

Boris adds £14m. to cost of Freedom Pass

A five-year deal to share the extra cost of using the Freedom Pass at peak times before 9am on weekdays, agreed by all London councils and Transport for London (TfL) last February was scuppered in October by London Mayor Boris Johnson, who leads TfL.

It means that instead of paying £261.7 million to TfL in the coming year for being able to use the Freedom Pass on buses, tubes and DLR routes, London councils will be charged £275.48 million – an increase of almost £14 million which will have to be found by cash-pressed councils.

The total charge for the Freedom Pass to be shared by all 32 London councils and the City of London in the financial year 2011/12 is nearly £296 million. In addition to the above payment to TfL, overground train companies will get £17.9 million and £1.7 million will go to independent bus companies.

Islington council leader Catherine West, who leads the London Councils transport and environment committee, told our Forum: ***“With government cuts already hitting the poorest London boroughs hardest, the decision by TfL and Boris Johnson to renege on their five year deal came as a real blow.*”**

“After urgent talks with TfL we’ve now agreed a settlement for 2011/12 but we remain in negotiations over further assistance to boroughs. I’m absolutely committed to protecting the Freedom Pass and the vital lifeline it provides to older and disabled Londoners. It’s the best concessionary fares scheme in the country and I’ll continue to fight any attempts to threaten or reduce it.”

The Freedom Pass is used by some 1.2 million older and disabled people in London and it can be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week on TfL routes. Outside London, the Freedom Pass is often restricted to bus routes after 9.30 am and train services vary.

Enfield Council’s share of the Freedom Pass cost in the coming year will be nearly £9.8 million. This is some £1.3 million more than last year, but part of the

increase will be offset by a crafty move by the new coalition government to wrap up the national concessionary grant into the total annual financial settlement paid direct to individual councils.

So instead of the government grant of some £28 million going directly to TfL, which was then deducted from the amount charged for the Freedom Pass to each borough, the grant has been rolled into the lump sum going to each borough – known as the Formula Grant - leaving each council to share out the money to meet its varying demands for services, including that for the Freedom Pass.

Once the extra money going into the revenue support grant is deducted it could mean that the Freedom Pass will be costing Enfield’s council taxpayers an extra £400,000 this year.

Although the Freedom Pass is safe for another year, the danger signs are clearly visible with transport operators all demanding more money to match the fares increases they are imposing on people at large. In addition, there are siren calls for the Freedom Pass to be withdrawn as a universal benefit and restricted to the poorest pensioners.

The next move could well be an attempt to restrict the scope of the scheme and return to the off-peak restrictions that prevented its use before 9.30am – which stopped people using the pass for early hospital and other appointments.

The continuing anxiety about any possible curtailment in the Freedom Pass prompted the Friends of Jubilee Park to write to our three local MPs. Peter Armstrong, their chair, wrote: ***“Many of our group are involved in caring for elderly and ill members of their family or friends, or taking grandchildren to and from school. Having the Freedom Pass saves carers, the NHS and the state time and money and this does need to be taken into account.”***

New Year greetings to all Forum members and friends. Let's work together in 2011 to make everyone's later life a better life.

Another Wills - not Wills & Kate

We'll be hearing a lot about Wills and Kate before their big day on April 29. But this is about our own Wills -Wills Week from April 4 - 8 2011. The wills week we held last August was a great success. Stennett and Stennett, the local firm of solicitors which supports the Forum, saw over 40 Forum members, some of whom joined specifically to take advantage of the special reduced price offer.

Making a will is important because it lets you say how your assets are to be distributed, can save inheritance tax, avoids family disputes and provides peace of mind. It is also important to think about updating your will, if circumstances have changed.

Solicitor Michael Stennett spotlights a problem if you do not make a will

Rose (not her real name) came to see me for advice recently. She was one of the many Forum members who sought advice during the last Wills Week. Rose was a widow. She told me her late husband Jack did not make a will but left her his savings and the family home, which he solely owned. The house was worth about £450,000 and savings were around £500,000. Rose and Jack did not have children. Jack had a brother Morris. Rose did not like Morris and the feeling was mutual.

Rose instructed me to prepare her will and also to sort out Jack's affairs. I explained to Rose that because Jack did not make a will strict rules applied as to how his estate would be distributed. The rules are called "*intestacy*". I advised Rose that under intestacy she inherited her late husband's house, but was only entitled to one half of Jack's savings, the other half going to Morris after payment of inheritance tax from his share.

Stennett and Stennett will be holding another Wills Week for Forum members from April 4 - 8 2011 at their offices in Winchmore Hill Road, Southgate N14 6PT. The price will be £99 inclusive of VAT per Forum member per will – and that is a saving of over £100 on their usual charge. To make an appointment please call 020 8920 3190 and mention the Forum wills offer. Please note: the S & S discount voucher carried in this or previous Newsletters cannot be used with this offer.

Rose was distraught at the thought of Morris receiving part of the estate because she feared this would deny her a comfortable retirement. She asked if she had to tell him and I said that she did because she was legally obliged to distribute the estate according to law. If she failed to tell Morris about his entitlement she would be sued. I suggested to Rose she could contest the distribution under the Intestacy Rules on the grounds that it failed to give her a reasonable share as the surviving spouse. This involves Court proceedings and the outcome is not certain.

Rose asked me to write to Morris asking if he would consider declining the gift. I am still waiting for a reply! In the meantime I helped Rose prepare a will gifting her estate to charity.

You can contact Solicitor Michael Stennett on 020 8920 3190 if you have any questions about this topic.

Are you paying a price for loyalty?

When your house insurance comes up for renewal, do you get another quote or just stay loyal to the same company? The question is justified after reading of a policyholder - 58 years with the same company - who was quoted £648 for a year's renewal cover that he could get for £162 if he was a new customer.

The press has been full of cases giving similar examples of people being asked £854 for home insurance and finding the same deal for £200 with another company. Or there was the case of the accountant quoted £551 for home insurance renewal by a company with whom he had been a customer for 10 years, and when he went on to their website as a new customer he was quoted £173.

There is strong evidence that all insurance companies take particular advantage of older people. They think we don't shop around and compare prices and charges; not enough of us use the Internet. Insurers think they can get away with pushing up prices year after year - and they do.

We think it is time the Financial Services Authority implemented its own "treating customers fairly" rules and tackled the insurance industry which uses any excuse to push up premiums - and they get away with it because of our reluctance to switch.

The Sunday Times quoted the case of a man who had been with the same insurer since the 1950s being charged £1,690 for buildings and contents insurance and after a simple search, found the same cover for £200. Another man with the same insurer for 47 years was being overcharged by £800 a year.

Forced by rising premiums, it is little wonder that many older people on low and fixed incomes are no longer getting home insurance, though this is a big risk. "It is not only insurers that punish loyalty", says the Sunday Times. "Energy, savings, mortgage and telecom customers can also be stung if they regularly do not reassess their deals."



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New Year – New Challenges

The year 2011 looks like being the year of greatest economic and social policy uncertainty that many of us can ever remember. Younger families face uncertainty over their jobs; a pay freeze alongside rising inflation. School and university leavers enter the most competitive jobs market at a time when unemployment for 16–24 year olds is the highest for 16 years. And the people we represent will face cuts in services that will inevitably follow the Government's slashing of its grant to Enfield Council.

So the squeeze is going to focus on all of us. We are, indeed, all in this together and it is worth remembering and emphasising that the largest part of the financial deficit we hear so much about was caused by the £850 billion of taxpayers' money that went to bale out the banks – and the £200 billion of Government money that went on "quantitative easing" – bankers' jargon for printing money so that the banks could function – the same banks that are now paying themselves outrageous bonuses, while businesses pay too little in tax and boardroom pay is rising sky high.

The failure of the banks led to the first major crisis of the new global economy we now see, and this in turn largely created the crisis of fiscal debt blamed on the last government. One of the results is that Enfield Council will in the coming financial year starting in April 2011 lose some 27% of its funding from central government over the next four years – over a third of it in the first year.

The council has already lost over £100 million which was earmarked for repairs and refurbishment of local schools by the last government's Building Schools for the Future programme, and grants of £6.9 million with the fate of another £10 million currently paid by the government for children's services waiting on Ministerial edict. Another £1.3 million could be taken away by the government to reduce Enfield's allowance for London's higher cost of living.

Council leader **Doug Taylor** said: **"Whatever the government says this is a massive blow and is the worst funding settlement ever for Enfield. The massive 27% cut to funding over four years plus the likely loss of other grants means the Council faces tough choices.**

"The government calculates council allocations on a formula based on community need. To make its books balance it has reduced Enfield's calculated funding by a massive £15 million next year resulting in a 8% grant cut."

In addition, we are being told to prepare for "savings" of £138 million over the next four years – of which £29.5 million at least will be in the first year to cover the loss of government funding. At the same time the council expects to spend £17.5 million more to keep pace with increased demand for its services, such as adult social care.

There will be no increase in council tax this coming year and the council is planning to honour its commitment to give a £100 rebate to low income pensioner households and the Freedom Pass will be costing more. Personally, I'm pleased that despite all the talk of cuts, the council intends finding money to help low income families with school uniform grants; free school meals and for youth work to try and reduce anti-social behaviour.

