

The Pensioner

Journal of the Brighton & Hove Pensioners' Forum

No. 37, Autumn 2010

Joining Forces

A hard working steering group are planning to merge the Pensioners' Forum with 60+ Action to form a stronger organisation to give local older people a bigger voice!

We are pressing ahead with plans for the proposed merger of the Pensioners' Forum and 60+ Action. A steering group formed of members of both organisations has been meeting frequently to formulate the details and help the project become a stronger voice for all local older people. The new project will be known as Pensioner Action, and will be managed by Impetus, a charity focused on empowering local people, with Graham Lee as project leader, providing strong advocacy skills. The project will be led by older people, and the new structure encourages increased representations for older people throughout relevant groups in the city.



Our main outputs (The Pensioner and the 60+ neighbourhood groups) will continue as far as funding permits. We have just secured a new contract with the PCT, giving funding until March 2012, which is excellent news, and will allow us to continue our important work for the time being.

The Pensioners' Forum must be dissolved to allow the new merged project to swing into action; paid up members are being sent a postal vote with this issue to decide whether they agree to this. Subscriptions to The Pensioner from this point forward will no longer encompass membership, but for £3 per year you can still subscribe to receive a posted copy of the magazine (renewable each November – see the back page).

Members attending our AGM in July overwhelmingly agreed that the organisation should continue to pursue the merger, and that all should be kept up to date with progress via The Pensioner. Copies of our constitution and the minutes of the AGM are available by contacting the office.

'Pensioner Action' will continue to fight for the things you think are important; if you have any input, feedback or issues you would like us to raise then get in touch. We will keep you up to date with our progress in the coming months.



New threat to pensions



Local Indian war memorials



Say no to the end of free swimming!

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Editor's Letter



There's a lot of change in the air at the moment, as you will see from our cover story about the merger. It is being driven by a hard-working steering group intent on doing their best to improve the lives of older people in our city. We put the plans to members at our AGM in July, attended by around 60 people – a record

turnout. Clearly older people's issues have a firm place on everyone's agenda – and members certainly made their voices heard. There was overwhelming agreement at the meeting that the two groups should be working together to plan the merger, which was seen as beneficial on many levels. Minutes are available to those interested – please give us a call.

A quick update on Older People's Day: as you will know from previous issues, this is too much for the Forum to organise singlehandedly this year. It is being organised by the City Council, and looks set to go ahead in the coming months as a combined event for lots of groups, probably called 'People's Day'. As soon as we know more, we will be in touch.

We are here to listen your concerns – so any issues, please get in touch. We don't provide advocacy on individual issues, but if there is something bothering you in your neighbourhood, or a lack of a service you think would be good for older people, or a gripe about a service provider you might have – let us know. We'll do our very best make you heard.

With the new merged project, the 'membership fee' is becoming become a 'subscription-only' fee (£3 per year) to The Pensioner. As you will see from our cover story we are currently holding a postal vote for our membership to let us know that they agree with dissolving the Forum to allow our new project to form - we need your feedback! Members have been sent a voting form and an SAE so they can have a say.

We will of course continue producing The Pensioner, and hope to raise more funds to do so; any ideas around this are welcomed. We'll be back in the spring with more news, so stay tuned...

Write to: Lila Hunnisett, Pensioners' Forum, 1st Fl, Intergen House, 65 - 67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2JQ. Tel: 01273 229004
Email: lila.hunnisett@pf.bh-impetus.org

The Pensioner circulation

4,000 copies of *The Pensioner* are printed, and it is circulated to many more by email. The Forum recently decided to produce three issues per year, in February, June and October. The new project, Pensioner Action, will be seeking funding to maintain the publication, and increase circulation and frequency. We are also looking to begin parallel production of a monthly bulletin which contains information and upcoming events to keep you up to date. More information will be published next issue.

Get the Pensioner emailed regularly to you for free - call us on 229004 / email: lila.hunnisett@pf.bh-impetus.org

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What is the Pensioners' Forum?

The Pensioners' Forum is a members' organisation of older people and older people's groups in Brighton, Hove and surrounding areas.

The aims of the Forum are:

- Engaging with older people
- Acting as a co-ordinating body for local older people & older people's groups
- Advocacy & campaigning on issues of importance for older people
- Promoting cultural, social and educational opportunities
- Challenging discrimination by encouraging understanding of older people's issues

Would you like a large print copy? If so, please call us on 01273 229004.

Older People's Council News

Jack Hazelgrove, Chair of the OPC gives The Pensioner his regular update on the work of the OPC, which is an independent body set up and supported by Brighton & Hove City Council. It works in partnership with the Council and other large statutory services to give older people a say in policies and services.



Jack Hazelgrove, OPC

As autumn approaches, and the major government spending review threatens further cuts, this is an anxious time for pensioners. Where will the axe fall – bus passes? Winter fuel allowance? Pensioner credit? Free TV licences for the over 75's? Already the government has withdrawn financial support for free swimming for pensioners. The OPC has

sent a letter to the City Council requesting the renewal of this concession. Underneath is an excerpt from this letter.

Of course, regular exercise, including swimming and walking helps older people to maintain a healthy lifestyle. It will be most interesting to hear the views of the man who knows most about the state of the health of the city – Dr. Tom Scanlan – our guest speaker at our AGM (see details on the right). I hope to see you there and wish you well, Jack Hazelgrove, Chair, OPC

Extract from OPC letter to City Council requesting renewal of free swimming

It is with some dismay that the Older People's Council notes that from the end of this August, the City Council (and the Coalition Government) will withdraw its support for free swimming for people over 60, although it is good to see that free swimming for under 11's will continue at the City's swimming pools until the end of March 2011.

Everyone will be aware of the Government plans for cuts to public services, but the phrase "short-termism" springs to mind when considering the wider and long-term effects of some policies which are being promoted. As much as a year ago, one of the Brighton and Hove City Council Cabinet members was proudly announcing the excellent figures that "more than 10,000 residents had taken advantage of the

free swimming scheme", and recognising that the scheme was providing older people with the benefits of exercise and socialising.

