

The magazine for older people in Leeds

# Shine

Dec 2020/ Jan 2021

## A VERY DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS

What does this mean for older people in 2020?

## PERSONAL STORIES

### The street where I lived

The street she grew up in, a World Cup wedding and a lockdown budgie

## IN CONVERSATION

### HARRY GRATION

On life since retiring, being a new Dad at 70 & looking forward to the future

## MEMORIES OF LEEDS

### Winters past

Remembering the harsh Winter of 1962/3

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### THE 5 WAYS OF WELLBEING IN WINTER



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- For information about services and self-help resources visit [www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk) or for people aged under 18 visit [www.mindmate.org.uk](http://www.mindmate.org.uk)

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*Shine is a magazine by and for older people in Leeds. We're part of Time to Shine, which focuses on preventing isolation and loneliness amongst older people. Time to Shine funds various projects across Leeds that use creative ways to engage socially isolated people. Some of these projects feature in the magazine. Linda Glew is a Time to Shine Programme Manager and she introduces each issue.*



**W**ell, here we are again! We're now moving into phase 2 of Shine Magazine.

Thank you for the wonderful feedback that so many of you gave us during phase 1. We have managed to secure funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and Leeds Public Health Department, to create 12 more issues. This bumper Christmas issues the first of those with

with monthly issues to follow right through to next December.

“ It is fair to say that 2020 has been a hard year, full of challenges for everyone. ”

This issue shares Maureen Kershaw's memories of Leeds winters' past, particularly the dramatic snowfall of 1962/63. This was apparently the coldest ever recorded in the UK and caused all kinds of chaos from Christmas through to March. Let's hope we don't see another one quite like that!

We also bring you an interview with the much-loved Harry Gration of BBC Look North. He tells us about how his values helped him to become the kind of journalist that makes many of us feel that we know him like a friend. He tells us what his plans are for his well-earned retirement and how being the father of teenagers and a toddler keeps him on his toes.

Our new 'My Time to Shine' section features an organisation that is doing amazing work supporting older people in this difficult time. They receive funding from Time to Shine and we're so pleased with the work they are doing that we wanted to share it with you. Sunshine in Leeds displays just how they go the extra mile to provide that personal touch.

We've also got our usual mix of stories, columns and articles. Some of them have a festive flavour. I hope you enjoy them and you find your own way of celebrating Christmas this year.

It is fair to say that 2020 has been a hard year, full of challenges for everyone. It has been particularly tough for older people; the first lockdown effectively kept everyone indoors and unable to socialise with friends and family. Whilst we know that this has been necessary to keep us all safe, we also know that it has caused loneliness and social isolation, something that was already a problem in the UK before a global pandemic came along. We hope that this magazine goes some small way to helping people feel connected and reminds us that Leeds people really care! We include a list of all the activities that you can engage with across the city during the Christmas period showing that even though we have keep our distance physically, socially there is still a lot happening.

Merry Christmas everyone and see you in 2021!

**Linda Glew**  
Programme Manager  
linda@opforum.org.uk

## Shine

At Shine we rely on our readers to provide stories. We're always looking for people to share their story. Do you have something to say? Maybe you're an aspiring writer, or maybe you just want to get something off your chest?

Send your story ideas to us in the following ways:

POST **Shine Magazine, PO Box  
908, ELLAND, HX1 9WF**  
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**Mon - Fri: 9am - 5pm**

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**06 Famous Faces** *We chat to Look North legend Harry Gration about retiring and fatherhood.*

**10 Columns** *Winter on the canalside and a Christmas tradition.*

**12 In Focus** *Maggie Poppa looks into how older people are able to celebrate Christmas in 2020.*

**16 My Time to Shine** *A look at Sunshine in Leeds, featuring stories from 2 older participants*

**20 Shine a Light Stories** *The Street Where I Lived, A World Cup Wedding and The Budgie in Our Bubble*

**26 Memories of Winter** *Maureen Kershaw remembers the Winters of her youth*

**30 Special Feature** *Favourite Christmas Stories from a variety of Shine readers*

**36 Christmas Collection** *Kitty Ross delves into the Leeds Museums collections*



**39 Health & wellbeing** *The 5 Ways to Wellbeing. A story from Ruth Steinberg and some helpful tips*

**44 Eating healthy** *A healthy pumpkin pie recipe to keep you warm and well in Winter*

**45 Puzzle page** *A bumper Christmas quiz and a few more brainteasers with seasonal twist*

**46 Shortcuts** *Your stories and poems*

## Famous faces

*In this new feature, we interview some older people who've made a mark in Leeds and Yorkshire. Some more famous than others, all of them fascinating folk. And all of them were born or live or work in the local area. Our first Famous Face is TV Legend Harry Gration.*



**H**arry Gration is no ordinary journalist. In fact, most people wouldn't describe him as a journalist; he's more of a friend. Harry has been broadcasting for the BBC for 40 years, including sports commentary, local reporting, presenting. And for the most part he's stayed up North. He's a true Yorkshireman. "I love this county," he says.

Over the last few years, he's been a familiar presence on the Look North sofa, as well as the streets of Leeds. Many people will have seen him covering local events in Leeds and Yorkshire. Some will remember his reports from disasters such as the Leeds Market fire of 1975, the Bradford City fire ten years later and the recent floods all across the county. As well as reporting on the news, he also cares deeply about people. His charity work has been almost as important to him as his journalism.

To every story and interview he brings heart, integrity and charm. Harry is now 70 and has had an eventful couple of years. In 2019 he became a father again and this summer he found himself in hospital with pneumonia. Luckily, he came through it, even when Covid-19 was a huge risk. He retired from his BBC work in October so we thought it was the ideal time to get Harry's thoughts on his long career and how he feels being an older person.

*I've had a simple philosophy: I've tried to give something back to society, having had a good life*

**You retired from BBC Look North at the end of October. How did that feel?**

I've had nearly 40 years presenting. It has been my life. It was a difficult decision in one sense but easy in another because they were moving down from two presenters to one. My co-presenter Amy is a young lady with a family – and I'm not. So, it was a logical time to step down. And, as I hit my 70s, it felt right.

The surprising thing was the amazing reaction. Thousands and thousands of messages. I received hundreds of cards to my house in York, half of which I still haven't got round to opening. Well-wishes all along the line. To me, that was a lovely way to bow out. I realised that there was a real affection out there. It was very humbling. I've always regarded presenting Look North as a privilege and I had that privilege for a lot longer than many people. And I say thank you to the viewers at the same time as they're saying thank you to me for what I've tried to do over the viewers.

**A lot of our readers have a lot of regard for you – they feel like they know you.**

I've noticed this for some time. My wife drew my attention to it initially! Certainly, over the last 5 years. I've had a simple philosophy: I've tried to give something ►



“ I love this place.  
I have a particular  
affection for Leeds ”

## Famous faces

something back to society, having had a good life out of the media. And I think that may well have come through in my broadcasts. I've always tried to be fair. I've never been one of those aggressive interviewers you see on TV now. It seems that you're supposed to really rattle people and get toe-curling answers. I've never been one for that. I think one of the reasons that perhaps people do relate to me is that whenever I've covered a story, I've really owned the story and it's become very personal. Floods, for example. The Jo Cox murder. They're not just any old story to me, they are like an assault on "my Yorkshire". It's very personal.

### You have an affection for this area, don't you?

I love this place. I have a particular affection for Leeds. I lived there for many years. I very much embrace the work that Leeds City Council is doing. Leeds is a welcoming city. It welcomes all kinds of different people, all kinds of persuasions. And it has that umbrella of support when people arrive. I do think that makes Leeds a bit special. The Council may have many problems, but it is a caring council. Leeds is a very genuine place.

I did have a stint down South. I was in Southampton for four years in the nineties. I presented South Today down there, which was a great experience. At that time, I was doing a lot of work for BBC Sport – Grandstand and Match of the Day. But I do enjoy my life in Yorkshire. I love Yorkshire. I'm very proud of this county and that's why when bad things happen in our county I feel upset for it. I feel upset for the people. It's a genuine thing too. It's not manufactured. In fact, I got told off by my boss many years ago for making a story too personal! A few years ago, I was covering the floods in Leeds, Hebden Bridge and York. The floods came on Boxing Day. Terrible floods all over the county. I went in the next day and said, "we've got to do something about this." I thought we could set up a charity to help get all these houses repaired. If myself and my co-presenters did a sponsored walk I could raise thousands of pounds. I mentioned this on a local radio station and my boss told me off. He said, "You can't do that kind of thing, we're not allowed to do it – you should know that Harry!" Of course, I did. But I'd got carried away by the story, that it happened at Christmas, these poor people without a home.

### You were in the middle of other big news stories in the area over the years. The Bradford City Fire for instance.

Yes, the Bradford Fire hit me on a personal level. Some friends of mine were lost in that fire. That was the first indication of how a news story affected me. I couldn't regard it as "just another story". My editor actually

### Harry Gration: Fast Facts

Harry was born on 22nd October 1950 in Bradford.

He spent 5 years as a school teacher, latterly as head of history at The Rodilian Academy in Leeds.

Harry juggled teaching and broadcasting until he went full time with the BBC in 1978.

Harry has presented Look North for many years, alongside a series of co-presenters: Judith Stamper, Clare Frisby, Christa Ackroyd and Amy Garcia.

He was appointed Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 2013.

In 2009 Harry was declared honorary mayor of Burn, a village in North Yorkshire.

Harry and his wife Helen are the parents of a toddler. Hamilton Gration was born in October 2019, making Harry a new Dad at 68.

In March 2020 Harry and weatherman Paul Hudson completed their 121 mile three-legged challenge. They spent 9 days strapped together and raised more than £190,000 for Sport Relief.

took me off that story, he said I was too emotionally involved in it. He was probably right. When you are associated so much with an event, it's very difficult not to be affected by it. I'm a very emotional person. As you'd probably know if you saw my last Look North appearance. I was a gibbering wreck for about 30 minutes!

I would never have been any good as a network news reporter, going from one disaster to the other. It took me a long time to get over covering the fire and the floods. I feel for people. As a journalist, you are encouraged to become desensitised. But that's just not me. Someone said the trouble with me is that I'm too soft. I had a surprise chat with Michael Parkinson in my last week. They got him on the line – and I just burst out crying. Parky's been a great pal of mine over the years. It was a great chat between two experienced guys who've been through the ups and downs of life.

### You mentioned working at Grandstand and Match of the Day. What are your favourite sports memories?

I was very lucky. I was Sports Editor of Radio Leeds from 1978. I covered Leeds United and Yorkshire Cricket. So, my encyclopaedia of sporting memories is quite significant. For me, the highlight was going to the



European Cup Final in 1975 when Leeds United were there. The result wasn't so good though. I do have a story about Brian Clough. Clough was appointed Leeds United manager after the great Don Revie and he only lasted 44 days. At the time I was working as a teacher up the road. I was called by the BBC Sports Editor, who said, "Harry, you've got to get up to Leeds United - quick as you can - because Brian Clough is about to be sacked!" So, I got on my Honda 50 scooter with my tape-recorder. I got there and saw Brian Clough moving from one side of the car park to the other, on his way to the manager's office. I ran up with my tape-recorder and said, "Brian, can I have two words for Radio Leeds?" And ... I got them. I've still got his response on tape somewhere!

**We'll leave it to our readers to imagine what those two words might have been! Time to Shine has an Age Proud campaign to combat ageism. How do you feel about getting older?**

Well, I am older. I'm in my 70s now. I'm no spring chicken. To be honest, there have been people who have been pretty horrible about my age over the last couple of years. Sending anonymous letters being nasty and vitriolic. That upset me. When people say horrible things about your age it does have an impact. So, there is some ageism.

