

shine

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2022/23

Older People. Sharing Stories

Playing *the* Dame

Panto legend Berwick Kaler steps out of retirement as Old Granny Goose at the Grand Opera House, York

LIVING *on the* LINE

Older people and the Cost of Living

A GRAND DAY OUT!

Christmas at Leeds Corn Exchange

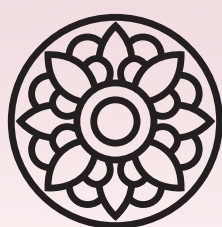
GAME ON!

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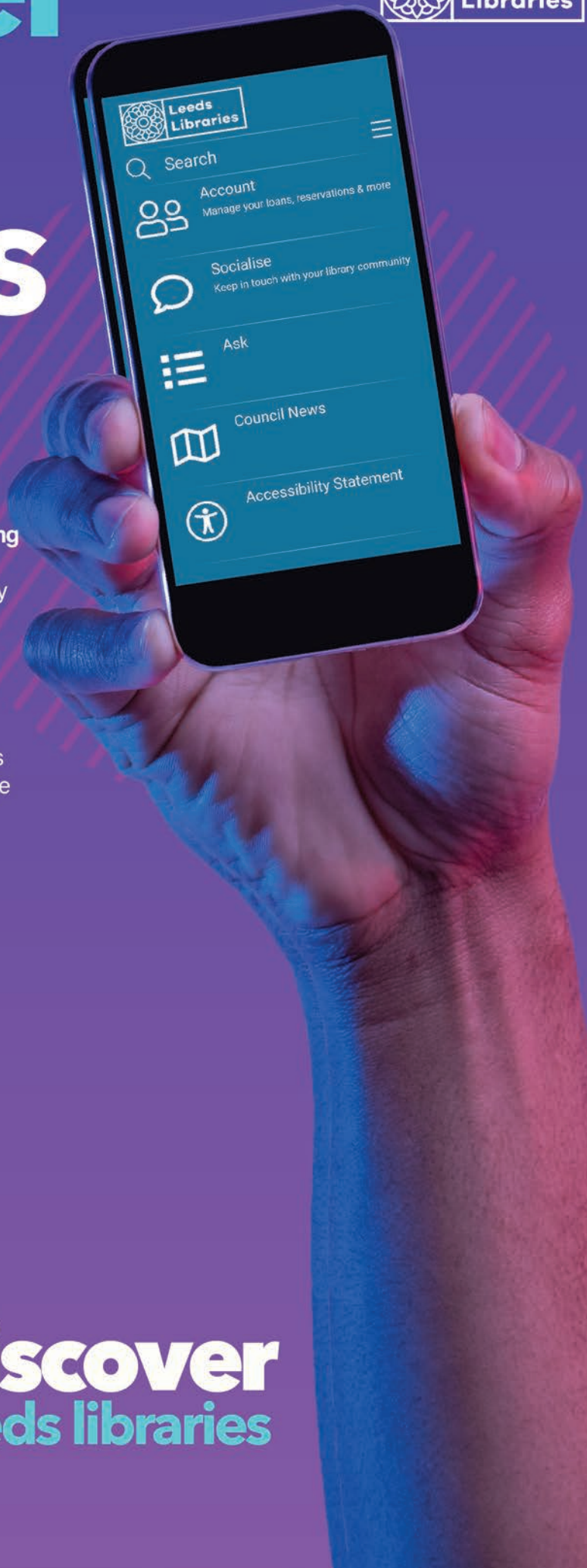
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Getting Together

Pantomime is a historic art. Some say it goes back to Ancient Rome, others that it developed in the 17th century. Whatever its provenance, pantomime is rooted in tradition: the catchphrases; the fairy-tale plots; the slapstick humour; the cross-dressing Dame. Berwick Kaler is a walking tradition. He's played the Dame in York since the 1970s, delighting audiences of all ages. Now 76, Berwick has come out of retirement to tread the boards once more. We're thrilled he agreed to talk to us, tell his story and grace our cover.

Panto attracts all sorts of people. Even Ian McKellan is getting in on the act, playing the Dame in at 83. McKellan believes there's something about it that brings us together. He said, "Whether it's soldiers marching in the streets at a funeral, whether it's a crowd at a football match all singing together, or whether it's a family going to a pantomime and sitting next to another family. We care about the same things and that's what pantomime underlines." It's this "togetherness" that we must remember this Christmas. We've had two years of being told to stay apart; perhaps this year we need to get together. The Cost of Living crisis is biting and affecting older people in particular ways. Our In Focus article discusses the issues and suggests some solutions. One way of getting through it is by getting together with other people.

However, Christmas isn't everyone's cup of tea. You might dread the prospect of getting back to (relative) normal after two winters of lockdowns! Resident curmudgeon Walter White presents his grumpy view of the season, whilst Judy Wild offers her more positive take. We also hear from some people who celebrate in different ways at this time of year. Not everyone comes from a background where Christmas is the go-to tradition. Ruth, Ranjit and Sting reveal how they celebrate in the dark months. Someone who isn't afraid to reveal all is Clarrie. She is tattooed from head to toe and she shows us some of her body art. Behind each tattoo is a story, of hope, of loss and of fortitude. We hope she inspires you.

We have a few new features this issue: In Profile takes a look behind the scenes at the excellent Carers Leeds. The Lowdown gives our regular writers a chance to tell you what's on their mind. A Grand Day Out is our new travel section. It's funded by Connecting Leeds, a project that encourages older people to get out and about on the bus. Much more about this project next issue. Meanwhile, enjoy the Grand Day Out we had at Leeds Corn Exchange. In our expanded health section we meet footballer Mike, who tells us how he returned to the sport in his 60s.

We hope you enjoy this special Christmas issue – and can enjoy the festive period. Hopefully you'll be able to get together with others this winter. Whether it's a festive lunch in your local community centre, or a chance to see a show, there are lots of opportunities to be with others. And if you get to the Panto, let us know!

Merry Christmas everyone!



Tom Bailey
Editor



shine

EDITOR
Tom Bailey

DESIGN
Zing Digital

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Alison McIntyre

LOPF LIAISON
Linda Glew

PHOTOGRAPHY
Jonathan Turner

DISTRIBUTION
Health For All

WRITING TEAM
Paul Atkinson, Betty Bennison, Anne Chitty, Lorraine Harding, Mally Harvey, Maureen Kershaw, Ruth Steinberg, Walter White, Judy Wild, Valerie Wood-Robinson.

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CONTACT
Shine
c/o Leeds Older People's Forum
Josephs Well,
Hanover Walk,
Leeds LS3 1AB
hello@theshinemag.com
0113 244 1697

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Carers Leeds do amazing work to support carers of all ages in Leeds. We meet some of the people who are involved and hear how important carers are.

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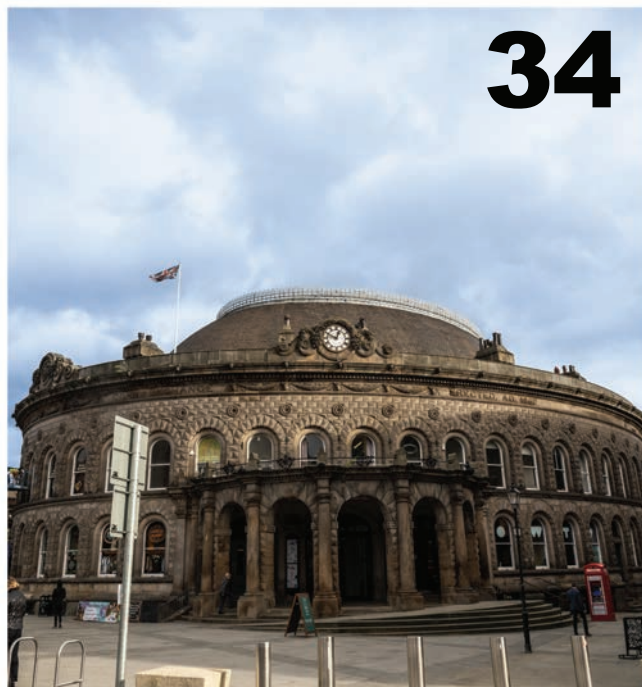
Christmas isn’t the only winter festival celebrated in Leeds. Ranjit is a Sikh and finds any excuse to celebrate; Sting is a Pagan and prefers to hark back to more traditional festivals; and Ruth is Jewish and celebrates Hannuakah at this time of year. Find out more about alternative ways to celebrate.

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Our team takes a Grand Day Out to Leeds Corn Exchange. We check out the Christmas Market and meet three people who have a connection to the building.

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THE LOWDOWN

What have we been reading and watching? Who do we have a lot of time for? What are we passionate about? What's happening in Leeds that you shouldn't miss? A choice selection of recommendations from the Shine team, introduced by our older writers.

A BOOK WE LOVE



Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* - Lorraine Harding

I hadn't read 'A Christmas Carol' since childhood so re-reading it was instructive. The story is well-known. On Christmas Eve, solitary miser Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his business partner, and by three spirits who take him to Christmases past, present, and future. Scrooge learns that pursuing his current path will lead to a lonely and unmourned death. And Tiny Tim, the saintly crippled son of Scrooge's oppressed clerk Bob Cratchit, will die.

There were scenes I had forgotten: the Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge the life he might have had and the fiancée who gave him up; the Ghost of Christmas Future shows the charlady, the launderess, and the undertaker plundering Scrooge's possessions. I'd also forgotten how much humour there is in the book, along with the sadness, the moralising, the sentimentality - and the horror. When the Ghost of Christmas Present reveals two starving children under his robe, it looks as though Dickens is calling out early industrial capitalism for what it was.

Dickens shamelessly manipulates his reader's feelings, and it is almost impossible not to shed a tear. I see it as a work that should be performed rather than read, by a single-spotlit actor, preferably Dickens himself. It is not a tale you can distance yourself from and I felt like an emotional wreck by the end - but in a good way.

A PERSON WE LOVE

HM The Queen (1926 - 2022) - Judy Wild

I was taken by surprise as to how upset I was when I learnt the Queen had died. I am not particularly pro-Royal but neither would I abolish the Royal Family. Whatever your views, I would suggest that Queen Elizabeth was an exemplary role model. She was just 25 when she became the Queen: a young woman taking a destiny, a role that only by chance had come to her. She pledged a life of duty which she then delivered. She carried out her duties until two days before she died. She always maintained a dignified persona. She's weathered the storm. At Prince Philip's funeral she sat alone and complied with the Covid restrictions, dignified in her grief. The Queen has always been there for so many of us. The only monarch we have known. She has been there in good times and bad, a figurehead, someone above politics; gluing us together. Her speech to the nation during the pandemic was timely and acknowledged the loss felt by so many. This to me seemed completely genuine and meant far more to me than any speech a politician could make. The amusing sketch she did for her Platinum Jubilee with Paddington Bear showed a sense of humour she was known for. I'll miss her.



A PASSION FOR



Winter - *Maureen Kershaw*

I've always loved winter. Childhood days of thick snow, going to school no matter the weather, then afterwards the excitement of sledging, snowballing and sliding on pavements. I grew up in the 1950s; Dad would take the family out at the weekend in our little Austin car, which leaked through the roof during heavy rain or snow. On winter afternoons we would sit on its cold leather seats under army blankets, with stone hot water bottles to keep us snug and warm as we travelled round the Yorkshire Dales.

Perfect winter days are bright and crisp. I love to wake up to a hoar frost on the ground; vivid blue sky and sunshine. Tucking into warming winter food after a walk in the park – perfect.

Slow cooked stews with dumplings, followed by treacle pud or jam roly-poly. However, you don't need to go out to enjoy the season! Stay put in the warmth, curl up and watch TV - or read in the cosiness of soft lighting. Wintry weather is the perfect excuse to stay at home and do what you want!

WHAT'S ON

Buy Art Exhibition

Support local artists by buying original artworks, prints, cards and more. Or just browse!

Every Friday (11am - 5pm) until 20th January 2023. Free.

Aire Place Studios, Kirkstall Road, Leeds LS3 1JL

Aire Place Studios is a hidden gem. Located just off Kirkstall Road, the project is an amazing, warm, welcoming, creative space. The Buy Art Exhibition is the perfect excuse to support Aire Place and check out the work of some of the most talented local artists of all ages. "Artists do more than just paint a pretty picture," says Aire Place founder Sarah Francis. "They help communities to flourish and enrich our lives and work-spaces." Buy your arty Christmas presents or just enjoy the exhibition!



The 2022 Lord Mayor's Carol Concerts

Leeds International Concert Season's annual family carol concerts.

Thursday 15th December, 6.30pm and 8.30pm, £6.50/ £3.50

Leeds Minster, Kirkgate, LS2 7DJ 0113 3760318

Celebrate the season in traditional style at this annual event for all ages. This year the concerts will support these charities: Martin House Children's Hospice, St Anne's Community Services, St George's Crypt and Simon on the Streets.



When I was a child Christmas was quite low key. There was a very small plastic tree that stood on top of the TV. This housed a bit of tinsel and the same decorations year in year out. Presents were never wrapped, they went in a pillowcase on the landing. One Christmas I got the doll I'd hoped for. It was amazing; Santa was so clever.

As adults the best Christmases were when our four children were small. We had very little money but did put in lots of effort. The presents were always wrapped and always left under the tree with the carrot for Rudolph and a homemade mince pie that looked like an alien object on the fireplace.

These days we are blessed with six grandchildren. I have hours of fun choosing presents for them. I will admit to not liking the wrapping and gladly delegate this task to my husband. Each Christmas my husband and daughter (and now my granddaughter) go off to buy a real tree. The trees they bring home are always huge and round and take up the full window. The Christmas music plays and we eat chocolate and drink wine as we decorate the tree.

We collect Christmas decorations on our summer holidays and as they come out of their wrappings, we chat about their origin and remember our times away together. Nothing matches on the tree but the end result is magical. The lights twinkle and the smell of pine fills the room. We have a coal fire so this too adds to the lovely warmth of the room.

A couple of days either side of putting up a tree my husband makes a chocolate and orange Christmas cake. The house smells wonderful as the cake bakes slowly in the oven for several hours. Usually the excuse for another festive tippie. Fairy lights go in the porch, decorations in the hall, including a singing Rudolph, Santa and snowman. It is completely over the top and just what the grandchildren want. I always think we have a look of Santa's grotto.

