



# The Echo

The Magazine of the Elders Council

Issue 104

February to April 2024



Why are we anxious?

Well, will we be able to continue to produce this magazine? Postage and printing mean each magazine costs

**£2.62**

**Can you help?**

**A donation of £11 will pay the cost of the 4 magazines this year. Please donate what you can.**

**THANK YOU**



# Meet the Elders Council



We thought we should try and meet members, especially ones we rarely see or haven't met (they may have joined online). The idea was for a "Drop-in" where you could just come in for a short while to sit and chat over a cup of coffee or tea. We wanted to hear from them about how they found us and what they knew about us as well as anything they

thought we should be doing for older people in the city.

We met in the Royal Station Hotel and there were several members who come to events but we hadn't seen for a while who called in as well as new faces. All the staff were there including Tim, who had only started that week. It was a good opportunity for them to meet one or two more active members as well as welcome those new to the organisation. The conversations were wide-ranging: some people just wanted to know what we did; others thought that they might like to join in more actively. The *EC Rider* was much praised and transport was mentioned quite a lot. People liked to know what was happening and the Bulletin was mentioned by some who read it and by us to those who didn't know about it.

The aim is to host more of these events in other parts of the city over the next year. Keep looking out for us and come and see just what we do and whether you could make a contribution by volunteering a bit of your time.

## **Contents**

<b><i>Meet the EC</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>State of Ageing</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Travels with Bill</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><i>OV Recommend</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b><i>Newcastles</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>City of Kittiwakes</i></b>	<b>11</b>
<b><i>Cultural Threads</i></b>	<b>14</b>
<b><i>Passion for Vintage</i></b>	<b>17</b>
<b><i>Poetry</i></b>	<b>19</b>
<b><i>Care Homes - facts</i></b>	<b>20</b>
<b><i>Offline – overlooked</i></b>	<b>23</b>
<b><i>What are QR codes?</i></b>	<b>24</b>
<b><i>A Wedding</i></b>	<b>25</b>

## **Driver training on the new Metro for Elders Council members?**

**by Alan Gowers & Rima Karam**



Well, not exactly, but two Elders Council members , Rima and Alan, recently took up an open invitation to see and feel the new Metro rolling stock, which will be introduced from March 2024 onward.

During the design consultation stage, several Elders Council members contributed their improvement suggestions.

From what we could see, the suggestions have been taken into account. The new rolling stock is a vast improvement in layout, seating , lighting , accessibility and passenger communications.

Our conclusion is very much that when we go to Europe we will no longer feel ashamed of the Metro back home.

The photo is taken in the new streamlined driver's cabin with all its digital controls. Existing drivers will be retrained but no job offers (as yet) for Elders Council members. However, the prospect of a much more pleasant Metro experience lies ahead for us all.

## **Ageism Day of Action 20 March 2024**

**by Clare Levi**

We have had several articles about ageism in the last year or so, as it affects all of us. The Centre for Ageing Better is taking up the challenge and creating an action day. This is a day of action that is all about challenging the negative way ageing is represented in society.





Age is universal. Regardless of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation – we are all ageing. Not one of us can say that it's “not my problem”. Ageism limits everything from our worth to our work, our health to our happiness.

Everyone, everywhere has a stake in changing this; and taking part in the Action Day is one way you can help.

The Elders Council will be following the Centre for Ageing Better campaign that will be **launched in January** to raise awareness and understanding of ageism because most people don't know it even exists.

Some Elders Council members will be running some activities on or around the day; look out for further information in our E bulletin and on our Facebook page.

If you want to get involved, please get in touch with us as we will have access to a range of promotional materials and ideas of how you can get involved.

## **State of Ageing 2024** **by Clare Levi**



In November, I went to the Age Friendly Cities Conference in London to represent the Newcastle Age Friendly Cities group, of which the Elders Council is part. It was so exciting to meet like-minded people and hear about the huge variety of age friendly projects from all over the UK. There was such a positive atmosphere and willingness to share information and ideas. I was very pleased to have the opportunity to share the work of the Elders Council and didn't stop talking for two days!

The main focus of the event was the launch of the state of ageing report by the Centre for Ageing Better (CfAB). *The State of Ageing 2023-24* is the most detailed, varied and up-to-date report about ageing in England. It is an important piece of evidence that shows how the work of organisations like the Elders Council is so vital. The following are statistics from the CfAB.