I always intended to leave the BBC when I felt I was still in a good place, in terms of my professional ability. Once I started to think of my ad-libs 12 hours too late, then it might be time to move on. I wanted to be functioning properly. I know I was on pretty good form towards the end. So, age didn't come into it. Age only becomes an issue when it starts to affect you mentally or physically. It never has done for me.

I accept that, yes, I'm 70 now. I'm lucky because I've got a little child and my wife is incredibly supportive. My little son is 14 months old now. He kept me sane in lockdown. But I'm a better parent now I'm older. I'm still a grumpy so-and-so at 3 in the morning! But I've also got two older twin boys, they're 17 now. They are adorable and they love the little one too. It's joyous. But being a parent of a baby when you're 70 isn't for everyone. It's something to do with my wife's determination. She's a nursery owner and has a great love of children and babies. She wanted to go down this route. I can't tell you how satisfying it is. It's wonderful! I hope I have a few more years to enjoy life best I can.

**How are you going to spend your retirement?**

I'm not going to be broadcasting. I'll probably never step foot into Look North again. People have said so many nice things about how I get along with Paul



Harry completing his charity 3-legged walk with weatherman Paul Hudson.

Hudson, the weatherman. So, I hope that continues in some way. But it's time to move on and make room for other people. I'm not actually watching Look North. I thought I'd give it a break for a while – at least until Christmas. I've tried to be a decent person who people can approach off the television screen. And have a chat. It's lovely and humbling to know I might be missed.

I'm going to be doing a lot of charity work. I'm heavily involved with a number of charities. Various hospices and cancer charities. I'll have more time for them now. I'll do different things in the media. I'm just turning away from news broadcasting as much as possible. Some commercial opportunities. But I'm also going to be watching a lot of cricket. I'm determined to and watch Yorkshire play. There's a couple of grounds I've never been to – I'm hoping to visit them this year, if I'm allowed to with the current restrictions. I'm going to enjoy life as much as I can for as long as I can, so long as I'm lucky enough to be alive.

**Happy Christmas Harry!**

You too, I wish all your readers a very merry Christmas. I'm very thankful for people's support over the years. It's very gratefully received. Thank you! ■



# That's Life!

*“Walter” (not his real name) is Shine’s resident self-styled Grumpy Old Man. In the Spring and Summer he told us tales from the canal bank – he’s a member of Canal Connections, a Time to Shine project that works with older men in Leeds. Below Walter shares his reflections on the season.*

**G**reetings, gang. Seconds out, round two! Is someone having a laugh? Who would ever have thought we would chat again on the same old issue? Locked down. I don’t know about you but it’s wearing a bit thin.

Regarding Canal Connections, we’re still not back floating our boat yet. We carry passengers, so social distancing is a problem. More like impossible actually, 7ft being the width of a narrowboat. Impatient to ‘get back in the saddle’, I took a drive to the mill last week for a gander at what I was missing. Not much as it happens: same moored boats, but no signs of life. Not even a gander! It was like looking at a photograph, which took me back to my first winter on the water...

My smug grin at shrouding myself in thermal gear, swapped for a ‘get me out of here’ gawk. There was Paul, sprinkling salt on the stern deck of ‘Out And About’. You don’t realise how the temperature drops near water. Research shows that folk were skating on the Leeds-Liverpool canal in the early sixties when boats were ice bound for weeks. “Hey, Grumpy! Watch every step, it’s dodgy everywhere!” came Paul’s concerned warning. Grumpy? Me?

Anyway, that was a few years ago. No trips for us for some months at least. I’ve heard there will be movement on the canal this winter though: two cargo boats are being used to deliver aggregate from the port of Hull, via the Aire and Calder Navigation to Knostrop Wharf. I believe the aim is to take weight off the heavily congested roads of Leeds. I was surprised to learn each boat carries the equivalent of seventeen lorries. Us skippers and crew have been told that retraining will be necessary to cope with the differences in sailing conditions due to the presence of these

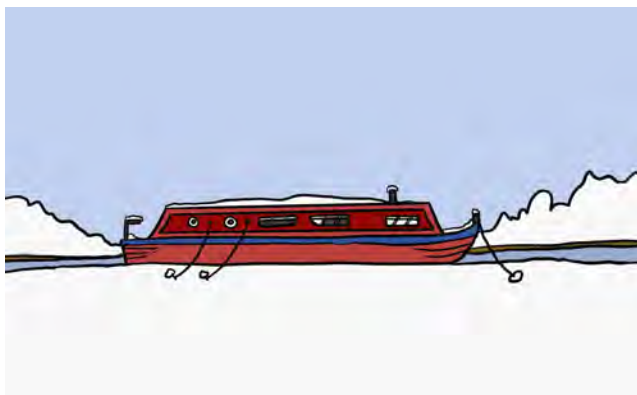
larger boats. In the meantime, reading and studying is replacing the outdoors for me.

One positive I did notice from lockdown is, I actually saved money. I wonder if this is the case for most folk? A good job too, as it turned out, I’d need it. Who was it that coined the phrase ‘everything comes in threes’?

First, my fridge freezer died, to be followed by the printer, then my electric cooker lost life in the middle of my attempts at egg, beans and chips. As in life, death is followed by the birth of another. I never used the oven bit, I didn’t see the point in getting a full-blown job. A two ringed hob was obtained via ebay.

So, what do you reckon, will this last few wasted months make Christmas seem better? I don’t even know which shops are open and which not. Everyone’s mixed up.

Talking of Christmas, I’ll sign off with a true story involving two mates of mine, the Walker brothers. They were brothers, but not exactly best mates. In their teens, elder brother Johnny was an amateur boxing champion, while Mark, the younger, was always striving to be better than his sibling. One Christmas Day morning, Mark asked if Johnny had got him a present. “No,” said Johnny. Mark replied, “Mum always taught us to be good to each other” and he grandly handed Johnny a twenty-pound note. Johnny took the note from his brother, pocketed it and thought deeply. He opened his wallet and held out a fiver. “Merry Christmas Mark. It’s all I can afford. Mark exploded, “Come on, our kid, I was only joking. Give me my twenty back!” Johnny grinned and said, Remember what else Mum taught us: never take back a gift!” The two brothers fought it out. Seconds Out! Good Job mum wasn’t there... ■





# Joyce Williams

*Joyce Williams took up blogging in her 80s and became an internet star as “Grandma Williams”. She was born in Yorkshire but now lives in Glasgow. Joyce’s latest column, in which she recounts the birth of a Christmas Family Tradition, is sure to raise a laugh – and possibly a tear or two.*

**M**ost of us have a family tradition or two around Christmas, don’t we? Usually something that we may have has grown up over years. In my wartime childhood it involved finding money in the Christmas pudding. At that time, it was those tiny silver three-penny pieces wrapped in greaseproof paper. Back then a big bag of Jelly Babies only cost you a penny at corner shop. So, getting thruppence was riches!

We searched our pudding hopefully. Sometimes lucky. But every Christmas a strange thing happened. My Father was just about to eat his last spoonful of pud and there, underneath it, was a Half Crown! A large coin, worth twoshillings and sixpence! It appeared by magic every year.

It felt hard then at age 34 being a single parent – just me and my young son - and having to create a family Christmas of our own.

## Making your own

We had just been given a Council Flat that had to be furnished. Junk shop “vintage” solved that. But my part-time pay had left nothing over after food and bills. Managed a chicken, a pud, mince pie and a trifle. Grandma and Grandad were coming with presents. Lovely to be able to ask them to our new home, but we had no decorations. Did manage to buy some lights. No Christmas Tree though. Far too expensive.

Then I remembered a story we had read about a poor family making their own. That was the answer! We made it a picnic expedition to the woods to find the perfect dead branch. Great discussions before we found it. Just the right height and shape with enough twiggy bits. Not too fragile to drag home either. A large pot filled with earth and stones anchored it. Some judicious pruning until we agreed that the shape met our joint artistic standards. Then the fun. Leftover white emulsion splashing everywhere. But enough newspapers and old clothes did the protection job.

Planning a pattern for the lights was another artistic challenge. Then to decorate it. We had a little bit of glittery red tinsel, so we cut and tied that onto the branches as little balls. And, of course, cotton wool and kitchen foil stars. Little toys, real holly berries, bits of old jewelry all added sparkle. The final touch was red crepe-paper around the pot with a big silver foil bow.

Lights off, light up. Pure magic. Ours! We invited little friends to share mince pies and sing carols with us.

Then we forgot it. Until next year. When an outraged voice insisted that it was time for us to go and get our Christmas Branch “We don’t have a ready-made one!”

So it has been ever since. Fifty years later I go to my son’s home for Christmas and there it is: “Our Christmas Branch”. My grandchildren grew up with our tradition.

Maybe their grandchildren will too? ■



# A Very Different Christmas?

Words by Maggie Poppa

*In every issue of Shine we choose a topic that is pertinent to older people and ask an older writer to investigate. The topic this month is (what else?) Christmas. What does this mean for older people in 2020?*

**‘C**hristmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, Please put a penny in the old man’s hat’. This is a rhyme we used to sing in the weeks before Christmas looking

forward so much to the day itself. This year many people will not be looking forward to Christmas because they are alone. What with all the lockdowns and rules we have to stick to, it makes helping these lonely folk very difficult. Already for some during this year there has been sorrow. For some, the fear of catching COVID-19 has overtaken everything. For most, the loneliness of staying at home for months on end has been the overwhelming. Admittedly, this year has also shown how good people can be – those working on the frontline to care for us, and the volunteers who have stepped forward ready to deliver shopping and prescriptions or whatever we have needed.

Many of us will benefit from the government’s announcement of “Christmas Bubbles” being extended to three households. Fantastic news for those of us who are desperate to see family. But there are lots of people who don’t have family support and who generally spend Christmas alone – even before Covid. For many this Christmas is going to be the loneliest Christmas they have ever had. Being alone during both lockdowns has been bad enough but to be all alone on days that are meant for families and for sharing is going to be hard. I heard one elderly lady with Age UK say, “I wish I could go to sleep on Christmas Eve and not wake up until the New Year.” Another man who lost his wife a few years ago said, “Christmas used to be fantastic, as my wife used to get all the family round, but things do change when you are on your own. Christmas won’t be too good for me this year if things carry on as they are with this virus. I can’t imagine what it’s going to be like. You are on your own; you feel lonely and depressed. You just want it to change.” ▶

For many who live alone, the only bright time about Christmas in normal circumstances has been going to their local Christmas party at their neighbourhood organisation. Or joining in with a huge number of festive events, get-togethers, carol concerts and the like. This year these events all have to be cancelled, so all the company they will have might be listening to the radio. At least this means another voice in the room. Some might find comfort in their pets. But please don’t think that loneliness is restricted to the elderly. There are so many younger people who live alone, and single mums who have a baby but no-one to talk to about their worries and concerns.