Christmas Day now is spent with my daughter and her family. We take it in turns to cook. The day will be relaxed and we will decide what we want to eat nearer to the time. It might not be a traditional Christmas dinner but will be something we all decide we would like. One year we had curry and another a very lovely lasagne. It's the getting together that matters.

EMBRACING CHRISTMAS

Some people love this time of year. Turkey dinners, festive lights, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, "It's A Wonderful Life" showing at the local picture house. It's all magical. It's time to shake off our cynicism and embrace Christmas, says **Judy Wild**.



We have all the children and grandchildren around on boxing day. The house gets trashed, and there is wall-to-wall mess. The younger children run around in a noisy pack together. We keep things simple with takeaway pizzas delivered to the door. Quizzes and charades are played and laughter fills the house. Seeing my family together, healthy and relaxed is the best Christmas present I can have.

When I was working, we would go away for a few days to the North East coast between Christmas and the New Year. These days we stay at home to enjoy the lights and the sparkling tree for as long as we can. Feet up in front of the television watching the reruns of *Morecambe and Wise*. I always watch the film *Love Actually*. I must have seen it about six times but it always makes me cry and laugh.

So for me Christmas is magical. I have experienced it as a child, parent and grandparent. I know this time of year can be commercial and brash but it can be a wonderful time too and it brings out the inner child in me. Merry Christmas everyone!

“We collect Christmas decorations on our summer holidays and as they come out of their wrappings, we chat about their origin and remember our times away together.”

AVOIDING CHRISTMAS

Some of us can't stand the festive season. Busy shops, filthy weather, screaming children, credit card bills, staying up all night to wrap presents you can't afford. It's a nightmare. It's time to grow up, do our own thing and avoid Christmas, says **Walter White**.

The most dreaded time of year approaches. Not the frozen wastes of winter, but the two weeks running up to Christmas, where the whole country becomes irrational. When I was a kid, I loved the last two weeks of December. I'd help with the colourful decorating of the house and tree, but really, I was thinking about the goodies I would be getting over the next few days. Then I reached the age of giving! The cost of it all blew me away. My wife all but melted our credit card in one shop - decorations, boxes of cards, rolls of wrapping paper, mistletoe ...

And every year, the same old favourite songs from Christmas Past. I'm sick of Wizzard, Slade and Noddy Holder. The very words "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day" make me nauseous. This is music that is over four decades old! Then there's the telly - nothing on, just repeats. And the ads! Christmas ads start in November and there's no let-up til January.

Then there's Santa. I wish I had a fiver for every clip around the ear I got from my parents for telling fibs as a kid. Those same dealers of pain told us downright lies about our presents being delivered by a senior citizen too fat to fit inside the chimney that he (supposedly) climbed up and down. The weird part is, when I became a father, I found myself telling the same ridiculous stories to my two boys. I also struggle with the false sentiments everyone writes in the cards sent to their long lists of so-called friends. Folk who have not been heard of nor seen since their schooldays. My mum used to get copied replies to most of hers. They hung in lines on walls and doors so there was no need for the decorations. What is it about greetings cards? I don't get it.

Though I prefer cards to the festive lights on people's houses. There's one near me

where the whole outside of the house is lit up and there's a pair of Santa's legs sticking out of the chimney. Who can afford to light up their house these days? They'll get a shock when the electric bill comes in.

What about those of us who use the occasion for a few days drinking? Splashing out on expensive malt whiskey. I'll never forget the Christmas when I found my father-in-law sitting on the floor at a party with his mate Sam, both of them sobbing. The culprit turned out to be a bottle-and-a-half of gin. Like I said, we all go a bit irrational at this time of year.

Looking back, I think my dislike for it all was intensified years back in my local pub. The Kids' Christmas Party. I'd had a few beers when the Willy the landlord approached, asking me if I'd be Santa. He was a big Scottish bloke - and he had the perfect body for a Santa suit. But he said he had to run the bar and I'd have to step in. Before I knew it I was having two large cushions stuffed up this red suit. I was guided into the main room and was immediately terrified at the sight of a

crowd of screaming kids. I did my best, but ended up sweating and deflated. Never again! I think I've got PTSD - Post Traumatic Santa Disorder.

People call me a miserable so-and-so. All I'll say is I cheer up when it's over. I know I'm probably in the minority. If you like the festive season, I wish you a truly great Christmas. For myself, I'm looking forward to a very Happy New Year, when I get back to normal!

“Every year,
the same old
songs.
I'm sick of
Wizzard, Slade
and Noddy
Holder.



LIVING ON THE LINE

Written By: **TOM BAILEY**

The Cost of Living Crisis is hitting older people hard. We look into the particular problems facing older people this winter. As well as examining the issues, we look at some of the solutions to the problem and meet some of the amazing people and organisations working to get older people through this difficult time.

If you had to popped to your local shop last year for a pint of milk it would have cost you about 42p. Milk been around that price for about 15 years. Nowadays the average cost of a pint of milk is £1. And it's not just milk. Butter, eggs, bread: the essentials of daily life. Everything is costing more. And some people don't have the money to spare. The rise in food prices is one real-world example of how the Cost of Living crisis hits older people every day. It's not just scary headlines in the paper or on TV: all of us are affected every day by how much their supermarket bill comes to. These increases can often be sudden and unexpected. "It wouldn't be so bad if they increased prices a bit at a time," says Maureen, an older person we spoke to in Armley. "But instead of 5 pence, it's 20, 30 or 50 pence more." If you've budgeted for your shopping to cost £30 and you come away with it costing £40, it can be shocking and difficult to manage.

These rising food costs might be fine for wealthy older people. Poorer people struggle to absorb the rising costs of food and services into their weekly budgets. According to the Centre for Ageing Better, there are over 2 million pensioners living in poverty in the UK. That's nearly one in five. The number of poor older people is likely to rise over the next year. People over 85 are particularly at risk, as are older women and those living on their own.

All of us will know about the increases in the costs of energy. Whatever the reasons - the war in Ukraine, the post-Covid recovery, worldwide inflation problems - it's normal people who have to shoulder the rises. Energy costs can hit older people more deeply. As we age, we tend to feel the cold more, we live less active lives and our health can suffer. "I can't just sit in a cold house," says Graham, 78. "It's all very well telling me put another jumper on. I'm freezing!" Older people who are retired tend to spend more time at home and many have physical barriers to getting out and getting moving.

Older people have particular problems: it's not just heating and eating. We spoke to Dawn Newsome, who runs Armley Helping Hands. She told us that some older people are having to stop paying for help around the house. "They're cutting their cleaners," says Dawn. Often it's older people who live on their own and who are disabled. It's not just the dirty floors that will be neglected. "It means nobody's keeping an eye on them. It's not just about Hoovering, but making sure they're ok - how is their physical health, their mental health?"

Age UK recently released a report which highlighted that many older people are cutting back on care and health costs as the crisis bites. "Sometimes I don't take my painkillers or eye drops because they are too expensive," says one older person quoted in the report. "I cannot afford them." Caroline Abrahams is the Age UK director and she is keen to highlight the issue of people cutting back on care costs. "It is alarming that well over a million older people are already cutting back or stopping their social care across the UK," says Caroline. "This is potentially disastrous because if you are an older person with care needs, this support is not a 'nice to have' but essential in enabling you to stay fit and well. Cutting back or stopping care in this situation threatens to pile extra pressure on the NHS, as it greatly increases the chances of serious ill health and injury."

“It’s a grim picture. But there are solutions. People working tirelessly to support older people in Leeds and beyond.”

The Cost of Living affects care companies as well as individuals. And these costs inevitably get passed on to older people and their families. It's something Caroline Abrahams is particularly concerned about: "Without the care they require, frail and unwell older people are more likely to fall, become malnourished and dehydrated, fail to take their medication, and become seriously ill because an emerging health problem will not be noticed early enough to nip it in the bud. Care workers are the only visitors many such older people receive each day and they play a vital role in sustaining their mental and physical health. Without them, it's inevitable that some older people will suffer, invisible and unseen, behind closed doors."

All these problems have led some to conclude that the Cost of Living Crisis is actually a Health Crisis. Colin Cox is a Director of Public Health in the North of England. "The Cost of Living Crisis has overtaken Covid-19 as the major public health threat over the coming months," says Colin. "Difficulty in heating houses leads directly to increased lung and heart health problems and contributes to the higher rate of hospitalisations and deaths that we see over the winter, so I'm particularly worried about what might happen this year. Winter is always a particularly difficult time for many people, including those who are older and on lower incomes, and this year is likely to be exceptionally so."

All this is very worrying. Older people are worried too. Anxiety about paying heating bills can be just as harmful to health as being cold. Mental health is a huge issue. The rise in energy prices and what support is out there can be bewildering. "People don't understand the lingo," say one support worker in Leeds. Older people are cutting costs - but to what end? What sort of life are people supposed to lead? Aren't older people entitled to a bit of joy, of hope? It's another issue Age UK boss Caroline Abrahams is passionate about: "Some people are having to forego all but the essentials of everyday life, like food and utilities. Looking after pets is becoming quite a stretch for some and suddenly little treats like lunch with a friend at a local pub, or a trip into town to visit the theatre or cinema may be financially out of reach. For those living alone especially, this makes life rather soulless and certainly much more solitary, because such activities are precious opportunities for companionship. The way in which lack of funds is reducing many older people's social lives and breeding loneliness, even among those who normally feel immune, is one of the important, but less obvious harms brought on by inflation."

On top of all of these issues, there's a big question hanging over pensions. Will state pensions rise with inflation? Rosie McGregor is the Chair of UNISON's national retired members committee. "The government removed the triple lock for this year and have said they would reinstate it for April 2023," says Rosie. "But with so many U-turns this government is making, there is no guarantee that they won't renege on the triple lock." Caroline Abrahams again: "Most older people feel strongly about the restoration of the triple lock next year: this offers much needed hope of better times to

to come, before it is too late for them to enjoy them." Who knows what the government will do? At the time of writing we've had three prime ministers this year. By the time you read this, we might have a fourth!

It's a grim picture. But there are solutions. People working tirelessly to support older people in Leeds and beyond. Scores of organisations set up to work with older people are pivoting away from Covid and towards the Cost of Living Crisis. Even private companies are offering some support. Lots of the major supermarkets are doing their bit. Asda is offering people over 60 some soup, a roll and unlimited tea and coffee for £1 as part of its new 'winter warmer' initiatives. You can go into any of Asda's cafes at any time of the day throughout November and December to take advantage of the offer. Mohsin Issa is Asda's co-owner. "We know that this winter is set to be incredibly hard for thousands of pensioners as they worry about how to keep themselves warm in the face of rising living costs and a fixed income," he says. "We're hoping our new offer of soup and hot drinks for over 60s will prove just as impactful for those who need it most." Yes, it's a good advert for Asda – they are a business and have to make money. But beggars can't be choosers. And there's a similar offer at Morrison's if you prefer a different retailer.

Soup and a roll won't cut it for some older people. A short-term solution just isn't enough. Faced with mounting bills and dwindling pensions, some need more than a cheap meal deal. This is where Neighbourhood Networks come in. In every area of Leeds there are people working for organisations who are looking out for older people. Dawn Newsome runs Armley Helping Hands. Dawn thinks organisations like hers are particularly well placed to help. "One of the great benefits of the Neighbourhood Networks is that there are certain members of staff you have been employed there for a long time," says Dawn. "That means we build up a relationship, a level of trust." But what about those people who can't walk in and ask for help? "We really have to get to those people who are really struggling. A lot of people just can't walk into our service to keep warm. So we have to have flexibility to really respond people's needs. We paid transport fares for a lady who was having cancer treatment. She couldn't afford the taxi, so we funded that. We had another gentlemen who had an

electric wheelchair, but the wheels were broken. He didn't have the finances to replace them. And that affected his ability to get around and be independent. It took my team an hour-and-a-half to sort it out and change the wheels – at a reduced cost. And that meant so much to him."

“Soup and a roll won't cut it for some older people. A short-term solution just isn't enough. Faced with mounting bills and dwindling pensions, some need more than a cheap meal deal.”

Third sector organisations are facing problems of their own with the cost of living. "The Cost of Living Crisis is having an impact on us as an organisation," says Dawn. "We don't want that knock-on cost to be passed on to our older people and have to reduce what we do." Funding is always an issue: "We're always trying to get funding and resources to help people in our community. Funding doesn't come without challenges. It means we have to increase our capacity, which increases the demand. One of the biggest things is sustainability. Our older people don't disappear after 12 weeks. They need continuity. People need to know that when they're facing difficult times, there's somewhere to go. There's a telephone number they can ring where they'll get a response and some support from someone who knows them."

Armley Helping Hands is doing very particular things to help people through the crisis. A lot of the time it's about alleviating anxiety and helping people navigate their way through the maze of government support and handouts. "We got funding from Staying Well in Winter and we're doing Sharing the Warmth pop-up cafes," Dawn tell us. "These are information cafes that help support older people and their families to get the information they need to help them through this crisis. We turn doctor's waiting rooms into a pop-up café and have conversations about how to stay warm with older people. We also deliver them in local churches – and we speak to people in the street too! You'll see us keeping warm on Armley Town Street!" MP Alex Sobel supports the idea of Neighbourhood Networks: "I would say to all my constituents who are struggling to reach out to local community organisations. There are many great ones. These services offer a lifeline to people."

There are basic questions all older people need to ask themselves. Are you claiming the right benefits? You might be entitled to pension credits. The DWP estimates that a million people are entitled to thousands of pounds in support – but they're not claiming it. Check it out. Are you saving as much energy as you can? Turn off the lights; turn off appliances you're not using; wash clothes on 30 degrees; draught-proof your windows; get a smart meter etc. All this seems like teaching grandma to suck eggs (literally) but doing some basic energy-saving can reduce bills and help people feel a bit more in control.

We've all heard of food banks. Sadly, they've been a feature in our communities for many years. But a new initiative has been developed on similar lines: Warm Banks or Warm Spaces. The idea is to provide a place where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, welcoming space – and maybe enjoy a hot drink and some company. Leeds City Council has developed a map of Warm Spaces that you can visit; these include libraries, community centres hubs and cafes. Councillor Mary Harland said older people can go to Warm Hubs to "keep warm, access services and get free guidance and advice to save money and keep their costs down this winter". Again, it's a short-term solution, but if you're struggling to heat your home, it can be a relief to know there's somewhere warm to go. The Warm Spaces are located all over Leeds and welcome everybody.