*For many people today, living longer is not just a hope but an expectation. Millions more of us are living into our 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond, with record numbers of centenarians recorded.*

*But at the same time, there is a growing divide in experiences of ageing, with the poorest people living shorter lives and spending many more years in bad health. People from minority ethnic backgrounds experience some of the greatest inequalities.*

*And with increasing diversity among our older population, we are likely to see inequality grow. The gaps in health and wealth between the richest and poorest become greater with age and are actually larger within older age groups than they are between generations. The number of pensioners living in poverty has steadily increased in recent years.*

*Contrary to stereotypes about "wealthy baby boomers", people aged 60-64 have the highest poverty rates among adults of any age.*

**The report called for the following to be actioned:**

- **Establish a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing** as there is in Wales and Northern Ireland
- **Pause proposals to raise the state pension age**
- **Increase the uptake of Pension Credit**
- **Invest in local public health services**
- **Develop a national plan to fix cold and dangerous homes**
- **Help older workers return to employment and boost labour supply**
- **Create local communities where people can age well**

You can read this important report on [www.ageing-better.org.uk/summary-state-ageing-2023-4](http://www.ageing-better.org.uk/summary-state-ageing-2023-4)

## Travels with Bill - Spring by Bill Harbottle

Bill continues telling us about his travels with his bus pass and makes some recommendations for the Spring when hopefully the weather will be warmer. Bill writes:

A trip I would recommend is Alnwick Gardens to see the cherry blossom in spring. I was there in April last year, combining this with a trip to Warkworth to see the daffodils, most of which were still in flower around the castle.



The time to do this depends on how mild late winter/early spring has been. But it is worth visiting and of course you can use your bus pass and *EC Rider* will help you with bus details.

Craggside was never easy to get to by bus, being on a busy road and no easy footpath from Rothbury. However, in the summer of 2023 Arriva X14 stopped outside the grounds and I took the opportunity to visit in May 2023.

The rhododendrons were just beginning to come out and I would highly recommend visiting around this time: the house is spectacular but it is a bonus to see the wonderful colour in the grounds. Early June is probably the best time to see the rhododendrons in their spectacular best. Don't forget to check where the bus stops!

*There will be another EC Rider coming your way later in Spring (Editor).*



## We recommend - - - from The Older Voices Team

Another part of our communications is the *Older Voices* radio broadcast team. A number of you will have listened to them on the radio live or via the podcasting on Mixcloud.

They broadcast each week from 2-4 pm on Sunday afternoon (<https://www.mixcloud.com/LLARC/older-voices>) and there's a complete mix of interviews, information, notices as well as music. On some of their programmes the team members recommend a book, a piece of music a film, a theatre visit and so forth that they have really enjoyed and think others will too.

Some of the things recommended in October last year were:

\* **'Ghosts'** This is a droll sitcom and you can see the whole set of series on BBC iPlayer using this link:

[iPlayerhttps://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m00049t9/ghosts?seriesId=p0g5h855](https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m00049t9/ghosts?seriesId=p0g5h855)

\* **'Silent Spring'** The famous book by the great Rachel Carson rang alarm bells about the poisoning of our environment and its effects on wildlife. It is still all too relevant today. (See:

<https://www.rachelcarson.org/silent-spring> )



\* **'Waiting Garden' exhibition @ the Baltic** The theme is that of refugees, presented in the form of a series of gardens. There is an impressive variety of plants and garden produce, along with much food for thought. This is still available until May 2024 See: <https://baltic.art/news-and-media/michael-rakowitz-the-waiting-gardens-of-the-north/#:~:text=On%2015%20July%202023%2C%20Baltic,Iraqi%2DAmerican%20artist%20Michael%20Rakowitz.>

\* **'Around the World in 80 days'** This film adaptation of the Jules Verne classic novel features some famous stars of the day (1956). For a preview, try: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76Ge6vO4q9Y>

Here's your chance to give us your recommendation. It could be a book, a film, a visit to a gallery or theatre. Just give us a couple of sentences about your recommendation so our readers can enjoy it too. Please let us know so we can pass that to others. You can email us or phone or write to us. The contact details are on the back page of the magazine.

**"I've just finished listening to your EXCELLENT recording.  
Thank you for sending it. Keep it up!"**

## **Newcastles of the world by Steve Whitley**

There are well over a hundred "Newcastles", "New Castles" or translations thereof in the world. In 1998, the mayor of Shinshiro in Japan arranged a conference of some of them and they formed an alliance.

Since then, they've been meeting every two years (except for the worst years of the pandemic); Mary Nicholls, the co-ordinator of *The Echo's* editorial group, has been to two of them – in Canada and Japan.

Although our City Council no longer supports the alliance, some Novocastrians still continue to attend the biennial conferences.