## Organised organisations

All around Leeds there are many organisations who have got organised to make sure everyone has at least a bit of cheer over the Christmas period, even with all these difficulties. I’ve been talking to a few of them about their plans. All across Leeds there are committed people, determined to find creative ways for people to enjoy the season. Richmond Hill Elderly Action has been going for twenty-five years, serving people from the Richmond Hill and East End Park areas. Normally they provide a full programme of events every day of the week from Monday to Friday, but at present although the staff offices are open, the events list is cancelled. I spoke to Darrell Xavier, their Project Manager, about their festive plans. “We have been having a campaign called ‘RHEA Christmas Cheer’ (it rhymes) and we have been asking either for money or for donations of small gifts that are suitable to go in the parcels we hope to deliver to those of our members who are totally alone on Christmas Day.” They have had online raffles with all the proceeds going to achieve their objective of being able to wrap up about three hundred parcels. Normally they would have been open to members on Christmas Day so that around seventy members would arrive for a jolly three-course lunch served by volunteers. “That’s off the menu this year,” said Darrell. “And we can’t do a parcel for everyone as we have about a thousand members. But everybody



## In focus

should at least get a Christmas card from us”

Another neighbourhood organisation that is plotting surprises for Christmas is Aireborough Voluntary Centre (AVSED) which covers Yeadon, Rawdon and Guiseley. There are five staff there, led by Debbie, the Project Co-ordinating Manager, who told me about the communications plan that has been hatched during lockdown. First, they provided a monthly news magazine, then they set up an additional Phone a Friend network, with the help of volunteers. Their usual programme includes exercise classes, both Tai Chi and chair based exercise, trips out and coffee mornings where getting together with friends is the main aim, but again that programme has had to be put on the back burner. She went on to tell me, “For Christmas we are going to trim up our minibus and have Santa Claus on board while we go up and down the streets where many of our members live. We’ll also call at the local care homes on our patch where Santa Claus will get out and wave to the people in the home. Every one of our four hundred and fifty members will get a Christmas pack which will have the usual Newsletter, a Christmas card, and small treat in there. For the very vulnerable, who are without friends or family, we are aiming to deliver a Christmas lunch. That is proving difficult to organise at the moment working under the current restrictions. We have organised a couple of virtual events for those who have learned to work on their computers, and we will be having a singalong party on Zoom.”

### Getting together

When you start looking there is such a lot going on for older people in Leeds. Thank goodness we have a council who supports all these organisations to be able to operate as they do. Coming to my area of Leeds, I spoke to the people at Crossgates and District Good Neighbour Scheme. Looking at their website, I saw that in normal times they have half a dozen activities every day and even a Share-a-Table scheme going on for weekends. I spoke to Jo, the Manager of the Scheme, about what they had in their minds for Christmas. “Having trained many people in being able to get online, we will be having a virtual carol service. As well we are including the residents of the two local sheltered housing schemes where we aim to visit with a local children’s choir and sing carols in their car park. Our minibus will be dressed in all its Christmas finery and we will be using that to take packages to those that we know will not have any family or any other visitors over Christmas. We have been putting together art activity packs and there will be a special Christmas one to go out. We’ve been trying to find out what our members are doing for Christmas, whether they have

relatives etc, by sending out a questionnaire and from those results we hope to send out a Christmas meal on 23rd December to those who will not have anyone visiting.”

Looking after all non-Christian older folk across our multi-cultural Leeds is also important. People of different faiths may not be celebrating Christmas but they have been celebrating festivals throughout 2020. In November some took part in Diwali, the Festival of Light. This year many families have not been able to do as they would usually do. In a normal year, older members of the family - grandparents and older aunts and uncles - would be brought to the rest of the family in a beautifully decorated house to eat together and to receive gifts and perhaps watch the little pieces of entertainment that the children have rehearsed for the occasion. Not in 2020.

### A different Christmas

I spoke to Debbani Ghosh who is in charge of a Project for Blind Asians across Leeds. “Festivities are an important part of human life and celebrations bring communities together,” she said. “Things are different this year in terms of celebrations due to COVID-19 and especially due to the current second lockdown.” She had spoken to some of their service users and here’s what they have said. Mrs S. who is partially sighted said that she will “miss the family get together”. She is missing the community events she usually has at Gurdwara (the Sikh temple) but she thinks that the festival will “take the darkness away and keep her loved ones safe”. Mrs P., a carer, looks after Mr H. who is registered blind, has agreed that “things have to be different” this year. She ordered some safe diyas (tea light holders) for him online and put out for him on the day of celebration. She said that being in lockdown for Diwali has made her realise that “life is too short and things can change in a moment”. A good lesson for those of us who are facing a very different Christmas in 2020.

### Making Plans

What about me? I am one of the people who have needed to shield the longest because of health problems. We have a new name this time round – ‘the clinically extremely vulnerable people’ – but the instructions are just the same – stay at home and be safe. So how am I planning to spend Christmas? I am lucky in that I will not be alone. John (my other half) will be with me, as will my son who is in our ‘bubble’ as he acts as a carer doing our cleaning and shopping if need be. We all cook, so we will share the preparation for the big meal on the day, probably duck or lamb rack if I have my choice. There will be a fair amount of Christmas TV, watching the Queen and then later probably Strictly. Alcohol will feature but not in a big way. I will certainly not imbibe as I used to

do when the ritual was to visit my friend's house in the morning, have a couple of drinks with her, and then home, where one year I was so tipsy I dropped the turkey getting it out of the oven. I didn't tell the family but they ate it quite happily without knowing of my mishap.

What can I suggest that will make the day as bright as possible? Let's tackle the meal first of all. If you are alone it's your choice whether you decide to cook or not. You can buy ingredients to make a traditional meal, or you could buy Christmas Stollen, boxes of chocolates and bags of crisps. It could be a day to eat all your guilty pleasures with no-one there to make you feel bad. I suppose it depends how the money is going round as to whether you might want to treat yourself to a bottle of wine or sherry, or perhaps even a bottle of Bailey's, which seems to be a favourite. There are small bottles of everything around now. My guilty pleasure for later on or for the next day would be a piece of gala pie (the pork pie with egg in the middle) if you can get it, as it takes me back to the days when I would call into Lewis's Food Hall and buy a slice of gala pie for my lunch when I was working. I asked one person what he would do if he was alone on Christmas Day and he said that depending on the weather, he would start off with a good walk, saying "Good Morning" to all he met. Then home for a festive meal which for him would be the biggest dressed crab he could buy so that he could pick away at it for hours. Each to his own I suppose.

### Volunteering

In other years I would have recommended looking for somewhere to volunteer if you are fit and well enough. Going out to help others is a good way to forget about your own problems. But this year due to the virus, there are very few places that are putting on a big meal and needing volunteers. Perhaps you could ring Age UK and offer to be a phone volunteer and then you would be reaching those who are even lonelier than yourself. Do remember that even though Christmas is important, it is only one day! If I was alone, I would buy the latest paperback crime novel by one of my favourite authors, and read without interruption. I am very glad that our government has decided to loosen the rules for Christmas, even if it's only for a few days. But let's not forget those people who don't have close family or friends they can "bubble up" with. Or those who, even with the Christmas easing of restrictions, don't feel safe to go out and see people. Wherever or whoever you are I wish you a good Christmas, spent in the best way you can this year. Here's to some good news in 2021. ■

### Age UK

Throughout December the befriending service at Age UK Leeds is encouraging volunteer befrienders to keep in regular contact with clients and find personalised ways to mark the festive season together. The team are planning doorstep gift deliveries and doorstep catch-ups for all befriending clients and also an online Christmas social.

Staff are sending thank you cards and vouchers to show their appreciation to their fabulous team of befriending volunteers, because without them the service wouldn't be what it is today! Staff are also putting extra support in place over the festive season and assessing each person's needs on an individual basis, creating additional action plans where necessary to support people who are in greatest need.

To find out more about the range of services Age UK Leeds provides phone:

**0113 389 3000** or **0113 389 3010**  
or email [frontofhouse@ageukleeds.org.uk](mailto:frontofhouse@ageukleeds.org.uk)

### Leeds Older People's Forum

The team at Time to Shine are asking community organisations across Leeds to let them know about all the festive treats that are being planned for people aged 50+. There's a lot going on (in both the real and the online world).

You can contact Leeds Older People's Forum on **0113 244 1697**. This service is available from 9am to 5 pm on weekdays until Wednesday 23rd December.

### Neighbourhood Network Schemes

The Neighbourhood Network Schemes are voluntary sector organisations that provide a wide range of services, activities and opportunities all year round, promoting the independence, health and well-being of older people across Leeds.

No matter where you live in Leeds, there's a Neighbourhood Network covering your area with staff, volunteers and members ready and waiting to welcome you.

You can contact Leeds Older People's Forum on **0113 244 1697** to get the phone number of the Neighbourhood Network which is local to you.

# Sunshine In Leeds

*There are lots of organisations and projects supporting older people in the city. Many of them are funded by Time to Shine. **Balwinder Kaur** introduces Sunshine in Leeds and over the page we hear from two people who have benefitted from the project.*

**S**unshine in Leeds is run by Health for All and funded by the Time to Shine (TTS) programme, which aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness amongst people over 50. There are 3 members of staff: myself, an occupational therapist and a project worker.

The main service we provide is one-to-one support where people are inside their homes, care homes, sheltered housing or independent living places. Since the project started in 2018, we have been offering befriending home visits, befriending calls and video calls. Most of our clients are very frail and unable to come out of their houses so for those individuals we only offer home visits.

Although our project offers one-to-one support, we are passionate about making a difference for older people. Hence we have set up a monthly social group where our clients can connect with other people. We have introduced people to local community groups. We have been having some social gatherings at local cafés. We start with one-to-one coffee meetings and then eventually introduce the idea for them to meet with other people too. We've done social gatherings at Roundhay café where 15 people joined, we played quizzes, some people sang and read poems. We have organised small walks, seaside trips, Christmas parties. Last year we took 40 older people to Tong garden and then for a Christmas meal at The Six Acres carvery and dining restaurant.

Our project offers a person-centred approach offering services based on elderly peoples' needs. We also help to reduce certain barriers, such as attending GP appointments with people who do not have the confidence to go in public, booking appointments on behalf of people, speaking to welfare rights and adult social care for benefits. For example, one of our clients ►



Enjoying a 1:1 chat in the sunshine in Leeds!





*“Our project offers a person-centred approach offering services based on elderly peoples’ needs”*



Ball games keep people healthy and connected, taken in 2019.

who was having suicidal thoughts was referred to social services. She was grateful and said, “thank you for looking after me”. Another one of our clients who is disabled (in a wheelchair) and finds it difficult to clean her bathroom. We managed to get her a care worker. Another client is 107 years old - we managed to take her for a coffee because she was desperate to go out. A few people whose mental health is not good were connected to mental health professionals.

Our occupational therapist has been able to support our clients in both a befriending role and that of a health professional. When appropriate, she advises clients on adaptive equipment such as cutlery, writing aids, perching stools and chair raisers. She has assessed and adjusted various equipment such as a kitchen trolley and an over-toilet frame. She has provided lifestyle management education such as pacing, sleep hygiene and relaxation techniques to clients with chronic pain or fatigue-related conditions. During COVID-19 most of our work moved to phone calls, food parcel deliveries and doorstep visits. We started our Zoomchat recently which people enjoyed. Beside this work I have contacted our clients from

our previous project who are elderly people from the South Asian Community. We are encouraging them to understand how to operate and meet others via Zoom. Two groups are already meeting on Zoom. We are offering door-step visits to help them to learn these digital skills.

We have supported several people since the project has started and people are giving positive feedback and appreciating the service we offer.