Adele Rae has set up one of these "warm spaces" in Kirkstall. The Heat Café operates from St Stephen's Church Hall on Monday and Wednesday lunchtimes. Adele runs Kirkstall Valley Development Trust (KVDT), a local project that encompasses a farm, a food bank, children's activities and much more. When we meet her in Kirkstall, Adele explains the concept of the Heat Café. "It's just somewhere that's warm," she says. "We were already providing food parcels to people, but we became worried. We were looking at the Cost of Living crisis and we realised that people aren't going to be able to afford to heat and eat. What are we going to do as a community to support local people?" Some older people were living on the line, even before the crisis hit. "We were there was already a need, but this was on a whole new level," says Adele. "The simple idea was this: we open this space up that would be warm. People can come in and just get something to eat." It's as simple as that. But it's not just about food. "It's about reducing social isolation. We can't afford to keep people warm in their own homes but the next best thing is to come here and get warm with us."

The cafe is a welcoming, friendly space with a home-made feel. There's a family atmosphere, but newcomers are welcomed in. Joyce and Irene have both been part of the KVDT community for some years; they come to get a hot lunch. "I picked it up off Facebook," says Joyce, as she waits for her stew and dumplings to appear. "I've been up here a few times." Both women live locally and walk down together. They try to get

out and about as much as possible, weather permitting. "It's a relief not to have to make a meal," says Joyce. How are they coping with the increase in energy bills? "I wear a vest, jumper and cardigan," Joyce confides. "Come teatime I put on my zip-up with the hood up. Then I've got my big, fleecy blanket. Anything to keep warm." Irene is more sanguine. "I've got my heating on. Bugger 'em!" The pair enjoy a hot lunch and a chance to catch up.

“People are always the solution. People pulling together. Connection and belonging – that’s the key.”

Volunteers are an integral part of the KVDT family. Jayne lives locally and volunteers a day a week. "It's important to feel part of something," Jayne says. "When you see good things happening – and you're part of it – it's good for your well-being." Volunteering helps others, but it also helps Jayne. In hard times it's important to be able to see that things can get better, that there can be a solution. "It's people, isn't it? People are always the solution. People pulling together. Connection and belonging – that's the key." Adele agrees. "It's a holistic approach," she says. Older people might need a hot meal and space to warm up, but there are other things that they'll need help with – benefit forms, help with dodgy boilers. Adele has first-hand experience of how life can be difficult, so she knows that people can be the solution. "In the middle of the last decade – around 2013 – me and my kids had a really tough time," she says. "It was the people that surrounded me that made my life better. I was aware that with austerity and everything else, a lot of people were also struggling. And we could do something about it. That's why I do it!"

During the pandemic, older people were encouraged to stay at home.

In many ways, this Cost of Living Crisis is the opposite. Should we instead be encouraging older people to get out of the house, to go to a Warm Space, to get involved with their local Neighbourhood Network? As the winter sets in and days get colder and darker, it's important for both our physical and mental health to be around other people. The older people we met in Armley and in Kirkstall certainly relished the opportunity to sit in a warm building and chat to others – if only to share their struggles and complain about food prices. Anyone old enough to remember the 1940s and 1950s will remember rationing and the scarcity of goods and services. Are older people better placed than others to endure hardships? Many have been through hard times before and can weather the storm. Others think times have changed for the worse. "It's not as easy as it was years ago", says Hazel, who we met in Armley. "Everyone helped each other then." Could everybody help each other now? Could we get back some of that oft-invoked "Blitz Spirit"? Times might have changed, but in many areas of Leeds, people are harking back to a more traditional attitude and supporting each other. Money is tight, but to repeat the words of Jayne, who volunteers in Kirkstall, "people are always the solution."

Q+A JO VOLPE

Jo Volpe runs the Leeds Older People's Forum, which is a network of organisations who work with older people to support them. Jo was appointed CEO earlier this year, so we asked her to share her thoughts about the particular challenges facing older people this winter.

Why does the Cost of Living Crisis particularly affect older people?

When we retire, we work out how much we will need to live on. But when something like this comes along, it just isn't enough. You think, "Where do I go from here?" Huge rises in inflation, challenges in paying for accommodation – it all hits older people disproportionately. People might not leave work through choice; it might be through ill health or because of caring responsibilities.

Some people have scrimped and saved to retire, they may not be in a particularly strong financial position as it is. Especially if they have issues with their health or they're caring for a loved one.

We're hearing about people in similar situations: they've got what's called "packages of care" to help them with daily living, but they're having to stop paying for them to afford their heating bills. Not all of this is covered by the council or by the government. People might be paying someone to help with making meals or with daily tasks – and they're having to stop this. I'm thinking about the frailer end of the population.

“People are very worried about the prospect of heating their homes. They're worried to put the heat on at all, because they don't know how much it's going to cost them.

- Jo Volpe

And this affects people's mental health too?

It's very complicated. People have to think about how they are going to cope over the Winter, looking after themselves and their family members. It seems to be one thing after another with all the costs going up. This all adds to people's worries and anxieties. People are very worried about the prospect of heating their homes. They're worried to put the heat on at all, because they don't know how much it's going to cost them. Even I don't understand how much we have to pay now. And nationally there's evidence that older people are having to come out of retirement and go back to work because they can make ends meet. There was a story about a lady in Leeds who was 65 and was job searching. Sadly, you're far less likely to get a new job as you age.

What is LOPF doing to help?

There is support. The council has a welfare rights service, a lot of people are providing information. There are food pantries and people are entitled to food vouchers. At the moment LOPF is trying to understand how our member organisations are coping. What impact is it having on small grass-roots charities supporting older people? A lot of the workforce are not on big salaries, a lot of them work part-time and we're hearing that some of them are having to leave- whilst also understanding that they're in a difficult position too, with funding cuts from government.

What are the answers?

We've come through Covid and now we're on to the next crisis! People talk about the response to Covid and how good it was. People say, "There were all these volunteers, wasn't it great? And there was a feeling of community spirit." But a lot of people were on furlough.

People still want to help. People naturally want to give. So we're trying to find ways that people can help when they have to go to work too. Older people want to help each other. They don't want to be "done to".

What would you say to people who wanted to help?

I would make a phone call to my local Neighbourhood Network. And there's a volunteer centre in Leeds Kirkgate Market. You can just pop in and they can connect you up with an organisation where you'll be really helpful. And if you're struggling yourself, it's the Neighbourhood Networks that are the ones who give great support.

How do you feel about getting older?

You get a bit more confidence with age. You're a bit more contented in yourself, a bit more comfortable in your skin. I'm really pleased to be working at Leeds Older People's Forum. I wanted to work for an organisation that was passionate about the rights of older people. That saw older people as assets, as interesting people that we can work together with.

Neighbourhood Networks are organisations in Leeds that offer particular support to older people. They get some funding from Leeds City Council to work with the most vulnerable and potentially isolated people. There are Neighbourhood Networks in every area of Leeds and all offer activities, drop-ins and volunteering opportunities.

You can find your local organisation online at:

www.opforum.org.uk or by ringing 0113 2441697

Thank you to everybody who spoke to us for this piece. Turn to Page 47 for a list of useful phone numbers to get support and advice.

THERE IS NOTHING, LIKE A DAME

Berwick Kaler has been playing the Dame in York for over 40 years: he's a Yorkshire institution. We go behind the scenes to ask him about how he started in showbusiness, the origins of panto and why he came out of retirement.

Photography: **JONATHAN TURNER**



Berwick Kaler is a Yorkshire institution. He's played the Dame in Panto for over 40 years. And he doesn't just don the frock and wig: Berwick writes and directs the show too. He has a reliable repertory of fellow actors who appear alongside him. Every Christmas, audiences flock to see the familiar faces – and familiar jokes. Berwick is famous for flinging out *Wagon Wheels*, his self-deprecatory ad-libs, his incomprehensible plots and for greeting the audience with his catchphrase, "Me Babbies, Me Bairns!"

Berwick was born in Sunderland in the 1940s. According to him, "nobody had much money". When he was 16, he moved to London and eventually found success as an actor. He's appeared in numerous films, TV shows and in countless plays all over the country.

Despite his success, Berwick retired from the panto in February 2019. However, he was lured back to the stage and has come out of retirement, much to regular audiences' delight. As the *Guardian* pointed out, "It isn't Christmas without Kaler". In 2022, you can see him appearing at the Grand Opera House, York as *Old Granny Goose*. We met Berwick and his two King Charles Spaniels at home in Acomb, York. Berwick has a wiry energy, sly sense of humour and was eager to talk about all things panto.

How's your retirement going?

I had every intention of retiring! It was 3 years ago, I was 73. I hadn't claimed my old age pension for about 8 years and I thought to myself, "Oh, come on". I write, direct and star in the panto. I thought, "I'm going to get out before the audience get bored of me." So I went. When I did, the audience response was tremendous. It was like I was a pop star. The comments were amazing. So I thought I'd made the right decision. I expected my sort of panto to carry on. But a new management came in and said no. I'd worked with some of my cast for 30 years, but they were dismissed. So the next year, a different company asked us to do another panto at the York Grand Opera House. That was *Dick Turpin Rides Again*.

And now we have another management company and it's *Old Granny Goose*. Not *Mother Goose*. *Granny Goose*. Because I'm willing to "age up"! I remember forty years ago, when I first went to see a show at the Opera House. I thought, "This theatre is made for pantomime!" And now we're there.

I don't know how long I can keep going. I'm at the wrong end of my 70s. I think, "One day I'm going to become ill or something." But I had a check-up recently and there's nothing wrong with me! I'm fit as a fiddle! When I'm on stage, it's a wonderful experience. It's what I live for. The audience – they've grown up with me. It's an extended family. But they won't let you off – you have got to keep your standards up. They come from all over the place. You know, my costumes and boots are in the V&A – and who am I? Nobody knows me! It's the panto they love.

What is your sort of panto?

You can't put it in a slot. Yes, it is traditional. But we also do things differently. For example, in the Millennium Year, we were the only panto in the country who did something around that theme. I called it *Old Mother Millie*. We change it. This year I'm going to do a lot of "trad" routines. You've got to do a bit of slapstick. There are some old routines that work today. Someone sat at the piano playing. "I'm Singing In the Rain, Just Singing in the Rain!" Then – Splosh - someone chucks a bucket of water over him. Pantomime is laughter. I don't talk down to children. Or adults. If the children are very young, I always give them something – or it's a funny situation. Not smutty and nothing to embarrass anyone. I won't do any jokes that upset people. If the child doesn't get it, they just look up to Mum and Dad, or whoever they're with. And if they're laughing, the child will too. We've never lost the audience. They keep coming! The whole basis of the thing is that it's written – but I ad lib all the time. It keeps everyone on their toes. But it works for the audience: they're in on the joke. It's an "in-gag". We have a bond. It's special.

Tell us about the first time you played the Dame?

It was about 45 years ago. I was doing rep at the Theatre Royal, playing Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*. York has always taken certain comic actors to its heart. The director Michael Winter said, "Do you want to do panto?" Before this I'd done a few commercial pantos as the villain. I'd worked with people like Frank Ifield, Roy Hudd, Dana, Jess Conrad. As the villain, I'd come on, the audience would boo and I'd say, "Shut up! Or I'll bring Jess Conrad on and make you listen to 'im singing!" So I thought I'd play the villain. But it was Dame I was offered. I'd never been in a frock in my life! We went into Wardrobe and there was an old ginger wig with a bun at the back. That was what my mother had, a bun. So I put it on, stuck on a dress and I had some old boots so I kept them on – they're the boots that are now in the V&A. I refused to wear make-up. And I went for it. I'd heard of Dan Leno and *Old Mother Riley*. I didn't want to be "butch". I never even thought about doing a voice.

"I'm fit as a fiddle!
When I'm on stage,
it's a wonderful experience.
It's what I live for!"

But the show itself - everything was a bit naff. Costumes, scenery falling down. That first performance, I started ad-libbing. I'd say to the audience, "It's rubbish this, isn't it?" Suddenly, the laughter came. The next scene I'd come on and say, "Now, let's see what disaster we've got here!" The director Michael Winter called the whole cast in the next day, to give them notes about the show. He left me until last: "As for you Berwick, I thought last night was the most amateurish performance I've ever seen on the stage. It was awful." Then the reviews came out and said, "If Berwick Kaler can repeat what he did last night this show will be a hit!" And it was.

Your pantos have developed their own traditions over the years. Where did the *Wagon Wheels* come from?

On that first show, I asked them, "What will you throw out to the children in the audience?" They did that in the commercial pantos where I was the villain. They said, "Nothing." I said, "Why?" This was York – the city of chocolate! They said, "We used to throw out boiled sweets and they'd throw

'em back." So I said, "Well, sling 'em something they won't throw back"! So the day we opened I went into Jackson's, just off Bootham's. I walked into the shop and just on the left – I can still see it – Wagon Wheels. A Wagon Wheel was the biggest treat you could give me when I was a kid. So I picked up about 6. And that night, during the songsheet, I threw them out. And – whoosh – they flew out, a couple of them flying into the Gallery. And that appeared in the good review! The production manager said, "You do realise that for every performance, we're going to have to buy Wagon Wheels!" What I didn't realise was that they're not even made in York! I broke a lot of rules. I'd give out bottles of beer. Why not!

You've made so many children laugh over the years. What was your childhood like?

I was orphaned at 11! I was illegitimate. It was 1946; I had 6 brothers and sisters. Two of my sisters were 18 and 16 when I was born. My mother had separated from William Kaler, but she couldn't trace him to get divorced. So you can imagine what my sisters thought when I came along. My mother was a cleaner – she'd do anything to keep the family together. I was born in a slum. When I was about 3, we moved to a council house. It was the usual story: nobody locked their back door, nobody had anything to steal: we were all the same. I didn't have much, didn't get many toys for Christmas. But that did me a big favour. Because from an early age, I used to use my imagination. I used to entertain myself with stories. I'd live in a better world in my head. It was a very rough time. When my mother died, I went to live with my brother Fred. He was 21 and had just got married. I slept on a couch for a few years. I didn't think we were poverty-stricken at the time. Fred and his wife moved to London so I went with them.

Did you always want to go on stage?

I think I was a natural. I remember being in a Nativity Play and my mother said, "You were the little star!" And in the Sea Scouts and we had to act a scene out. I remember thinking, "I'm really living this." We had a drop leaf table when I was a kid and I used to sit there pretending to play the piano. I was full of imagination.