I've no doubt we'll be hearing from a lot of people playing the "blame game" for the tough times ahead, but I hope that while the brickbats are flying we are thinking too of the 200 or more council employees who will be losing their jobs as a result of the cuts.

You can have your say at a special and important Budget Consultation meeting the Forum is holding with council leader Doug Taylor and Andrew Stafford, the Cabinet member for finance, at Skinners Court on Tuesday 18 January starting at 10.30am.

Manty Meth

Calling all Grandparents

The amount that UK grandparents save their children in child-care costs in looking after their grandchildren is estimated to be £12.5 billion each year.

And we know from our own experience that a special relationship can be developed between grandparents and our grandchildren. And we know too that we are here to provide support and advice – when it is asked for – to them and to their parents – our kids!

So when we hear sadly and dangerously that both measles and mumps are on the increase in London, and that in Enfield cases of measles have increased among children of school age and mumps cases have increased, particularly among 18-25 year olds, it is right and proper for us to make sure that youngsters in the family are getting the best protection.

To achieve a satisfactory level of immunity we need something like a 95% vaccination take up in Enfield. Currently we are significantly below this figure – as are other London boroughs.

There's an estimated 14 million grandparents in the country and we hope they can be persuaded to spread the word that measles, mumps and rubella can be dangerous and are not a thing of the past. Mumps in grown men can have devastating consequences and Rubella is very dangerous in pregnancy.

There's now a whole range of vaccines that protect against some of the childhood illnesses that we all probably had when we were children. Children and young people can be protected from diseases like measles and mumps by immunising them with the MMR vaccine. They need two doses to ensure protection from these potentially damaging and sometimes life threatening diseases.

Now that all the scare stories in the press linking MMR with autism have been dismissed as having no scientific or medical basis, if you think your grandchildren have missed vaccinations or aren't sure what they had then perhaps we can encourage them or their parents to make an appointment with their GP as soon as possible.

If they are not registered with a GP, their parents can contact their health visitor or school nurse. Alternatively the Walk-In Centre at Evergreen primary care centre at Edmonton Green provides immunisations Mondays to Fridays from 10am to 4pm (parents should take their child's "red book" with them).

For any further information and advice you can contact the NHS Enfield immunisation co-ordinator, Amanda Williams, on 0208 370 8206 or Amanda.williams@enfield.nhs.uk

Vivien Giladi

NHS reforms begin to bite

The biggest shake-up the health service has seen for over 60 years has started here in Enfield with redundancy **“at risk”** notices being handed to primary trust staff and those accepted for voluntary pay-offs were told their fate earlier this month. At the same time NHS staff have been told to cut costs by 54% in one year - representing a bigger saving in half the time previously announced.

The **“savings”** will in part be used to develop the handover of responsibility for commissioning of health services to a newly-formed GP consortia which health chiefs admit will mean that **“PCTs will be unable to function effectively while reducing management costs by half.”**

In a frank assessment of the changes, the health chiefs say in a report to the new North Central London NHS board - which combined the Enfield, Barnet, Haringey, Islington and Camden PCTs: **“The end state of the new local NHS is not known.”**

“There is no clear view of what parts of the PCT will transfer to the national commissioning board, or the national primary care services, nor what the form of GP consortia will be and how quickly health improvement staff will transfer to local authorities.”

Faced with this uncertainty, the Forum will endeavour to monitor closely all local developments and seek assurances that all health services currently available to older people are fully maintained when the PCT is abolished.

For example, the PCT have told us that funding will be continued for the Parkinson's Disease specialist nurse but only until March 2012 – not to the end of that year as originally agreed. So we will need to ensure that the new GP consortia continues this service. Similarly with the toenail cutting service paid for by the PCT to Age UK Enfield.

Meanwhile, opposition continues to be expressed by health professionals and others about the reform plans for the NHS and the speed of implementation. Although alarm bells were rung by many, if not most, of the 6,000 responses to the reorganisation plan, for the Government it is a case of **“all systems go.”**

A leading article in The Times (16 December) said the abolition of PCTs by 2013 was a **“surprising decision and rather worrying. It involves moving very quickly, and at considerable cost, to a new system whose merits are unproven.”** Dr Hamish Meldrum, chairman of the British Medical Association, said there was little evidence that the government wanted to listen to criticism.

“Most of the major concerns that doctors and many others have raised seem, for the most part, to have been disregarded.” The Government had **“completely failed”** to acknowledge that proposals to increase competition in the NHS would make it harder for staff to work together. The BMA complained that their warnings about the pace and scale of the reforms had been ignored and the **“lack of detail make the present strategy very risky”.**

The NHS Confederation representing all health service organisations says the reforms are the greatest challenge the NHS has faced. **“People may not be ready for the turbulence, hospital closures.”** Civitas, a government supporting think-tank said: **“The NHS is facing the most difficult time in its history. Now is not the time for ripping up internal structures yet again on scant evidence – scrapping PCTs could seriously damage patient care.”**

A letter to The Times on 13 December signed by 206 medical professionals said the Government's proposals will **“destroy the NHS as we know it”** and the House of Commons Health Select Committee questioned the plan to secure savings of £15-£20 billion in four years adding: **“There is no precedent for efficiency gain on this scale in the history of the NHS, nor has any precedent yet been found of any healthcare system anywhere in the world doing anything similar”**

Against this background of critical concern about the future, the Forum will nevertheless work constructively with the new Enfield consortia. We will seek assurances that PCT pledges about **“reducing health inequalities”** in the borough – where the **difference in life expectancy is eight years for men and 10 for women between Edmonton and Cockfosters** – will remain a priority for those charged with providing future medical services to the whole community.

Liberating the NHS

That is how the government brands its new health proposals. Some of us see it differently as do these members of the medical profession.

Pathologists yelled, **“Over my dead body!”**

Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness,

Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing.

Allergists voted to scratch it,

Dermatologists warned against making any rash moves.

Gastroenterologists had a sort of a gut feeling about it,

Neurologists thought the Administration had a lot of nerve.

Obstetricians felt they were all labouring under a misconception.

Ophthalmologists considered the idea short-sighted.

Paediatricians said, **“Oh, Grow up!”**

Radiologists could see right through it.

Internists thought it was a bitter pill to swallow,

Plastic Surgeons said: **“This puts a whole new face on the matter”**

Podiatrists thought it was a step backwards

Anaesthetists thought the whole idea was a gas,

Cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no.

Urologists were pissed off at the whole idea.

In the end, the **Proctologists** won out, leaving the entire decision up to the ar**holes in London.

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The Enfield Over 50s Forum is not liable for any personal injury/accidents that may occur during any of its activities/events.

See the new North Mid.....but not as a patient!

Eighteen Forum members were recently given a first class guided tour of the newly expanded North Middlesex University Hospital, rebuilt and re-equipped at a cost of £123 million. Greeted by director of nursing Theresa Murphy and matrons Breda Cuddihy and Jane Dunne, the tour party visited various departments to see at firsthand how patient care has been enhanced.



Our tour included the A&E and walk-in units, resuscitation and critical care units, surgical wards and the X-ray department, to name a few. While doing the rounds, the group met Mark Channell, the lead nurse in charge of A&E and Beatrice Norman, the paediatrics matron who briefed us on their respective roles at the hospital.

Throughout the tour we were kept fully informed of the benefits to patients of the new facilities and our questions were answered fully and honestly. The pride felt by the staff in their new working environment and the commitment they showed in providing better health care to the Enfield community was self-evident to all of us. Considering the new facilities were only commissioned last May, we all felt the staff should be congratulated for getting the new facilities working so well in such a short time. And we felt too that more Enfield residents should know of and recognise the change that has taken place at North Mid.

So we are planning to take another visiting group at 1pm on Friday 18 March 2011 but again the party will be restricted to 20 and will only last 1.5 hours so as not to interfere too much with the hospital routine. If you would like to come, please register your name with the office by calling 020 8360 8743.

Peter Smith

Now call 111 for NHS Direct

A new free call three-digit number - 111 - that will make it easier for patients to access non-emergency NHS healthcare wherever they are, 24 hours a day, is now available.

The 111 service, first trialed in the North East of England, aims to make every kind of non-emergency health care more accessible.

The service is staffed by a team of fully trained call advisers, supported by nurses, who are on hand to assess callers' needs and ensure they receive the right service as quickly as possible. It guides patients to a locally available service or provides appropriate advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The number can be used when you need help fast but it is not life threatening, or when you do not know who to call. This will be particularly useful outside of GP surgery hours and for people who are away from home.

BCF wins "most improved hospital" award

The Barnet & Chase Farm Hospital NHS Trust has been named the most improved hospital at the HEAL (Healthcare Excellence and Leadership) Awards. Voted for by healthcare professionals, patients and the public, the HEAL Awards recognise excellence in healthcare and pay tribute to professionals who have improved quality during the last year.

The award was presented to **Averil Dongworth**, the BCF chief executive at a ceremony attended by over 250 healthcare professionals from across the country. The HEAL Awards are the only awards completely independent of government departments or healthcare regulatory bodies.

