether wiser.



SHIRLEY MEREDEEN

A BARNET LEGEND

Shirley Meredeen (1930–2022) co-founder of New Ground in Barnet, the first co-housing community for women over 50, has been recognised as a Barnet Legend. A plaque celebrating Shirley has been erected as part of an art trail recognising 21 inspirational figures who have contributed to the borough's rich and unique cultural tapestry. Shirley was an advocate for women and pioneer of senior co-housing in the UK.



In 1989, she co-founded the Hen Coop, a group that aimed to inspire women to challenge conventional views of ageing. After the publication of research on senior co-housing models, Shirley and five other women formed Older Women's Co-Housing (OWCH) in 1998. The group expanded and started to develop its ethos.

After 18 years of seeking funding and a site, acquiring planning permission, building a membership, negotiating with local authorities and collaborating with housing associations and architects, New Ground eventually opened to residents in December 2016.

And our volunteer receptionist Charlotte is one of those residents, along with her cat Suki (read her column on page 11!). "Shirley was an inspiration and I love living here," says Charlotte. "It's an intentional community blending communal living and my own private home and there's a strong ethos combining mutual support and proactive involvement with the wider community."



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...

Winter in the garden is a time of quiet beauty and preparation, offering a different kind of appeal compared to the vibrant flowers of spring or summer.



While the growing season slows, a garden in winter reveals its structure, showcasing the elegant silhouettes of trees, and the intricate patterns of frost.

At the allotment, all the plots can look equally beautiful under a thick layer of snow.



Now is also the time for maintenance and planning. Pruning dormant trees and shrubs, protecting tender plants with mulch or coverings, and clearing paths of snow and ice are essential tasks. It's an ideal time to consider the garden's design, imagining improvements or new planting schemes for the year ahead. Attention can be paid to clearing weeds and debris, turning over the soil, and adding organic matter like compost or manure to enrich it.

In the garden, grasses and seed heads left standing create visual interest and provide food for birds and other wildlife, ensuring the garden remains lively despite the cold weather. Glossy leaved evergreens like Holly, Fatsia and Mahonia add colour and life to the otherwise muted tones, while winter-blooming plants such as hellebores, snowdrops and witch hazel bring delicate splashes of colour. Daphne and Sarcococca can also add a delicate scent to the winter air. Scented plants in pots can also offer many benefits for your home and garden. Their portability allows you to position them where their fragrance can be most enjoyed, such as on balconies, near seating areas or by doorways.

At the allotment I have been re arranging and digging over an area that had become unkempt, incorporating some of my compost to improve soil fertility. I am using some second-hand railway sleepers to create a raised bed and some old paving slabs as a base for a bench. You always need a nice spot to sit and contemplate what to do next.

A few jobs for January / February

- Prune trees and shrubs while they are dormant, removing dead or diseased branches to promote healthy growth. Check tree ties and stakes for damage.
- Add mulch around plants to protect roots from frost and retain moisture.
- Cover tender plants with fleece or cloches to protect them from frost.
- Sprinkle slow-release fertiliser around the base of soft fruit bushes, roses and other flowering shrubs.



EXTRA SUPPORT THIS WINTER



Two organisations are there to help if you're struggling with your energy bills and staying warm

SHINE offers support to people who are over 60 and are struggling financially. Arrange a consultation by phoning **SHINE on 0800 953 1221** or emailing shine@islington.gov.uk (covers all of London). If you are eligible, an energy doctor will visit your home and help you save money on your energy bills, check your heating controls and fit energy efficient measures such as low energy light bulbs, draft proofing, reflective radiator panels and water saving devices. They also provide energy debt support and grants and much more.

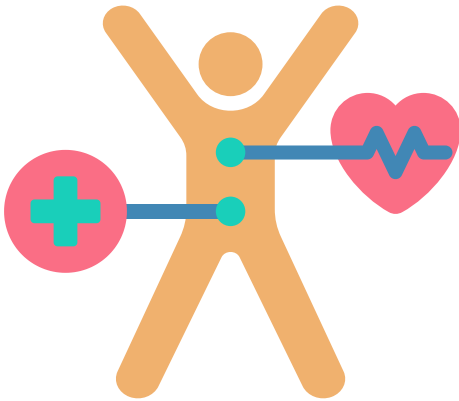
Green Doctor has launched its Winter Support Fund which offers energy and food support to people living in the most vulnerable situations this winter. To be eligible for energy and food support households must be on a lower income (less than £31,000) or living in an energy inefficient property. Energy and food items available include energy and supermarket vouchers and cookery or heating items such as an air fryer, heated blanket, microwave. To arrange a telephone appointment or home visit from a Green Doctor representative, phone **0300 365 3005**.