But when I got to London, it all started. I was a painter and decorator. I was painting the outside of a film producer's house. Talgarth Road, it was. This producer was making a film called *The L-Shaped Room* at the time. Laurence Harvey was a very smooth English actor and I used to see him coming to the house. So one day, I plucked up the courage to speak to him. I had a thick Wearside accent at the time. I said, "I fancy doing a bit of acting!" He couldn't understand a word I was saying. But he came back a few times, bless him, and he'd talk to me. He said, "I'd get rid of that accent, my boy." I never tried hard to get rid of it, but it went eventually.

Somebody told me I had to audition. And without any lessons at all – nothing – I went to a West End audition for a musical. I had never sung in my life. I started to sing, "Pass me by, pass me -" "Thank you very much!"

Berwick in the stalls of the Grand Opera House, York: "a theatre made for pantomime!"







Berwick Kaler amongst his fellow cast members in *Old Granny Goose*, at the Grand Opera House, York this Christmas

And did you get the part?

No! Of course not! What was I thinking?! Nobody had told me about RADA, or anything like that. I then went to a few singing lessons. My teacher there said he knew an old comedian called Ted Gatting, who works in Margate, doing an old-time Music Hall show. So I got a job there. That set me on my way. I was feeding the comedian. He was so bad that halfway through the run, Ted told us to swap parts so I got the laughs! You know, I'm the luckiest moron to ever enter show business. I've never trained. But I've played the Old Vic. I've had my name in lights. I've played the Pope. I've done about 10 West End Shows. And I don't know how! I've made films, done loads of television.

I got a bit part on *The New Statesman* with Rik Mayall. My role was a reporter called "Jeffrey Dicquead". A regular part. Rik would be doing some romantic scene with his wife – with a studio audience – and I'd pop my head up from behind the sofa and say, "Can I quote you on that?" Rik was very good to me. I've worked with people who were jealous of the contact I had with the audiences. They didn't like that I got a laugh. But Rik wasn't like that. And I'm not like that. If someone else gets a laugh in the panto, it's a win!

Jimmy Nail is still a very close friend. We got on like a house on fire. No-one else got on with Jimmy! We did 3 series of *Spender* together. The crew used to say, "We'll be alright today because Berwick's on set". Jimmy was always in a good mood when he worked with me. We were poles apart in many ways. He didn't like that "Newcastle versus Sunderland" stuff.

And now you're in Yorkshire. What keeps you here?

I came to York and I had to look on the map to find out where it was. I was thick! I entered York in 1975. I was in an Agatha Christie play – but no-one knew who had cast me. The director had no idea. My agent just told me to get to York on a Monday morning. There was a strangeness about the read through. But there was no-one else who'd been offered it. It was a mystery. Story of my life. And now I live in the most wonderful old house in a lovely part of York. York has been good to me, over the years.

How do you feel about getting older?

I know I look older, but my God, I do not feel it at all. I do forget things, mentally. The usual thing. There are 3 floors in my house. I get to the top, lots of stairs, I think, "What have I come up here for?" But mentally I'm fine. That can be a problem with older people. We think we can do anything. I'm teaching myself to take it easy. I'm lucky to be alive. I've got a pacemaker in, a double bypass. And I'm as fit as a fiddle. I'm well satisfied with my life. I've been so very lucky. I pat myself on the back and say, "You've done alright!"

And you're continuing to entertain audiences in *Old Granny Goose*.

I am basing this year's pantomime on humour. This year, I'm saying to the cast, "Don't rely on effects, on lavish sets, all that." It's all costing too much money! It's about the laughs. I've got the best cast. It'll be magnificent!

Old Granny Goose is at Grand Opera House, York this December & January. Phone 02890 241919 for tickets.

REAL STORIES

WRITTEN IN
INK

Each tattoo inked on Clarrie Ramsden's body tells a story. Hers is a tale of pirate queens, ukuleles, apple trees, ladybirds, draughty vicarages and much more. Clarrie shares her story over the page.

Written By: **RUTH STEINBERG** *Photography:* **JONATHAN TURNER**



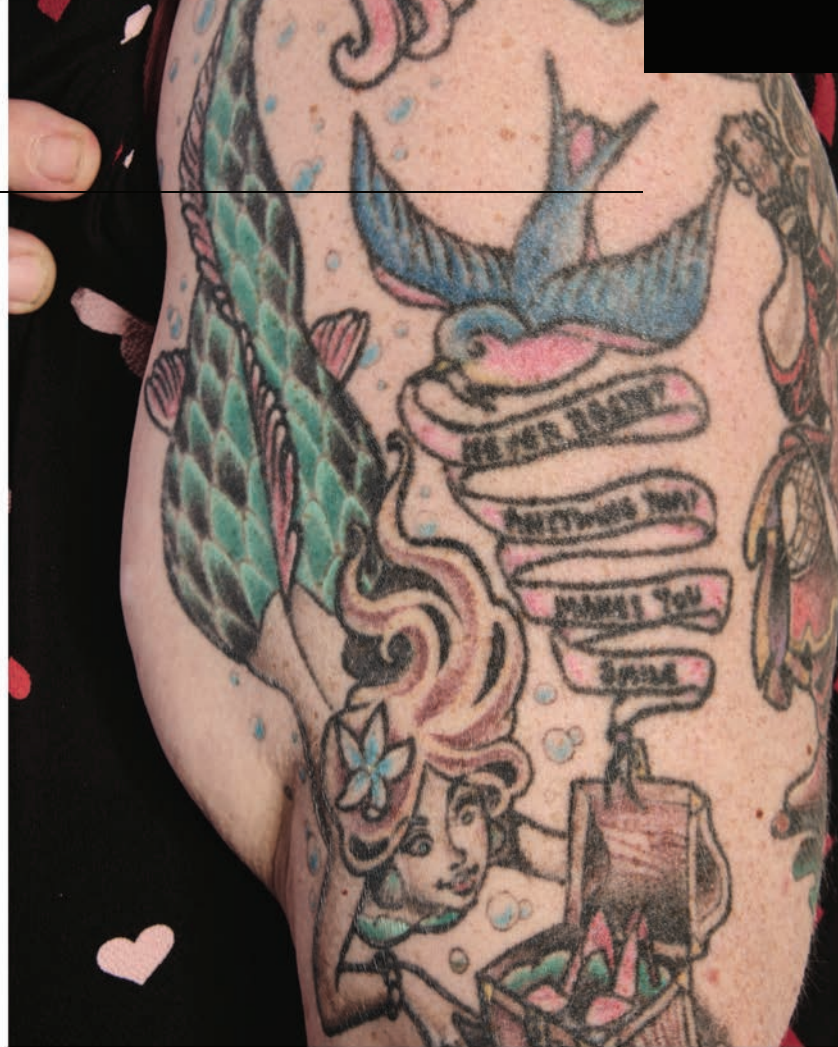


Clarrie Ramsden is a walking canvas. Every tattoo on her body tells a story. She says she's inked "from my ear down to my toes". The artwork stretches across her chest, arms and legs: each is linked to a moment in her life or a person she loves.

Clarrie retired from teaching 18 months ago, after 31 years. Her first husband died suddenly a few years ago. Through difficult times, Clarrie has found the strength to carry on. As well as being a teacher, Clarrie is a musician, a performer, a horticulturalist, a climate activist – and she has a collection of 226 pairs of Doc Marten boots! She comes from an interesting family: her great-great-grandmother met her husband, when she pulled him out the sea at Cleethorpes after a shipwreck. Clarrie comes from a long line of strong women.

Since Covid, we've all heard the word "infectious" swirling about. It's been seen as a scary, negative word. But I'd like to offer another meaning of infectious: I hope you will be infected by Clarrie's story. Infected and inspired to do what you can in your corner of the world; to make a difference and even have fun.

"I've got a storm in a teacup on my leg. Anybody that knows me knows that the first thing I'll say is, "Do you want a cup of tea?"



My Dad's Last Words

The most recent tattoo is on my arm, of my dad's last words. He died 3 years ago. He was a vicar, a cannon of York Minster and a very interesting bloke. He had been approached by his old parish about some advice about the church organ, because he was also the district organ advisor for York - he was an exorcist too, I found out. Anyway, they were asking about what they should do about the organ. He was blind at the end of his life and he had Parkinson's. It was really tough. And the last piece of writing he ever wrote was, "Go for it. No time is better than now." I just thought, "What an epitaph." So I've actually got that tattooed on my arm and a few times when I'm struggling a bit, I'll just pat it and say, "Yeah, I can do this. I've got this and I crack on with it. Go for it. No time is better than now." And I go off and have another adventure.

I was born in Hull. And I don't remember much about it other than when I was about 6 and I was fighting my big brother for some reason and I put his backside through one of the windows. I also remember dodging the coalman, because we couldn't afford to pay for the coal. Then we moved to Middlesbrough to a big Victorian house with fantastic bannisters to slide down. Lovely, but always cold. We used to play up in the attic where the servants used to live in the old days. Still had the bell pushes on the wall. And then we moved to York, near the university. And my bedroom was really cold because it was a weird 1970s house; my bedroom overhung empty space and there was a big crack in the wall that the wind used to blow through. I had to make the bread. That was my job. I made 9 pounds of bread a week. 3 pounds of white and six pounds of granary.

From an early age you had to make cups of tea for bishops. I'd have to get up on a Sunday morning and go serve at church, make the cups of tea for the old ladies. I learned by osmosis to be nice to people. Being helpful, being kind – it's how you want to be treated, isn't it?

Ukulele Pirate Queen

On my left forearm I've got the Turtle of Fifths. Any of you that are musicians know about playing through the 5ths. It's great if you are jamming late at night in the pub somewhere and someone says, "We're playing so-and-so in B flat". You think, "What chords do I need?" and you just have to look down at your Turtle of Fifths and there you are.

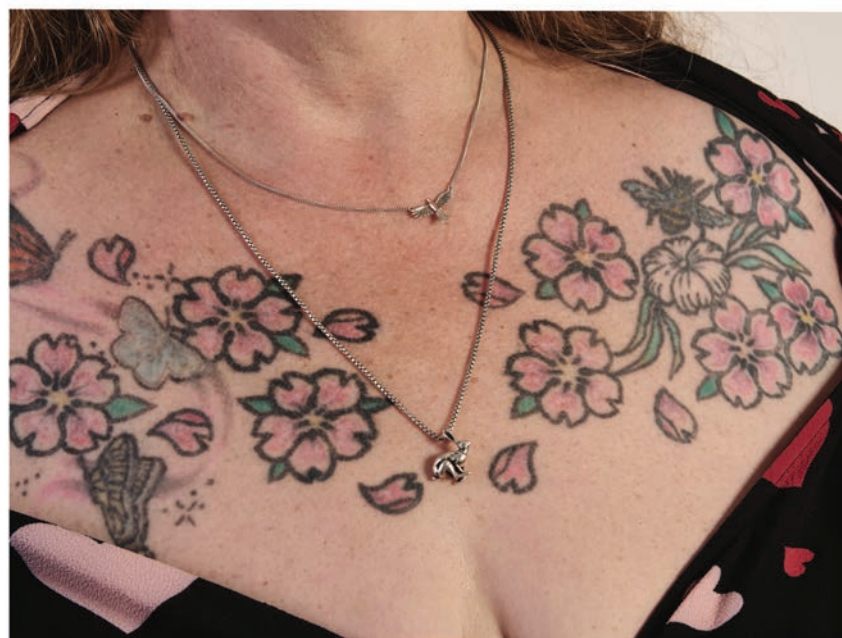
I play the ukulele and I used to perform as the "Ukulele Pirate Queen". She was based on Diana Dors, the kind of old sexy, really womanly, vamp. I wore a lovely Union Jack corset, Union Jack boots, big blue skirt: amazing. I'd get up on stage at the George Formby Society in Blackpool and it was very entertaining. I think it started by watching the old films on the weekend, sort of film noir really. I used to love watching films with really super sexy film stars in dresses. They were very womanly, but very in control. Really powerful women. There was a group of ukulele players that used to meet in the club opposite where I lived. Once a month all these old guys used to get up on stage, with ukuleles and banjoles. They'd start playing *Leaning on a Lamppost*, doing all the fancy tricks. I bought myself a cheap ten-quid ukulele and I got up and performed. My husband watched me and it was brilliant. And then he went bloody died on me. So it was a way of sort of channelling that pain and that grief through music. Tessie O Shea was an inspiration to me. "Ten Ton Tessie from Tennessee" - she was actually Welsh. I've got this instrument of hers. She was a big, strong, fantastic woman who took no rubbish off anybody. I've also got some of her stage clothes. It's just amazing that you can take a little bit of her and make it your own. She was a Welsh girl who sang at carnivals, from a theatrical family and she reinvented herself into this big star.



Snowflakes, Teacups, Oak Trees and Tits

The first tattoo I ever got was a ladybird, about the size of your little fingernail, because ladybirds are tough little survivors. Like me. I was 36 and quite unhappy. I was in quite a dark place. We were on holiday and my friend said, "Come on let's get a tattoo." Peer pressure! It was a tiny thing on my shoulder. That started it all off.

Then I had a leaf, turning over a new leaf. And then on my right leg I've got some snowflakes. That was to do with depression and the idea that "This too will pass". And then I've got wings on my heels. I've got an oak that grows from my ankle all the way up to my hip. It's got little birds on it. I've got my Clarice Starling playing the ukulele. I've got a Nightingale and I've got a nice pair of tits: great tits. The birds!



Covering up and Recovering

When I was working as a teacher, I had to hide all my tattoos even in the summer. I had to cover literally from the neck down to the toes, because I'm covered in tattoos. That got bit warm! I worked really, really hard, I was constantly dashing about and never really had time to sit and think and feel. Apart from six weeks in summer where I used to sleep. By the end of the second week I was vaguely human. By the third week I was mostly human. In term time it was a 100-miles-an-hour.

I loved it when the kids "got it". A lot of them came to us excluded from school and they'd had quite negative experiences. I remember years ago we were doing *Macbeth*. I love *Macbeth*. So bloodthirsty. One of the children came in and said, "Did you see *Corrie* last night? That Tracy Barlow, she's just like Lady Macbeth. She's such a bully and she's controlling everybody". Yes! I mean, it's moments like that that made it worth it.