The awards pay tribute to the dedicated professionals who lead the way in advancing the quality of healthcare during the last year. The awards also aim to encourage and support the development of the next generation of leaders in working together to improve standards of health and healthcare in the UK.

In accepting the award, **Averil Dongworth** said: *"I would like to say a very big thank you, first of all, to our patients who have supported us on our journey. I'm very proud as chief executive of the Trust to receive many letters from our patients acknowledging our services and their support for them, and also, on occasion, their complaints, which we endeavour to respond to, take seriously, and learn from."*

"I would also like to thank our staff who work incredibly hard to offer the best and safest care for patients. It is their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm that have made us the most improved hospital."

Health snippets

Brush up

University College, London, completed a study which showed that people who fail to brush their teeth twice a day have a higher chance of heart disease. Poor oral hygiene is linked to inflammation in the blood which is a marker of heart disease. If you never or seldom brush your teeth there is a 70% higher risk of heart trouble than if you clean up twice a day.

Child diabetes

More than 3,200 children are admitted to hospital A&E departments around the country each year for complications caused by diabetes. Children accounted for about a quarter of the 13,465 emergency admissions due to blood sugar levels being too high - a rise of 9% since 2006.

Aspirin is great

Over-the-counter drug Aspirin is proving to be the greatest yet discovered after scientists confirmed that taking a daily low-dose of 75-150mg will not only reduce your chances of dying from cancer, it will also cut your chance of a heart attack or stroke.

However, there is a down side as doctors warn there is a potential; risk of serious side effects such as stomach bleeds and in rare case brain haemorrhages. As ever, the problem is knowing who it will help and who it will harm.

South Asians beware

Heart Research UK has issued a special risk warning to people of South Asian origin who are up to six times more likely to develop type2 diabetes than the UK white population and this is a risk factor for heart disease.

There is a special lifestyle leaflet for the South Asian community giving advice and information. Women, for example, should keep their waist measurement down to 32 inches and men below 35 inches - a tougher regime than the local population. Call 0113 234 7474 for details.

Oldest old show fastest growth

Amid the massive changes now being planned and executed by the coalition government, the Forum will have to ensure that the needs of older people, in particular, are not neglected.

Thanks to the work of eminent UK academics, we now have the ammunition to make sure that local GPs – who will be taking over the provision of health services – have the capacity to match the changes in our ageing society that we now know are taking place on an unprecedented scale.

Take these facts alone:

- In the next 20 years to 2031 the UK population is expected to grow by 10.3 million people
- Just 3 million of them will be of working age from 20 – 64
- 6.2 million will be aged 65 and over – of which 2.8 million will be 80 and over
- 1.3 million will be up to age 19

Newcastle University has an important Institute for Ageing and Health which is tracking the lives of the oldest old – people aged 85 and over – which it says is the fastest growing section of the community. In 1981 they formed just 7% of the population but in 20 years time it is projected to reach 19%.

Indeed, people born during the period 1923 -1940 are now being called the “golden generation” because they have shown the greatest rate of health improvement compared with those born on either side of the 17 pre-war years.

This is not all that surprising if you recall warnings from former US president Bill Clinton and Yvette Cooper, former public health minister, that life expectancy for today’s children will be years shorter than their parents because of poor diet and lack of exercise – they will be the first generation to live shorter lives than their parents.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the estimated number of grandparents has grown in the UK in the last 60 years from under 2 million to a record 11plus million. And with this growth of an ageing population comes a growth in disability and long-term diseases – arthritis, dementia, stroke, heart disease, diabetes – the list is not finite.

So our message to local GPs and the new consortia who in a couple of years or less will be charged with providing health services is simple: Welcome as the increase in life expectancy is, it has to be accompanied by increased spending on social care and medical treatment. We cannot expect to live an enhanced life, free of disability and illness.

Can you bridge this gap?

The Wednesday evening Bridge Club that has met at the Ruth Winston Centre for the last 25 years, is in danger of disbanding due to lack of numbers. They really need a minimum of five tables to make it competitive but currently have only three.

The Forum has been urged in the past to organise bridge-playing but there is no point in re-inventing the wheel when there is a club already up and running –that we can help survive and thrive

A Beginners / Intermediate group, meets every Wednesday evening 7.30pm to 10.00 pm. at the Ruth Winston Centre, 190 Green Lanes, near the Palmers Green Triangle. The cost is only £2.50 per person per night and a partner is not essential.

Interested? Then please call Ruth Winston Centre Tel: 8886 5346, who will put you in touch with the bridge club leader. Remember: Bridge playing is excellent for exercising the brain.

The new health chiefs need to recognise this now and plan across the country for an estimated 60% increase in the number of older people with ill-health. And the numbers of older people with disabilities will rise by some 900,000, while the 85plus age group is going to more than double.

We're living longer and longer.....

Over the past 20 years the number of people living to 100 has quadrupled – rising from 2,600 in 1981 to 11,600 in 2009. By mid 2034 it will have reached an astonishing 87,900, the Office of National Statistics predicts. So if you are in your mid –70s it could be you and female centenarians outnumber men by six to one!

At younger ages, the life expectancy gap between men and women is closing. At birth, baby boys can expect to live to 77 years and eight months and girls to a month or so short of 82. Once you have safely reached 70, life expectancy is higher. At that age men can expect another 14 years of life. Women can look forward to 16 years and three months.

However, these figures assume life expectancy will remain the same, whereas in fact it is continuing to grow by almost three months for every year that passes. So if you are 70 now you could well be getting a congratulatory card from King William V in 2040.

- SAGA Magazine December 2010

.....and so are the mice!

Scientists claim to be a step closer to reversing the ageing process after rejuvenating worn out organs in elderly mice. Harvard Medical School in the United States has turned feeble and weak old mice into healthy animals by regenerating their aged bodies.

A new drug – code named “*Methuselah*” could be only a decade away, say the scientists rashly predicting that they will double longevity. But many people feel we should just be content with the life span as it is and not try to extend it.

While some people’s hopes are being raised that it may be possible to slow down the human ageing process – politicians and insurance companies live in fear this will cause havoc with future pensions policy.

On the other hand, an anti-ageing therapy could have a dramatic effect on health costs by reducing cases of dementia, stroke and heart disease, and prolonging the quality of life of an increasingly ageing population.

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With more than half of all adults living in Enfield not participating regularly in any kind of physical activity, the Forum clearly has a big role in explaining the proven link between regular exercise and a healthy life.

In fact, participation levels in Enfield are below the average for London and indeed England. At the same time, the Office of National Statistics now estimates that the over 50s in the borough has grown to 84,100 – that is nearly 28% of the total population and it will steadily grow. Unfortunately, the Over 55s age group have the lowest level of regular physical activity and this is something we need to tackle if people are to lead a healthy and independent lifestyle.

So with the end of free swims for the over 60s at the end of March, we have been negotiating a new package with Fusion Lifestyle – the not-for-profit company that manages our leisure centres on behalf of the council - with the aim of both attracting new Forum members and getting more of us into a regular fitness routine.

Council officers are working with Fusion to explore the options for delivering the affordable leisure outlined in the council's manifesto and it is hoped that early in the New Year we will be in a position to say what these are.

Meanwhile, we have secured a very big concession for all Forum members who buy the annual concession card - also known as the energy card - which allows you to get a 50% discount on a number of activities including swimming, the Over 50s activity days at Edmonton, Southbury and Southgate leisure centres, gym sessions and the various fitness classes.

Instead of paying the new £20 fee for the annual concession card, Forum members on production of their membership card will only pay £7.50 – that is £2.50 less than last year and a whopping £12.50 saving on the price charged to non-Forum members. It also means that with this £12.50 saving alone, Forum members will be able to pay for their annual Forum membership and still have something left over!

In addition, all Forum members with existing monthly or annual membership at the leisure centres will retain the current prices of £32 per month direct debit and £320 for the annual membership providing they remain as members throughout the coming year.

If members cancel their direct debit or let their annual membership expire without renewal the price will go up to the new increased price of £37 monthly direct debit and £370 for the annual membership. **So the answer is: renew on time and you will beat the price increase and renew your Forum membership too!**

By ensuring that you stay with Enfield Leisure Centres you will be saving £60 over a year as a direct debit customer and £50 as an annual membership customer.

Unfortunately, prices were increased for all new memberships and for some other activities from January 1st 2011. But Forum members can still get 50% off a wide range of activities with the concession card as follows:

Price	Current	2011	Concession
Swim	£3.80	£3.80	£1.90
Fitness session	£7.00	£7.20	£3.60
Fitness class	£7.00	£7.20	£3.60
Sauna & Steam	£7.00	£7.20	£3.60
Over 50s Activity Day	£7.00	£7.20	£3.60
Badminton Court	£10.80	£11.00	£5.50

Southbury Leisure Centre ..

Work is well underway to improve the centre in many areas. It will have a much improved entrance / reception area, new cafe with improved seating and viewing, dry changing provision is all being upgraded, fitness gym is being enlarged with additional new equipment, a new studio 2 is being created to increase class programmes and the centre is being redecorated throughout. Work should be finished in January.