*We spoke to two of the participants of Sunshine in Leeds and they were kind enough to share their stories with us*

*I was cleaning my bedroom windows about two years ago and I saw Bally passing outside. She was going door-to-door to meet people with another girl. Bally stopped to chat and asked me how I was. She told me about the groups they do and I was quite interested. I'm 83 and I live on my own. Although I do have a large family around me, I haven't got anyone to talk to day-to-day. Different people, a different way of going about life. I love my family to bits, but you can only talk to them so much.*

*So, I got involved with Sunshine in Leeds. We went on some nice trips and had a Christmas Dinner. I went to the Temple and did an exercise class. It was so good because everybody was so sweet and friendly. I felt a part of a different group to my family. I could talk to people and we were all “of an age”.*

*Sadly, I had some health issues, so I wasn't able to go to things. But Bally kept me updated and we chatted on the phone. I still feel part of the group even though we haven't been able to meet because of shielding and lockdown and one thing and another. Covid put a stop to everything. People I know from the Temple wave at me through the window as they go past. I live near the temple. I may not know them all by name but I know their faces and they wave. All the Sikhs from the Temple were new to me. But now they're like old friends. So friendly.*

*I love meeting different people. I am a talker, I could chat for England – or I should say Wales. I was born in London but my parents are Welsh and we moved back to Wales when the war started.*

*I hope I can go back to Sunshine in Leeds when Covid is all over. I'm 83 but I'm not dead yet!*

**Ann Haddon**



Older people keeping fit together

**I** was contacted by Bally and Annie last November. I got a call because I was getting support from another organisation but after three years my time with them was coming to an end. But I still needed support for my mental health. I suffer from agoraphobia, bulimia, anxiety, panic attacks – and I’m a hoarder. I live alone and I never go out. I’ve suffered for 35 years; I was only 27 when I lost my husband. He passed away in 1985 with leukemia. And I’ve just got worse and worse. There were plenty of organisations I could go to if I could go out – but I couldn’t. Sunshine in Leeds were the one and only organisation that would visit me at home.

They came to see me once every two or three weeks. Sadly, since the lockdown March, it’s been only telephone calls. But it’s been a lifeline for me. You get to know each other – you feel like you’re talking to a friend rather than a support worker.

Just knowing there’s somebody out there that I can ring if I needed. I can ring them any time when I’m depressed and lonely. I go out on average once a year. It’s a complete nightmare going out when you have agoraphobia. I did have to go to hospital at the end of June, which was really bad. It’s been invaluable to be able to speak to Bally and Annie with all the things that have been going on. They both rang me in June, when I was in hospital, to make sure I was OK. When I came out I was very confused and

worried about appointments. Bally and Annie took control and sorted things out for me, which was such a relief. Kindness and friendship in the most distressing time. It’s marvellous and they’re wonderful.

We’ve always spoken about me getting out more. I’m 62 and have two baby granddaughters. I missed a lot of my son’s life because of my health. We do talk a lot about making progress in the future. We’re working towards the goal that one day I can get myself washed and dressed and step out of my door to go out somewhere – not for a hospital appointment! It’s just so valuable to have maintained my contact with Bally and Annie at Sunshine in Leeds.

**Yvonne Mitchell, 62**

Sunshine in Leeds is a Health for All project.

For more information contact  
Balwinder Kaur in the following ways:

www.healthforall.org.uk  
Email: **Balwinder.Kaur@healthforall.org.uk**  
Telephone: **0113 270 6903**



# The Street

Where I lived

*In this section we like to Shine a Light on ordinary people who live in Leeds*

*This month we hear from Betty Bennison, an aspiring writer and poet, who tells us about the street where she grew up. And there are two very different stories: one about the World Cup Final of 1966 and one about a brilliant budgie.*

*Betty Bennison is part of a writing group at Moor Allerton Elderly Care. She sent us a lovely poem and then sent us some more memories!*

**T**he street where I lived was in Cardiff. It was a dead-end with a railway line running across the bottom. Two rows of terraced houses. Ours was the last but one on one side – number 51. No front gardens, just straight in off the street.

There was Mum and Dad, me and my sister who was 4 years younger. When I was 16, I got a baby brother, which was lovely. I practically brought him up. Unfortunately then my Dad left home. I went off to work in an office. My sister became a hairdresser. And my mother helped to build aeroplanes in a factory nearby. It was a production line. She worked very hard. We were brought up well and fed well. My Dad was a foundry worker but moved to London. We had to grow up very quickly. We shared the housework.

I knew all the neighbours on the street. I can still recount all of them. Next door, the last house on the street, was an old gentleman. We would do his shopping and looked after him. And we got his sweet rations as a reward. Up the street there were all our friends: Mary, Jean, Verna, Tony, Allan, Raymond, John, Pat... It's funny, the other night I was going up the street in my mind recounting all the people. It was amazing how many I could remember.

I married a Welshman. We lived in various places around the country but ended up in Leeds in 1972. I divorced him. I'd had enough! When your parents divorce, then you get married, you're sure you won't end up the same. But it wasn't to be. We had three lovely children. Six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. But I married again, he was a Yorkshireman. We got on very well but, unfortunately, he died.

After a few years I was persuaded to go online. I was having my nails done and the girl who was doing my nails said, "why don't you go online and look for another fella?" So, I did and we married three years later! We moved in together after a year. One day he came up to me and said, "will you marry me?" Going online dating was fascinating. You talk to lots of people and get to know them. There was one gentleman: very active, played football, went walking – no thank you! Another one: played golf – no thank you. This gentlemen popped up and he was partially disabled like me. We started talking on the computer and then we met and it was love at first sight. That was just over 2 years ago.

*We asked Betty to send us her Christmas memories and she happily obliged:*

### *My First Christmas*

The first Christmas I can remember was when I was 4 years old. It was Christmas Eve. My mother had taken my sister and I to see this gentleman called Father Christmas. According to my mother, if we had been good children all year round, on the 25th December he would bring presents to well behaved girls. I met him in his Grotto. He was very old. He had a long white beard and wore a red coat. There was a fairy too, but I had to sit on this old man's knee and and talk to him. I wasn't frightened but I did prefer the fairy, with her beautiful white sparkly dress and shoes with silver buckles. Apparently, it was the gentleman who gave out the presents, so I had to tell him what I wanted for Christmas. "Well, really!" I thought, "If he was so magical, he should know!" However, I did as I was told and whispered in his ear, 'A baby doll please, and a pram, if you don't mind, thank you.'

Soon it was time for bed. We had these net stockings to hang up at the bottom end-post of our beds. I was not very happy. I had asked for a doll and a pram – how were they going to fit into this small stocking? But mum said, "Go to sleep and wait 'til morning."

The next morning dawned. At last, I woke up. I heard a funny rustling noise and quickly leant down. There was the little stocking, full to the brim and with a cracker on the top. Inside were sweets, a pencil and a rubber. Oh bliss! Just what I wanted. Some pretty ribbons, a playing card game and, at the very bottom, an orange. I looked at all this bounty. Great – but where were the doll and pram I'd asked for?

Mum called to us for breakfast. Carrying the heavy stocking (which I had refilled), down we went. On opening the door to the living room, I stood – looked again. Where was I? This must be fairyland! Our usual mundane living room had been transformed overnight. There were streamers of colour overhead, a real tree stood in the corner with lights festooned all around and baubles of every colour hanging on the branches. Underneath this magnificent sight were parcels wrapped in fancy paper and stacked all around. And there was more. This Father Christmas fellow really was magical. There in the middle of the room was, yes, a beautiful ►

## Shine a Light

pram and a baby doll. I shouted my delight and twirled around. Real magic!

### *A Full House*

One Christmas in 1974 it was my turn to entertain the family for an overnight stay. Plans had to be made and the house organised. Firstly, the food. In those days there were no supermarkets, so it was to the butcher, the baker, greengrocer and grocery store for provisions. What a grand sight it was! The kitchen shelves and cupboards, full of exciting packages, smells and colours.

The day before the family arrived, I was busy cleaning the house and preparing the bedrooms. Cleaning the turkey and peeling the vegetables. Our family tradition was to decorate the house on Christmas Eve, when the children were in bed. The decorations were mostly home-made by our family. We filled the children's rooms with their presents and the stockings at the end of their beds. At long last it was our turn to go to bed!

Christmas Day dawned; the family arrived! My mother, brother, sister and her family, six in all. At that time we lived in a two-bedroom house!



Betty Bennison aged 9  
Previous Page: Betty with her family  
on the street where she lived.

The plan: husband, brother and brother-in-law in one room; my mother, sister and myself and two babies in the other room; the two tots in the little box-room. We all had a bed and somewhere to sleep – so why, forty years later, am I still ridiculed?! Did it really hurt for my husband to spend one night in the double bed with my younger brother? I had to sleep with my mother! Why does nobody remember the food, the gifts, the fun – even the weather? No. They only remember the sleeping arrangements. What else could I have done?

The following year, my Dad treated us all to a hotel in London. But that's another story

*Betty has agreed to join the writing team here at Shine so look out for pieces from her in future issues!*

On the street where I lived when I was young  
We played with marbles or a stick of chalk.  
Or a rope on the lamppost was hung,  
Giving hours of playtime fun.  
No cars to disturb us  
On the street where I lived.  
Salt and vinegar, bread and milk  
Were all delivered by horse and cart,  
As the trains carrying coal nearby hooted.  
But no cars disturbed the peace  
On the street where I lived.  
Doorsteps were daily whitened,  
(A must, the neighbours would say)  
Never too busy to pass on the news of the day.  
We had a shop on the corner  
Where hard-earned pocket money would go,  
Earned by running errands for elderly neighbours  
On the street where I once lived.

Then came the war, with sirens and bombs.

A concrete air raid shelter was built  
Right down the very middle  
Of the street where I lived.

If an air raid was imminent

A siren would warn us

And into the shelter we'd rush.

Sleeping on benches, quite a crush,

But the enemy never found us.

Years later came victory parties,

A Royal Wedding, bunting and flags.

Celebrating with music and dancing

On the street where I lived.

But today as children try to play

Motorbikes and cars get in the way.

Tubs of flowers bedeck window sills

No room to sit and show our ball skills.

The shop on the corner has long gone.

My street has become the target

For young couples going up market.

Sadly, it's no longer the street where I lived. ■

# My 1966 World Cup Wedding

*Helgard Sofie Shaw grew up in Germany and married an Englishman. But the date they set for their wedding turned out to have an unusual significance.*

I will never forget the date: 30th July 1966. I was not at Wembley, but in Germany. To be precise the Black Forest, where I had grown up. I had just married my English man. The church ceremony was in a beautiful Romanesque chapel and the reception in a small hotel in the middle of the woods. It had exquisite cuisine. Afterwards, my parents led a convoy of cars to another inn, high up in the forest. My mother had warned me in the morning that the men wanted to see “the game”! I consider myself a “sports agnostic”, so I groaned inwardly. But I understood that my father, brother, cousins and guests had different ideas I resigned myself to the fact. “Oh well,” I thought. “It takes – what – sixty minutes? Meanwhile I can dream.” Little did I know.

When we entered the TV Room, the lights had been switched off and the pre-match build-up was in full swing. The TV picture at that time was only in black-and-white. When my eyes had become accustomed to the dark, I noticed that there we were in a large room with a long table in the middle. About twenty people, mostly young men, were sitting at the far end. Our party of nine sat at the other end.

When the game started, I began to dream and doze happily, in spite of the noise from the TV. I had a coffee in front of me. It was warm in the room and after the excitement of the morning, I was wilting. I welcomed a respite.

Suddenly I was jolted out of my dream. A goal! A gathered it must have been one for the German side because all the men at the far end of the table jumped up, dancing round their chairs and yelling at the top of their voices. To my amazement (and disdain), I saw that even my academic cousin was joining in the fray. There was another goal. Although I did not watch the screen, I could tell from the moans and heavy sighs at the other end that it was an English goal. Then my newly-wed husband suddenly jumped up and, imitating the German lads, danced round his chair and yelled at the top of his voice. At first, they looked up in astonishment. This then developed into downright hostility. Later, the game went into extra time. Turning back to the screen, I realised to my surprise that I was following the game and was gripped



by the action. Now I did want to know! Who would win?