And, in October 2023, I decided to join them, signing up for a visit to Nové Hradý, a small town in the Czech Republic.

I don't like airports and I don't want to fly. So, I took the ferry from North Shields to Ijmuden, the port for Amsterdam; then the overnight train from Amsterdam to Linz in Austria, from where I got a lift in Nové Hradý's fire-brigade van, driven by Nové Hradý's mayor.



Other towns represented were Herceg Novi (Montenegro), Neuburg an der Donau (Germany), Neuchâtel (Switzerland), Nové Zámki (Slovakia), Shinshiro (Japan) and Jaunpils (Latvia), which was chosen as the next conference venue in 2025. Although the British were not a formal delegation (just a group of individuals), we formed the largest contingent. All formal discussions were conducted in English.

We decided that the alliance should continue and that there should be formal recognition of young people within the structure. But we were not in formal mode all the time: there was also space for a trip around Nové Hradý's environs, during which we saw some beautiful Bohemian glass; I was particularly struck by some remarkable glass snuffboxes.

I returned roughly the way I'd come: lift with the mayor to the nearest railway station, train to Linz, NightJet to Amsterdam and ferry back to North Shields. The ferry, as always, was very good but the overnight train was not: the train company's aim seemed to be to cram as many passengers as possible into the smallest space as possible.

If you want to know more about Newcastles of the World, ring me on 273 4727, visit [newcastlesoftheworld.com](http://newcastlesoftheworld.com) (or go straight to a very professional film about the conference at [newcastlesoftheworld.com/2023/11/](http://newcastlesoftheworld.com/2023/11/) or listen to the *Older Voices*

programmes of 29 October, 5 November and 26 November, which you will find at [www.mixcloud.com/LLARC](http://www.mixcloud.com/LLARC).  
See you in Jaunpils in 2025? [newcastlesoftheworld.com](http://newcastlesoftheworld.com)

**Don't worry if you can't make it to Jaunpils, you can always get around our own Newcastle using EC rider – look out for it later this spring.**

## Getting to know you by Tim Oxley

Tim is our newly appointed Development Worker and this is a brief account of where he's been and who he has been meeting since starting with the EC.

The Kenton and Fawdon areas of the city have been a focus for me, and I am working to build up inter-agency relationships, with Search, Kenton Foodbank, Kenton Sports Centre, Kilbourne OP sheltered housing, Accord Healthcare plant, Fawdon Community Centre and others. I have established links with the local Councillors and Council Officers.



With other colleagues I've been planning for the next 'Meet the EC' event in February; with final date and venue is to be finalised soon. Added to this, I am seeking out older people to join us as members and possibly gather candidates for a local Active Voices group.

I have engaged with the South Asian and Chinese women's group, following the report launch; as well as linking on a joint project with the Chinese Healthy Living Centre (HLC), where we are linking with Dance City to do preparatory sessions ahead of a performance.

Links with Active Voices current course have led to an application for a Micro grant (as with the Chinese HLC); some £500 toward activity costs. The Active Voices group are looking to link with Newcastle College on an intergenerational project.

Overall, prospects in terms of community engagement are looking good and I see the next period, up till March, being productive and one where I will be evaluating and reviewing impact according to funders requirements.

**The next 'Meet the EC' is on 21 February from 12-2  
It's in the Community Room, Kenton Park Sports Centre,  
Anfield Road NE3 3LL  
Looking forward to seeing you there**

## **City of Kittiwakes by Barbara Douglas**

Moving Parts Arts (the team who organise the Newcastle Puppetry Festival) are planning a parade in Newcastle on March 30<sup>th</sup> on the theme of the City of Kittiwakes.

From 16<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> March they are holding workshops to give people the opportunity to create the kittiwakes.

The workshops will take place in the amazing John Marley Centre. Elders Council would like to put a team together to participate in the workshops and the parade.



Please let us know if you are interested by **12 February** so we can confirm the bookings.

**We have booked these dates: 20 March 2 -5 pm;  
22 March 2 – 5 pm; 26 March 2 – 5 pm and  
27 March 2 – 5 pm. You can come along to all of them or just  
one. Come and have a go and some fun.**

Contact us on [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) or call 0191 208 2701.  
You can read more about it here <https://www.movingpartsarts.com/>

## **EC and the city budget proposals**

The Elders Council of Newcastle engaged in a lively discussion with Newcastle City Council officers regarding the 2024-25 budget proposals.