The Government initiative to offer free swimming to under 16's and the over 60's was landmark moment in the bid to build a healthier and more active nation. Building on the Olympic investment legacy, it enabled many to engage more often in one of the most popular participation sports, keep fit, tackle weight problems and save money in the long term for the NHS.

We urge the City Council (and the Primary Care Trust) to review the policy on free swimming and to seek by all means possible to secure funding to support for this service for older people in Brighton & Hove.

AGM of the Older People's Council

Everyone interested in older people's concerns will be welcome at the next public meeting of the OPC:

Wednesday 27 October from 10am to 1pm, in the meeting room at Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane, Brighton.

Start at 10am with the AGM of the OPC. This will be followed at 10.30am with the public meeting about public health and older people with Dr Tom Scanlan, Director of Public Health, NHS Brighton & Hove.

At a time when public service budgets are under pressure, this will be an excellent opportunity to ask questions on this important issue, and to provide feedback from the older people's community. Refreshments will be provided. For more info, contact the OPC (details below).

www.olderpeoplescouncil.org / tel: 01273 296427 / email: olderpeoplescouncil@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Spending cuts

We won't know until the Comprehensive Spending Review on 20th October just where the cuts are going to fall, but they are inevitable. If you feel that older people are being discriminated against, voice your protests. Importantly, we must all explore alternative ways of service delivery so that satisfactory levels are maintained.



NPC Rally of Parliament

The National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) is holding a rally at parliament square on 27th October standing up for older people's rights. Will you be there? We'll update you next issue.

Threat to pension increases

Pensioners' Forum committee member and Secretary of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance, Sue Howley, assesses the latest threat to our pensions

The new Coalition Government has been very active and some of its actions will be welcomed by some older people. But it has already done a number of things which could impact badly, such as scrapping the free swimming scheme for the over '60s, and there is currently uncertainty about the future of such things as Winter Fuel Payments. All this has been well-covered by the media. However, another proposed change could have much deeper and longer-lasting impact and has been less well-covered. It is the proposal to change the way pensions (and all benefits) increase with prices ("index-linking"). This proposal is being made despite assurances from the three main parties before the election that index-linking of pensions would be protected.

Until now, the practice has been to increase pensions by using the Retail Price Index (RPI). There is another index, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is calculated differently and is almost always lower. The Government says CPI is more appropriate for pensioners, although this is strongly disputed. Arguments can become very technical, but no-one can deny that applying CPI in its present form will mean smaller increases in pensions than would otherwise have been the case. Had pensions been linked to CPI rather than RPI for the last ten years, the basic state pension for a single person would be about £86, rather than the £97.65 it currently is.

The Government has announced its so-called "triple guarantee". From now on, the basic state pension will rise by whichever is highest – prices, earnings, or 2.5%.

This is not as generous as it sounds if CPI is used instead of RPI. (As a one-off, in April 2011, RPI will be used if it is higher than CPI, but after that it would be CPI.)

Importantly, these changes would apply not just to the state retirement pension, but also to public sector occupational pensions and to those private sector pensions where the rules do not specify an RPI increase – which is most of them. Independent consultants estimate that under the new rules, an occupational pensioner currently receiving a pension of £10,000 a year will be more than £800 a year worse off by 2016.

The changes will save the Government £5.8 billion by 2014/15. Meanwhile, they will adversely affect the 11.5 million people who currently receive the state retirement pension (8.5 million of these also have an occupational pension), as well as all future pensioners.

Pressure is growing on the Government to re-consider its plans, not just from national pensioner bodies such as the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), but also from pension industry experts. The NPC argues that the state pension is already one of the least adequate in Europe and, under the new proposals, it will take decades before it has any real impact on tackling pensioner poverty. Locally, pensioner bodies such as the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance are urging their members to write to their MPs. The aim is to ensure that every MP receives so many letters of complaint that they cannot ignore this situation. Why not write yourself? And get friends and family to write too – we might just make a difference!

Write to your MP: Brighton Pavilion: Caroline Lucas MP / Kemp Town: Simon Kirby MP / Hove & Portslade: Simon Weatherley MP. Address for all three: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

Adult Social Care News: Access Point

The single point of access for advice, information and assessment for social care

Access Point has been set up as a single point of contact for people with social care needs and their carers in Brighton, via the telephone number/website below. It can provide the following services:

- Give advice and information to enable people to access the support they need
- Complete assessments over the phone to establish any social care needs
- Arrange services or refer further assessments as required
- Provide services including home care, day care and daily living equipment

To find out more, contact: tel: 01273 295555 / **minicom:** 01273 296388
email: accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk **web:** www.brighton-hove/access

60+ Action Group News



60+ Action runs meetings for older people in four neighbourhoods across Brighton and Hove, and encourages older people to deal with their local issues. Anyone can join - just get in touch! See below for details on what we do.

It's all change at 60+ Action! As you will know from other features in *The Pensioner*, we're developing plans to merge with the Pensioners' Forum, as it is hoped that together we will be stronger. The neighbourhood groups will continue, so don't worry – we're not going anywhere! We'll still be called 60+ Action, and will be fully supported by the new merged project.

The new project will be managed by Graham Lee, who has a strong advocacy background and plenty of experience to bring to the role. Lila from Pensioners' Forum is looking after groups while a new group worker is appointed - watch this space!

60+ Project Leader Jo Tulloch left for pastures new in July. She was sad to say goodbye as she's really enjoyed working with 60+. She's moved on to manage the Lay Assessors Scheme and will be much missed.

During September, members were visited by speakers from

Mind and Age Concern Advocacy services, who gave plenty of useful information on how they help older people. Read the Age Concern article on the back page for more information on help they can provide.

A new 'open forum' item has been introduced to allow members to speak up about what is getting them down, so something can be done about it!