When the last decisive goal for England was scored, there was a deathly silence. It was the famous – or infamous – goal. It depended which side you looked at it from. Either from the English or German perspective. It was the most controversial goal in football history. It would be debated for years to come by both countries alike. “Yes, it was over the line” “No it wasn’t in”. And it is warmed up again at every World Cup since.

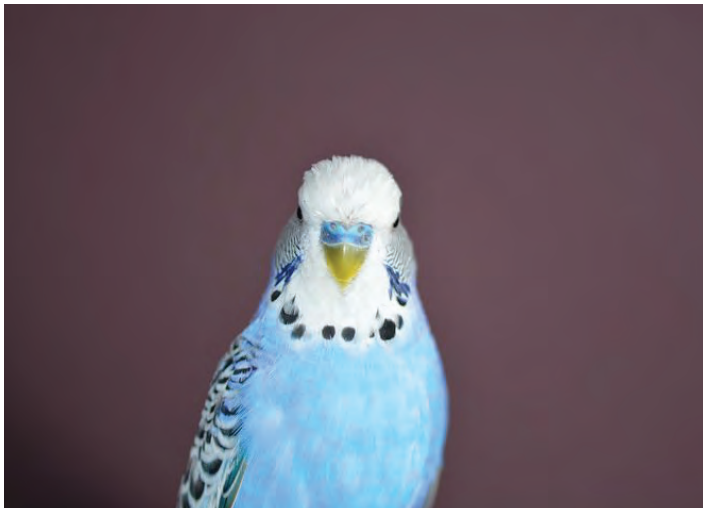
The lights were switched back on. I saw a thoroughly dejected lot at the far end of the table, hanging their heads. Various groans were heard from that direction. Whilst the men were crying into their beer, my newly-wed English husband stood up and said, in his halting German, “Meine herren, unfortunately you have lost the World Cup, but I have won a wife!” Their faces cleared instantly, they tucked away their chagrin and ordered wine for us all to make a toast. For quite a while we still sat together, chatting animatedly with one another. The former antagonism was forgotten. We were doing our bit for Entente.

I was amazed. “What a courageous husband you have got yourself!” I cherished the thought all the way down home through the woods. In years to come, I would have occasion to be reminded, again and again, what a bold, brave husband I had married that day of the World Cup Final in 1966.■

# The Budgie in our Bubble

*Doris Lythe, sent us the following story, hoping it would bring a smile to some people's faces!*

**M**y husband Sid and I moved to Cookridge in 1963. Our neighbours Brian and Shirley had just moved into the house next door. We became very close friends and shared happy times together. Sadly, Brian passed away in 2012. After this Shirley effectively became part of our house and our family and she helped care for my husband who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Sid died on the 22nd May last year. He was nearly 90-years-old. Shortly after this, Shirley's little dog had to be put to sleep. I knew Shirley was missing the dog so I bought her a Christmas present: a budgie. She called him Bobbie.



## A change of scenery

It wasn't long before we heard about the lockdown for the first time. Shirley and I realised we were in a bubble with a little blue budgie called Bobbie. We were surprised how quickly Bobbie picked up words. I was at Shirley's for coffee. I went into the other room to hang my coat up and heard the budgie say, "Where's she gone?" It was so comical! I would say to Bobbie, "Where's Shirley?" and straight away he'd say, "Shirley's upstairs!" or "It's Shirley's bedtime!"

He would get carried away on picking up names. A few months ago, I had my doubts. I thought to myself, "Is my mind playing tricks on me? Is Bobbie really speaking?" I needed a second opinion. Shirley's nephew came to visit and as he stood up to go home, Bobbie said really loudly, "Shirley and Doris are going shopping soon, won't be long!" Her nephew looked at me, then looked at the bird. "Did you hear that?" I asked. I was quite relieved when he said yes.



Doris & Shirley (and Bobbie) in their support bubble.

Shirley said she'd never had a budgie like Bobbie before. But, then again, we've never been in lockdown before. He was spoiled because he got so much attention. Even Shirley's hairdresser couldn't start before she'd had a little word with Bobbie and tickled his tummy.

Bobbie brought a ray of sunshine into our lives at times when we needed it most. I wish I'd thought of getting a budgie when Sid was here. He would have loved Bobbie. I hope this story has put a smile on someone's face.



*Do you have a story to tell? It could be a memory, a family tale or a story of how you've coped over the last year. Send it to us at Shine*  
Email - [hello@shinealight.org.uk](mailto:hello@shinealight.org.uk)  
Phone - 0113 225 5944  
Post - Shine Magazine, PO Box 908, ELLAND, HX1 9WF





MindWell is a Leeds-based website, funded by the NHS, that helps to promote positive mental health in the city. We know that the winter holidays are likely to be different this year, so they've shared with us their five top tips for staying mentally well

**Tips to keep feeling well over the festive season**  
**By the MindWell Team**

- 1 Routine** - keeping to a daily routine can help us keep going especially if we have to stay at home more during the pandemic. We usually feel better if we're up and dressed, having regular meals and going to bed at the same time.
- 2 Talk** - a friendly natter by phone, online or at a safe distance (if we can) helps us stay connected. Ringing a helpline if we're lonely can help us feel better too. Keep a few phone numbers handy for times you need to talk
- 3 Plan** - make a plan for days of festive celebration that are special to you. Your local Neighbourhood Network can help you connect with local events taking place.
- 4 Enjoy** - we all need an activity we enjoy, whether it's reading, watching our favourite soap, doing a puzzle, making handmade gifts or festive baking. Taking time to enjoy ourselves each day is really important, and it can be fun to try something new or dust off an old hobby.
- 5 Unwind and relax** - listening to our favourite festive tunes can help us relax and cope better with stress, whether we're up and moving or sitting down and resting. Singing along is great too!





*Remember how Winters used to be? The snow seemed colder, the drifts thicker, the air crisper. We asked **Maureen Kershaw** to send us her reminiscences of Winters past – especially the heavy snowfall of 1962/3. If this piece sparks your memories about that dramatic Winter 60 years ago, do let us know.*

**O**h, how I miss the snow! Bonfire Night has gone, with just the solitary reminder of a dead Rocket in the gutter. Winter is upon us. Brighter and crisper days, when my thoughts always turn to whether we will have some snow. Growing up in Leeds in the 1950s, it wasn't a matter of if the white stuff fell, more a case of when. I still feel excited when we have snowfall now, but it is so short-lived. We are lucky nowadays to witness snow for around three hours, rather than three weeks - or even the months as of yesteryear.

We lived on the border of Burley and Headingley, so we had Burley Park opposite and hilly streets to play. At the first snowfall, we would be planning where to go first. Was it deep enough to sledge? Snowball fights would probably be the first game. Then we'd go home to change out of our wet clothes and two pairs of gloves. The joy of sitting in front of the roaring coal fire and sipping hot drinks to thaw out! Mum would warn against sitting too close to the fire for fear of chilblains, but to me the heat of the flames and the joy of playing in the snow just filled me with delight.

### **Sledging**

When the snow was deep and firm enough to sledge on, it would be time to visit the park. All manner of homemade sledges were there and one soon learnt the best type of vehicle upon which to be transported. One year I received a Christmas present of a bright red sledge. Sadly, it was too low to the ground; it would never pick up enough pace and I can remember feeling self-conscious of its vivid colour. At the weekend, Dad would take me to Roundhay Park and we would join the hundreds of other families, sledging together down Hill 60. Exhilarating!

Even playing out in the street after dark was exciting in the snow: the white stuff sparkled and glittered in the light thrown from the gas lamps. The skies ►

## Memories of Leeds

were clear, the Moon and stars shone brightly - occasionally dimmed by passing clouds, carrying even more snow. In the morning, I would look out of my bedroom window to see whether the snow was still there and couldn't wait to go out again. School was not where we all wanted to be. It was far more fun playing in the snow. Black rubber Wellingtons would be lined up by the pipes in the School cloakrooms to dry their linings for playtime and - better still - home time! I can remember now being in the playground of Queen's Road County Primary, queuing to slide on a long patch of ice. The girls would pretend to ice-skate but we'd take many a tumble. Fast forward to 1964 when Leeds had 'Silver Blades' Skating Rink, and I owned a pair of my own white skating boots. I tried - unsuccessfully - to skate on the solid (but rather bumpy) iced surface of Burley Park. Without joy, but it was worth a try. Anywhere the ice would form, be it a pavement or hill, the children of the neighbourhood would be there. We saw no danger and spent many happy hours sliding and falling until one of the neighbours appeared with

a shovel full of cinders or ashes from the fire grate. This would stop us in our tracks and provide a more careful pathway for people walking. Also: huge icicles hung from windows and pipes which we would break to lick as an ice lolly. Ugh!

### The big freeze!

I recall a pre-Christmas outing around 1954 with Mum and Dad to see a Christmas Lights display at Heckmondwike. I believe it was one of the first in the Country and that it gave inspiration for the Blackpool Illuminations. No doubt it was very basic compared to those seen nowadays. Nevertheless, the sight of trees adorned with colourful bulbs and festive figures around the small park must have been magical to their annual audience.

In the late 50s I enjoyed the most wonderful New Year's Eve - all thanks to the snow. At the annual gathering of family friends whose Headingley home faced the Leeds Rugby and Yorkshire Cricket Ground, the snow fell at an alarming rate way all evening.



A snowfall in Leeds, 1947



A more recent snowscape  
by Maureen Kershaw



The Winter of 1962/3

There was a power cut at the Headingley Pavillion so their New Year's Eve Dance was abandoned. This left the revellers no option but to walk home, happily snowballing each other. We opened the curtains to watch the snow getting deeper. Illuminated by the blazing coal fire and candles, my Mum played the piano for the adults. We all had a sing-song whilst the younger ones squealed with delight, tramping through the smooth covering of snow on the garden. Happy times!

Then there was the 'Big Freeze' of 1962/63. When the snow hit during that awful winter, I was at secondary school. No longer would I be 'playing' out - just 'going' out, in the deep snow and freezing temperatures. As a young teenager I didn't want to wear 'suitable' boots, I wanted fashionable ones. Or preferably heeled shoes. We had no central heating at home, just coal fires in the dining room and front room, the latter rarely being used. The frost and ice would be so thick on the bedroom windows, both outside and in, we could hardly see out. Going for a drive in Dad's little car, we would take hot water bottles as well as old Army blankets to try and keep us warm. The countryside looked beautiful, with snowdrifts way above the hedgerows. The city streets were cleared and this

resulted in huge banks of snow and ice which lasted for weeks. With the plummeting temperatures it was going nowhere in a hurry.

When I had my son, I made a Christmas tradition of reading him a special winter book. This was 30 years ago. "Christmas in Puddle Lane" has delightful illustrations which transport me back to watching the falling snow from the warmth and comfort of my childhood home. The smell of home-cooking and baking, the coal fire burning brightly and the anticipation and excitement of going out to play. Well wrapped up from top to toe, we all enjoyed the fresh air and seasonal fun of the snow, knowing that on our return we would be dry and warm again, ready to sleep soundly in our beds.