Who'd be a silver surfer?

The computer swallowed grandpa
 Yes, honestly, it's true
 He pressed "**control**" and "**enter**"
 And disappeared from view
 It devoured him completely
 The thought just makes me squirm
 He must have caught a virus
 Or been eaten by a worm
 I've searched through the recycle bin
 And files of every kind
 I've even used the internet
 But nothing did I find
 So if inside your inbox
 My Grandpa you should see
 Please Copy, Scan and Paste him
 And send him back to me

Promises, promises! Now its mid-June for 307 bus to Barnet Hospital

We've heard it all before and so we'll believe it when we see the 307 bus from Brimsdown actually dropping patients and visitors in the grounds of Barnet Hospital, instead of having that uphill walk from Wellhouse Lane.

Everything depends on a new bus stand being erected and although we've been given dates and assurances before, this time we hope it is for real and that the years of battle will be over. It follows confirmation sent to Joanne McCartney, the Greater London Assembly member for Enfield and Haringey, that the new bus stand will be operational by June 2011.

Following her extensive lobbying, Joanne McCartney was given the following timetable:

- Completion of design by mid February 2011;**
- Appointment of contractors by mid April 2011**
- Commencement of construction works by early May 2011**
- Completion of construction by mid June 2011**

On getting the good news, Joanne issued a press release saying: **"The Enfield Over 50s Group have done a great job campaigning for the bus extension into Barnet Hospital. This will be good news for many people in the area and we can only thank the Forum for their perseverance in this matter.**

"I am glad to have played a small part in the success of this issue and I believe it also has much wider implications. It strengthens the case for improving public transport links to health facilities, such as the new £123m North Middlesex University Hospital. In particular, we want to see the 318 route extended to Winchmore Hill & Palmers Green and I have been lobbying hard on this issue. We hope that TfL agrees."

This Newsletter is for general information only.

You are recommended to seek competent professional advice before doing anything based on the contents of the Newsletter.

Cold is a killer

If 25,400 pensioners died last winter as a result of cold related illnesses – that is nine every hour between December 2009 and March 2010 – how many more will it be this winter, the harshest we've seen for years? And why are our winter deaths figures higher than those in cold climate countries in Scandinavia?

The vast majority (81%) of those who died over four months last winter were aged 75 and over and 10,600 of them were men and 14,800 were women. Although this is less than the 36,700 pensioners who died in the 2008/9 winter, it should raise the level of resistance to any moves to cut the winter fuel allowance next winter.

The allowance used to cover roughly one third of fuel bills, now it is less than one fifth and it will be less this year following a double whammy – energy bills going up and we've all had our heating on for longer because of the prolonged zero and below temperatures.

You won't believe that at the height of the freeze, a Mr Alan Bentley, managing director of British Gas, had the cheek to say that the winter fuel allowance paid to all pensioners was a waste of money and should only be directed at those on low incomes.

With his next breath Mr Bentley predicted that gas and electricity bills would rise by as much as 25% by 2020 – a rise of £275 on a £1,000 average annual energy bill. It is expected that 5.5 million households will be in fuel poverty early next year – that is spending more than 10% of their income on fuel. Helping to boost the figure, which is up 2.5 million since 2004, Mr Bentley's British Gas has just put up its prices by 7% after announcing a 98% increase in profits.

Dot Gibson, leader of the National Pensioners Convention, said: "Since 1997 we have lost over 300,000 pensioners during the winter months because of cold-related illnesses. Rising fuel bills are constantly worrying pensioners about whether they can afford to put the heating on – whether to heat or eat."

WARNING

Severe cold weather increases the likelihood of blood clots and therefore strokes and heart attacks so you should keep your living room at around 21C. Every one degree drop in temperature is estimated to increase winter deaths by 1.4%.

28 January 2011 Special General Meeting

Notice of proposed changes to the Forum Constitution

The executive committee wishes to submit the following changes to the **Constitution** to the **Charity Commission** at the January 28 Forum to allow more time if necessary to prepare end of year accounts and clarify the wording so that a certified auditor is not required. The changes are put in brackets ().

6.2f The Annual General Meeting of the Forum will be held not later than ~~two~~ (three) months following the end of the financial year when Officers and the Executive Committee will be elected

6.2g An Honorary Auditor (Examiner) is to be appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

9.b Audited-Accounts (examined by an independent examiner) must be presented to the Annual General Meeting.

Copies of the full constitution will be available at the meeting.

The committee will also be recommending to the meeting that Monty Meth, MBE, should be elected as life president of the Forum in recognition of his service to the Forum and older people in Enfield.

Now where did these sayings originate?

A century or less ago, baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then the other men dropped in, followed by the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying: **"Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!"**

The horse drawn dray, carting prisoners to the gallows in the 1800s was accompanied by an armed guard, who would stop the dray outside a pub and ask the prisoner if he would like **"one last drink."** If he said yes it was referred to as **"one for the road"**. If he declined, that prisoner was **"on the wagon"**

They used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot and then once a day it was taken and sold to the local tannery. If you had to do this to survive you were **"Piss Poor"**. But worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford to buy a pot. They **"Didn't have a pot to piss in."**

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water isn't as hot as you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s: **Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May**, and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Houses had thatched roofs, thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying **"It's raining cats and dogs."**

When visitors came, some people would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could, **"Bring home the Bacon."** They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around talking and **"Chew the fat"**.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or **"The Upper Crust"**.

It is said that 1:25 coffins used to have scratch marks on the inside caused by burying people before they were pronounced dead. So they would tie string on the wrist of the corpse and hook it to a bell. Someone would sit out in the graveyard all night (**the graveyard shift.**) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be, **"Saved by the bell"** or was considered to be a **"Dead Ringer"**

Now, believe these tales or not you can't say history is boring!!!

Enfield and Southgate WEA

is offering a new evening course:

Introducing Film Studies - the 20th Century's dominant art form

Cinema is the defining art form of the 20th century, embracing entertainment, information, propaganda and experimentation. This course will chart cinema's history through topics such as Dickens on film, the Ealing comedies and film music.

Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road. Five weekly two hour sessions starting Monday, 28 February, 2011, 7-9 pm. Fee £34. Advance booking essential.

Longer daytime courses resume in January on subjects as varied as Art History and Geology and also new, The History of St. Petersburg.

Further details: 020 8882 0615 or 020 8882 0207 or visit www.london.wea.org.uk <http://www.london.wea.org.uk>

News from the Met.

Close that door

Burglars broke into the homes of a staggering 5,000 plus Londoners last year, simply by walking through unlocked front doors. People innocently pop out to post a letter, see a neighbour and hey presto, the thieves are in like a shot.

There are some 50,000 burglaries in London each year, so please give a thought to how secure your homes are, especially during the darker winter months. Don't give burglars an open invitation into your home - properly lock any UPVC doors before you go out or go to bed by lifting the handle and double-locking with the key to engage the security features

Remember, even if the handle is lifted up on the inside, it isn't properly secure unless it's double-locked. Lock all doors and keep all windows (including upstairs ones) closed, preferably locked when you are out, and keep your keys out of sight. Give your home the 'lived-in' look by using timer switches on lamps if you are going to be home after dark.

Secure your rear garden - lock your shed, shut and lock any gates and keep fences maintained. Don't leave ladders and tools outside - they could be used by a burglar.

In vehicles, keep all loose valuables like laptops, cameras and mobile phones out of the sight of anybody looking in - and why not register them on the free online database -

<http://www.immobilise.com/>

Please DO NOT leave your engine running to warm up an unattended vehicle. Cars are stolen from this area every year in this way - and your insurance will not cover it!

Make a difference to your community

There are many ways you can get involved in supporting local policing and improving your neighbourhood. Why not consider becoming a neighbourhood panel member and help set local police priorities, or sign up to be a Special Constable or Met Volunteer.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities contact your local Safer Neighbourhood Team or visit Get Involved at: (www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods).

Conned again

Police are still appealing for witnesses following a fraud in which a 71 year old Enfield man was duped out of £10,000. We've said before that it is hard to believe that after all the warnings a man could be contacted by telephone by a complete stranger saying that he worked for a company doing building work and they had to carry out urgent work to the drains at the victim's property in Russell Road, Enfield.

So that this work could be carried out they said it would initially cost £2,000. The stranger went to the home address of the victim and collected the money. The victim then received further phone calls from two male suspects claiming to work for the same company asking for more money so that they could hire equipment to carry out the work. In total, they've got the man to hand over £10,000 and no work has been carried out.

The suspects are described as:

- A black male, 30 - 40 years old, 5 foot 6 inches tall, wearing yellow fluorescent jacket.
- A white female, 35 - 45 years old, 5 foot 8 inches tall, blonde shoulder length hair.
- A white male further description not known.

Detective Constable Eddie Norman from Enfield Police said:

'We urge everyone in the community to be on their guard against this type of offence and I appeal to anyone who cares for vulnerable relatives and neighbours to help get the message across that you should not agree to any work being carried out that you have not asked for yourself.'