The Craven Vale group recently had some good news - it was able to celebrate securing some community funding to take 16 older people on an outing on the Thames in London in September. The boat trip was followed by tea at the Tate Modern – the day was enjoyed by all (see pictures on the right!).

We want to expand our membership and hope that you will come along to our Christmas parties in November. Invite your friends! Food and fun will be on the agenda – so come and join! All are welcome - give us a call for more details - 01273 229004.



What are the 60+ Action Neighbourhood Groups?

The purpose of the 60+ Action Neighbourhood Groups is to work together to enable older people to tackle issues which affect our everyday lives, such as:

Hospital and GP services - Public transport - Social services - Benefits - Community Safety - Environmental issues - and anything else which may be affecting you as an older person living in Brighton & Hove.

We have regular speakers, give information on services for older people, encourage debate, friendship and work together to get the changes we want for our neighbourhoods. All are welcome to join in!

60+ Action Diary - join in!

Craven Vale Group. Craven Vale Resource Centre, Queensway, Craven Vale • 27th October, 24th November, 26th January - 2.00pm-4.00pm.

Kemp Town/St James/Hanover Group. Courtney King House, Eastern Rd (next door to Sussex County Hospital). • 9th November - 2.30pm-4.00pm. • 12th January, 2.30 - 4pm.

West Hove Group. Muriel House, Ingram Crescent West, Portland Road, Hove. • 16th November, 25th January 2.30pm-4.00pm.

Moulsecoomb Group. The Orchards, Moulsecoomb Way, Moulsecoomb. • 2nd November, 11th January, 2.30pm-4.00pm.

Call 01273 229004 for details.

Letters

Send letters to: Lila Hunnisett, The Pensioners' Forum, 1st Floor, Intergen House, 65-67 Western Road, Hove, BN3 2JQ. Unfortunately we can't print them all & some may be edited, but we really want your opinions!

The politics of ageing

As a new pensioner I was delighted by "The Pensioner" Summer Double Issue. Brimming with interesting features, one item in particular justifies comment.

The issue is challenging - the politics of later life. Francis Tonks' view of Election 2010, is essentially a traditional view of older-people within existing political structures - an approach which most agree has failed older people in Britain. Relying on politicians seen as "scoundrels somewhere down there with estate agents & used car salesmen" to represent us & achieve our objectives for us is always going to be second best & deliver second best.

Yet pensioners are united in having achieved 60+ years with vast life experience. Numerically, a force to be reckoned, as pensioner numbers increase relentlessly, political strength will burgeon over time.

It is claimed that today "60 is the new 40". Retirement age is rising everywhere. Soon a legal challenge to the existing retirement age will succeed since forcing retirement at 65 appears fundamentally unfair and itself, age discrimination. One way or another British people seem likely to be expected to work further into traditional retirement.

We have started to see old political ways changing with the Conservative-Lib Dem Alliance.

I believe it is time for older people to stand up & be counted. There is a sound case for a political party - with all this entails, to address the specific needs of older people in the future. Reliance on past approaches is dead. They haven't worked. We must face the issue head-on & break out of traditional thinking.

As Francis says, a referendum on Alternative voting, electoral reform is at last possible. So why not a role for the Older Peoples' Party? The breadth & depth of life experience older people offer make for a formidable political grouping. With longevity, later pensions, longer working lives, better health etc. we must start the process of political change now ready for the next General Election.

Brighton & Hove leads Britain in so many ways. If it happens in Brighton & Hove today, then Britain tomorrow. What an innovation the Older Peoples' Party could be. *Keith W D Jago*

Editor: A strong proposal which could encourage older people to be listened to. Readers, do get in touch if you have any ideas around this.



Speedy treatment

Dear Editor: Older people need speedy and efficient NHS attention when necessary. *Ray Wootton*

Re: Letter 'Prevention of Illness', The Pensioner 36: The NHS obviously can't afford to support people's quirky lifestyles or imaginary ailments. But if any new treatment is clinically proven to be of benefit to patients, it should be seriously considered for funding. I hope it also goes without saying that "orthodox" medical treatments must be kept under review, and that if any of them can be shown to be harmful or ineffective, they should be discontinued or improved at once. *Bruce A Smith*

Battle of Britain – a floral tribute



Above: Brighton and Hove City Council's Floral Tribute to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, in Easthill Park, Portslade. We apologise for a typing error last issue in our 'Battle of Britain -

70th Anniversary' article. The extract from Winston Churchill's speech should have read: 'Never in the field of human conflict, was so much owed by so many to so few'.

'No!' to the end of free swimming!

Local pensioner and keen swimmer Pat Kehoe, urges us to protest against the end of the Free Swimming Programme - we've done so - will you?

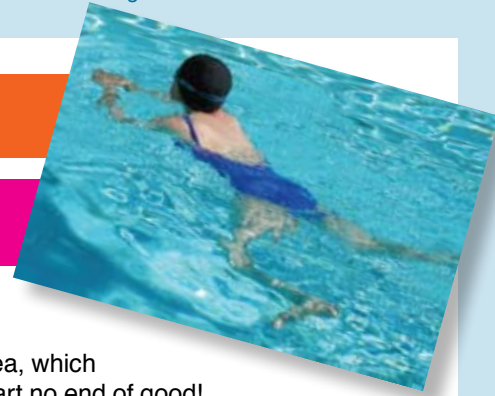
I much enjoyed the benefit of being able to swim at local pools after the introduction of the Free Swimming Programme (FSP) in 2009. Sadly the programme ended in August 2010, though it is being maintained for children aged 11 and under until March 2011.

With the FSP there were three objectives, focused on the under 16's and the 60 plus – to increase the swimming population by teaching non-swimmers to swim, free; increase the amount of swimming they do, free; and consequently improve the health of participants. There was a £140 million budget for a two-year period for the FSP. To put this into some kind of context MP's claimed a record £95.6 million between them in expenses in 2008-09. There are 650 MPs.