CHANGING THE WAY BARNET RESIDENTS PARK

The use of Pay and Display machines has dropped dramatically in Barnet, and there are plans to remove the machines permanently... However, you will still be able to pay for parking using the PaybyPhone App, online, phone or cash at Pay Point locations. Residents who lack digital skills to navigate through the new system will find this transition particularly difficult, so there will be support available. Age UK Barnet's digital inclusion sessions can also help to guide people through the process. For more information about our sessions, contact Howard on howard.chapman@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call him on 020 8432 1415.



NEW HEALTH CHECKS!



A new check and test service is being introduced in Barnet to improve the way GPs work with patients with long-term conditions.

If you have certain long-term conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, you will be offered and encouraged to attend a yearly health check to better care for your health. Your GP will work with you to consider your individual needs and preferences. The idea is that you are given the tools to manage your condition, reduce the risk of being admitted to hospital, and have a better quality of life.

Patients will be contacted via text, phone call, or letter to organise your appointments over the next year so please do not worry if you do not hear from us right away.

THE BOROUGH'S BEST KEPT SECRETS - THE CLUB IN THE PARK

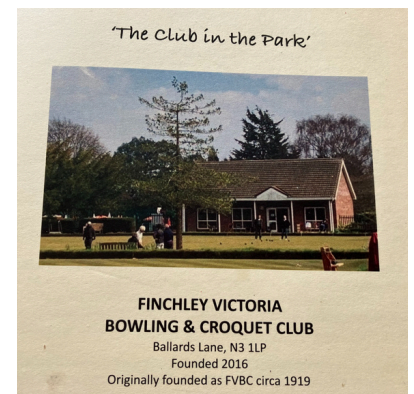


Age UK Barnet walking volunteer Gillian discovered this 'Youth Club for older people' which offers a wide range of activities for over 50s.

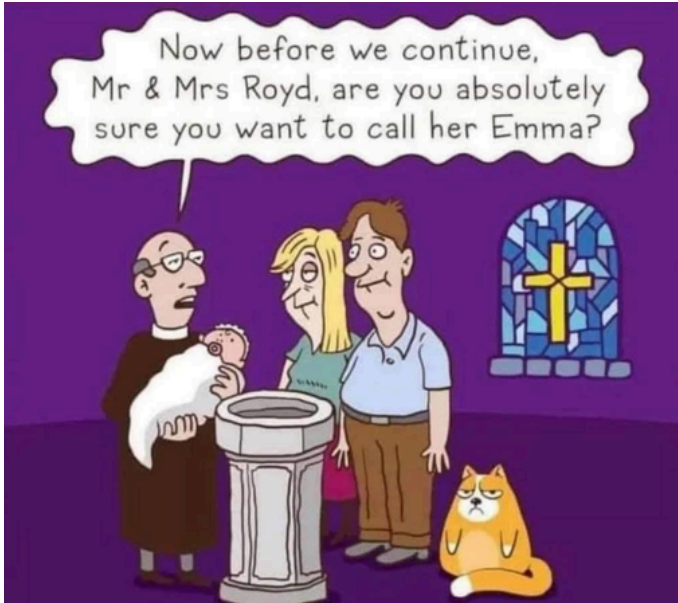
The question you may then ask is which Park? We're lucky in Barnet to have so many. Well this one is called Victoria Park and is located just north of Finchley Central. Lurking within is 'The Club' which, when it is open, is accessible from near the cafe in the park or the main road. Not only is it near the Victoria Park bus stop - visited by the 125, 13 and 460 buses - there is also free parking for members.

So what is this club all about? Well it is a Bowling and Croquet club. Until I tried it, I didn't know how much I would enjoy croquet. But if you peered

through the railings in the winter you wouldn't see much evidence of that. Instead they have a lovely club house, where for a small fee (£2, for members) you can have hot drinks and often delicious cake and even better meet other members for activities. I am a table tennis addict, which we play on Monday afternoons and sometimes Saturday afternoons. In addition there are loads of other activities. On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons we usually start with a group quiz, before moving on to tackle a jigsaw, play Scrabble, cards, more complicated versions of Dominoes - or within reason whatever members want to do. It's a lovely atmosphere- we call it the 'Youth Club for older people', but all ages are welcome. So if any of this appeals to you, why not come along and see for yourself? It's usually open from 14.00 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. If the gates are open, everything is done by volunteers, then pop in and say hello.



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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“Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.”
-Mark Twain

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