A lot of people were quite surprised I was a teacher because I'm not really a twin-set-and-pearls type of gal, you know? I found that now I've had time to not be that Mrs Ramsden teacher person. But there's a lot more in life. It's good fun. Retiring has been a massive shift because when you're working, you've got your internal model and you know who you





are in the world. And you stepped into that role: you're Mrs Ramsden, and you know that you do this, this and this every day. When you're not in that role anymore, you think "Who am I?" It's really quite mind boggling, because being a teacher, you are only yourself on the weekend. After you finish working, suddenly you've got the whole week. What do I do? I started doing courses. There's lots of free courses at the Kentmere Centre, through the LS14 Trust and We Are Seacroft. Then I got involved with Climate Action in Seacroft, and I found out that I'm quite a nice person actually. I found out I've got far, far more to offer. I always thought when I was teaching that all I could do, but actually I'm finding now I've got so many transferable skills. Retiring is strange. You feel a bit like an octopus in a box, sticking in a tentacle out and then climbing out and finding where the world is.

Blossoming

The tattoos I've got across my décolletage (or frontage) are blossoms. I had them done after my husband Mick died. He dropped dead on me one morning, which wasn't a very nice thing to do. He was 52 and fit as a lop. He had a pulmonary embolism; just one of those things. It was awful. It didn't understand grief, I didn't understand the word "bereft" until it happened to me. The cherry blossoms are about love: little blossoms, fragile blossoms holding my heart together. Love's so fragile and life's so fragile. I've been so blessed in my life.

I thought I'd never find love again. Then I met Mark in a pub. I was getting chatted up by a bit of a weirdo. I'd seen Mark through the bar and thought, "He's nice." I went over and said, "Hello, I'm Clarrie, can I come and rescue myself on you?" He said "Yeah. What are you drinking?" He bought me a pint and that was it, and we've been together ever since. Within a week, we were living together and we set the date for the wedding, a year and a day later. We got married on the stage of the Leeds City Varieties, in the middle of the show. It was amazing.

When Covid and lockdown came both myself and my husband were at home because he's clinically vulnerable - he's only got one lung. So we sat in the house terrified to go anywhere. I said, "Should we grow some vegetables?" When I met him, his garden was just pebbles. He went out to work one day and came home to a rockery. Next day, we got an herb garden and it basically went on like that. We got everything delivered. We built a raised bed and grew all sorts of vegetables, even to the point that we went out on Christmas Day and dug the potatoes up. There's a thing called Square Foot Gardening. You divide the garden up into 1-foot squares. And then put different crop in its square. It's just so much easier because otherwise it's so big and so scary. Like life really: If you're struggling with something, chop it into little bits. You can't eat an elephant on in one bite!

Then one of my friends said, "I hope you don't mind, but I've joined you into this little chat group of people that are interested about growing stuff and the environment." Well, it's gone crazy. Climate Action in Seacroft is a group of local people who are interested in doing something practical about the climate. So we have Get Growing Seacroft, we've got a community allotment up in Killingbeck: it's got a polytunnel, it's got a lovely big pizza oven and a lovely social area. It's got a loo, it's got a shed, it's got raised beds and it's got a bed which is growing herbs to make tea out of. Obviously, it's got the kettle because you can't do anything without cup of tea - it puts the "tea" into "community."

We grow plants and save seeds that then into community seed banks. We've got plans that would like to actually develop little pocket parks around the area. There's a grass verge near me, so I'm going to put an apple tree on it and put some nice plants around it as well, make it nice place to be. Green the area up. The legacy is that in 20- years' time, we can all walk to a tree, sit under it, read a book, pick an apple and eat it. Absolutely gorgeous.

I've made so many lovely friends, amazing people. What happened in Seacroft during the pandemic was the third sector people all joined together as We Are Seacroft. I think it's amazing. We're all working together, for example on the energy crisis. Giving away coats, to keep people warm; giving away slow cookers. I work on the old method of put a jumper on, put another jumper and put hat on. Put your coat on. Put the dog on. Now blanket. Now another dog. Now the cat. Are you still cold? Okay, now you can put the heating on. But I think that's growing up in cold, draughty vicarages.

We're doing all sorts of weird and wonderful things. It's people talking about what you can do, not what they need to do - as in the government. This is what we can do. We can do our little piece, our little square foot. And actually make a real difference.

Blessings

I've been so blessed in my life. To have loved and to have been loved. Hopefully when I go kicking and screaming into the grave, I'll be able to say I've lived a life well loved - that's all we can hope for isn't?

Find out more about Climate Action in Seacroft on Facebook and at <https://www.climateactionleeds.org.uk/>. You can listen to a long conversation between Ruth and Clarrie on the Chapel FM website. Just search for the Care to Air podcast at www.chapelfm.co.uk

Everybody Cares

Many of us become carers. We might look after elderly relatives and friends, or support disabled children. Carers Leeds exist to support carers of every kind. **Valerie Wood-Robinson** finds out more.

M

any older people find themselves looking after relatives or friends. For some, it's their mum or dad. For others a sister, a neighbour. Or an adult child. Many people are carers and don't know it! Carers often do not recognise themselves as such. "It takes, on average, 2 years for a person to realise that they are a carer," says Nikki Pattinson, Team Leader at Carers Leeds. "In that time, their own health can suffer, friends and family can pull away and feelings of loneliness can become commonplace." You may be surprised to learn that there are over 75,000 unpaid carers in Leeds.

A carer is defined as someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage without that help. This need may be due to age, physical or mental health issues, disability or substance abuse.

Carers Leeds aims to enable the well-being of carers by offering support, advice and social activities. The staff provide the framework and support is provided by volunteers. Volunteers say that they benefit from their role as much as the carers they are supporting, as it raises their self-esteem, feeling of satisfaction and it offers social engagement. Below, we hear from Dianne, a volunteer befriender, who has been involved with the organisation for over 20 years.

The organisation encompasses many different services. One of these, Carers Connecting, encourages carers to get out and about. We meet Cinzia, who runs the project. Another strand is digital support. Dorothy Colley shares her experience of getting online. One of the main functions of Carers Leeds is as a listening ear. "We deliver confidential one to one and group support that helps

carers keep on caring," says Nikki. "We are based in the centre of Leeds, but we also offer support in local communities, over the phone and online."

We could really sense the "care" in Carers Leeds. Down-to-earth care, empathy, mutual support, joy and friendship pervades the whole ethos of this organisation. We hope some of that care reveals itself in the stories below.

Befriending

Dianne is a volunteer with Carers Leeds. As a volunteer befriender she is matched up with a carer and they meet 12 times over a series of months. Dianne was a carer herself so knows about the difficulty of being in that position.

"My involvement with Carers Leeds goes way back to 2000. I had been thrown into the role of carer for my mum Doreen who had heart disease, other ailments and then a diagnosis of vascular dementia. Though mum was living with me, our relationship it was not the best, though it was not acrimonious. To find that I became the main carer for her was difficult. It wasn't a case of, "Yes, I must care for my mum" or even "Do I have to?", it just came naturally that I would care for her - because I care.

"At that stage the input from Carers Leeds was minimal but very supportive - they gave me advice on finances. I took it further in 2004 when Mum's physical health was deteriorating and I was struggling. I came back to Carers Leeds, who directed me to sources of funds to get a stairlift and other facilities. They also gave me a social life: I joined groups with a range of other carers.

"I get satisfaction, support, self-esteem and, dare I say it, love."

"Alongside my caring role, my first volunteering with Leeds Carers was with the "envelope stuffing" team to mail out the Carers Leeds Newsletter. This was a way of getting a bit of "me time" and a great way to have a chat and a laugh. Until she became too unwell, I could take Mum along with me and also to meetings and socials. It enabled us both to feel we were giving something back. "Carers Leeds" says it all: they care, they care for me as a volunteer, as a carer, as an ex-carer. They've always cared. They encourage carers to volunteer in appropriate roles and to bring their experience as carers.

"After my mum died, I wanted to continue my relationship with Carers Leeds. My volunteer role now is as a befriender, which I started around 2016. I have supported carers both by telephone and face-to-face. Befriender is a bit of a misnomer, because within the volunteer role I can't actually be a friend to them. There is a different set of boundaries. I'm not a professional support worker or counsellor, a coach or a mentor. I don't like the American word "buddy", but that's what I am. I try to be warm, welcoming, happy and consistent.

"Carers often go into the background and disappear. When I was caring for Mum, I became a non-entity. The funding all related to her, it was very much, "Is Mum OK, does she need this or that?" You literally do become invisible. The caring role is very isolating: friends don't understand, so you lose them; family don't want to go there. You go into a vast black hole of everything, you lose social life and feel worthless. You can forget about your own health and neglect it.

"When I was in that black hole, Carers Leeds represented safety and a welcome. It helped me to find my way out on more than one level. The Befriending scheme was not yet there when I needed it. There is only so much you can tell your friends and family, my caring role would have been easier if I had a befriender to tell.

"Having said that, most of my befriending has not been talking about the

caring role, but giving that carer a chance to be a normal person by talking about anything that interests them. It takes people out of their environment. I started befriending to give something back, but it continues to give back to me. Maybe it sounds selfish, but it gives me such a good feeling that I know I am helping and supporting people. I feel appreciated and valued by both Carers Leeds and the people I have befriended.

“To be a Befriender you have to be a good listener. You have to be self-aware and beware of overstepping the mark and becoming a personal friend. I am a Christian and my last two matches have been Christians, but I have had such a wide range of carers to be in contact with. For my own sake I have taken a big interest in dementia and in bereavement. You lose people over and over with dementia. I prefer a match with someone over 50, older than myself, because I feel that I have rapport with that age group.

“I have a good social life at Carers Leeds. Volunteers have get-togethers with socials, crafts, picnics and peer support. Everybody cares for everyone else. The care is genuine. So much of the work of Carers Leeds is supported by volunteers, all are valued. What I get out of my involvement with Carers Leeds is satisfaction, support and self-esteem, and, if it doesn't sound too trite, love.”

Has this story inspired you to volunteer? Carer Leeds always needs people to help in lots of roles. Contact them for more information.

Carers Connecting

Cinzia Procter runs a project called Carers Connecting, which aims to help carers get out and about. We spoke to her to find out more.

Cinzia Procter has high hopes for her new project. “We want to end the loneliness that some carers feel,” she says. “I'm a carer myself so I can empathise.” It's hard to get out when you are looking after someone. The Carers Connecting project provides enables carers to go on short excursions in and around Leeds in group outings by private minibus.

Cinzia is ideally suited to manage Carers Connecting. She's worked in the travel industry to organise excursions. More importantly, her personal experience as a carer means she understands their needs, constraints and potential social isolation. “Caring is complex,” says Cinzia. She likens a carer's life to an



Carers Leeds volunteers Elvie and Margaret.

iceberg, where the obvious everyday caring responsibilities are represented by the 10% tip of the iceberg. There is so much more going on under the surface. Cinzia wants to gently encourage carers to put some time aside for their own well-being.

This project is all about connection. “The long-term goal is that people make connections in their local areas,” says Cinzia. “Then they can carry that friendship on when we finish.” Sometimes it's good to meet other people who are going through a similar experience. The team are looking for new participants. “We will try to reach carers who have not used any of our socialising services,” says Cinzia.

Cinzia wants to make the outings as easy as possible for carers. The trips are free and the minibus can pick people up in a convenient location. Even the routes and times can be tweaked to meet people's circumstances and the constraints on them. Cinzia has a programme of visits already arranged: to Skipton, Leeds Playhouse, Tong Garden Centre. “The world is our oyster!”

If you or someone you know is a carer over 50 and might like to know more, get in touch with Carers Leeds.

Digital Connection

Dorothy Calley married Maurice in 1957 but in recent years she has become a carer for him. Carers Leeds supported her to get online to help in day-to-day life.

Dorothy's husband Maurice lives with dementia and she has cared for him for many years. “It's been extremely difficult,” confides Dorothy. “He's quite frail.” The experience was very hard for both of them: “I lost weight and Maurice lost weight.” Dorothy's husband now lives in a “very nice” care home in Morley. “I visit him every other day,” she says. Though it has been a stressful time, “things are improving.”

Last winter Dorothy noticed a piece in the local paper about the possibility of getting access to a free laptop or tablet. “I used to work in an office,” she says. “I used a computer and I loved it.” However, Dorothy had no such device at home. She'd had a computer but “it got a virus” and she couldn't afford to get it fixed. Dorothy linked up with the Carers Leeds digital project and was provided with a tablet. “It came with the internet!” reveals a delighted Dorothy.

Dorothy was supported by Holly at the Digital Inclusion Project at Carers Leeds to help her use the device. “Google was wonderful!” says Dorothy. She searched for new carpets and gas fires. “Holly was brilliant,” she continues. “She helped me with what to do.” The tablet opened up new worlds for Dorothy and helped her keep in touch with others. “Now I use WhatsApp all the time. I love it!”

Are you a carer and want a bit of help digitally? Get in touch.

Contact

You can find out about all the things Carers Leeds offer by calling or emailing:

Carers Advice Line – 0113 380 4300:

Mon – Thurs 9am – 5pm
and Friday 9am – 4.30pm

Email: advice@carersleeds.org.uk
Website: www.carersleeds.org.uk

Carers Leeds carers advice line
0113 380 4300
Working together to support carers

the
LIGHT
in the
DARKNESS

Many cultures mark special occasions during the winter. Christmas can seem all-pervasive, but it's not the only winter festival celebrated in Leeds.

Most religions recognise the significance of getting together and spreading a little light in the dark months.

We meet 3 older people who celebrate in their own ways during winter.

THE ELEMENTS OF LIFE

RANJIT KAUR VIRDEE

Ranjit is a Sikh who was born in the Punjab region of India. She's lived in the UK since the early 1970s. She worked as a teaching assistant and retired a few years ago. Ranjit is a member of the Sikh Elders Service at Touchstone and shares her thoughts about festivals she celebrates during the winter.



There are loads of festivals in the winter. Of course, the whole of India celebrates Diwali, but the Sikhs have particular celebrations.

As Sikhs, we normally celebrate every multicultural celebration! As long as it's a happy occasion, a community get-together, there are no restrictions. No reason not to celebrate a happy event! Births, remembrance days, everything. We have 10 gurus and we celebrate their birthdays. There isn't a week goes by we don't have an occasion to celebrate. In January, in India, we have something like a Harvest Festival. Lohri is when we light a big fire to celebrate the farmers finishing their work in the fields. In January, everybody gets together. We used to collect wood and have sing-songs every night for a month. And on the Lohri evening, on 13th January, we light the fire. It's beautiful.