I love to photograph Leeds covered in snow and long for those days again. Beautiful well-tended gardens and scrappy lawns all tend to look the same when hidden under the white blanket. I love the sound of footsteps on crunchy snow and to see the glitter effect from the street lights, or sunshine beating down on the fresh falls. Will we experience it this Winter? Oh, I do hope so! ■



The woods in the snow



What was Christmas like in your youth?  
What are your festive traditions?  
What are your favourite memories of Christmases past?  
What about now – what are you hoping for this year?  
We asked our readers to respond to these questions –  
and you did!



# SHINE CHRISTMAS STORIES

# Shine Christmas Stories

*A selection of Christmas memories and stories from readers across the city. A big thank you to everyone who submitted stories. Some come from individuals, some from organisations working with older people in the city.*

## Sharing Christmas Dinner

*By Mally Harvey, 73*

**B**efore we moved to urban Leeds, we lived in a small hamlet, thirteen miles east of Lincoln. It was Christmas 2007 and our family had either made other plans or were were working on Christmas Day. We arranged to all meet up on the 27th December for a family gathering. This meant we were alone on the 25th. So, we packed our rucksacks with sandwiches, mince pies, Christmas cake, fruit and a box of Quality Street, along with flasks of coffee, and cycled along the river Witham into Lincoln and the Brayford Pool. We shared our picnic with the four homeless men that we met there. Their stories were sad. They spoke of their altered lives, their loss of homes, jobs and families. My husband took out his ukulele and we sang rather tuneless carols as we shared our stories. We left them with the tin of Quality Street and we were quietly sombre as we cycled home. We were each reflecting on what we had seen and heard, realising how fortunate we were to be going back to our cottage, a warm fire and a hot dinner. We had lives rich and fulfilling, but our Christmas lunch had made us realise how lives could change so quickly and easily. It was a chastening experience and even a puncture two miles from home which meant a slower walk back couldn't affect the gratitude we felt for the life we had.



## A Saucy Tale

*By Mary Bell, 99*

**I** remember many years ago a Christmas in our house. There were 10 of us and my mother-in-law and father-in-law had come over. They used to live under the Cow and Calf on Ilkley Moor. They were strong Congregationalists. They were very strict when it came to attending church and were total abstainers from alcohol. My sister-in-law and family had come from Brentwood, outside London.

In the morning we went to church (of course), leaving the turkey to cook in the oven. On our return, my sister-in-law Molly and I continued to prepare the lunch. We had paid special attention to the making of the brandy sauce - and the non-brandey sauce.

The meal went without a hitch. On to the pudding, all homemade. Two jugs of sauce were placed on the table. Oh no! My mother-in-law took the wrong one. We watched in horror and stayed silent. My mother-in-law tasted her pudding we hoped that she wouldn't notice the brandy flavour. My mother-in-law said, "How delicious, your best ever!" I could hardly hold the giggles back. I grabbed an empty bowl from the table and ran into the kitchen followed by Molly. Did we giggle! We both repeated, in mother-in-law's manner, "The best ever!"



## Christmas Through the Ages

By Colin Trenholme

**W**hen I was born, I'm afraid Christmas morn meant little or nothing to me. I got piles of presents (or so my mum said) and got nursed on my Aunt Bertha's knee. I quite liked the colours and noise of it all; the packages, parcels and packets, But presents for babies are really a bore: just bunnies and matinee jackets.

When I became one, Christmas still wasn't fun; my sister just got in the way. She pinched all my presents (or so my mum said) and hid them for most of the day. This made me feel mad so I soon let them know with a yell and a howl and a scream and then after that- can ou guess what I did- I was sick during the speech from the Queen!

When I became two, I knew just what to do 'cos other presents seemed better than mine; We all had to share things (or so my mum said) and I quite liked the look of that wine. I sneaked into the kitchen and there stood glass, just waiting for someone to slurp. I downed it in one gulp and gurgled and gasped-and then gave the world's biggest burp!

When I became three, Christmas seemed great to me and presents arrived by the score; A great doctor's outfit (or so my mum said) that I used on the moggy next door. The neighbours weren't thrilled when I sent them the bill and told them their cat was now cured 'Cos I'd stuck a huge plaster on that hole in his bum. (Thank goodness my life was insured!)

When I became four- who could ask for more? I was given a great clockwork train; A smart-looking model (or so my mum said) but I don't think I'd want one again For my dad liked it so much, he hogged it for hours, playing with my Uncle Bill, so I thought that I'd try out all his presents instead-I loved that brand new power drill.

When I became five, well, I started to drive my first pedal-car down our street. I knocked down my granny (or so my mum said) and mashed up the neighbour's flat feet. But it's hard work is pedalling so I had an idea; I needed some help; someone big and I knew just the fellow so harnessed him up-and got pulled by my pet guinea-pig.

When I became six- a box of magic tricks- to make Auntie May disappear. She wanted to kiss me (or so my mum says) and brought me a rattle each year! I'd tried itching powder; put salt in her tea; stirred

laxative into her stew; But finally got her, alone in her house- and threatened to cut her in two!

Seven, eight, nine and ten-well, you're getting old then- and Christmas comes round really fast. You get that you're thinking less of Christmas presents and much more of Christmases past. Anyway, no point worrying; it's here again. I'll soon draw my pension, I fear; So a good 'Merry Christmas to one to and to all- oh heck, I'll be past it next year!

## Poorly at Christmas

By Eileen Barraclough

**I**'ve had a lot of Christmases. This one will be my 103rd and I've enjoyed every one. My mother and father were very kind and lived in a terraced house in Dudley Hill on the way to Wakefield. I do remember one year it was the day before Christmas. I was very poorly with measles. I was bound to my bedroom for days. Suddenly, I felt better. I needed the toilet - which was of course then outside. I ventured downstairs. My father was sitting by the kitchen stove and he said, "You can't go outside, I'll go and sort something" and went to fetch a chamber-pot. But he said to me, "Don't go into the parlour!" I thought, "Why?" and I wandered into the parlour. I was only 7 and didn't see why I shouldn't go and explore. Well, on the table there were loads of presents - all unwrapped. And leant against the table was a beautiful bike. Dad entered and he was really really cross. He sent me upstairs. I sat on my bed. "Who were the presents for, had I missed Christmas, had Father Christmas forgotten to wrap them?" I was ever so upset, but still very poorly. I fell asleep and didn't wake up 'til the morning. Mum came upstairs and said, "Let's have you downstairs for breakfast". I opened the kitchen door, I saw stockings on the mantle filled with presents - and the bike! A beautiful bike with a ribbon across the saddle. I was just so excited. When I was better, I was able to ride my bike.



*Kaitlin Walmsley from Otley Action for Older People spoke to some of the older people she works with about their experiences of Christmas over the years. She asked them to talk to her about their memories and wrote down their thoughts.*

**G** Geoff's favorite memories of his Christmas experiences are the ones in which he has spent with family and close friends. His most fond Christmas memories are the ones that and grandchildren in either their home or his. Every year, the week before Christmas, Geoff and his family go shopping to get the food in preparation for Christmas day. He enjoys this: it is a nice day out and everybody becomes excited for the festivities to come. Another tradition Geoff has is to visit his local church - Otley Methodist - for the annual Christmas get together. This occurs every year on the Sunday before Christmas and local people come to join and listen to Christmas music, have a hot drink and socialise with close friends, family and others. The sense of being together is what makes Christmases so special for Geoff. His favorite Christmas memories are those in which a new baby has been born into his family and it is their first Christmas. As this year everything is going to be different at Christmas due to COVID, Geoff is not looking forward to this year as much as previous ones.

**I**nitially, Betty did not think that she had a great Christmas story to tell as she is an only child and does not have any children of her own. She went on to discuss that her memories of her childhood Christmases that were spent in WW2 which in its self is a fascinating experience. Unfortunately, Betty does not remember her childhood Christmas as being a positive time as not many celebrations took place in her home. She would wait for her father to return from war around Christmas time; which thankfully he did. Although Betty did not receive many gifts, she does remember getting things such as an orange, coins and nuts. She stated that "we were lucky if we got a mince pie." When Betty was old enough to work, she did so in a toy shop which she enjoyed and reflects on positively. A tradition that existed within Bettys family was that every Christmas eve, she would visit her Grandparents and she would take a piece of coal with them. However, she does not recall why they did this.

**M**argaret's nostalgia of her childhood Christmas is very positive. Her Christmas then was similar to the traditional Christmas ideology that exists today except for a few things. Margaret did not have a tree in her house when she was younger as this did not become a tradition until later years, and they did not have stockings either. Her parents would give out very few presents on Christmas which included items such

as oranges and coins and although these seem simple now, Margaret enjoyed receiving these gifts when she was a girl. She remembers making decorations for her home such as paper chains that her parents would hang up to make the house look festive. Margaret has three sisters and one half-brother so Christmas in her household was a very busy one; which she enjoyed. Each New Year, Margaret and her family would go outside and then come back in, bringing back with them items, including coal. This was a symbol of heat to keep the home warm, which is traditionally good luck to bring through the door at midnight on New Year's Eve each year.

**T**he two main ideas that come to mind when Jim thinks about Christmas are plenty of food and good company. Jim's childhood memories of Christmas are traditional ones such as putting up the Christmas tree as a family and he remembers the excitement that he felt when seeing presents wrapped up placed under the tree. One tradition Jim is not fond of is Christmas pudding; He would much prefer another dessert after his Christmas dinner. Jim enjoyed going for a drink with his friends during the run up to Christmas, as he likes the social side to this. Since joining Otley Action for Older People, he has attended the annual Christmas lunch club as he has many friends that also come to this and it is nice for him to see them. He also attends any Christmas trips that Otley Action put on.

## A Christmas story from Chinese older people

*By Huazhu Liu*

**I**n China only about 1% of people are Christians, so most people only know a few things about Christmas. Because of this, Christmas is only often celebrated in major cities. But in the UK, we see Christmas Trees, lights and other decorations on the streets and everyone's homes. How could we not want to be part of it?

In 2019 Red Chinese seniors' group held a Christmas celebration in a local traditional family restaurant. For many of our older people, it was the first time they'd gone to an English restaurant at Christmas. Because of the language barrier, most of them celebrate Christmas either in a Chinese restaurant or

at home. Last year, we decided to change. We chose a restaurant with pleasant surroundings in the countryside: Tong Garden Centre. The magic, the bright Christmas lights and the decorations made it so pleasant.

After we wandered around in the garden, we all went to The Six Acres restaurant. It was nice and cozy with sparkling lights. The staff made everyone feel warm and welcomed. After we were served a traditional Christmas lunch, we played games, had a raffle and sang "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" in Cantonese.

This was an unforgettable day! It was very special for many of the older people. I asked them how they felt about the party. One of old people said gratefully, "I can't speak English, so I never thought to walk into local pub. But today, I walked in and had a nice time with a Christmas celebration. I feel amazing. People are all kind and friendly to us even though I don't speak English. It brings me a lot of confidence and I feel I have been accepted."

In 2020, we're all facing the difficult time of pandemic. We know coronavirus doesn't care about Christmas, but we all have the faith for the day we can come together and meet again. Lychee Red wishes everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year!



Members of Lychee Red enjoy Christmas dinner

## A Light in the Darkness

By Ruth Steinberg

**I**t is nearly the longest night and soon the sun will start returning. We are coming to the end of quite a year. For many people Christmas is approaching and the first advent light has been lit. When I think of this time of year I think back to growing up in a Jewish family. We didn't do Christmas. But we did have our own particular magic time.