"You should not give any personal details and agree to transfer any money over before work has been done and if you are still concerned contact Trading Standards."

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call DC Eddie Norman on 020 8345 4587 or alternatively if you would like to remain anonymous call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

If a member of the public believes they are being confronted by bogus officials then they should telephone 999 immediately.

Random round-up

Slow Alzheimer's

Over-the-counter vitamin B tablets can slow brain shrinkage in older people and may delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, claim Oxford university researchers. They say that high doses of the tablets cuts the brain shrinkage by up to half in elderly people with memory difficulties who are at risk of developing dementia.

Cash cow

Parking fines imposed last year in Green Lanes, Haringey totalled £564,000 - the highest for any single street in the UK.

Pain relief

National Benevolent Fund for the Aged provide TENS pain relief machines to help older people with arthritis remain active and independent. They also donate the machines to physio departments so they can lend them out to patients for trial periods. If you are over 60 and on a low income call NBFA for details 020 7828 0200.

Euro health insurance

Bleak winter, but think of holidays to come and you may need a European Health Insurance Card (EHICs) which have replaced the old E111. The EHIC is free and can be obtained from the NHS website at www.nhs.uk or by calling 0845 606 2030. Beware of a scam offering to process the card for you at £10 per person - apparently this is not illegal!

The EHIC covers medical treatment due to accident or illness in the Euro Economic Area including Switzerland and entitles you to the same state-provided treatment as local people.

OK for some

Top executives from Britain's leading 100 companies saw their pay rise by 55% last year. The average boss now earns £4.9 million a year - 200 times the average wage - Sunday Times 31 October 2010

Published by Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum.

Contact: The Secretary, Salisbury House, Bury Street West, Edmonton, N9 9LA. **Tel:** 020 8360 8743

E-mail: info@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Web site: www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Subscriptions renewals

Members are reminded that subscription renewals become due on 31 March 2011 and will be increased to £7 for individual members and £10.50 for couples. Renewals received before that date will be at the current rates of £6 and £9 respectively.

FORUM Meetings

Thursday 13 January 10am for 10.30 start
Community House, 311 Fore Street, Edmonton
Jane Collins of Solace Women's Aid, talks about
"Working with the over 50s and domestic violence".
 Community House is a 5 minute walk from
 Edmonton Green. Buses stopping outside CH
 include 102, 144, 149, 259, 279.

Tuesday 18 January 10am for 10.30 start
Skinner's Court (1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane) Cllr Doug
Taylor, Leader of Enfield Council, consults with the
 Forum on *"Enfield's 2011/2012 Budget"*.

Friday 28 January (NOTE FRIDAY not Tuesday)
FORUM MEETING at the **Civic Centre, Silver Street**.
 So for this month only the first Forum meeting of the
 New Year will take place at **10am** on **Friday 28 January**.
 We will start with the very successful Your Shout
 session followed at **10.30am** by **Lindsay Macintyre,**
NHS Enfield director of quality and service re-
design speaking on: *Reforming the NHS - where are we*
now? Where are we going?
 This is your chance to hear about and comment on the
 big change in the pipeline to scrap all local PCTs and
 handover their role to GPs.

See also page 8 for proposed changes to the Forum
 Constitution which will be presented to members for
 ratification at this meeting prior to submission to the
 Charity Commission.

Thursday 10 February 10am for 10.30 start
Community House, 311 Fore Street, Edmonton
Colin Morris of the Pensions Service, talks about
"Pensions entitlements & benefits".

Tuesday 15 February 10am for 10.30 start
Skinner's Court (1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane) Forum
Member, John Garrett talks about *"Genealogy -*
tracing your family history". Plus **David Block**
 discusses the **2011 Census**.

Tuesday 22 February
FORUM MEETING at the **Civic Centre, Silver Street**
 10.00am Your Shout session followed at **10.30am** by
Councillor Chris Bond, LBE Cabinet Member, talks
 about: *Enfield's Environmental Services*.

Thursday 10 March 10am for 10.30 start
Community House, 311 Fore Street, Edmonton
Helen Price of Enfield Voluntary Action, talks
 about *"Supporting volunteers and volunteering and in*
Enfield".

Forum Soci

17 Jan - New Year buffet lunch at the North Enfield Conserv-
ative Club: beat the January blues with a sumptuous lunch and
 good company. Cost £9.50pp. For bookings please contact Jacky
 Pearce on 020 8482 3575 or email jackypearce@blueyonder.com

25 Jan and 22 Feb - Book Club meetings: 10am Central
 Library, Enfield Town, 1st floor meeting room. 22 Jan: Secret
 Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd and Lady in the Van by Alan Ben-
 nett. 22 Feb: Grave Sight by Charlene Harris. If you are inter-
 ested please contact Sue Scott on 020 8368 0861 or email:
scotsf48@hotmail.com

16 Feb - Visit To the Victoria & Albert Museum: Freedom Pass
 day out - join Polly at Southgate Underground station at 9.30am
 or meet at 10.45am at V&A. 11.30am: free tour of the Medieval,
 Renaissance & British Galleries; lunch and either a talk on Toiles
 de Jouy (French printed cottons) or a tour of the Theatre & Perform-
 ance Galleries in the afternoon - your choice. You can either bring
 sandwiches or buy lunch and coffee. No entrance fee but voluntary
 contributions may be requested by V&A. Physical mobility: partici-
 pants will have to negotiate steps, stair climbing and be on their
 feet for some time. Cost: £2 pp. For bookings contact the Forum's
 office: 8360 8743, or polly.lawman@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk.

Monday 21 Feb 7-00 for 7-30 pm
An Over 50s Forum Curry Evening

Get that warm glow on a cold February Evening at another Forum
 Social Dinner with friends at the "Taste of Raj" Restaurant,
 76 Aldermans Hill, Palmers Green (tel: 0208 886 9600)
 (opposite Broomfield Park). Choose from an exquisite menu
 selected by our host Anwar Hussein for the price of £12 (excluding
 drinks).

Limited to 50 persons so book early to avoid disappointment.
 To confirm your reservation please call Roddy Beare 8292 4324

22 Feb - Social committee Open Evening 6.30 - 8.30pm
 At the Civic Centre. **Roddy Beare**, chair of the social commit-
 tee, and its members cordially invite you to the Open Evening for a
 glass of wine, nibbles and fun. See below. **Cost: FREE**

The Forum's Social Committee



invites you to a

Special Open Evening

Tuesday 22 February
Conference Room, Civic Centre, Enfield Town
 6.30 - 8.30pm

We are a friendly and welcoming group of people that organise
 the Forum's social events. Come and meet us for a chat over a
 glass of wine and share your ideas and suggestions for future
 activities.

All members are welcome.

To book a place call Roddy Beare 020 8292 4324 by 15 Feb

Please make cheques payable to:
Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum

al Calendar

13 April – Brick Lane Music Hall – something different this time! Few places still left for this very popular outing. Return transport, sumptuous lunch and a good, old fashioned music hall show are included in the ticket £40 pp. Contact Jacky Pearce on 020 8482 3575, jackypearce@blueyonder.co.uk

20 April – Day visit to Highclere Castle, Newbury: great opportunity to see where Downton Abbey, BBC drama series, was filmed and visit the finest occupied Victorian mansion in England. Cost: £26 includes return coach journey, entry to Highclere and entry to “wonderful things” Egyptian Exhibition. Pick up at Lidl/Argos Enfield Town. For bookings please call Lorraine Murray on 020 8805 3506 lorraineofenfield@yahoo.co.uk or Jean Mittins on 020 8367 2102 mercia121@talktalk.net

11 May – Train trip to York: Places still available for this lovely day-trip to the historic city of York. Dept from London: 8.30am; arrival in York: 10.30am; Dept from York: 5.30pm; arrival in London: 7.30pm. Cost approximately £25. Contact **Bill Thear:** 020 8363 9216, 46 St George’s Rd, EN1 4TX email: thear_242@hotmail.com

20 Sep – Discover stunning Croatia! Washed by the sparkling waters of the Adriatic sea, Croatia has one of the most beautiful coastlines in Europe. This warm and welcoming destination is our choice for next September and we welcome you along on the Travelsphere trip full of historical and cultural heritage. This is an 8-day holiday with lots of optional excursions, including Venice and the Lipica stud farm which breeds the famous Lipizzaner horses. For full information, an itinerary and booking forms contact Olivia on 020 8447 8841 olivia.harrod@virginmedia.com

A few of the Forum’s forthcoming events for your diary:

17 May – London Walk to Bloomsbury & the Literary Quartet:

22 Jun – London Walk to Old Hampstead Village:

Jul 2011 – Visit to Kenwood House and picnic:

Contact Polly Lawman at the office for these 3 activities.

Aug/Sep – Colchester & Constable country day trip: contact **Olivia Goodfellow:** 8447 8841 email: oliviaharrod@virginmedia.com

Christmas lunch sold-out again!

100 of the Forum’s members enjoyed a sumptuous Christmas lunch on 6 Dec at the NECC, putting everyone in a festive mood. The people were fun, the food was great and thanks to the Mayor for joining us. God bless and see you again next year!