I've been here 51 years. We grew up in a Sikh environment. There weren't any Christians in our village. I knew about Christmas from reading about it in books. I came to the UK in December and stayed with my aunt in Derby. She had 4 children and they all got presents and they had a tree. That was my first experience of a Western Christmas.

Asian families do give gifts at Christmas. It's a happy event! To some extent, Asian families have more of a bigger

expense! When children go back to school, they don't want to feel left out. Even the adults get presents! We've always been multicultural, our family. My brother-in-law is married to a Yorkshire girl. When I got married, they had two kids and they'd stay with us for 2 weeks. There'd be a tree up and the kids would sneak down to see the presents.

The winter in Punjab is very cold. We were in the foothills of the mountains. We used to see the flocks of birds, flying over to the mountains and coming back to the nests in the evening. One day, I said to my Grandad, "There's a white cloud there that doesn't move. It stays there all the time." He said, "That's Mount Everest!" We could see the Himalayan range from the village. Now there's so much pollution, you can't see it. But during lockdown, you could see the mountain clearly, like I could in the 1960s.

In the early 80s, my daughter was little and we went to the North St Temple Diwali celebration. We took some sparklers to light up outside in the car park. We wouldn't light fireworks back then. The following year, at that temple, they gave sparklers to the kids. That's where it started in Leeds. Now they have big fireworks in Chapeltown!

When you blow a candle, you're letting

the light go. In Sikhism, we light the candle. We call it a Jot. It's made of clarified ghee and cotton. We light a Jot in front of the Gods to say thank you. Some people say, "Why make it darker by blowing the candle out – you should light the candle!" We light candles a lot. Nearly every evening. Particularly on Sundays and on celebrations: weddings, birthdays. In every religion there is water, fire and bread or food. Water is involved in baptism. The fire keeps the light going. In churches too. The fire is significant. It's nature, isn't it? Growing up, we didn't have electricity in the village. So the fire used to be kept going. People would come and "borrow" the fire to light theirs. Fire and water are the elements of life.

The Story of Sikh Diwali

Sikhs celebrate the release from prison of their 6th Guru at Diwali. The Emperor had imprisoned Guru Hargobind in 1619, alongside 52 princes. Upon his release, the Guru insisted the 52 princes be freed alongside him. The Emperor agreed, but on the condition that only those who could hang on to the Guru's coat tail could go. Sikhs celebrated the return of Guru Hargobind by lighting the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

A ZIG-ZAG PATH

STING WRAY



Sting is a member of the Leodis Pagan Circle. He started his working life as a blacksmith fitter down the pit but he's also been a musician, a scout leader and a professional Santa Claus! Sting is a huge advocate for learning old skills and has spent his life searching for meaning in nature.

We celebrate Samhain at the end of October. It's celebrating when Autumn's in full swing. Everything's turning: Temperature's changing, leaves are changing, the light changing. You can literally hear the sap change. It's something I've done for years; you hear the difference in the trees by the noise they make internally. The veil between the two worlds gets thinner – between this world and the next – whatever you want to call it.

Yule is the equinox – the end of the year. It's the Winter Solstice, where you get the longest night and the shortest day. We have a get-together: turn up somewhere, everybody fetches food, we have music playing, some of us will sing or read poetry. Last year we were up at Adel Crag. I played there as a kid, cut my teeth learning to climb round there. I brought my fire-pit and we met out there on a Sunday afternoon. We're not too ritualistic, people follow different paths. We celebrate the coming of the light because the longest night has finished. The wheel has turned again. Like a lot of similar religions do – they want to put a light in the dark, so they have colourful, bright rituals. It harks back to the Celtic lunar calendar that I follow. I believe it all goes back to the old Celtic ways – like Mabon, Samhain, old Celtic words to describe the year changing. Imbolc is an old Celtic name for Ewe's Milk. Imbolc is in early February and it's when the ewes

start to produce the colostrum, the thick milk that feeds the lambs. That signifies the end of Winter and the start of Spring. Nearly every religious festival has pagan roots.

My path isn't straightforward, it's a zig-zag! I don't give myself a label. Growing up, none of my family went to church. I went to church on my own aged 9. My aunt and uncle used to be the caretakers and I used to go to my aunt's and have Sunday dinner, then I'd go home and have another Sunday dinner. We do have Christmas at home. My wife is a Methodist and we were married in a church. I was on the brink of becoming a Methodist lay-preacher. The church is literally across the road. Marie Dove, the minister, took me under her wing. We got on like a house on fire. told me to study as much as I could about paganism. She said, "That's where you belong." Then I came across Wana-neechee, a Native American. He helped me get a picture of the state of my life and what I could change. What drew me to that was the Native Americans' reverence and knowledge of nature. I follow the traditional "hedge witch" philosophy that uses herbs – I used to teach Tudor Herbs and medicine. But there's also the "spirit drumming" element that I follow too.

Stone Age people used to gather in the Winter. People that are too old to catch

things; the elderly who were on their own. It was a time to look after the community: make a camp and live together over the Winter. The older people could stay in the camp, look after the kids, while others went hunting. This feeling is still with us, just because we're modern. Yes, we can pick up the phone or watch TV and hear voices, but it's not the same as seeing people properly.

My wife believes in God and Jesus – and I'm happy for her. It works between us. We've been together 34 years. And she'll come our Yule Party: I dress up as the Holly King. This is Father Christmas as he should be, not the Coca Cola version. I play Father Winter and do exactly the same as Santa – give out presents to the kids and spread a bit of cheer!

The Story of Yule

Yule (or "Jul") is a festival traditionally observed by Norse people to mark the start of Winter Solstice. The story goes that Odin rode through the skies collecting the souls of the dead, so people stayed indoors feasting. Yule is a festival of rebirth and renewal and encompasses many familiar Christmas traditions: decorating a tree, gift-giving and the Yule Log.

DISPERSING THE DARKNESS

RUTH STEINBERG

Ruth was born in Newcastle and has lived and worked in Leeds for many years. She is now a storyteller and is a regular contributor to Shine. Ruth grew up in a Jewish family who didn't celebrate Christmas. Ruth shares her unique take about how she manages the festive season.



Most religions will do something in the middle of Winter – when it gets darker and darker and darker. Especially in the Northern Hemisphere. We Jews have Hannukah. People make the mistake of saying it's the Jewish Christmas. No. It's not a major festival, but it celebrates the possibility of a small group of people to overcome a whole empire. It's an 8-day festival: on the first day we light one candle, on the second day two – and it increases and increases. One little candle can disperse the darkness. It happens round about the time of 25th December – and this year it does coincide.

When I was growing up, we didn't celebrate Christmas: there were no decorations, there was no tree. What my mum and dad did do was give us presents that we woke up to on the 25th. So we didn't feel too different. But that was it. We always had fish and chips on Christmas Day. Fried fish in batter is a very Jewish thing. But it had no significance. The turn of the year for Jews is in September or October. It's quite solemn; it's about taking stock of the last year. What you have to face up to, how to improve in the coming year. It makes a lot of sense to me: September is the time to start again.

Some years recently we have gone to a massive Jewish conference around Christmas time. There are about 3000

people – which is about a tenth of the UK Jewish population. It's a big festival of learning, there are concerts, theatre, dancing. There's a lot of political stuff too, lots of conversations about our relationship to Israel. It's always over the Christmas period. So, you have the build-up to Christmas, which is very difficult to ignore! Even on the silver caps of your milk bottles, covered in Christmas trees; or if you're walking through a shopping centre and there's carols being sung. You can't get away from it – it's everywhere. Then you enter the conference (which is called Limmud), which is at the NEC in Birmingham, and you go from this frantic feeling to something different. You leave all the Christmas frenzy behind and enter this Jewish space. It's quite extraordinary. To be somewhere where the majority of people are Jewish is just wonderful.

In a way, this time of the year is the same as the rest of the year – but all the knobs are turned up. So all the good things are there: being generous, being together, enjoying each other's company, eating well, resting, playing games. But the negative sides are turned up too: Isolation, disconnection, cruelty, poverty, tension. Rows between people. So there can be a myth that we're going to get together as a family, as a community, and we're going to have a good time. Sometimes that works, sometimes it's

too hard. But it is midwinter and the natural world is going down into a little death. It's dark, it can be scary. So reaching out and being with people can be a good idea. This year I'm thinking of having a gathering for New Year to play games. Be playful, connect with each other – and laugh!

The struggle that I've had being Jewish in this country always shows itself at Christmas. I have tried everything: I've tried ignoring it and I've tried embracing it – even to the extent of getting a tree. I've hated it and loved it. Where I've come to now is that I treat it as a myth, as a fantastic story. There's a profound truth in the Christmas story, whether you happen to believe it or not.

The Story of Hannukah

In the 2nd Century BC, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seleucids, who were Syrian/ Greek. A small band of faithful Jews defeated the mighty army and drove away the Greeks. When the Jews tried to light the candelabra in the reclaimed temple, they found only one bottle of oil. Miraculously, the oil lasted 8 days. Hannukah commemorates these miracles with the lighting of a candle a day for 8 days.

The Shine team take a trip to Leeds Corn Exchange, a beautiful Victorian building that is now the home of a huge host of independent shops and cafes – plus a seasonal Christmas market.

a grand day out

LEEDS CORN EXCHANGE

Written By: PAUL ATKINSON, MALLY HARVEY, ANNE CHITTY
Photography: JONATHAN TURNER



Leeds Corn Exchange is a grand Victorian building in the heart of Leeds. Many older people will know it as a place of work, but since the 1990s it has been the home for independent shopping in the city. During the festive period the Corn Exchange plays host to a Christmas Market with street food, live music and local artists. The Shine Team took a Grand Day Out to find out how welcoming the venue is for older people and what you can expect if you visit.

THE CHRISTMAS MARKET

The market takes over the entire basement of the Corn Exchange and promises live music, great quality food and drink and an ideal place to find an arty Christmas present. We spoke to Lee Jones, creative director at Rolling Social Events. “We come from the hospitality industry so we know good food and drink – and that’s what we’re offering.” Musicians perform every day, starting in the late afternoon. “There’s a really good programme of local musicians,” says Lee. “Solo performers on the Fridays and Sundays, full bands on Saturdays.” Indie Makers and Mahogany Makers are running the stalls – there are new artists every week. Older people are welcome – the market is for all ages. “It’s a real mix of people, a really broad demographic,” Lee assures us.

OUR VISIT by Mally Harvey

I haven’t visited Leeds Corn Exchange since before the first lockdown in 2020. The first question in my mind was, “What did it have to offer an older person like me?” I was pleased to see a curving ramp giving easy access for wheelchair users and for disabled people, which led immediately into the ground floor. This is a new and important addition of access to the building. The main entrance is wide and accommodating. On entering the main concourse, the visitor is immediately aware that Christmas is on its way. A great deal of time and money has gone into decorating the building; wherever you look there are huge blow-up decorations and baubles of every kind, which give a very festive feel. In the basement is a huge Christmas tree. However, although the decorations running down the staircases looked very jolly, they did impede the use of the handrail in places.



The Shine Team stop for coffee on their Grand Day Out. Left to right: Anne, Mally and Paul.

There are a plethora of independent and unique shops with something for everyone, from clothing to jewellery, roller skating and knitting yarns. You could get your hair cut, have a tattoo or buy some unusual greeting cards. The Sculpture Gallery on the first floor is well worth a visit. Set up by a group of artists to display and sell their work, it has some extraordinary and unique pieces for sale. I was particularly taken with one place that sold patchwork clothing made from material and clothing saved from landfill.

There are two sets of toilets, one set on the first floor and one set in the basement. There are no specific disabled loos, although there are baby changing facilities in the first-floor toilets. Though a bit cramped, both sets of toilets were clean and well stocked.

While the Christmas market is on, there is a licensed café downstairs. There is lots of room and seating is plentiful. Other than the café and coffee shop on the ground floor there is no other seating round the building. The lift services all three shopping areas and is quite small. Two people would find it a squeeze. I have met this problem before in old and listed buildings who try to be accessible; it can be a problem to overcome planning regulations or make the the necessary structural changes needed to make the building fully wheelchair-friendly.

Anyone looking for something unusual or a little bit out of the ordinary would find something to love in Leeds Corn Exchange.

THE BASICS

Where to Go

Leeds Corn Exchange,
Call Lane, Leeds,
LS1 7BR

Website

<https://www.leedscornexchange.co.uk>

Costs

Free entry

Getting There

Leeds Corn Exchange is right in the heart of the city centre. It’s only a short walk from Leeds Bus Station and Leeds Train Station. Bus numbers 12 and 13 stop right outside the Corn Exchange on Vicar Lane and other services run very close by.

The building is fully accessible to wheelchair users and has toilets on 2 levels. Though there are stairs, all levels are accessible via a lift. If you have particular access needs you can ring the Corn Exchange site team on 07597 699646.

Opening Times

Monday – Wednesday 10am – 6pm
Thursday 10am – 9pm
Friday and Saturday 10am – 6pm
Sunday 10.30am – 4.30pm

Christmas Market Opening Times

Friday – Sunday until Christmas
12pm – 8pm

INTERVIEWS

Paul Atkinson and Anne Chitty meet some of the characters who make Leeds Corn Exchange the independent, unique space that it is. Thanks to Russell, Stan and Penny for sharing their stories.



THE GUARD

Russell is one of the security guards at the Corn Exchange. He was born and bred in Leeds but now lives in Wakefield with his girlfriend and Cooper, his French Poodle.

I've been here 5 years. It's changed a bit since I've been here. They've done a paint job inside and out. I've done events, football, rugby, boxing. This place is a lot different. When you're used to 100,000 people, this is a bit quieter. At Elland Road I was pitch-side, stewarding. You have to face the crowd so you can't watch the match!

This place has its ups and downs. Through the week it can be quiet. Mondays and Tuesdays are quiet. But weekends are busy, a bit more lively. The shops can change quite regularly. We had to close the whole place in Covid, I was at home furloughed. It's good to be back open.



THE WRITER

Stan worked all his life as a civil servant but when he retired became a writer and blogger. Stan was reviewing the Christmas Market at the Corn Exchange for his website: tyke-it-to-the-limit.com

I love it here. It's an amazing space. When you think it was just a commercial space open for just a few hours a week to flog corn, what they've done to it is fantastic. It's an oasis for independent businesses. What I like about independent shops is that the people can tell you who made what you're buying and the provenance of where it came from. I lived in Leeds for three quarters of my life. When I was a kid in the 1950s, you'd never dream of coming down here. I was at Central High School in Leeds, near the Merrion Centre. Bang in the middle of town. Lunchtimes, you used to get all over the place. But you never came here. There was no reason to ever come in. It was probably just the shell of the building. There was nothing here. If anything, just offices.