I grew up in a Jewish home and every December, like in other Jewish families, there was the Jewish festival of Chanukah to look forward to. It's not a major festival in the Jewish calendar, but it is magical. It lasts for 8 days. This year on Thursday evening, 10 December I will take down my mother's menorah (8 branch candelabra) and light one candle for the first night. Friday, second night I will light two candles and so on increasing every night until Friday 18 December all eight are shining. I'll put it in the window as a "light to the world". The word Chanukah means "rededication" and celebrates the victory of a small band of Jews who, in 2nd century BCE, successfully fought back against the might of the Greek-Syrian army and miraculously won. The Greek authorities had outlawed the practice of Judaism. This band were called The Maccabees and they reclaimed the Jewish Temple that the Greeks had thoroughly desecrated. The eight days and eight candles represent the story of Maccabees who cleaned the Temple but couldn't find any holy oil. So they couldn't light the Eternal Lamp that would complete the rededication. Then they found one small bottle that only had enough oil to last 1 day. But wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles, the lamp oil lasted for 8 days.

It takes just one small candle to banish the darkness. I love the fact that in so many cultures and religions there are stories and ways of dealing with the increasing darkness and going down into the depths of winter. People light candles for Advent, or Diwali the festival of light for Hindus and Sikhs. There are Christmas tree lights and Yule bonfires, and many others. For me and my family candles it is lighting the Hanukah menorah. Unfortunately, I won't be able to have a Chanukah party this year. But I can look back at previous years photos, with tables full of traditional oily foods such as doughnuts, latkes (fried potato cakes) and several Menorahs full of candles reflected in the window and in the eyes of the children and adults.

Happy Chanukah. Happy light in the darkness. ■

# Festive discoveries

*Kitty Ross, Curator of Leeds History, uncovers some seasonal artefacts from the collection at Leeds Museums and Galleries. Each one has a local significance and Kitty is a mine of interesting festive facts. We hope these objects stir some memories – let us know if you have any similar items in your attic – they may end up as museum pieces!*

## Mazda Mickey Mouse Lights

This delightful little set of Mickey Mouse Christmas lights was donated to Leeds Museums last year by Mrs Jean Hough. We know how old they are because they were bought for Jean's first Christmas in 1937. The Walt Disney character Mickey Mouse had first hit the screens in 1928 and from about 1932 Mickey Mouse merchandise had started to appear everywhere as a result of a business deal between Walt Disney and Herman Kamen, an advertising man from Kansas. The money raised apparently helped to fund the feature-length Disney cartoon "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" in 1939. These lights were made by British Thomson Houston, an electrical company with factories in Willesden, Birmingham, Chesterfield, Lutterworth and Coventry. They first produced light bulbs with the brand-name Mazda in 1911.



## Christmas at Lewis's Department Store

This flimsy little paper bag dates from an era when the Lewis's department store was the place to go for Christmas shopping. The Leeds branch first opened on the Headrow in 1932 and was transformed each year into a grand Christmas Toy Fair, complete with a resident Santa Claus. We have two pin badges in the museum collection given to children who visited him there. Lewis's began as a clothing shop in Liverpool in 1856. They were pioneers of the Christmas grotto, first transforming their Liverpool store into a "Christmas Fairyland" in 1879. Sadly the company fell into decline in the 1990s and the Leeds branch was taken over by Allders in 1996 and finally closed in 2005.

## Herbert and Maud Storer's first Christmas tree

Herbert and Maud Storer got married in 1944 and they set up home together in Reeves Street, off Meanwood Road. They celebrated their first Christmas with this little table-top Christmas tree which has been lovingly looked after until it was donated to Leeds Museums by their daughter in 2016. It has branches made with dyed feathers and wire and still has some original berries at the ends of the branches. Although we may think of artificial Christmas trees being a modern phenomenon they actually go back a long way. The demand for real Christmas trees had contributed to deforestation in Germany (the original home of the Christmas tree tradition) and so these goose-feather trees became a popular alternative from the 1880s onwards. The museum has two other examples of feather trees. One dates from 1923 and the other was used by the Gascoigne family at Lotherton Hall.



## Christmas baubles made in Morley

This box of Christmas tree decorations was also owned by Herbert and Maud Storer and may also date from their first Christmas in 1944 or shortly after. It is labelled "Jay-Tee" Brand Glass Tree Decorations. The box states that they were made by Briteglass Ltd. Morley, England who were "Sole Agents to the Wholesale Trade for the U.K. & Export, Robin Agencies Ltd., Leeds, England". We have not yet managed to find out much about Briteglass Ltd. so if anyone knows anything about the firm we would love to know more. Glass baubles were first made in 1847 in Lauscha, Germany. The first shapes were fruit and nuts (appropriate for decorating a tree) and were made by blowing glass into a mould. These early baubles were coated with toxic mercury and lead to make them shiny but this was later replaced by a less dangerous combination of silver nitrate and sugar solution. This set contains 21 glass baubles including a goldfish, a polar bear, a walnut, acorns, clown faces, a shell, a lantern and Father Christmas. ■



**Everybody needs  
to know about...**



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Call our helpline  
0113 378 4610**

**Are you looking after someone?  
Call our expert team for carer support,  
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**0113 380 4300**

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# THE 5 WAYS



**How do we stay healthy?** It's not easy when cooped up at home, especially over the Winter months.

In this section we team up with the Public Health Team at Leeds City Council to look at the "**5 Ways to Wellbeing**" and what they mean for older people in Leeds.



*The 5 Ways to Wellbeing”: connect, be active, take notice, learn and give. What does it mean to live by these 5 Ways? We asked storyteller **Ruth Steinberg** to weave a tale that took them as a starting point. We hope it offers some inspiration and hope in the coldest months of the year. “Well, well, well!” is a charming piece that tells of one man’s connection with a feline friend – and ultimately with a human friend too.*

**Y**ou may ask if this story is true and I will answer that there is truth in it. Let’s start at the end. Michael and Michaela wave a hello over the fence that divides their backyards. They do this every day. The fence is only 4 feet high so they can easily see each other. And winding itself in and out of the uprights that make up the fence is the most beautiful cat you have ever seen. It is one of those long-haired variety, the colour of freshly fallen autumn leaves, a mixture of reds, orange, browns, golden, yellow. When the sunshine catches on her fur, it lights up and glows.

But it wasn’t always like this. Michael had lived in his house since he was born. His parents had both died quite a few years ago and any friends he had from his schooldays (and he never had many) had moved away. He’d had a few jobs but didn’t stick to them. His life had become smaller and smaller. If it wasn’t for the woman at the post office, he might not have spoken to anyone all week.

#### Taking notice

Then in March the pandemic started. There was now a lockdown that meant everyone had to stay home. In Michael’s house, nothing changed. He only went to the shops on pension day and he got used to wearing a mask.



During the day he would make himself something to eat and read the paper. Then he sat and looked out into the backyard. He just sat and stared, not really taking anything in. Sometimes it was raining and sometimes the sun shone and cast shadows over the yard.

At the bottom of the yard was a wall high enough so nobody walking down the back lane could look in. One day, for some reason, he looked up and noticed that high up on the wall there was a small tree. He wondered why he hadn’t noticed it before. It was a buddleia, a butterfly bush. A tree? Growing out of a wall? Six feet from the ground? It was a wonder, a miracle. From then on, he watched its buds open into green leaves. As the spring turned into summer, it blossomed and he noticed butterflies visiting, landing, taking off, circling.

That is when he saw the cat! The tortoiseshell cat! Walking across the top of the wall, like he owned the place, right past his bush. He watched as it reached the end and elegantly jumped onto the fence and into next door’s yard and disappear from view.

But that one glance was enough. He couldn’t stop thinking about it. He imagined stroking that beautiful creature. He longed to touch that gorgeous fur, to feel its silkiness. He went out into the yard a few times a day to try and meet this cat. He did see it, but only when it strolled along the top of his wall and then drop down into his neighbour’s yard.

He decided there and then that he would entice the cat into his yard. On his next trip to the supermarket, he bought some cat food. He laid out some morsels and some milk. First it was next to the fence and then every day a little nearer the house.

 **For a tail, he tied some  
coloured string.  
It became a thing a  
wonder,  
for a cat anyway.** 

He then remembered when his mum brought home a young cat. He remembered how he and his mum made toys out of bits of sweet wrappers and bits of string and played cat-and-mouse with their kitten. He played for hours doubling up in fits of giggles when he outwitted the poor creature.

He suddenly knew what to do. He went to the drawer in the kitchen (the one that was stuffed with scraps and bits that he didn’t want to throw away) and he started on his contraption: a cat toy. He found a single chopstick at the back of the drawer. He wrapped it in silver foil, gold foil and purple sweet wrapper. He added a bit a tinsel and a bell from some old Christmas decorations. For a tail, he tied some coloured string. It became a thing a wonder, for a cat anyway.



The next day was sunny with bright blue sky and white fluffy clouds. Michael made a cup of tea, took his kitchen chair and his cat toy outside. He sat and waited. And there was the cat, fur glowing like a halo as it took its daily stroll across the top of the backyard wall, brushing past the buddleia and dropping down for a feed and drink from Michael's offerings.

Out of the corner of its eye the tortoiseshell saw Michael's magic cat toy. It pounced. Michael whipped the toy away. Michael laughed, the first time in years, as he teased the tortoiseshell beauty closer and closer.

Just as Michael reached out to stroke that gorgeous fur, the woman from next door came out. She stood and watched, arms folded, and smiled. Over the fence she could see her cat weaving in and out of Michael's legs, purring.

When he looked up Michael saw he was being watched and shyly looked away. The neighbour spoke up and said a small "hello" and waved. "My name's Michaela what's yours?". Michael stammered, "M-m-michael". When Michaela heard that, she laughed and laughed, and Michael started to smile too. "A Michaela and a Michael! Well, I never! Why have we never spoken to each other all these years? Would you like a cup of tea?"

### Connecting and giving

Things changed for Michael. Every day would start with a wave and hello from Michaela. Then he'd go and have his breakfast and listen to the radio. She was a keen gardener and bit by bit gave him plants and pots to make his yard brighter. He went to the local library to find out more about gardening. Once a week they went to the park together, walking at safe distance from each other of course, looking at how the trees and flowers were doing.

If you were to go round now you might find him weeding or planting. Or sitting among his plants in the yard reading a book he found in the library. Or maybe, if the weather's not so good, making yet another contraption for the cat, as a gift for Michaela. And not far away is the cat purring.

So now you know how a tree on a wall and a cat brought these two together.

It's true, sort of.

*Ruth Steinberg aged 68½* ■



# 5 WAYS to keep well in Winter

## 1 Connect

Having restrictions on how we might normally socialise and see family and friends can be difficult. Making an extra effort to stay connected with those important to us will help us to feel less isolated. With this in mind, try to do something different today and make a connection.

### Talk

Ask how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you. Put five minutes aside to find out how someone really is. Reconnect with an old friend, start writing to a pen pal.

### Activities

Join a group – e.g. a book club or virtual coffee morning.

### Projects

Plan an event with friends and family to look forward to after restrictions or organise photos into a photo album and share stories with loved ones.



Contact Leeds Directory for information about what's happening in your area: **0113 378 4610**

The Connect helpline provides emotional support over the phone: **0808 800 1212**

Make use of technology – you can contact Leeds City Council libraries for advice, support and loaning equipment: **0113 378 5005**

*Hannah McGurk is a Health Improvement Specialist at Leeds City Council. She and her team are committed to helping older people in the city to stay healthy. Every month the Public Health team choose a health topic that they think would help and interest older people. Below Hannah outlines some ideas of how you can stay healthy this Winter using these 5 Ways.*

## 2 Be active

Your body and mind are linked. Try to start moving, even if it's just a little. You should feel the benefit quickly.