Roddy Beare

St. Martin’s-in-the-fields and National Gallery day out

15 participants enjoyed the Freedom Pass day out on 23 November. We visited St. Martin’s-in-the-field in the morning for an audio tour of the historic building, had a lovely lunch at the crypt where the floor is actually gravestones, and listened to the lunchtime concert in the Church. **“The church is stunning and I love the ceiling. I would recommend the visit to everyone.”** In the afternoon we joined in a tour of the National Gallery: **“the highlight of the tour for me was the portrait by Paul Delaroche called The Execution of Lady Jane Grey. It was sad but evocative.” “I never knew a painting can be so complicated – so much more than meets the eye. I learnt a lot from the tour.”** After an afternoon coffee we made our way home, tired but content with having explored a couple of London’s treasures. **Polly Lawman**

Forum sends £578 to Help for Heroes fund

Day trip to Imperial War Museum, Duxford

Early on Armistice Sunday morning, 24 Forum members set off from Enfield Civic Centre travelling for the first time by mini-buses supplied by Enfield Community Transport to Duxford, Cambridgeshire and were admirably driven by two volunteer drivers from the Forum, Robert Chester and John Hinnigan.

After hot drinks on arrival our members set off to explore the museums many interesting exhibitions in the airfield hangers. I took a group inside the supersonic airliner Concorde and standing under its huge delta wings I gave a brief talk on its development and operating characteristics. Alas, this masterpiece of aeronautical engineering was withdrawn from service after a fatal crash in France in 2000.

At 11am we all stood and honoured the two minute silence to commemorate the fallen of two world wars and subsequent military operations. Lest we forget **“Their Name Liveth For Evermore”** and **“For Your To-morrow They Gave Their Today”**.

Some members stayed on in the hanger to take part in the Service of Remembrance, joining many veterans wearing their medals with pride and no doubt remembering their fallen comrades. Alas, as the day went on low cloud and drizzle prevented the historic Spitfire fighter aircraft fly past.

Forum member Jean Bigsby wrote to us expressing her thanks for the trip to Duxford Airfield for Remembrance Sunday adding: **“This trip was of special interest to my husband who served as a navigator in the R.A.F. during the war. The memorial service was especially moving. We thank Roy Barrows for the arrangements and the two drivers for the community transport. A day long to be remembered.”**

Before setting off for home, models of a Concorde and Spitfire were raffled in aid of Help For Heroes and £52 was raised which when gift aid was added totalled £66, the Forum’s tribute and a fitting end to a long, interesting day on Remembrance Sunday 2010. To date the Forum has contributed £578 to this worthy charity.

Royal Opera House tour

Forum members have also travelled to Covent Garden for a group backstage tour of the Royal Opera House. We were welcomed by our enthusiastic guide, Sarah Westley, who took us on a one and half hour backstage tour of this world famous cultural centre, home of the Royal Ballet Company and International Opera House.

We learnt all about this third building of the Royal Opera House, the two previous having been destroyed by fire. Our tour took us all around the backstage areas and we were informed about the huge scenery sets, where they were made and how they are positioned on stage.

We stopped at the hats and costume department and had the opportunity to see and touch items made for famous performers of operas and ballet. We had the privilege of watching **Carlos Acosta** and **Tamara Rojo** rehearsing their solo roles of pure dance and expressive mime for their performance in the ballet **Giselle**.

At the end of the tour we all agreed how very much we had enjoyed this unique tour which was so over subscribed that I have arranged for another on Thursday 13 January which too is now over subscribed.

Roy Barrows

Polly's Patter.....

Sunday lunch with a difference

Merrill Lynch is an American bank at the heart of London's financial district. Every December they invite 300 older Londoners for lunch and give them the opportunity to make free phone calls to anywhere in the world.

So 21 Forum members braved the chill morning to take the coach from the Civic Centre. The journey was a trip down memory lane for many of us. We travelled the length of Green Lanes, through Islington and reached the City with its wonderful mix of old and new architecture.

St. Paul's looked truly magnificent in the sunshine and soon after we reached our destination to be greeted by a cheerful Santa and a choir singing Christmas carols. After coffee and biscuits we were invited to make our phone calls and send greetings to relatives and friends around the world – and we certainly did – to Pakistan, America, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, India, Kenya, Tanzania, Greece and others..

Then it was time for a glass of sherry, a sumptuous hot buffet lunch and indulgent choice of puddings. The hospitality throughout was impeccable and the cheerfulness of our hosts infective. Just before leaving at 2pm we were given a generous goodies-bag which rounded off a perfect day – and what a wonderful start to the festive season.

Affiliates meeting

We held a very successful meeting at the Dugdale Centre, attended by 40 people representing 28 of the groups affiliated to the Forum. Irene Richards welcomed everyone and Doug Taylor, Leader of Enfield Council, opened a free-ranging discussion on the council's budget, its impact on older people and the voluntary sector.

This was a great chance to quiz the council leader and get one-to-one-replies. This private meeting was held in a spirit of openness that augurs well for our future relations with council leaders. The fact that we could put on such a meeting – enabling people to air their thoughts in a frank and open way – is testimony to the value

of the Forum which I think affiliates attending appreciated. Forum members will have the chance to influence the Council Budget when Cllr Doug Taylor comes to our Skinners Court meeting on 18 January as listed in our forthcoming meetings programme.

Indeed, our affiliates took the opportunity to raise many issues – too long to list here – but they included the future of the Freedom pass; future of Dugdale Centre including its use as a venue for theatrical performances and as an advice and information centre; support for elderly and disabled people who do not qualify for council care; the future of small annual council grants to voluntary organisations; the future of vulnerable people with mental health problems who may be pushed into residential care; and seeking council support for Good Neighbourhood Schemes.

The presentation by Doug Taylor was sent to all participants; a full report and feedback of the meeting will be sent to all affiliates in January 2010 and will be available from the Forum's office.

Cheers volunteers

32 members joined us for festive mince pies and coffee early in December. There was a presentation on the work of the Forum and the areas where volunteers can help. Lovely informal atmosphere, people relaxed, and enjoyed themselves. They filled in questionnaires and their feedback of the meeting was very positive – excellent.

Main points:

One attendee agreed to join the Forum's executive committee and three volunteers have offered to help on a Monday and Tuesday so we can look into extending the office hours for a couple of days a week from April 2011 – but we'd like a few more volunteers to enable us to open the office in the afternoon every day. Two people will be joining the social sub-committee and we are developing a good code of practice for volunteers which will help to recruit and retain people. A full report will be available in the New Year.

Polly Lawman
Development Officer

Variety the spice of life

That's what they say and judging by the following activities, it is right.

Many tears were shed when 40 Forum members went to the New London Theatre to see the very moving production of War Horse in October, based on the celebrated novel by children's laureate Michael Morpurgo, but we all agreed that it was worth the tissues.

Then early in November it was Turkish delight when 42 members had another wonderful lunch at Samdan on the Green in Winchmore Hill. Members apprehensive of trying Turkish food for the first time were impressed and said they would definitely come again.

Christmas came early with boogie-time on December 7 when 90 members enjoyed an atmospheric evening of fantastic food and music at the ever popular North Enfield Conservative Club. Evidence of this frivolity can be seen on the Forum website and the event raised £370 for Forum funds.

Looking to the future for our Germany Walking holiday August 2011 - a single room has become available on this trip, so if you are interested, contact Olivia without delay.

And for the Discover Croatia trip September 2011 - bookings are going well and we currently have 11 members booked on this trip so far. There are, at present, 4 single rooms and 3 twin rooms still available.

Olivia Goodfellow

The Forum in Europe

Over 50s representatives from the towns Enfield is twinned with met in Courbevoie for the first time to compare and contrast how older people are supported in their respective communities. Each delegation presented the profile they had prepared and highlighted aspects of service and older people's involvement that were felt to be good practice or found wanting. The various profiles and the report on this first conference can be viewed on the project website (www.eur50plus.org) set up by our Forum members.



From the Chair's chair



The Jewel in the Crown

Every so often, as your Chair, I am invited to attend various events – often openings of this or that. On the 26th November I went to the opening of the £1.5 million completely refurbished Formont Centre. I doubt if most people in the borough have heard of it: I knew it existed but had little or no idea of what it was for.

It is tucked away in Waverley Road, just off Windmill Hill and it is a jewel in Enfield's facilities. The Centre supports adults and also children from a special school who have profound and multiple learning difficulties including autism, epilepsy and those who need assistance with their everyday lives.

We were given a tour of the facilities by some of the users. These include an Art Room – examples of the art produced are displayed around all the walls - a Training Room; a Computer Room with programmes devised specifically for the users; a Music Room – we all joined in with great gusto and mixed abilities; a Wellbeing Room – with specially designed exercise facilities to help those physically not able to maintain and improve movement; a Pool which can cater for up to three users and has variable coloured lighting and music for stimulation – it was very warm and is kept at a constant high temperature.

Phew! There is also a state of the art multi-sensory room equipped with user controlled lighting, cinema, music, aromatherapy diffuser and a multimedia “cube” which projects special effects on an interactive “floor”. Regular users were closely involved in the refurbishment process including having the walls painted in their favourite colours.