I get all over the place writing reviews for my blog. I'm 73 now and it's great to be having conversations with younger people. They'll be talking about where the best place to go for Thai food is; positive conversations like that. When I talk to people my own age, we end up talking about bloody Statins and knee operations! It keeps me young. I was down here at the Corn Exchange the other week to see a rapper - a beatboxer called Testament. A couple of years ago he did a show at Leeds Playhouse called Orpheus at the Record Shop. He was doing a publicity thing at a record shop in the Corn Exchange - this was the shop that started him off. It's a phenomenal place now. Just great.

THE ARTIST

Penny Pendle Hayes is a sculptor who was born in Essex but moved to Leeds 5 years ago. She is part The Sculpture Gallery, cooperative of artists who show their work at the Corn Exchange. thesculpturegallery.co.uk

There's 6 of us involved. We're all sculptors and we created this specifically for sculptors because we feel there aren't many galleries that dedicate their space to the art form. We all put this together so that we can display our work in the best possible light. We started in April and it's been going really well.

We're in such a lovely building. The Corn Exchange is just wonderful. It's had a bit of an unusual history. It goes up and down over the years. It got a bit run down, but there's new managers who run it now and it's just a lovely atmosphere. We're all independent here, every single one. We're not "chains", so we all have a vested interest to keep the thing going and make it really work. It's just the most incredible building. You couldn't possibly want to be in anything more fantastic than this.

When I arrived 5 years ago, it looked wonderful but a lot of the units were empty. They've been trying to get more independent units in. People that are running their own businesses, to give it that unique atmosphere. It's just so easy to get around - even for older people. We have a lift, so you can come up to the top floor quite easily. People are always saying how nice it is in here and they're always welcome to come in and have a cup of tea or a cup of coffee.





The magnificent roof of Leeds Corn Exchange is worth a visit, even if you don't buy anything!

A HISTORY OF LEEDS CORN EXCHANGE

In 1860, the good burghers of Leeds City Council decided they needed a new corn exchange. The first exchange building was built 30 years before and the traders felt that they deserved a new home. A competition was held and the winning design was by Cuthbert Brodrick. Brodrick had found fame a few years earlier as the architect of the magnificent Leeds Town Hall; he seemed the ideal choice.

Brodrick based his design on the Halle du Ble in Paris, a majestic grain hall built a century before. His original plan was to make Leeds Corn Exchange three storeys high, but the Council decided this was too expensive. Building started on 7th May 1861 and was finally completed and open for business in 1863.

The new building housed 161 traders and it became the hub of the grain trade in England. Huge quantities of grain were imported from North America and transported along the canal from Liverpool to be traded in Leeds. The

trade led to a boom in the city that lasted the whole Victorian age and into the early twentieth century.

By the 1960s traders had dwindled; by the 1980s the future of the building was uncertain. There was an ill-fated plan to turn the Corn Exchange into a concert hall, but it came to naught. In 1988, the building was restored and converted into a shopping centre. Remarkably, corn trading did continue for a few years after this, until finally ceasing in 1994.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the building was seen as a haven for independent shops. More significant was what went on outside: hordes of teenagers used to hang around on the steps. The Corn Exchange became the go-to hang out for alternative young people. Leeds was the birthplace of goth bands like The Sisters of Mercy and the Corn Exchange was one of the places wherein such black-clad kids felt comfortable. Goths shared the space with other youth culture tribes; the Corn Exchange was a melting pot of music and fashion.

In 2005, a new owner bought the lease and sought to clear the building of scruffy youths. Protests were unsuccessful

and the building was reopened as an upmarket food emporium. This failed venture never attracted the wealthy customers it needed and gradually the building returned to supporting independent and artistic traders. Nowadays, the Corn Exchange is full of music, art, food, fashion and exudes an independent, creative spirit.

YOUR TURN

If you are inspired to visit Leeds Corn Exchange yourself, do let us know how you get on. We can print some of your experiences of your visit in a future issue of Shine.

JOIN US

We want readers to join us on Grand Days Out in 2023.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 11th -
Marks and Spencer Collection at Leeds University
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 9th -
Meanwood Farm
FRIDAY MARCH 3rd -
St Aidan's Nature Reserve

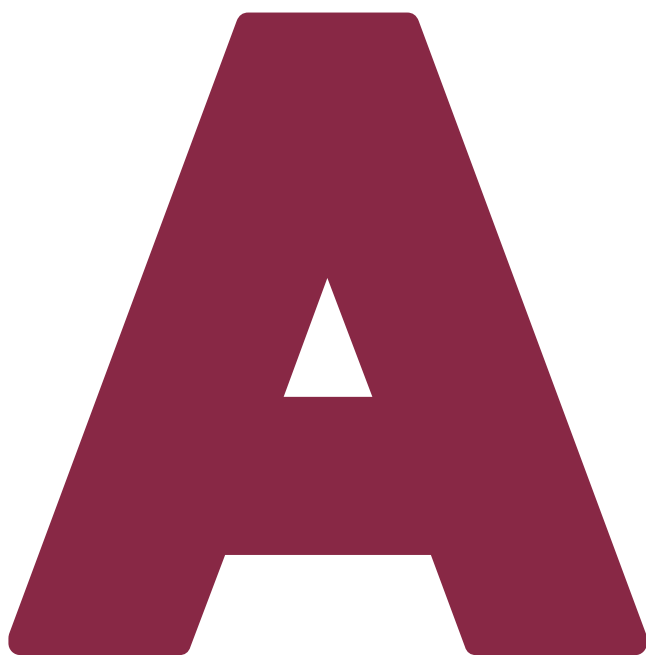
Contact us at Shine to tell us you'd like to come with us.

Written By: **MALLY HARVEY** Photography: **JONATHAN TURNER**

GAME ON

What's it like to be a
footballer in your 60s?
Mike Thompson shares
his story.





s we age, it's tempting to become less physically active. Joints seize up, old injuries resurface and we make involuntary noises when we get up from chairs. Team sports can be seen as a young person's game, not for people over 60. However, there are ways to be involved with competitive sports at any age. Over the next few issues we will be featuring the stories of some active people who refuse to take ageing lying down.

Like many young boys, Mike Thompson always wanted to become a footballer. When he was injured as a young man, he thought his athletic dreams were over. However, after 50 years, Mike returned to the sport and now he runs a team of his own. Mike shares his story of how he turned disappointment into hope and explains how he got involved in a new sport specifically for older people: walking football.

What is your first memory of playing football?

I was about 6 and I remember kicking a football – I haven't stopped kicking a ball about since then. The junior school I was at had a football team, for year 3s and 4s. Year 4 was when you went up to high school, so that was my first time playing competitive football. I managed to get in the school football team. I remember scoring my first goal: it was a scramble but I kicked the ball over the line. That was when I got the bug. I worked hard trying to be a professional footballer. The way of finding my way in to get a trial was difficult, because I hadn't played for Bradford or Yorkshire Boys or England Boys.

Whenever I was asked the question, "What do you want to do when you leave school?" my answer was always, "I want to be a footballer!" But there didn't seem to be any means of getting there. However, my dad knew one of the gatekeepers at Bradford City; this man called Mr. Petrie had a word with someone at the club about getting me a trial. I was 17 years old by then. He got me in! It was very exciting. I turned up as one of many other trialists - only 4 people were to be selected. At the end of the evening, the chosen people would go to train at Bradford City. I was one of the chosen 4! It was amazing because there was no other way in. The sad thing

was that when the manager called my name, my dad went up to him and said, "What are you picking on Mike for, he's not anywhere near good enough!" The manager said, "If Mike wants to come down we want to see him."

I turned up (obviously) on Tuesdays and Thursdays when training sessions were on and I kept training. The idea was to train for a year - if we were good enough, we would be kept on. Otherwise you would be discarded. But at the end of the first year I wasn't discarded. Then there were more trials for the juniors. When the decision came, I seemed to be just sitting on the grass waiting. Others were given positions and I just waited. Then I got my moment. One of the coaches said, "We need someone who plays left back." I immediately stood up and said, "I'll do it!" The coach said, "You'll play anywhere to get a game, won't you Mike?" I said, "Yes - just put me on the field. Let me show you what I can do." He said he would put me on for half an hour to see how I performed. I told him, "If you put me on, you won't take me off." I went on to the field. I was going to go for it. I charged up and down the pitch. I was putting balls across from attackers, I was defending with the goalkeeper, and I was the find of the night. I was then in the team as a left back, even though I was right footed and a forward. I was putting that shirt on.

But then you got injured, is that right?

It was about 9 games into the season for the Under 17s and we were playing Sunderland. I went to tackle for the ball. One of their players dislocated my ankle and broke my tibia and fibula all at the same time. Bradford City did their very best for me: they got a surgeon who put my ankle back to where it should be. But after a year's treatment and rehabilitation, they told me I didn't have the same movement in my right ankle as I had in my left. They decided I couldn't play professional football. So that was the end of my footballing career. I played for amateur teams up until I was 35 when our daughter was born when I gave up. I did a bit of Five-a-Side but not much else was available then.

How did you get involved in Walking Football?

The working years kicked in, but I was never happy. I only ever wanted to be a footballer. I should have been a footballer. I had over 31 jobs in my working life; I was driving instructor, I worked in the civil service. I yoayed between jobs. I'd get fed up with them and go and work somewhere else. Some jobs lasted a week, some much longer. The bottom line was that nothing could compare with being a footballer and what had I lost.

When I got to 60, my wife Helen and I decided to go on the holiday of a lifetime - to Australia to see my cousins. They were 5 or so years younger than me. I discovered they were playing what they called "Open Age" football. So when we came home, I wanted to play football again. There didn't seem to be any Open Age football or anything like it here in the UK. But there was something called "walking football". I couldn't imagine anything worse than "walking" football! Walking wasn't competitive! If I was going to play football I wanted to compete, to win things. I thought that was no good. But there wasn't anything else, so I thought I would give it a try. There were 2 clubs doing walking football and when I enquired one answered straight away - I never got a reply from the other one. I thought I would go down and try it. I reckoned I would be back in 10 minutes. It couldn't possibly be what I want. But to my surprise it has filled the gap. We have social sessions so that people who aren't really footballers come down and see others, talk to people, just pass the ball: it's a social group.



“The competitive side of walking football has been with me now for 7 years. I’ve won lots of trophies, I’ve even represented Bradford City in what’s called the EFL competitions.”

What are the benefits, healthwise?

It's good for the mind and for the body. Its exercise. And there is the competitive side. This is what I really enjoy. But there is a "helping others" side which confirms how I like to be.

And you run a team now?

The competitive side of walking football has been with me now for 7 years. I've won lots of trophies, I've even represented Bradford City in what's called the EFL competitions. The English Football League put it out to all the clubs, Bradford City included. But they don't have a walking football team. So I got 26 walking footballers out on Bradford City's pitch for a half-time demonstration at one of their games. I made sure I had my own little moment. I played in the team nearest the Kop, which is where the loudest supporters are. I dribbled up the field and I passed it to a guy who back heeled it into the net - the crowd were cheering! I had my Wakefield football shirt on and I pulled it up and underneath was my Bradford City Football shirt! I waved it at the crowd of 17,000: they went wild! I never imagined that I would be on that pitch at this age in my life, hearing that roar.

It's amazing that now I can do something I love. And helping others is so fulfilling. One of the guys who has Parkinson's - he smiles at every match. That is wonderful. I kept asking him if he was going to come; he just kept saying he didn't want to let me down, it depended how he would feel on the day. I wanted him to come because I knew he would enjoy it, but I understood his reluctance. In the end he came and he loved it. That will stay with me.

Walking football has been restructured so that people don't get injured. It's a free kick if the ball goes above head height, which is how it should be because the players are older and they don't want to get injured. Its inclusive because as people get older, they are not as physically able. But they can play walking football.

What does walking football do for you?

I thought I had lost everything when I was injured, but walking football is inclusive for people, even those with difficulties. It's good for physical as well as mental health and there is a lot of emotional support. I have made so many friends through walking football. I have gained so much from it at this time in my life which I could never have envisioned 50 years ago. It reaches the soul. Football is something I thought I had lost. Football was my dream and to get it back at this stage in my life is amazing. It fulfils so many areas in my life. I socialize with the people in our team but competitors as well. Unfortunately, there are teams who want to win at all costs. We go out to win but not at all costs. We don't push people over! We are playing the game in the right way, using our skills - not brute force. We have beaten teams who were brutal and, although it took a few matches, we did it. Just by being ourselves and that's a proper victory. Our strategy is we go to compete. We play twice a week and then there are competitions. The emotional support of walking football is wonderful, not only for what it gives me but for what it has done for others. The emotion and satisfaction that I get out of playing and seeing my contemporaries enjoying the game is something I lost 50 years ago. I never thought I would get back, but I have all these years later. Football was my dream, my everything. To get it back at this stage in my life is amazing. As I say, Football was my dream, my everything. And now I've got it back.

FOOTBALL OVER FIFTY

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

The average age for England's World Cup Squad for the 2022 competition is just 26. Most footballers retire in their 30s. Cristiano Ronaldo was seen as the old man of Manchester United - and he's only 37. The oldest player ever to complete in a World Cup was Essam El-Hadary, who was Egypt's goalie in 2018. He was 45! At the time Essam said, "I don't know what the word impossible means." A positive message, but if you're in your 50s, 60s or 70s, it's probable that your dreams of playing for England are behind you.



So a kickabout in the park with the grandchildren might be the best option. But what if you want to compete? As we age, we find it hard to keep up with younger players. Some older people carry on playing 5-a-side into their 50s and 60s. But inevitably, age catches up with us. This is where Walking Football comes in. Walking Football has been going since the 1930s - the first match was apparently between railway workers in Derby and Crewe. However, it was only a few years ago that Walking Football was developed into a competitive sport. John Croot of Chesterfield FC was the first to realise the potential. "I thought of Walking Football as a means of engaging with older people and asked my team to research it," says John. "Amazingly we could find no evidence of it being played so set about establishing the concept afresh. This led to us passing the rules on to many fellow clubs and organisations."