The focus was on Adult Social Care and while appreciating the consultation opportunity, the Elders Council expressed interest in broader discussions with concerns about the impact of overall budget changes on older residents. Proposed measures include a 2.99% council tax increase, a 2% Adult Social Care Precept rise, reduced school meal subsidies, deleting vacant posts, and increased charges for services. Notable changes involve redesigning homelessness provision, closing the City Library earlier on Tuesdays, and discontinuing the Citylife magazine in its current format.

The Elders Council welcomed preventative approaches in social care but highlighted concerns about core care services, digital exclusion, communication strategies, and the funding reduction's impact on community organizations. They acknowledged the challenges the Council faces in maintaining statutory services while aiming to save £59.7m over the next three years.

For further details and the complete written response, visit the Elders Council's website:

<https://www.elderscouncil.org.uk/representation-and-consultation>



# Culture and Heritage

## **Calligraphy, the art of beautiful writing** **by Mary Nicholls**

I think I'm of the several generations of children who were taught to write neatly using a "dip" pen. It was a good skill as many would go on to become clerks, book-keepers and so on; so a good neat hand was a necessity. When I retired, I found a teacher of calligraphy very near to where I live and began to really work at writing.

Like many skills, there is much more to this art than just picking up the pen and putting it to paper. You do need to be prepared to spend a lot of time in repeating pangrams (sentences that contain all 26 letters of the alphabet as in "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog").

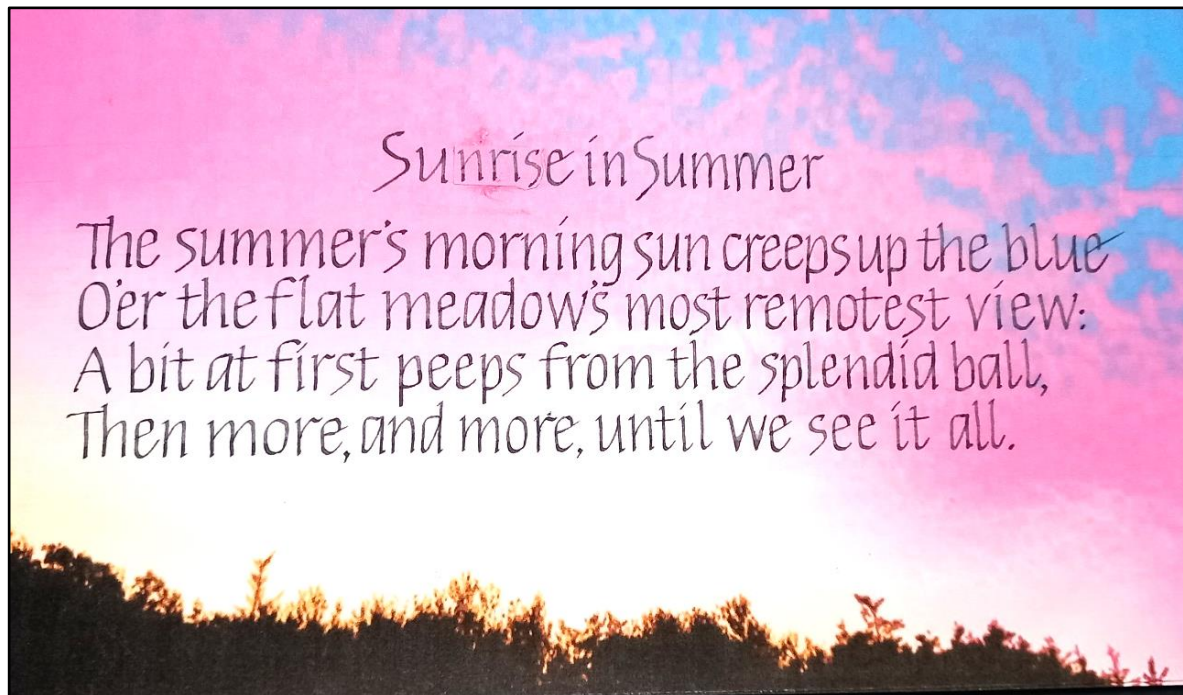
A good tutor will help you understand the specific terminology and show you the type of pen that's best to start. So, I began with a "pilot" pen working on the Foundational Hand, in which every letter is formed by more than one pen stroke, as in this example:



You need to analyse the script and look very carefully and hold the pen at the correct angle to the paper to create the thick and thin strokes. You soon discover that you have to think about other things too: how do you centre your writing or should you centre it? Would it be better this way or that? What size do you want it to be and will you have to buy different-sized nibs?