The Centre is not meant to cater for everything that a user might need. There are outreach activities such as riding, bowling and shopping. It used to cater for about 70 people but is now capable of more. It is also a resource for service users on a personal budget who can pick and chose the activities they wish to do. However, as one of the centre managers said: **“ We don't want anyone to just be here and that is their life, we want them to be out in the community and to live a normal life.”**

I was deeply affected by my visit – humbled by the dedication of carers, many of whom had had years of caring and who warmly welcomed the new facilities as life enhancing for their son or daughter. Perhaps the only cloud on the horizon is the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and the effect it will have on all our lives.

Enfield's Spending Review is out for consultation and it dramatically demonstrates the pressures on reducing the Adult Social Services budget. Most services for disabled people are statutory, however. Nevertheless, I hope that the Formont jewel is kept shining for those who are the most vulnerable in our society.

I wish for all our members and readers that 2011 will, at the very least, be peaceful.

Irene Richards

If you need more information please contact:
The Learning Difficulties Integrated Team
St. Andrews Court, 1-4 River Front
Enfield, EN1 3SY
Phone: 020 8379 5737: Monday-Friday 9.00 – 5.00

We've topped 3,000 again

Hello everyone, wishing you a happy New Year and I hope you all had a good Christmas. I cannot believe we have completed our first decade of this new millennium. I'm delighted to welcome another group of active, voluntary workers who have affiliated to the Forum – Enfield Breathe Easy.

So if you, or somebody you know, is experiencing breathing or lung problems you may like to go along to their monthly meeting held on the second Wednesday of the month at the Royal British Legion in Holtwhites Hill from 1 – 3pm.

You will be able to get advice issued by the British Lung Foundation, hear how other people are coping and, most important of all, it will encourage you to leave the armchair and get some exercise, says the Breathe Easy secretary, Sylvia Napier, who can be reached on 020 8363 4237.

November was a good month for us with 61 new members and one new life member, so we now have over 3,000 paid up members. When I joined in 2002 I was the 150th member so, if as they say there is strength in numbers, we surely have that strength now to move forward with our campaigns.

We would like to see a better response to our East of the Borough meetings in 2011. So perhaps you can tell us what we are not getting right, what do we need to do to get you there?

A number of people have been kind enough to write and say thank you for the work the Forum does. We also once again thank those of you who have made donations and been able to Gift Aid. Our volunteers must not be forgotten because without them the Newsletter would not go out and our events would not get off the ground.

Joyce Pullen, Membership Secretary

Thank you, social committee

The Forum really does owe a big vote of thanks to that team of volunteers gathered around social secretary Roddy Beare for their dedication and diligence, having organised in the past year a stream of events – lunches, dinners, discos, trips abroad and to the seaside, Freedom Pass visits to exhibitions and places of interest from Wembley Stadium and the Brick Lane music hall to the Royal Opera House – this list is by no means complete.

The result of all their efforts is threefold. Firstly, you may like to know that our treasurer Champak Mistry reports that the social committee's work has raised more than £2000 for the Forum's funds in the past year alone, which he says deserves to be recognised since it helps us to employ our Polly and Mina and equip the Forum office.

Secondly, their activities help to combat the feeling of loneliness and isolation that too many older people experience. They have told us that they would never leave the house to go to this event or that but for the Forum organising it.

Thirdly, the social committee's work gives an added dimension to the Forum's all-round appeal yes, as a campaigning organisation, as you'll see reflected in this Newsletter, but it also enables us to project ourselves as a body committed to an all-round improvement in the quality of life of older people.

And while we are doing that we also know how to enjoy ourselves as over 100 people at the Christmas lunch can testify. They heard the Mayor of Enfield, Cllr Jayne Buckland, say that the Forum was a force to be reckoned with and she stayed with us for some three hours as we danced to the music of DJ Danny and enjoyed a fantastic array of food.

And having organised a very successful Elders Friendship Day last year on the River Lea for people living on their own, the social committee will this year be using the money donated by Waitrose, whose customers voted for the Forum, to organise a similar event.

So thank you, social committee. Too numerous to name individually but we know who you are!

Tea Dances at Ruth Winston Centre
Tuesdays 1-3pm £2 per week, 1st two week FREE!
190 Green Lanes, N13 5UE Tel: 8886 5346



Enfield's Good Neighbours

The Enfield Good Neighbour groups are local groups usually run by volunteers that can offer practical help e.g. shopping, transport, befriending and visiting, prescription collection and small odd jobs to the elderly and house-bound in need. There are currently six Good Neighbour groups in Enfield and they each cover a certain area within the borough.

The Forum invites Newsletter readers to consider offering their support to any one of the Good Neighbour groups listed below either as a volunteer helper or in drawing the groups' existence to the attention of someone who may be in need of help. The Forum was instrumental in getting the Council to undertake a mapping exercise which led to the groups coming together in a more co-ordinated way and we are still seeking funding to publicise their valuable work. Please contact your local group if you or a friend/neighbour needs help. **New volunteers – especially drivers – always welcome.**

Eastern Enfield Good Neighbours
(EN3 area)
0208 805 3800
Mon-Fri 10am-12noon

Meet A Need with Christian Care
(Enfield Town, Bush Hill Park & Forty Hill)
0208 882 1831
Mon-Fri 10am-4pm

Palmers Green Good Neighbours
(N13 area)
0208 882 4937
Mon-Fri 10am-12noon

Edmonton Green Good Neighbours
(for N9 and N18)
0208 503 0569
Mon-Fri 9.30am-2pm

Operation FISH
(Southgate, Oakwood, Cockfosters, Hadley Wood)
0208 336 9929
Mon-Fri (office hours vary)

Winchmore Hill Community Care
(N21 area)
0208 882 7824
Mon-Fri 10am-12noon

(All groups have answerphone service)

Always look on the bright side

Wrong reply

Forum member Bob Young tells us he just missed out on the top prize in the trivia contest at his local church by one point. He reached the last question in the lead when the question was: **"Where do women have the most hair?"** On giving the wrong answer he was immediately asked to leave.

Apparently, the correct answer is Africa!

Partners

Celibacy can be a choice in life, or a condition imposed by circumstances.

While attending a marriage guidance weekend, Ken and his wife Janet, listened to the instructor declare: **"It is essential that husbands and wives know the things that are important to each other."** He then addressed the men, **"Can you name and describe your wife's favourite flower?"**

Ken leaned over, touched Janet's arm gently, and whispered, **"Homepride, isn't it?"**

And thus began Ken's life of celibacy.

Stop and search

An elderly man was stopped by the police at 1am and asked where he is going. The man replied: **"I'm going to a lecture about alcohol abuse and its effects on the human body"**. Taken aback, the constable asked: **"And who gives that lecture at this time in the morning?"** The man replied. **"My wife"**.

First Jewish President

Fast forward to the year 2020. The United States has just elected the first woman and first Jewish president - Susan Goldfarb. She calls up her mother in San Francisco after election day and says: **"Moma, you'll be coming to my inauguration?"**

'I don't think so', says Moma. **It's a ten hour drive, your father isn't as young as he used to be, and my arthritis is acting up again.'**

'Don't worry, Moma about it. I'll send Air Force One to pick you up and take you home. And a limousine will pick you up at your door.'

'I don't know. Everybody will be so fancy-schmantzy, what would I wear?', says Moma. **'Oh Moma,'** says Susan, **'I'll make sure you have a wonderful gown made by the best designer in New York.'**

'Honey,' Moma complains, **'you know I can't eat those rich foods you and your friends like to eat.'**

The President Elect replies: **'Don't worry, Moma. The entire affair is going to be handled by the best caterer in New York, kosher all the way. Moma, I really want you to come.'**

So Moma reluctantly agrees and on 20 January 2020, Susan Goldfarb is being sworn in as President of the United States. In the front row sits the new President's mother, who leans over to the senator sitting next to her and whispers:

'You see that woman over there with her hand on the bible taking the oath of allegiance? Her brother's a doctor!'

STOP!



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Silver Screen – an apology

We are sorry to report that for the time being the monthly film showings at Cineworld, Southbury Road have been discontinued due to mishaps completely outside the Forum's control. We are, however, endeavouring to meet the cinema management with a view to re-starting the programme in March, but we will have to guarantee a minimum audience of 40 for each monthly performance.

When we meet the management it will help us to know that we have a list of interested people. So can you please put your name down with the office. **Call 020 8 360 8743 or email (polly.lawman@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk).**

Decent state pensions – still a dream?

The idea of a good income for all pensioners has, I suppose, been the promised aim of everyone – politicians, trades unions, voluntary and community organisations since 1908 when Lloyd George first introduced the state pension.

And they are still at it. A few weeks ago there was the announcement of a coalition government Green Paper consulting on a plan to introduce an easily understood and administered flat rate basic state pension. The rate will be higher than the means tested £133 Pension Credit Guarantee payment for single pensioners and £202 for couples. This will be largely paid for by abolishing the State Earnings Related Pension (SERPS) and the tax relief for those who contract out. This proposal seems to reflect a scheme in a 1990 pamphlet by Pensions Minister Steve Webb and journalist Samuel Brittan.