Walking football can offer many health benefits. Players reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. The sport can also improve blood pressure, postural balance, blood sugar levels and bone density; and help with cholesterol and lower your resting heart rate. It also has mental health benefits: players often find that being part of a team can make them feel good. It offers a sense of purpose and belonging that other fitness and exercise regimes can't. Being in a team brings you into a community of similarly aged people - and gives you a reason to exercise more regularly.

"Football is close to a miracle cure for some," say Magni Mohr and Peter Krstrup, sports scientists who have researched the sport's health impact for older people. As well as the benefits listed above, the professors believe the sport can stave off diabetes. One study has found that a 70-year-old who regularly plays football has the bone-strength of an untrained 25-year-old! All the more reason to try it. Perhaps your dreams of World Cup victory aren't quite so far-fetched...

Mike Thompson is part of Wakefield Wanderers Football Club. The team meet at Wakefield Football Centre and sessions are run Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons and Tuesday evenings.

Contact: Niall O' Donnell on 01924 870403
or niallodonn@aol.com

WINTER WELLNESS

Stay well this winter! Have a glance at our checklist of things to do to keep healthy over the next few months. As well as providing sage advice, we've invited regular Shine contributor Betty Bennison to share her thoughts. Betty is in her 80s and lives in a supported living complex with her husband; she has some handy tips to keep healthy and fit.

1 GET JABBED

If you haven't already had them, you should get your winter flu vaccine and COVID booster as soon as possible. Health bosses are predicting that more people than usual are likely to get flu this winter, so it's best to be on the safe side. You should be able to get your jabs at your local GP practice.

Betty says: "We've had both of ours. No reaction at all. It was fine."

2 BEWARE OF BUGS

Though COVID is less of a worry this winter, the virus is still circulating. So don't forget to wash your hands often and if you're mixing in large groups, keep your distance if you can. The "hands, face, space" message is relevant at all times if you don't want to catch viruses.

Betty says: "We don't mix a great deal anyway. I haven't been into the big supermarkets, I only go to the little ones locally. I have a Sainsbury's delivery every week."

3 HOME PLUS

If you're struggling, there is help out there. The Home Plus service helps older people improve their health at home, so you can live where you want to live safely. The idea is to prevent people having to go to hospital or help them get home safely if they have had a stay in hospital. Home Plus help with Hazard Repairs – they can fix a leaky boiler or fix a banister rail. They also have a Falls Prevention service – practical support to make support to make adjustments in your home so you're less likely to fall.

Home Plus also help older people keep their home energy efficient. If you're over 65 and have an income less than £21k and savings less than £16k, do get in touch. You may be entitled to a variety of measures: draught-proofing on your doors and windows; energy-saving lightbulbs; reflective radiator panels – and more.

Contact Home Plus
0113 2406009
homeplus@care-rpair-leeds.org.uk

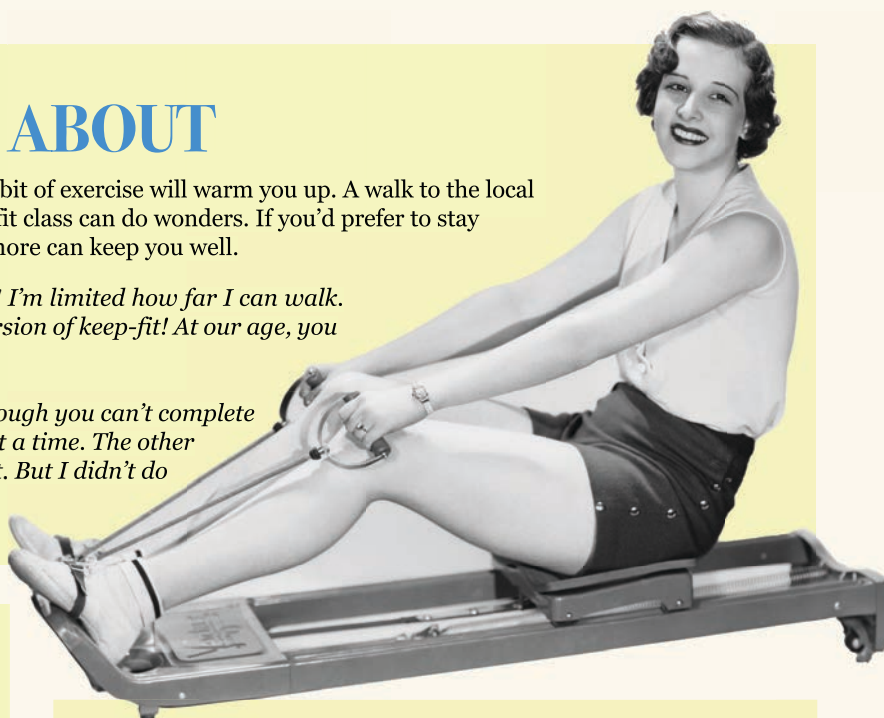


4 SHAKE IT ALL ABOUT

Try to get active at least once a day. A bit of exercise will warm you up. A walk to the local shop for the paper or going to a keep-fit class can do wonders. If you'd prefer to stay home, do try to keep active. Moving more can keep you well.

Betty says: *"My exercise is doing the housework! I'm limited how far I can walk. Taking the laundry up and down stairs is my version of keep-fit! At our age, you think you can still do what you used to do."*

You start to do a job but you realise halfway through you can't complete it because you're too tired. I do the jobs a little at a time. The other day I decided to clean the kitchen cupboards out. But I didn't do it all at once. I did one cupboard a day!"



5 STAY COSY

If you can, it's best to try and keep the inside of your home warm. The recommended temperature is between 18 and 21 degrees. As we have gone up recently so if you can save power, do. One tip is to heat the room you're using, as opposed to the whole house or flat. Sometimes this means turning radiators off and on, but a bit of extra effort is worth it, to know you'll be warm and not worried too much about bills. If you get cold, it's more likely you'll get poorly.

Betty says: *"I'm careful. I turn lights off. We don't heat rooms we're not using. We take precautions so we're not paying for too much. I have two dressing gowns: a light summer one and a fluffy winter one. I sometimes wear my fluffy dressing gown over my clothes. If anyone comes to the door, I can whip it off so they don't know!"*

6 TUCK IN

Warm your body up with hot food, hot drinks and hot snacks. If you eat well, you can prevent illness. Some older people find they have a smaller appetite. This is normal but do try and eat something regularly. Try swapping your main meal to lunchtime, you might have more energy to make a proper meal in the morning. Snacks like peanut butter on toast give you an energy boost.

Betty says: *"Now the weather has turned, I've started making soups. Last year we bought a soup maker, it's a really good investment. You can buy cheap vegetables, throw them all in the mixer and you've got a lovely meal. And at very little cost. We have a hot meal every day, usually at lunchtime. And a sandwich later."*

7 DIB DIB DIB

Be prepared! Look at weather forecasts and have a stock of food in the cupboard if conditions become icy. It's good to think ahead so if you're not well, you can still eat.

Betty says: *"I make sure I've got enough in the cupboards. I've only got a small freezer so I get these ready meals from a company called Parsley Box. They last about 6 months. So it means if I get stuck, I have a stash of them."*

8 CONNECT 4

Research shows that older people who have strong social connections tend to keep healthier for longer. We can all become isolated over the winter, especially when the weather is bad. Joining a club or activity can help keep you feeling well. Find your local Neighbourhood Network. There are lots of opportunities to stay connected in Leeds this winter.

Betty Says: *"I play Scrabble with a group where I live once a week. Just four of us. We've made friends with a gentleman who plays the organ. He took us to a concert where they play massive old cinema organs. All the old songs we could sing to. Then to an old cinema where there was an organ and a brass band. The atmosphere was fantastic. You just came out of there feeling alive. You must socialise. Even if it's just talking to your next-door neighbour. You feel better for it. Sitting by yourself is just no good."*

Healthy Menu

PARSNIP SOUP

As Betty says, soups are a great way to keep healthy over winter. This parsnip soup is packed with easily sourced vegetables and a bit of extra spice to warm you up!



Prep time
45 mins



Serves
5



Skill Level
Easy

Ingredients

2 onions
600g parsnips – around 4 or 6 parsnips
1 large carrot (use fresh vegetables or leftovers from Christmas Dinner)
2 garlic cloves
2 large tomatoes
Olive Oil
2½ pints/ 1.4 litres vegetable stock
Squeeze of lemon
Salt and pepper
Handful of sunflower seeds (Optional)

Spices

1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp coriander seeds
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp mustard seeds

Equipment

Big Pan
Liquidiser
Baking Tray
Big Bowl
Chopping Board and knife

Method

1. Heat the oven to 200C.
2. Mix the spices and the olive oil in a bowl.
3. Chop the onions into large chunks, quarter the tomatoes and roughly chop the peeled garlic. Peel and chop the parsnips and carrots into 1cm chunks. Mix with the oil and spices in the bowl. (If you are using leftover parsnips and carrots, leave them to one side, you don't need to roast them.)
4. Spread the mixture over a baking tray and put into the oven for about 30 minutes, until the vegetables look tender.
5. Put the vegetables into the liquidiser with some stock and whizz up.
6. Transfer to a large pan, add the rest of the stock and heat the soup. If you think the soup looks too thick, add more water.
7. Remove from the heat, add a squeeze of lemon and some salt and pepper. Add sunflower seeds as a garnish! Serve with bread and butter.

Tip

If you have any leftover turkey, you can add it to this parsnip soup. Just chop up some meat into small chunks and add it to the mixture, making sure to heat the soup for an extra few minutes. If you want a bit more luxury, add a dash of single cream to serve.



SUDOKU

Sudoku is played on a grid of 9 x 9 spaces. Within the rows and columns are 9 "squares" (made up of 3 x 3 spaces). Each row, column and square (9 spaces each) needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, without repeating any numbers within the row, column or square.

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

THE BIG QUIZ

1. What word do the Scottish people give for the last day of the year and its celebration?
2. In which European country is it a tradition to jump from a chair right before midnight, then smash plates against friends' doors?
3. What name was given to the predicted computer meltdown at the beginning of the year 2000?
4. On January 1st 1881, Ferdinand de Lesseps began French construction on which great civil engineering project?
5. 'The ball drop' is a famous part of the New Year's Eve celebration in which touristy part of New York City?
6. Who wrote the song 'Auld Lang Syne'?
7. Which English author, born on New Year's Day 1879, wrote A Passage to India?
8. In the Chinese Zodiac, 2023 is the year of what animal?
9. Literally meaning the 'beginning of the year', what name is given to the Jewish New Year?

WORDSEARCH

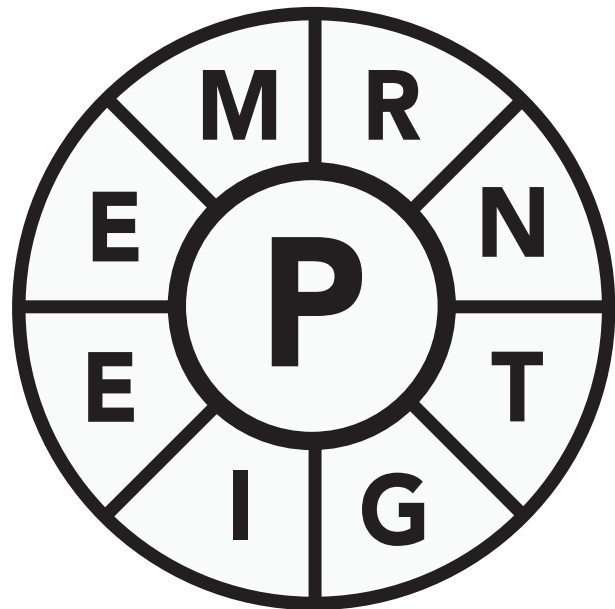
A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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

CHARLES DICKENS CRATCHIT CHAINS CHRISTMAS PAST
DOORKNOCKER EBENEZER FEZZIWIG GHOST MARLEY
MISER SCROOGE SKINFLINT SPECTRE TINY TIM

WORDWHEEL

Your target is to create as many words of 4 letters or more, using the letters one only and always including the letter in the middle of the wheel (and the one 9-letter word which uses all letters)



- 4 LETTER WORDS**
GRIP PEEN PEER PENT PERE PERI PERM
PERT PIER PINE PING PIRG PRIM
RIFE TEMP TRIP
- 5 LETTER WORDS**
GRIP INEPT PETER PREEN PRIME PRINT
RIPEN TRIPLE
- 6 LETTER WORDS**
EMPIRE PERMIT PITMEN REPENT TEMPER
RIPEN TRIPLE
- 7 LETTER WORDS**
EMPTIER PEERING PIGMENT TEMPING
- 9 LETTER WORDS/ROOT WORD**
TEMPERING

WORDWHEEL

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

WORDSEARCH

1. Hogmanay
2. Denmark
3. The Millennium Bug
4. The Panama Canal
5. Times Square
6. Robert Burns
7. EM Forster
8. Rabbit
9. Rosh Hashanah

QUIZ

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

SUDOKU

USEFUL CONTACTS

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 376 0330

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

Leeds Adult Social Care 0113 2224401

Emergency Duty Team outside office hours on 0113 240 9536

Emergency repairs to Council Housing 0113 3760410

Police call for non-immediate danger 101

Police call for immediate danger to life or Medical emergencies 999

NHS number 119

This is the new number for Covid related calls -if you have Covid symptoms, want a test or are over 70 and not yet had your vaccine.

The Carers Advice Line for Leeds 0113 380 4300

If people are one of the 74,000 unpaid carers in Leeds and need some advice, help or support

100% Digital 0113 535 1170

Help with digital stuff or help to just get online

Leeds Gay Community (LGC): Men's group. lgc@mesmac.co.uk

Sage:
sage@mesmac.co.uk
Group for 50+ year old LGBT+ people

Friends of Dorothy:
info@friendsofdorothy.org.uk
Group for 50+ year old LGBT+ people

Leeds LGBT+ Women's Space:
lgbtwomensspace@gmail.com
Group for LGBT+ women aged 40 years or older.

Silver Pride Social:
A new WhatsApp social 'chat' group with a fast-growing membership of 50+ year old LGBT+ people.

Medical emergencies for non-emergencies & GP out of Hours 111

Gas - if you smell gas contact the National Grid 0800 111 999

**Electricity - if you have been affected by a
power cut.**
Contact Northern Power Grid on
0800 375 675

Water - contact Yorkshire water on 0845 1242424

Care & Repair 0113 2406009

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