Many calligraphers use paint for writing as you can mix your own colour (though whether you will ever be able to create that very colour again is another matter!). I also learned how to apply gold leaf, which is so fine that it often ends up everywhere you don't want it. I do have some skill now but still am awed by what others are able to do.

It is something you can do alone and there are lots of You Tube videos to help. I find I'm quite picky now about which tutor I will watch. The good thing about going to a tutored class is that not only do you receive good teaching but you become friendly with others learning alongside you. The image is from a small book I made and is part of a poem by John Clare.



*Sunrise in Summer*  
The summer's morning sun creeps up the blue  
O'er the flat meadow's most remotest view:  
A bit at first peeps from the splendid ball,  
Then more, and more, until we see it all.

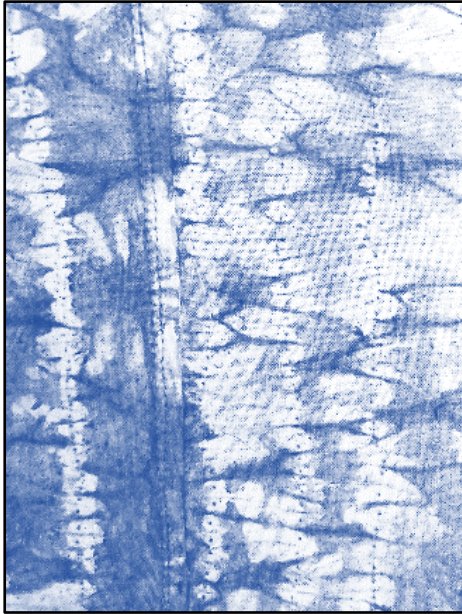
## **Cultural Threads – a natural textile dyeing course by Judi Postle and Janet Barnett**



Fresh woad leaves

Sometimes opportunities come along which are just too good to miss. So, when free, weekly nature-inspired arts and crafts workshops were highlighted in the Elders Council's E-bulletin, it was a no-brainer to sign up.

"Cultural Threads", a course of six natural textile dyeing sessions, provided an opportunity to meet people, learn new skills and connect with nature. This was organised at Springbank Pavilion in



Indigo shibori - patterns formed by stitching and pulling threads tight before dyeing then releasing the stitches

Leazes Park by a partnership between Urban Green and Newcastle Hospitals to promote wellbeing.

Artist Lily Daniels from Gem Arts ensured that everyone was welcome, from complete beginners to those with some dyeing experience. Initially, we treated a variety of natural fibres, including cotton, wool and silk to prepare them for dyeing by soaking in special liquids (mordants). In the following weeks, these were used to create a rainbow of coloured materials from yellows (chamomile & annatto) and reds (madder & cochineal) through to blues (indigo & woad).



Eco printing 1 - steamed fabric sticks ready to unroll

Fabrics could be overdyed to create new colours. Patterns could be added by manipulating fabric in various ways before dyeing using techniques such as folding, twisting, tying, binding and stitching to give areas which resisted the dye, creating unique designs. The introduction to dyeing techniques from around the world, including Japanese shibori (see picture), provided plenty of opportunities for experimentation. Stirring the steaming pans, there were moments of magic as cloth dyed with indigo or woad visibly transformed from pale green to deep blue when lifted from the vat.

Leazes Park provided plenty of natural resources such as foraged materials for eco printing. In this technique, the delicate shapes and colours from plant dyes in leaves and flowers transferred onto fabric by rolling up





Eco printing 2 – natural dye transfer from leaves onto fabric

tightly around a stick and steaming or boiling for a couple of hours. The unattractive sticks were then unrolled with a sense of excited trepidation to see if they had been successful. The results were rather beautiful (see pictures). We learned how leaves can be described poetically as having a sun side (the front side which prefers facing the light) and a moon side (the underside which releases its dye more readily).

The sessions were informal and enjoyable; tutor Lily provided everything that we needed. She was very accommodating and open to using ideas from workshop participants, fostering a culture of

positivity and shared experience through a mix of science and sorcery. The Cultural Threads course achieved its aim of promoting wellbeing through creative activity so thank you to *The Echo* for promoting it. (Janet provided the photos)

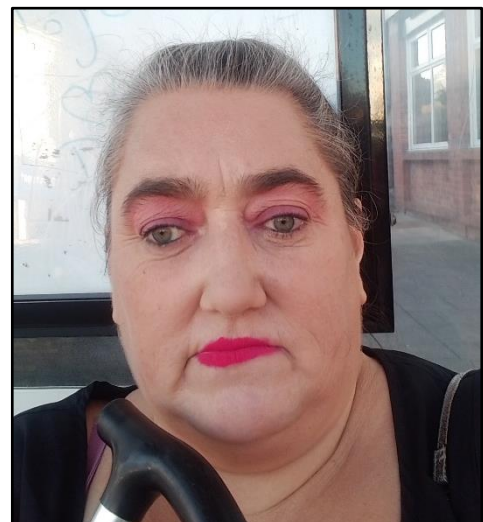
## **Meet Catherine Walsh, a drag artist by Mary Nicholls**

Catherine came to the Elders Council Drop-in held in October and when I started chatting to her she had much to say about her life.