My concerns are that stopping this programme is very short-sighted. We should be encouraging and increasing our use of sports facilities; encourage us to use them by making them free. If they are not used they become uneconomic and will close. I was staggered to read that in some Local Authorities (LA's) there are no swimming pools.

By encouraging everybody to use sports facilities, we will improve the health of the nation and, one would imagine, reduce costs to the NHS, but the main benefit will be making individuals' lives longer, livelier and happier. To this end I urge you to contact your local MP and demand that the FSP

is reinstated. For the moment, a free swim will have to be in the sea, which will probably do my heart no end of good!



Advertisement

A Special Christmas Treat

The much loved classic tale of downtrodden Cinderella, who - with the help of her fairy godmother, a large pumpkin and a glass slipper - marries a handsome prince, has been transformed into a sparkling musical by the creative team behind the West End hit Billy Elliott – The Musical.

With beautiful sets and costumes, stunning special effects, a live band and a cast of top West End performers, you know you are on to a winner when you book for this seasonal treat.

Theatre Royal Brighton has conjured up a very special price for weekday matinees in January – groups of 10+ older people pay just £14 each... a saving of £8 per ticket!

To book tickets call our Groups Hotline on 08448 717 617 and quote January Group Special (valid for the following performances: Thu 6 2pm, Fri 7 2pm, Wed 12 2pm, Thu 13 2pm, Fri 14 2pm).



A New Fairy Tale Musical for Christmas

'REALLY DELIVERS THE CHRISTMAS MAGIC IT PROMISES. ONE OF THE BEST CHRISTMAS SHOWS I HAVE SEEN'

Praise from Brighton magazine for *PETER PAN*

Cinderella

GROUP SPECIAL DISCOUNTS

2pm 6, 7, 12, 13 & 14 January



17 DEC 2010 - 16 JAN 2011

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www.ambassadortickets.com/brighton

Letters

Cultural Diversity

With reference to your article in Issue 36, 'Ethnic Minorities in our City', I would welcome comments on my perhaps naive observations.

I frequently hear the phrase "culturally diverse" applied to our city and wonder what this means to the ordinary citizen. Often it seems to be used in a kind of celebratory way, of cultures coming together and enjoying each other's national identities. However, in our O.E.D, 'diverse' means 'unlike in nature or qualities', and to me this does not make for the spirit of social cohesion that our use of the phrase 'rich ethnic diversity' indicates, or to which we should be striving.

*It is true that there is little racism in our city compared to some northern ones, but with right-wing fascist groups again often in the news I feel there is no room for complacency. Recently, a friend of mine witnessed a young Pakistani man being punched and kicked on the ground by a group of bullies because he rightly objected to the 'p***i' word.*

In my view, such violence is based on fear; the fear of us losing our own cultural identity. It is a fear that is bred of ignorance that is being fostered by a lack of mutual engagement. Religion can be both wonderfully salvational and horrifically destructive as, by now, we should have

learned through our world's history. We, and I mean all nations, must respect each others belief systems but realise that we are not separate, but all of the one spirit. We have to learn that humanity is one vast brotherhood of life. We are all a part of God and all creation is in God. So, let us share and celebrate all the wonderful things that we have developed in our individual cultures; things like art, music, poetry, literature, cookery. The list is a long one. We have so much to offer, to gain and to learn from each other. Don't be so insular.

I feel the onus is on the elders of our different countries to sow the seeds from which our succeeding generations may reap the fruits of harmony and accord. Perhaps the BMECP could start an International Arts and Friendship Group where members could bring along their grandchildren as well as a Scotsman, Irishman, Welshman, Cornishman and Englishman! It may require leaving one's politics and religion at the door.

So, in conclusion, I would just like to say to Messrs and Meses Balochi, Bayat, Hernandez, Huang, Kato, Kowalski, Mohammed, Okake, Patel, Popescu, Rasheed, Rossi, Schmidt, oh, and you, Jones - especially you; when I give you a friendly smile in the street, don't just look straight through me but try to smile back, and do likewise to each other. You might just find it brightens up your day a little, and you may feel a little less fearful. And remember, fear is all we have to fear. Clive Taplin

ADVERTISEMENT

ABBEEFIELD – THE BEST KEPT SECRET

The Abbeyfield Brighton & Hove Society is a registered charity no. 212980 and a member of The Abbeyfield Society, whose Royal Patron is HRH The Prince of Wales, KG, KT, GCB, and exists to make older people's lives easier and more fulfilling. Since 1959, Abbeyfield volunteers and staff have worked tirelessly to provide housing, support and companionship to older people in the Brighton & Hove area and was the third of over 600 to be formed in the UK.

Residents, who are usually over 70 years old and, whilst reasonably fit, find a unique opportunity to live in small communities, which normally accommodate about 8 older people.

The Society runs four family houses in Hove, two are in Aymer Road with the others in Wilbury Road and Wilbury Gardens. The houses have been adapted from existing buildings with added facilities. At the centre of each homely house are volunteers and the house manager, who is employed to ensure that the house is comfortable and safe, and that meals are nutritious and enjoyable.

Residents are free from the worries of maintaining a house and garden, paying bills and dealing with loneliness. The studio rooms with en-suite, cost an all inclusive fee of on average £270 per week.

Abbeyfield aims to provide a caring environment. Residents who need some help can arrange visiting services such as a home help, chiropodist, hairdresser and/or care assistant.

It provides a balance of privacy and caring support which can be ideal for many older people who no longer feel happy living alone or sharing their children's home and gives peace of mind to children that their parent(s) is/are safely looked after.

If you would like to know more about becoming a resident or volunteer please contact: the Administrator on 01273 730351 or e-mail abbeyfield-bh@tiscali.co.uk

Abbeyfield
Where older people find care in housing

Do you want a bit more support yet still keep your independence?