### Move more when you can!

Simple things such as walking round your home or using stairs all provides benefits to your health. If you can increase your movement, you will improve your health!

### Start low, start slow...

A car doesn't set off in 5th gear, and your body is the same! Warming up and starting small helps your body adapt to exercise. Over time, you will see and feel the benefits.

### Use the outdoors if you can

A breath of fresh air is a cheap and easy way to boost our immune system and lift the spirits. A walk outdoors however short, will be a change of scenery and will also help improve sleeping patterns.

### Layers

During colder weather keeping active can help keep you warm. Also consider wearing layers rather than one thick jumper.

Home Plus Leeds can offer support with minor adaptations such as stair rails if you're worried about getting around your home safely: **0113 378 4160**

If you are worried about staying or getting active you can speak to the Active Leeds Health Programmes team for advice and support: **0113 378 3680**

If you are interested in learning new digital skills, you can contact Leeds City Council Libraries on **0113 378 5005** for advice, support and loaning equipment. There's a lot of activities online for keeping active!

# 3

## Take notice

Some of the usual support we may rely on might look different at the moment, but reminding yourself to ‘take notice’ can strengthen and broaden awareness. Being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your well-being and savouring ‘the moment’ can help to reaffirm your life priorities.

### Where you live

Get a plant for your home or have a ‘clear the clutter’ day. Take notice of how your friends and family are feeling or acting.

### Nature

Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you. Perhaps take a different route through the park or your neighbourhood.



During colder weather make sure you keep an eye on how warm your home is! Ideal temperatures are between 18°C and 21°C. If you are struggling with fuel bills or energy efficiency.

**Home Plus Leeds** can help: **0113 378 4160**

Be prepared for colder weather – follow the news on the TV or radio for information about cold snaps.

If you feel like you could do with some more support. **Linking Leeds** is a social prescribing service that can help improve your overall health and wellbeing: **0113 336 7612**

# 4

## Learn

Learning new skills, or rediscovering an old one, is great for good mental health and development. Anything that encourages you to use your mind is good. Why not learn something new today?

### Be curious

Find out something about your friends and family.

### Books and Puzzles

Read a book you wouldn’t normally choose – try some poetry, fiction, non-fiction. Do a crossword or Sudoku.

### Be brave

Research something you’ve always wondered about. Learn a new word. Sign up for an online class try a new recipe. Take a look in your cupboards and pull out the sewing machine or paints and get creative.

Your local library might still be open.  
Phone Leeds Library Service on **0113 378 5005**

# 5

## Give

In times like this, many of us often want to roll up our sleeves and help others but it can be hard to know how.

### Help Others

Do you have a skill or talent you can share to help others? Can you share this with others?

### Volunteers

Maybe you could be a volunteer telephone befriender with a local neighbourhood network?

### Simple Kindness

Often simple things can make all the difference. There is a national movement of putting pictures of rainbows in your windows for people to see as they are out doing their daily exercise. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

If you want to volunteer try  
**Doing Good in Leeds**  
on **0113 297 7920**

# Eating Healthy.. Eating Well

## Pumpkin Soup

### Ingredients

2 pounds (900g) of pumpkin flesh, cut into cubes  
1 large onion, chopped  
1 large potato, peeled and cubed  
1 -2 cloves of garlic crushed.  
1 flat teaspoon of curry powder (strength is optional)  
1 bay leaf  
1 & ½ pints of vegetable stock  
1 tbsp of vegetable oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

### Method

1. Boil the pumpkin cubes and the bay leaf in some water until tender.
2. Meanwhile heat the oil in a pan and sauté the garlic and onion until transparent.
3. Mix the curry powder into the onions and garlic and stir.
4. Add the drained pumpkin cubes and the potato cubes and pour over the vegetable stock.
5. Simmer for 25 – 35 minutes, until cooked.
6. Allow the mixture to cool slightly, and then blend to a creamy consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.
7. Serve with crusty rolls, Delicious!



**Sudoku**

The goal of Sudoku is to fill in a 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, row, and 3x3 section contain the numbers between 1 to 9. At the beginning of the game, the 9x9 grid will have some of the squares filled in.

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

**Christmas food anagrams**

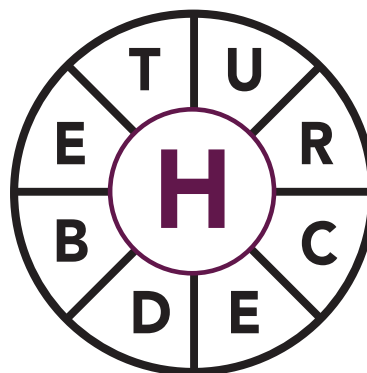
Hint - the number of words and letters needed is shown in brackets

- 1. cutest snuff thing (8, 8)
- 2. a bad rescue (5, 5)
- 3. in lewd mule (6, 4)
- 4. nearby cars cure (9,5)
- 5. biking pals nest (4,2,8)
- 6. cutest snuff thing (8, 8)
- 7. a bad rescue (5, 5)
- 8. in lewd mule (6, 4)
- 9. nearby cars cure (9,5)
- 10. biking pals nest (4,2,8)

**Bumper Christmas quiz**

- 1. How many points does a snowflake have ?
- 2. Who wrote "How the Grinch Stole Christmas?"
- 3. What colour are the berries on mistletoe?
- 4. Name all of Santa's reindeer that begin with the letter D
- 5. In the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas".... My true love sent to me nine...what?
- 6. London's Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree is traditionally given by which country?
- 7. Continue the song "I saw Mommy....."
- 8. Pine needles are said to be a good source of which vitamin?
- 9. What is the English title of the carol written in 1818 by Austrian originally called Stille Nacht?
- 10. Christmas Island is part of which country's territory?

This months puzzle page is brought to you by Home Instead senior care answers on the bottom of page 46



**Word Wheel**

Your target is to create as many words of four letters or more, using the letters once only and always including the letter in the middle of the wheel.

X	N	K	C	V	S	R	S	X	C	E	M	U	R
U	E	C	E	R	I	G	E	L	Z	J	G	E	V
J	O	L	L	Y	U	O	N	I	L	C	E	M	A
E	R	N	E	C	K	H	R	I	N	E	P	F	T
M	G	E	B	H	M	E	T	U	K	D	B	P	N
E	O	S	R	I	O	F	D	A	U	C	E	T	A
R	N	L	A	M	I	S	T	L	E	T	O	E	S
R	G	E	T	N	W	K	D	R	Y	R	F	T	R
Y	G	D	E	E	L	V	E	S	U	N	W	B	S
N	E	I	Q	Y	E	A	X	G	S	P	A	U	A
P	S	E	E	X	F	R	T	O	I	L	U	J	M
M	O	I	J	D	C	O	T	D	H	X	E	V	C

Stockings Celebrate Reindeer Mistletoe  
Chimney Wreath Merry Egnog Santa  
Jolly Elves Bells Tree Sled

- 11. What are the two most popular items to put on top of a Christmas tree ?
- 12. What does the word "Advent" mean?
- 13. What is the last day of Christmas called?
- 14. What is the name of a male turkey?
- 15. Who were the Magi?
- 16. Which Christmas carol was the first song to be broadcast from space in 1965?
- 17. John Horsely designed the first what, given at Christmas?
- 18. Which band holds the record for the most UK Christmas number ones?
- 19. Name the Christmas themed ballet which premiered in St. Petersburg in 1892.
- 20. Coca Cola was the first company to use whom in an advertising campaign?

**Short Cuts**

*This is the space where you can share a small thought, a tip or an idea. Or even a poem!*

**Renewal** By Pat Stemmer

In the cluster of chestnut trees outside my window I can look down on an annual pantomime of comedy and drama. During the bareness of winter, these trees are like black-latticed iron works, stark and naked; but my regular pair of crows have already staked their claim to this territory.

On the topmost, weediest, thinnest of bare branches they sit, him and her, facing each other, their bodies too heavy for safety, bouncing up and down in their own courtship ritual. Laying claim, in this comedic danse macabre, to their territory.

As the season progresses, this ridiculous dance continues, but it is harder to detect due to the wonderfully dense foliage. Youngsters arrive, fledge and then fly. But these old timers cling to their ritual – and to the same branches.

In the midst of all the fear and uncertainty of my present predicament, this yearly pantomime is an oasis of peace and hope.

**My Childhood** by Hilda Scattergood

What do I remember,  
Coal, railways or steam,  
My brothers and sisters,  
All part of a dream

The hens the allotment,  
And kitty, the cat.  
The dog and the ferret,  
The fireside mat.

The dinners on Sundays,  
Roast taties and meat,  
And jelly and custard,  
Tinned fruit for a treat.

In winter the sledges  
In summer the sun,  
And out on the hillside,  
We'd play and have fun.

The rain was a nuisance,  
But on a wet day,  
We'd take to the attic  
And keep on with our play.

It all sounds idyllic,  
But let's not forget  
The constant and boring,  
And spoil sporting wet.

The valley we lived in,  
Was shaped like a funnel,  
The wind raging through it,  
Used it like a tunnel.

We weathered the weather,  
We played in the sun,  
We sledged in the winter,  
We knew how to have fun.

I still like the sunshine,  
I still don't like rain.  
And joy, how I'd like to,  
Live it again!

**Quiz corner solutions**

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

**Christmas food anagrams**

- 1. Chestnut Stuffing 2. Bread Sauce 3. Mulled Wine
- 4. Cranberry Sauce 5. Pigs in Blankets
- 6. Brussel Sprouts 7. Mince Pies 8. Quality Street
- 9. Christmas Cake. 10. Port

**Word wheel**

- 4 Letters ETCH, HEED, HERB, HERB, HERE, HURT, TECH, THEE, THUD
- 5 Letters BEECH, BERTH, CHEER, CHUTE, DUTCH, ETHER, RETCH, RUCHE, THERE, THREE
- 6 Letters BREECH, CHERUB, ETCHED, ETCHER, EUCHRE
- 7 Letters BERTHED, BUTCHER, RETCHED
- 9 Letters BUTCHERED

**Bumper Christmas quiz**

- 1.Six 2.Theodor 'Dr Seuss' Geisel 3.White 4.Dasher, Dancer, Donner 5.Nine ladies dancing 6.Norway 7.Kissing Santa Claus 8.Vitamin C 9.Silent night
- 10.Its is an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean 11.Star and/or angel 12.Coming 13.Twelfth Night or Epiphany Eve 14.Tom 15.3 Wise Men
- 16.Jingle Bells 17.Christmas Card 18.The Beetles 19.The Nutcracker 20.Santa/Father Christmas

# Useful Numbers

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Leeds Older People's Forum:

**0113 244 1697**



LOPF can direct you to Neighbourhood Networks and older people's services in your area

Leeds Coronavirus Hotline

**0113 378 1877**

For anyone unable to leave their home because of coronavirus, and worried because they don't have family or friends who can help.

Universal Credit Hotline:

**0800 328 9559**



Dementia Connect:

**0333 150 3456**



Alzheimer's Society's new personalised support service for people with dementia and their carers.

Covid-19 Bereavement Support Line:

**0113 218 5544 or 0113 203 3369**

For anyone who has a friend or family member who is seriously ill or who has died from Covid-19.

Leeds Directory:

**0113 378 4610**



Leeds City Council's Information Service that offers a range of local community care and support services and activities.

NHS:

**111** 

For all non-urgent medical care



HM Government

**NHS**



**Washing my  
hands helps  
protect me.**

**And you.**

Regular handwashing  
wipes away the virus.

**STAY ALERT**  
▼  
**CONTROL  
THE VIRUS**  
▼  
**SAVE LIVES**