She told me she had been to Drag King classes at the Lady Kitt Art Studio in Ouseburn

(<https://www.ladykitt.com/>).

Cath wanted to know more about this art form and found some of the learning a form of relaxation. She talked about learning to walk like a man, which is quite different from women's walk.





She enjoyed watching professional performances, miming to songs that suited the Drag King she became and importantly getting the make-up right, including the facial hair needed.

Cath prefers the title Drag Artist rather than King or Queen. She believes that performance art can help people understand that we are all people and the labels just get in the way. We all need to be kinder to each other and not make judgements based on very little.

## **A passion for vintage clothing by Jools Donnelly**



I'm Jools Donnelly and along with my husband Paul we run 60s events based on the original Club a'Gogo in Newcastle.

I have always had a passion for vintage clothing and I have been collecting since my teens. My love of second-hand (or vintage) started in 1979 when I walked into an Oxfam shop for the first time and picked up a pair of 1960s turquoise kitten-heel slingbacks.

These shoes were hand painted, which always made me curious. I later found out, when I was doing research into our book on the Club a'Gogo, that the Newcastle mod girls would frequently dye their shoes to match the colour of their latest outfit as they couldn't always afford a new

pair (shoes sometimes having many layers of dye). I was delighted with my purchase and this passion continues to this day.

I don't just collect vintage; I WEAR it as I feel these beautiful clothes deserve to be loved and not just stored as museum pieces. The orange dress pictured is one of my favourites, picked up at a kilo sale. The clothes are charged by weight so the cost can be minimal. Kilo fairs are good fun as long as you don't mind wading through tons of 80s shell suits and hideous Princess Diana style dresses to find the hidden gems (which I don't !).

Another favourite is this dress I found in the Graiger market. The dress is "deadstock" (i.e., brand new from the 60s). There's also a great piece of history behind why this dress was kept (see the tag in the photo). The owner of the shop was tipped off that the family were going to throw this old stock out; thank goodness she rescued it!



For me, vintage is about the quality and also the heritage of the garment.

I love to think of the person who wore the clothes first: did they love it as much as I do? Lots of the pieces I own are handmade and it is the love and care that has gone into making these beautiful little pieces which is a stand-out feature for me. If any of your readers are having a clear out, then please bear me in mind as I'm a bit of an addict!

For more information about Club a'Gogo events or to buy the book *Club a'Gogo & The Mod Scene of 1960s Newcastle*, please visit <https://www.clubagogo.co.uk/>

## Our places and spaces

Will feel relaxed, inclusive and happy  
There'll be no need to be brave  
Social, active, participatory

Places to be me  
Spaces to be free  
With intergenerational connection  
Respects, giggles and laughter  
We will be rebellious, unshackled

Run wild, play and hang out  
Enjoy joyful ways to get about  
No need to be responsible  
To be home before dark  
We'll go wherever, whenever  
Wearing what we want

## Sycamore Gap by Tony Huzzard

We've lost our tree on Hadrian's Wall,  
A Sycamore worshipped by one and all.  
It's stood there for about 300 years  
And ended its life among so many tears.

It was so desirable for us all to see,  
But tragedy struck for both you and me.  
Silhouetted against the sky each day,  
Now it has simply gone away.

So, the most famous tree in the land,  
Is lost to us by an evil hand.  
To be replaced by – well as yet unknown  
We will just have to wait to be shown.

Hanging out in the park, after dark  
Dancing on the pews,  
Singing in the loos  
Music with our brews  
So many fun things for us to do

We've a long history to unpick  
Messages to unstick, joyful boxes  
to tick  
To create places and spaces  
To be proud, visible, out loud  
Places and community and unity

From the workshop with residents and  
colleagues facilitated by Eve Holt & Kelly  
Rodgers (GM Moving) at the GM Ageing  
in Place Pathfinder, 1 Year Learning  
Event, 18 October 2023





# Information

## Care Homes - some facts

We know how important it is for all our members to have some useful facts about this subject. We took this basic information as a starting point from the website noted below. This has further information that you can find when you have time to properly digest it. <https://www.carehome.co.uk/advice/who-pays-what>.