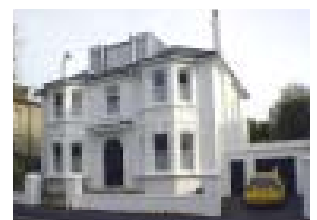
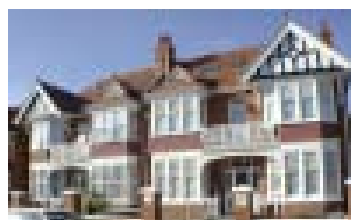
Are you lonely or worried about bills?
Fed up with shopping and cooking?

The Abbeyfield Brighton and Hove Society is a charity that may be able to help.

We have four beautiful houses in Hove with large studio room accommodation which residents can furnish with their favourite pieces. All rooms are en-suite with use of the lounge dining room and garden.

All meals provided. Couples welcome. Average cost of £270 per week.

Contact Sue or Debbie on 01273 730351 or e-mail Abbeyfield-bh@tiscali.co.uk



Support for grandparents

Celia Steer, a local grandparent, has fought for her rights to see her grandchildren, and is encouraging others to do the same. She is setting up a support group for those experiencing similar situations.

Five years ago, our daughter's first marriage broke up and she met her present partner. She has a daughter from her first marriage who we were always able to see from the time she was born. After a few months our daughter got pregnant with her new partner and we were told that we would not see this child. That was devastating for us. We accepted it, as, at the time, we did not have the resources to fight it.

After nearly five years we decided to go to court to get access to the youngest granddaughter. We managed to get legal aid for a good solicitor and barrister. It took 14 months of court cases before we were finally given access to her. At first, we had to go to a contact centre, as our little granddaughter did not know us.

Thankfully, it all went well and we now see her once a month and our other granddaughter every other weekend as she is with her dad the other times. The court case was mentally very upsetting, but thanks to family and friends, and the support of a grandparents website (www.begrand.net) we got through. We were horrified to learn that there are millions of grandparents who have tried to gain access to no avail, due to all the costs.

Having gone through this harrowing experience, I would very much like to set a support groups for grandparents locally who are going through the same heartbreak we experienced. If you would like to hear any more about this story we would love to tell you. Please email me on lonelygrannie@gmail.com or call on 01273 776337.

Celia Steer

If you have found yourself in a similar situation to Celia, would like to get in touch about the group, or have something to say about the subject, get in touch with the Pensioners' Forum - contact details on page 2. We hope to update you next issue.

New website launched to help grandparents

BeGrand.net is a new website to support grandparents. It offers information, advice and support to grandparents on a whole host of topics, from helping children to learn at home, fun activities you can do together, to expert advice on caring for children, as well as guidance on everyday issues around growing up:

- *Information and support about everything to do with grandparenting.*
- *Confidential online advisors trained to deal with legal and social problems.*
- *A place for grandparents to talk to each other about the issues that matter.*

Check out the website at <https://begrand.net> or call or call on 0845 423 55 65.



At Home this Morning Our own radio programme

For the past 2½ years, Brighton and Hove have had their own radio programme – produced by, and for, older people. It is broadcast every Tuesday at 11am and Sunday at 10am on Radio Reverb, 97.2 FM.

A new 55 minute programme is produced every two weeks. Each programme consists of four or five items, embracing a wide range of themes of interest to older people – book and film reviews, health advice, reminiscences, interviews with local people etc.

The programmes are produced by Grey Matters Productions CIC, a company set up by members of the Older People's Council, The Pensioners' Forum, and Age Concern. Bob Gunnell, founder manager of BBC Radio Brighton, leads the group.

Grey Matters now has its own recording studio, thanks to a substantial lottery grant. A team of volunteers conduct interviews and put each programme together; they are keen to recruit new members, providing necessary training.

So listen in – put the times in your diary! And if you'd like to help produce the programmes, call 419723. Tell us what you think about the programmes; what would you like to hear? We would appreciate audience response.



We need volunteers! We want to get *The Pensioner* out to as many older people as possible. If you could distribute in your area, please call! 01273 229004.

The Pensioners' Forum is here to raise your concerns, not only in this magazine, but through our committee, who are members of steering groups and older people's organisations in the city. Get in touch and let us know what's up!

Bowel Screening Saves Lives

We would like to correct information given last issue. It was suggested in the OPC article that men are offered an appointment to complete the bowel cancer test kit; this is not correct. There is a test for bowel cancer; the kit comes in the post to your home, to both men and women around the time they turn 60. The test is quick and easy to complete, and after you submit it, results are given in two weeks.

Older people are at increased risk of bowel cancer. Screening is for healthy people. If you are symptomatic you should see your GP immediately. The most common symptoms are:

- *A persistent change in bowel habit, especially going to the toilet more often or diarrhoea for several weeks*
- *Bleeding from the back passage without any obvious reason*
- *Abdominal pain, especially if it is severe*
- *A lump in your abdomen*

Please remember that these symptoms do not necessarily mean you have bowel cancer but if you have one or more of these symptoms for four to six weeks you should see your GP. If you have any questions or would like more information call Freephone 0800 707 6060.

Ask your pharmacist!

GP's are very busy nowadays, but your regular pharmacist can answer many of your questions about your medicine. Your pharmacist is highly trained – a four year degree course plus a year's probationary practice leading to registration. For instance, they can:

- *Explain the purpose of your prescribed medicines and how you should take them and possible side-effects*
- *Check any possible incompatibility between your prescribed medicines & other non-prescription drugs, e.g. for indigestion, vitamins, supplements, inhalers etc.*
- *Advise on what non-prescription drugs might solve your problems.*

Many pharmacists offer their regular customers a free Medicine Use Review (MUR). In a confidential setting, you can raise any of the above issues.

The pharmacist will print out for you a list of your medication and notes on the discussion; a copy is sent to your GP. When next collecting your prescription, ask your pharmacy if they provide this service.



Health Care in Spain



Beach in Nerja, Spain

Under a reciprocal arrangement between the British and Spanish governments, British people who are taxed in Spain and take up residency are accepted into the Spanish Health Service. One gets a medical card with one's National Identity and Medical Numbers on it. A chip in the card contains your repeat prescriptions; any pharmacy will serve medication, and in emergency situations, medics can ascertain your current medication.