This “jam tomorrow” plan will do nothing for today’s pensioners. Also, this may not be popular with the current workforce who will pay extra taxes and may not receive a bigger pension. Hopefully the consultation will allow us to again raise the issue of uprating by CPI, an index which does not even pretend to be a cost of living index.

This proposal, which will increase the incomes of the least well off pensioners at a cost to middle income earners, follows a trend established under the Thatcher Government in 1979 and followed by all subsequent Governments. Why? It used to be said that Britain had the best pension system in the world. Why the cuts? How did we get here?

Look back

So let’s have a brief look at the history of pensions. Cash retirement gratuities for soldiers and senior aides were paid in ancient Egypt and became the norm for the Romans once all the attractive land had been given away. A bag of gold after a long and loyal period of service was calculated to ensure loyalty and honesty. Mutinies in the legions were sometimes eased by increased promises.

Retirement gratuities and pensions have a millennia long history in the public sector and became a major feature of private sector employment at large well established companies in the late 18th century. For example, some way from the Nile, the lock-keepers of the River Lea Navigation had their own contributory pension scheme by 1820.

In spite of this very long history the widespread availability of pensions only took off after the 2nd World War. The Attlee government beefed up our contribution-based state pensions, though the desire to give generous pensions to all meant that none of the early beneficiaries contributed nearly enough to pay for their own pensions.

Private pensions also blossomed and by the mid -1960s around 60% of workers were in occupational schemes. It was felt that all people should have access to good pensions and an extremely generous state earnings related pension (SERPS) was introduced by Barbara Castle with effect from 1978. This marked the high water of state pensions. A full entitlement was based on the best 20 years of working life and 100% of the pension passed to surviving widows or widowers. Astonishingly, no long term costings were published at the time.

Thatcher’s cuts

The Thatcher government started 20 years of cuts when it broke the newly introduced linkage of state pensions to earnings. The final chop was in 2000 when the concession that mothers could still get a full SERPS pension for 20 years work was abandoned. The main losers from all these changes are working mothers on middle incomes.

Recently retired nurses and schoolteachers, who took time out for children, will have lost around half the state pension they might reasonably have expected in 1975. The cuts in contributory pensions and massive tax increases on private pensions were used by both Tory and Labour governments to substantially increase means tested benefits. Optimistic politicians find it hard to accept that it is very unusual for more than two thirds of people entitled to do so, actually take up means tested benefits.

So what went wrong? The golden dreams of the late 1960s and 1970s have all crumbled to dust 40 years later. The key word here is dreams. In fact the world was never as good as it seemed. SERPS as originally presented was horrifically expensive; this may be why no long term costings appeared. Even in the 1990s, when projected costs had already been slashed by 75%, Labour ministers were still seeking further cuts.

Occupational pensions were nowhere near as generous as they appeared in the 50s and 60s. Changing jobs, having babies or even getting married could result in loss of pension rights. Industrial change led to many pension providing employers disappearing. Survey evidence is limited but many people retiring in the late 1980s reported they received lower pensions than they expected. Increased regulation in later years has made pension promises more certain but, along with tax increases, increased the cost of provision to such an extent that almost no private sector employers offer salary related pensions to new recruits.

Take away retired public sector workers and it is pretty obvious the Golden Age never dawned for most people. Only around 60% of retired people get an occupational pension and the amounts of pensions received are not very much, the occupational pension of the typical single person being £70 p.w. in DWP’s latest estimate. It was perhaps inevitable that some cuts in SERPS would take place. It was based on the male breadwinner, wife at home lifestyle of the 1950s and 60s. By the time it was introduced the twin revolutions of cheap washing machines and the pill had “liberated” women from domestic drudgery so the notion of 100% inheritance of pensions looked out of place. Increasing longevity also made a very generous universal state pension appear a poor use of limited public funds.

The good news is that pensioners’ incomes are generally higher than ever before. In the last ten years average pensioner incomes grew three times more quickly than average earnings. This is because newly retired people have larger pensions than existing pensioners and this trend seems likely to continue.

The bad news is that the average increase in pensioner incomes disguises the fact that many older pensioners have very low incomes and have no prospect of an increase unless the state or occupational pension gives it to them.

The abandonment of RPI as the measure to uprate pensions is a very cruel blow to people who thought they had made careful provision for their futures. We will constantly need to remind Government that not everything in the garden is rosy.

John Ball, Forum vice-Chair

John is an economist and was for 15 years before his retirement in charge of government analysis of pensions and family benefits.

The National Pensioners Convention to which we are affiliated is urging all Forums to join the national rally against the cuts on Saturday 26 March – more details later.

Words from the wise

"I find television very educational. Every time someone turns it on, I go to another room and read a book" – Groucho Marx.

"Sex among the old is the best kept and most glorious secret in the world. It's a secret because the young don't want to know and wouldn't believe it if they did know" - writer Victoria Glendinning.

"It ought to be lovely to be old, to be full of the peace that comes of experienced and wrinkled, ripe fulfillment" - author, poet, playwright, essayist and literary critic D H Lawrence.

"Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move the hearts of men" - Johann Wolfgang Goethe, the German born poet who at 74 was disappointed when in love with a 17 year-old lass.

"Women have almost too many powers. I don't think I'm alone in never being consulted about any major decisions in the house" - author Martin Amis.

"The Eye's circulation figures are like John Terry's shorts. In the past they may have been down - but now they are firmly up again" - Ian Hislop, editor of Private Eye.

Poetry group moves home

Nearly three years ago Monty Meth, then Chair of the Forum, asked me to organise a Poetry Group as part of a lifelong learning experience. At the first meeting at the Oakwood Library in April 2008 just a handful of people turned up. Since then it has grown and in April 2010 some 28 people appeared for a meeting in a room restricted to 25 people.

Obviously, our meetings had to take place in a more roomy environment and we found the new Enfield Town had a Community Room accommodating 35 people - with the added advantage of being in easy reach from all parts of the borough. To ensure that everyone who wants to participate can do so, it would not be appropriate to have any more than 35 people present.

So the first meeting at the new Town Library venue will take place on Thursday, 20th January from 10.30am to 12 noon, when the theme will be Competition Entries that never made it/Disappointments, led by Judy Klimt. The next meeting will be at the same time on Thursday 17th February and will take the form of a workshop conducted by Myra Schneider, a local poet who has published many volumes of her work. It is meant for those wishing to write poetry and will be restricted to the first 16 people to notify me of their intention to be present. For this special workshop there will be a charge of £3 per person.

Lastly, a reminder from Enfield's Mayor, Cllr Jayne Buckland, that the closing date for the poetry competition in aid of her charity appeal is 31 January. The entry fee is £3 per poem for the first three with a first prize of £500. And there's a special £50 prize for a poem on Enfield.

A full description of the Forum's Poetry Group and its activities appeared in the May/June 2010 Newsletter, when an entry that had appeared on the website of Bookbite under the heading Set up a poetry group was quoted – see <http://www.bookbite.org.uk/resources/howtoguides/how-to-set-up-a-poetry-group/>

David Oliver

Roll up, roll, up!

Roll up with your left over presents and see they are put to good use by donating them to the Forum for raffle prizes at our various events, We can help to clear out your cupboards after Christmas by taking your surplus bottles of Bailey's or bath salts, chocolates or candies. Just bring them along to a Forum event or call the office and we'll collect.



ENFIELD BOROUGH OVER 50s FORUM

www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Surname	
First Name(s)	
Organisation*	
Address	
Post Code	
Phone Number	
Email	

* Not applicable if joining as an individual or a couple.

(I/We/My Club) wish(es) to apply for membership of the Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum. Enclosed is a payment of (**£6.00 individual membership; £9.00 for couples; £15.00 for Clubs**). Cheques should be made payable to Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum. (Delete as appropriate). We invite members to register for two years at twice the above rates as this cuts down the administration burden. **Life membership is on offer at £100, £150 and £250** respectively for single, joint and club subscriptions

How did you hear about the Forum or who introduced you?

If you have any special skills and are willing to put them to good use in helping the Forum Committee please tell us:

If either you or your partner pay tax on your income we can claim gift aid from HMRC tax office on any subscription or donations you make to the Forum. Currently this allows us to claim from HMRC an extra 25% on your subscription. For us to claim gift aid on your contributions please sign and date the statement below.

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Signed:

Dated:

Please post or deliver your application form to Joyce Pullen, Membership Officer, Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum, Salisbury House, Bury Street West, Edmonton, N9 9LA. or hand in at a Forum Meeting with the appropriate amount. Receipt of the bimonthly newsletter will indicate your subscription has been processed. Please note the Forum is temporarily based at this address as Millfield House, Silver Street, is being refurbished.

Also our subscription year runs from 1 April to 31 March in the following year. Subscriptions from April 2011 will increase to £7, £10.50 and £17.50 respectively for individuals, couples and clubs.

Chair: Irene Richards Vice Chair: John Ball & Prabodh Shukla Treasurer: Champak Mistry Secretary: Tony Watts