Around a half of care home residents aged 65 and over fund themselves and are referred to as self-funders and the other half of older people needing residential care are state-funded and are paid for by the local authority.

If you are not sure whether you need to

pay for your own care, you will need to get a [care needs assessment](#) and a [financial assessment](#) done by your local council, which will determine whether you need to contribute anything to your residential care.

- If you live in England and Northern Ireland and you have income and capital over £23,250, you will need to pay for all of your care. If you have between £14,250 and £23,250, you will have to pay some towards your care.
- There are certain benefits you can still claim in a care home and, if you are a self-funder, you will still be able to claim your state pension and private pension.





## Warm home discount

We thought we could try to clarify this discount and how you might be able to claim it. Please check and see if you can claim. There are details about how to do this in this article.



HM Government  
Her Majesty's Government

The warm home discount is a discount of £150 which is taken off one winter electricity bill by your supplier. There are two groups of people who are entitled to this discount:

The first group is **people over 66 who get pension credit**. You should get the discount automatically as the Department for Work and Pensions(DWP) tells the energy companies who is on pension credit of the right sort – yes, there’s another qualifying section. You qualify if you get what is called “the guarantee credit element” of pension credit. This will have been stated on the letter you got when you were awarded pension credit.

The second group is **working age people, and pensioners** who are not in the first group. **But** you have to fulfil two conditions:

- You must be claiming a means-tested benefit such as Universal Credit or just the **savings part of pension credit**
- Your home must be hard to heat. The government works this out based on data they have. However, the government admit it can get this wrong! So, you should check. There is an eligibility checker on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) if you search “warm home discount”. If it says “no” but you know you are on a means-tested benefit and believe you should qualify for this discount, call the Warm Home Discount helpline for free on **0800 030 9322**. We think you should use the phone number anyway.

If you have a **pre-payment meter**, you still qualify equally with others and your energy supplier can tell you how the discount will be paid.

The information we gathered here came from Paul Lewis, who presents *Money Box* on Radio 4 and you can read more here: <https://www.radiotimesmoney.com/news/how-to-get-help-with-heating-bills/>

**Whether you are able to claim or not if you are having trouble paying your bills, you need to contact your supplier and talk to them. They do have some funds to help people.**

## **#Offline and overlooked**

You will have noticed that even in this magazine we put links to websites when we are giving you information. We do search to find telephone contacts that we can also add but sometimes there just aren't any. We will still add the website because of course many of us do use the internet. However, we are aware that we aren't helping a good number of people to access all the information.

Age UK have started a campaign to address this problem and this is what they say (on their website):

"Public services are rapidly "going digital". If, like 2.7 million older people in the UK, you aren't an internet user, it's becoming harder – and in some cases impossible – to access day-to-day necessities such as banking, making NHS appointments or even just paying for car parking.

But it's not just those who aren't online. Plenty of people would just prefer to handle their finances, their bills or their health matters in person or over the phone. No one should feel forced to perform important tasks online if they don't feel comfortable.

Older people who aren't or choose not to be online are being locked out of essential services. **It's discrimination – plain and simple.** And it poses real risks to people's health, wellbeing, finances and ability to participate fully in our society."



<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/offline-overlooked/>

The campaign, “#Offline and Overlooked”, is to ensure everyone is able to choose to access and use public services offline – by phone, letter or face to face as appropriate – rather than constantly being forced down a digital route. It has two key asks:

- All public services, including the NHS, council services and other nationally provided public services, must be legally required to offer and promote an affordable, easy-to-access, offline way of reaching and using them, funded by central Government.
- The Government should lead on the development of a long-term, fully-funded national digital inclusion strategy, to support people of all ages who want to go online to do so.

It has launched an online and offline petition. Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/OfflineandOverlooked>. **Or request a petition sheet from: Freepost, Age UK campaigns.**

## What are QR codes?

QR stands for "quick response". The black-and-white squares work like a two-dimensional barcode and can be scanned by a phone or tablet.

Businesses often use them to direct people to things such as app downloads, payment platforms, social

media accounts, menus and events listings. The one here is just an illustration and doesn't do anything.