In mid-2008, Ann began to experience problems with her hip and leg. X-rays were taken, which she took to her GP. Following a series of appointments with GP and hospital consultants, a hip-replacement was advised. This was carried out in the nearest hospital, in early February. The operation was completely successful. Ann was in a two-bed ward; food was excellent; hygiene was good; there were no set visiting hours and a restaurant on-site served visitors. On the fourth day Ann was discharged, walking under her own steam with her zimmer.

In mid-2009, Bill woke one morning "feeling woolly"; he suspected a hangover from the previous night's party.

Ann & Bill (not their real names) are close friends of one of our readers...Now in their late 80's, about 15 years ago, they retired to a village near Nerja in Southern Spain. Our request for an account of their experience of the Spanish health service resulted in a very long letter for which we are most grateful. The salient points are abridged here.

Mobility was fine – but then he noticed that his speech was slurred. Ann suspected a mild stroke and took Bill to the clinic. Although it was a bank holiday they were seen immediately by GP and staff and sent by ambulance to the hospital for scans which confirmed the stroke. Bill was discharged the next day with medication and quickly recovered his speech and health.

Throughout the descriptions of these episodes, Ann and Bill emphasise the speed with which they were treated and the laid back attitude of all staff. Before his retirement, Bill had business connections with NHS hospitals and suspects that morale in Spain is much higher than in Britain nowadays!

British pensioners in Spain get the index linked state pension and winter fuel allowance; pensions are paid, commission free, into their Spanish bank. The local regional government will, on application, provide a 65 card, with identity numbers and photo, which gives discounts on spectacles and public transport. There are a number of Pensioners' Clubs in every town – but women are, still, segregated in a separate room! Ann and Bill are very happy in Spain; they apparently have no plans to return to Britain.

Therapeutic Singing Group for people with breathing difficulties

Mondays: 1.45 to 3.15 at Patching Lodge, Eastern Rd, Brighton. Fridays: 11.30 to 1pm at Ralli Hall, Denmark Villas, Hove. For info, call Uditia - 01273 556755.



Want *The Pensioner* posted to your door?

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Dementia events NHS Brighton and Hove are holding events every other month entitled 'Living with Dementia' For info and to book please visit <http://www.brightonandhove.nhs.uk> or contact Emily Watts on 01273 295490.

'Afresh for Depressives' is a group helping depressives and carers of depressives. There will be fortnightly meetings at a time to be arranged in the future. Contact David Leonard for details on 300799 or 0780 6570163.

Dental Charges Be sure you are paying the correct amount for any course of dental treatment. Your dental surgery will have full details of current charges. If you are unaware of what they are, you must check as you could be overcharged without realising it.

Cardiac Patient Involvement Group

Within the Cardiac Centre in Brighton, a Patient Involvement Group meets every 2 months (between 17.00-18.30). They would like to invite more members to join in, and are looking for people who have recently experienced cardiac services. The aims of the group are to:

- Allow staff in the Cardiac Centre to get patient's views on issues they are working on (e.g. reviewing patient information, discussing medications, hospital food, amongst others)
- Allow patients to raise issues that are important to them (such as the suggestion of comment boxes on wards, discussions about personal experiences in A&E, ask about information patients may want, etc.)

To get involved, or to hear more about the group, please contact Sarah Young, Nurse Consultant Cardiology on 696955 ext 7850.



Dying with Sympathy

We had a great deal of feedback to Hans Lobstein's 'Dignity in Dying' letter. He gives us a few more thoughts on this much debated issue.

This is a subject which creates a great deal of heated argument for and against assisted suicide. But one thing I assume most of us are agreed upon is that we would prefer to die asleep in our beds never knowing a thing about it. At least I would. Instead I am threatened with the prospect of spending years in an armchair in some nursing home demented to the last. What good would that do me or anybody? But by then I won't have an option any more, it would be too late for me to make a rational decision and to have some choice.

Voices against assisted suicide argue that we are fallible to human weaknesses and could be persuaded to make decisions which we may regret, if we are exposed to pressures from others or our own sense of worthlessness. I am only talking about myself. But I am worried. I don't want to end up a vegetable or worse, endlessly in pain which only some inaccessible drug can relieve. There are a few doctors who will help and possibly instruct a nursing home how to administer palliative care, but they are few and cannot

be relied upon to be in the right place at the right time. Some are even threatened with prosecution for illegal practices, and who would be brave enough to want to take that risk unless they are superhuman angels?

I am 89, I have had a rich and rewarding life. But I won't live forever, and when the time comes I want to depart without causing anybody any harm or for anyone to be legally threatened. I feel I need to make proper arrangements now. Next time I see my GP I shall ask her. Will she or won't she?

There are four legal ways of dying with dignity. One of them would be to sign a 'Living Will'. I have done that and hope that it will prevent anyone from resuscitating me when the occasion arises. I have seen the mother of a friend of mine in hospital being resuscitated three times even though she tearfully pleaded to be left alone. But in those days, many years ago, such pleas were disregarded and there was no 'Living Will' in fashion then as there is today.

Retirement – a useful concept in the 21st Century?

One day, we are working full time, in a steady job, with a good salary. Suddenly, on our 60th or 65th birthday we become “retired” – no occupation, no income except a pension. When first introduced a century ago, the age at which one received a state pension was close to average life expectancy; that is, one had a 50/50 chance of reaching retirement. Today, many of us are spending half as many years in retirement as we did in work.

How, then, can we afford our retirement – having an income that covers our basic needs, health and care? Basically, there are two ways: either we save during our working life, or our children provide from their earnings. Both ways imply a colossal burden.

Governments' responses have been to slowly raise the age at which one becomes eligible for a pension. But in recent years, life expectancy

has been rising two years each decade. What we really need is a new concept of retirement.

As we age, we should be able to wind down slowly – to work fewer hours or on less onerous tasks, but still receive an, albeit lower, income. Pensions could be deferred or reduced to produce a higher income in later years – a complex but not impossible task for actuaries.

“Voluntary” work, whether within the family, or in the community, should be rewarded – with cash or tokens.

But most of all, we need a new image of ageing. “Retirement” led to older people being characterised as “a burden on society”. We need to revive the concept of pre-industrial society when older people were valued for their contributions – their wisdom, or experience, their skills and abilities. In many spheres we are moving in this direction – but far too slowly.



PALS is an NHS service providing free, confidential help and support to patients, carers and the public who use local health services

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Sheltered/retirement housing – a new image?

Community resources provided by sheltered housing are on the increase...

Did you know there are about 70 sheltered/retirement housing schemes in Brighton and Hove, homes of some 3,000 people with an average age of 80 years? Around one third are City Council properties, one third managed by housing associations and one third are leasehold schemes in the private sector.

Our ignorance about these schemes derives from their invisibility – no large boards advertise them; residents value the privacy they offer; their communal facilities are rarely designed for public use; social activities are for residents exclusively. But a new image is emerging – sheltered housing as a community resource; this is one of the goals set out in the City Council's recent Older People's Housing Strategy, which itself echoes national government policies.

The main driver of change has been the government; for a decade it has argued that older people should be able, and encouraged, to live independently in their own homes, rather than enter residential care homes. It is what most older people want, and is, in most cases, much cheaper.

Scheme residents have their own homes, with their own front door, but they are also privileged with the support of a scheme manager who monitors their well-being, is available for advice, and able to provide hands-on care. Residents provide mutual support for each other through one-to-one friendships and communal social activities. Those living in their homes in the community do not share this support – and many are lonely and vulnerable.

by Ravensbourne Court in Woodingdean (Moat HA), the development of community schemes in the new Larchwood extra care scheme in Coldean (Hanover HA/ BHCC), activities within the City Council's Schemes, projects led by local Age Concern and the role of a development worker (Sanctuary HA).

Throughout the workshops it was stressed that residents must be fully involved in any new developments; it is their home that is being 'invaded'. They must choose from among the activities or facilities offered, and say what interests they wish to promote; (since sheltered schemes tend to have between 25 – 40 residents, it is often difficult to find enough people to make an activity viable – why not invite those people in a nearby scheme or in the community?). Fears about security must be allayed; procedures devised to check the identity of visitors.

Active residents will lead activities; often their initial efforts are welcomed but then they experience 'burn-out', or get branded as 'busy-bodies'. But one cannot leave all to the scheme manager. Almost inevitably there will be one or two residents who oppose any change; as often they are vociferous whilst those who enjoy the activities remain shyly silent.

In the end both scheme residents and those in the community benefit when new interests are developed, new friendships created.

What might sheltered schemes provide?

- Outreach services by scheme staff, e.g. a morning call, regular visit or access to advice
- Access to scheme facilities – an assisted bath, scheme shop, visiting hairdressers or chiropodists
- Access to externally organised events – talks on health etc
- Participation in some of the communal social activities led by the residents – the fish and chip lunch, outings, whist drives...

Much is already happening – but the potential for expansion is great. The Sussex Gerontology Network held a workshop in April to explore the issue. Presentations described the outreach services offered



Photographs of community activities hosted by LifeLines at Patching Lodge in Brighton

Help us! Live in local sheltered housing? Would you be able to put one copy of this magazine through each door in your block each issue (quarterly)? We can get copies delivered to you; all we need is one volunteer per scheme! Call on 01273 229004. Please help!

Potential winter fuel payment cuts

Rumours abound that the Coalition Government are making plans to cut winter fuel payments for older people, despite pre-election promises that this would not happen. Potential cuts could leave millions of pensioners much more vulnerable to the effects of cold weather. The Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance recently wrote to all three local MP's asking if they would sign the Early Day Motion against potential cuts. Green Party MP Caroline Lucas immediately signed up; Mike Weatherley MP said he would be paying attention to the issue but would not sign; Simon Kirby MP sent a standardised response which did not directly address the concerns raised; and has not signed the motion. If you feel concerned, write to them!



Brighton's Indian war memorial

Brighton's Indian Memorial Gateway at the Royal Pavilion is dedicated to the memory of Indian soldiers in the first world war. Bert Williams of Mosaic explains more about its unique history.

A gift from the people of India to the inhabitants of Brighton and Hove, as a thank you to 'Doctor Brighton' for caring for her sons, the Indian Memorial Gateway at Brighton Pavilion is dedicated to the memory of the Indian soldiers that passed through the many Brighton and Hove hospitals during the First World War. The unveiling of the Gateway was performed by H.H. the Maharaja of Patiala on the 26th October 1921. The inscription on the Gateway reads:



'This gateway is the gift of India in commemoration of her sons who – stricken in the Great War - were tended in the Pavilion in 1914 and 1915. Dedicated to the use of the inhabitants of the Brighton, B.N. Southall, Mayor'.

During the 1st World War (1914-1918) India sent over 1.27 million men to the war in Europe and those that were wounded in battle in Europe were brought back to Brighton and Hove for treatment. Many buildings in the City were converted to accommodate the wounded soldiers. They included the Royal Pavilion, Dome, Corn Exchange, Brighton General Hospital, York Place School, and Brighton & Hove VI Form College receiving Dominion troops, Howard House and two houses in Sussex Square, 5 Eastern Terrace and a number of houses in Kemptown, known as The Kemptown Hospital, Hove Dispensary, Adelaide Crescent Hove to name a few...

The Gateway to the Royal Pavilion from the South

While the Indian soldiers were in the City all religious rites were respected as would be in any hospital in India, with separate facilities to accommodate the various Indian castes and religions. There were nine kitchens in the Royal Pavilion estate to cater for the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, separate washing and burial arrangements were made for the Hindus and Sikhs at the Chattri in Patcham, while the Muslims were taken to Woking in Surrey for burial in the Shah Jehan Mosque.