You may have seen them on railway stations or on menus in a restaurant. They can be really helpful and often can save you time. As always, there are people who are using these to try to scam you out of your money. Recently, some appeared on Newcastle City car parks. They were all false and the parking fee you paid went directly to the scammer. The city council issued this information and it's now on their website: ***"Please do not use any QR code that is displayed in any of our car parks to make a payment to park. We do not take payments via QR code."***



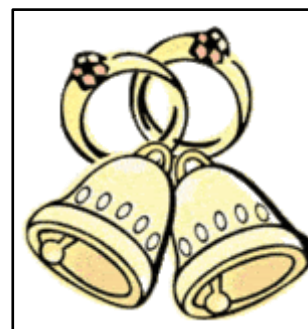
Our advice is always to just take a minute before you do anything, whether online or phone or face to face. If it's completely new, it's probably worth trying to check first to see if it's trustworthy. And of course, **never give your PIN to anyone.**

If you are interested, this is how you use a QR code:

1. On your phone or tablet, open the built-in camera app.
2. Point the camera at the QR code; your phone should detect it without you touching anything.
3. Tap the banner that appears on your phone or tablet.
4. Follow the instructions on the screen to finish signing in.

## **A wedding in November** **by Anne Levi**

After a year of health issues, Anne Levi and Norman Taylor, aged 79 and 81, started to realise the legal and financial benefits of being married. Anne tells us here about her journey:



*We'd had a year of health issues: my blind partner's medications – worse than his illnesses; I had injured my knee, slowing down considerably. He was approaching 81, me knocking 79. We had recently realised the legal and financial benefits of being married.*

A sudden urgency came upon me. I rushed to the registry office for the forms. It was simpler than feared and getting a slot was no problem: weddings in November are not that popular! The form was do-able, though documents were needed: birth certificates, divorce papers, proof of address.

It cost £155 for the basic ceremony in the Council Chambers, the registrar officiating. Bringing in another celebrant or choosing a special location can cost considerably more.

Getting clothes was a trying process. There was no time or money for shopping for fancy outfits so we resorted to the wardrobe.

My partner had his suit trousers waist altered to fit, bought a new shirt on-line, found a snazzy tie in a drawer. He looked great. I already had a silk jacket and got new trousers, shirt and shoes.

Only a ring for me was needed, he not being the ring-wearing type. I unearthed my grandmother's wedding ring from a drawer. This ring was first worn in 1918 so was 105 years old. I tried it on, worn to an oval from the shape of her finger, and it fitted me perfectly; I felt as though she was holding my hand. Polished up by the local jeweller, it was perfection.



We were blessed with a lovely day. With our witnesses and my son. We celebrated afterwards in a local hotel, handily next to the council offices. The next day, we had drinks and nibbles at home with our neighbours and a few close friends.

This tells how we did it but not how it felt. We were amazed by outpourings of loving kindness from everyone, who found it delightful and lovely that these old people were getting married! We even had presents!

It was heart-warming, it was unexpected. It was altogether magical!



# Ways to Donate

Every penny counts! No matter how small, the Elders Council really values your donation.

Your donation will help us provide information to our members by printing and posting this magazine. Each magazine costs about **£2.62** to print and post.

**Direct payment:** Bank: Co-operative Bank Account name: Elders Council of Newcastle Sort Code: 08-92-99  
Account Number: 65079623

**Paypal:** A quick and easy way to donate via our website:  
<https://www.elderscouncil.org.uk/donate>

**Cheque:** Post a cheque payable to the "The Elders Council of Newcastle" to the address on the back of this magazine.

**Cash:** We also accept cash donations. Please ring the office to arrange collection.

**www.giveasyoulive.com:** Log on to this address every time you shop online and nominate the Elders Council as your chosen charity. It costs you nothing and we receive a small percentage of the sale.

**Legacy:** Some members have chosen to leave the Elders Council a legacy. By deciding to remember us in your will, you can really help the Elders Council to continue its work.

## Gift Aid

Let us know if you are a UK taxpayer and we'll send a Gift Aid form that you can sign and return to us. This allows us to claim gift aid from the government (there is no charge to you). You can also download the form from the donate page of our website.

# Magazine Information

Do you have a great article or an idea for one or an axe you want to grind for the next magazine? Then please send it to us by **Friday 8 March 2024** at [info@elderscouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@elderscouncil.org.uk) You may also post articles to us at the address below. Articles that are typed or word-processed are really appreciated but hand-written articles are fine. **Please note: the editors reserve the right to alter, adapt or change articles submitted to the magazine.**

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## Magazine in other formats

We can make our magazine available in alternative formats (e.g., in larger print or on an audio CD or memory stick). Please just let the office know what format you would like.

## Reminder

If you move, change your email address or telephone number, please let us know so that we can keep our records up to date.

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