For more information, visit www.black-history.org.uk/ indian.asp or www.chattri.com

The Chattri memorial in Patcham



A fond 'Au Revoir' to Joan

Joan Moorhouse, for many years a stalwart of public life in the city, has moved to a retirement home in Sussex; she will be missed by her many admirers and supporters who have followed her career from hard-working Councillor for Woodingdean to become first Chair of the Older People's Council and finally Chair of the Pensioners' Forum. Her contribution was immense, aided as always by her husband Ben Moorhouse.

Joan may not have fed the five thousand but she certainly supplied the multitude attending Older People's Day with a thousand sandwiches! I remember in 2009 arriving at Hove Town Hall for the event to see her and Ben scurrying around for

Joan Moorhouse recently left the Pensioners' Forum for pastures new. Jack Hazelgrove says farewell...



a trolley to unload their car of its precious cargo of food for the event – the culmination of months of preparation for the big day. But Joan was not just a person for the big event, she was a conscientious caseworker and committee person on numerous bodies and gave her time unstintingly. Now we wish Joan and Ben a well-earned retirement and many happy years together.



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Food Glorious Food!

Brighton has numerous culinary hotspots; committee member Francis Tonks lets us in on a few of his favourites

I married a vegetarian, so most of our food comes from Infinity Foods in Gardner Street. It is good, nourishing and ethically sourced. In addition, you get a 10% discount if you are an older person. However, when my wife is away for the day, I sneak out and have bangers and mash or some other forbidden delicacy.

I thought I would share my ideas on meals out in central Brighton. There is a temptation to go into the nearest pub; one of the best is the Victory Inn, where you can get a good meal as well as a beer. Wetherspoon's lay on ham, eggs and chips for £1.99. Also good value is a Chinese lunch-box for

£3.90 from the Red Cottage in Queen's Road. I also enjoy Me Old China near the Clock Tower, where you can eat as much as you like. If you want fish and chips, go to Bankers in Western Road, or Bardsley's in Baker Street. Very best for value is the Brighthelm Centre in West St. They do a good lunch for pensioners, and there are also several lunch clubs. I also intend doing some research on Indian food, which I really enjoy.

I am not knocking it, we had a meal at Terre a Terre some time ago with Dutch friends. It was alright, but on the way back, the Dutchman and I visited a delicatessen and bought some salami to eat at home...!

Long legged allure

Do those legs belong to me?

Large thick extremities,
Getting ready for the cemetery
Surfaced like ripples on the Sea.
Scant, limp, hair
Barely there
Brown patches
Swathe scaling pins,
Over superfluous fluted skin.

To whom,
Do those legs belong?

Mine to my memory
are, sun kissed,
Tanned and strong
Pleasing every eye, along,
Life's pleasurable path
These days, I look down,
I gasp;
Suppressing the urge to laugh
As I ask,

Are those 'my' legs?

Diana Ward-Davis, 2005

Rooms by Roger Wood

A place of escape
From the harsh outside world,
A place of loving comfort
Or of silent coldness,
Or of individuality.

The wooden paneling
And scratched old tables
With glistening patinas,
Speak of long dead ghosts.
Are they returned to the mirror
By All Hallows night candles?

Rooms within rooms
And even more rooms,
Like honeycombed cells
In giant conglomerate
City towers which gleam,
Mercurially, glassy eyed,
In their reflected sunlight.

Rooms that are never mentioned
Except in hushed quiet voices
Or pierced by screams
In dungeons and asylums.
In catacombs and cemeteries,
The unspoken forgotten rooms.

Age Concern East Sussex Advocacy Service

Stephen Giles, head of Age Concern's local Advocacy Service explains about the important work they carry out helping older people to deal with their problems

Older people sometimes don't know which way to turn when faced with a problem and, consequently, feel they have lost control of their lives. For example, they may have difficulty in organising their finances or dealing with council and NHS departments, housing associations, care agencies, utility companies and other providers of goods or services.

It may be that they lack the information needed to make informed choices, that they find it difficult to speak up for themselves or that, in extreme cases, they are simply ignored and their views and wishes not taken into account.

The Advocacy Service aims to support and empower older people by enabling them to make informed choices, resolve

their problems and have a say about issues affecting their lives.

The service is free and confidential and available to all people aged 60 or over living in Brighton or Hove. Our advocates are mostly volunteers and are all Criminal Records Bureau checked. They are non-judgmental and will not take a view of what is in an older person's best interests or try to persuade them to follow a particular course of action.

If you would like the support of an advocate, or know somebody who would, please telephone 01273 476704 and speak to Michael Townsend on extension 232 or Stephen Giles on extension 231.

Circulation of The Pensioner

The Pensioner is distributed locally to a number of different locations, including all BHCC sheltered housing schemes, local libraries, via community nurses, and care agencies, to local community centres, and via other organisations. It is also available to be posted to you - so to be sure of a copy, sign up using the form to the right...and please get in touch with any ideas of new places we should circulate to.

READERSHIP AUDIT

We need to ensure that every copy of this magazine gets used. If you know of places where piles are left unread, let us know! Call on 01273 229004. Also, please pass copies on to friends/ neighbours when you have finished reading them!

Pensioners' Association: forthcoming meetings

The next meetings are held on the second Tuesday Morning in each month at 10:30 for 11:00, and all at Patching Lodge, Eastern Road. Do come, if you've never been, or not yet been to our new venue; the atmosphere is friendly, the talks are always interesting, and the discussions afterwards lively.

NB: 1. Please try to arrive by 10:55, in case there is no-one to let you in after that; 2. ring/e-mail me for directions to Patching Lodge. Bruce Smith, Acting Secretary tel: 698737 / email: saecurb@yahoo.co.uk

November 9 - Speaker from Mind Advocacy for Mental Health Patients

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Signed _____ Date _____