

Published by Engage with Age, Charity Number 100718, Company Number NI39665.

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Edition No. 59 March 2025



Front Page Poems

When I bent to pick
A dancing daffodil
I tripped and fell
And rolled down a hill,
The daffodil?
It's dancing still.
I'm light on my feet
With a "fresh pair of legs",
Let's go on a hunt
For some Easter Eggs
Some frosty days,
Then warm as a bun.
The yellow thing above?
My word, it's the sun.



Can You Read This Paper Clearly?

If you need a magnifying glass
phone or text Paul on 07436 174793.

We will send you one through the post for FREE.



Quick-fire Phone Competition!

The 3rd person to call **Lois** on **07595 261253** will receive a £10 Tesco voucher.

Calls will be taken 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday.

Competition closes 14th March.

Winner announced in next edition.

The winner of February's Edition (Edition 58) was **Wilma Dempsey**.



THE MAGICAL MONTH OF MARCH

March comes with the promise of warmer days, and brighter mornings and evenings. Oddly enough, the Earth is closer to the Sun in the Northern Hemisphere in winter time (91.4 million miles away) than during summer (94.5 million miles away). As you read this month's PAL Gazette we are probably about 92.95 million miles from the sun, give or take.

For all you nature lovers, this is a month of emerging natural activity. Warblers can be heard singing in the mornings. Increasingly Warblers are not migrating and staying here during winter because of changes in our climate. Their numbers swell as spring approaches. Their song is the Warbler staking out its territory as mating season begins. March hares are seen to get frisky, partly because longer days and more daylight triggers their mating rituals. And because crops in fields are still low it's possible to see the hares bobbing up and down. Sand Martins start to arrive, flying and skimming across lakes and ponds looking to catch insects for their dinner. Keep your eyes peeled for emerging butterflies, moths, and the spawning of frogs, toads and newts in pools and ponds.

If you are growing your own veg, don't they say you need to get your spuds in the ground by St. Patrick's Day?

Of course, March has the usual important dates, Shrove Tuesday on 4th March, International Women's Day on 8th March, Saint Patrick's Day on the 17th... but you might consider celebrating the following, more unusual dates in March: Bachelor's Day on 1st March; Hug a G.I. Day on 4th March; International Day of Awesomeness on 10th March (particularly relevant for all PAL Gazette readers); International Ear Muff Day on 13th March; National Jump Out! Day on 20th March; and Sunday 30th March which is Take a Walk in the Park Day. More fun March celebrations can be found at: https://www.webcal.guru/en-GB/event_list/holidays_funny

Spring will be "sprung" this month on the



20th March, the spring equinox. On the equinox, day and night are nearly equal in length. The word "equinox" comes from Latin, where "equi" means "equal" and "nox" means "night." Beyond the equinox, the length of days/daylight will be longer than night. Astronomically, spring ends on 21 June, at the summer solstice.

And when do the clocks go forward an hour? Sunday 30th March 2025. Remember, spring forward, fall back.

March is a month of promise and

anticipation. The poet Emily Dickinson put it eloquently in the first part of her poem "Dear March – Come In –"

Dear March — Come in —
How glad I am —
I hoped for you before —
Put down your Hat —
You must have walked —
How out of Breath you are —
Dear March, how are you, and the Rest —
Did you leave Nature well —
Oh March, Come right upstairs with me —
I have so much to tell —

PAL Gazette News

GET INVOLVED! Would you like to join the team that helps put the Gazette together? You can help by writing articles, collecting recipes, searching for competitions, even helping with the mail out. Call Lois on **07595 261253** if you would like to join the PAL Gazette team.

In the meantime, keep sending in your stories! We love your recipes, special stories, and poems.

Call Lois on **07595 261253**. Or if you use email, send them to info@engagewithage.org.uk



Anne's Crafty Corner The Sharpie Mug Bird Feeder

The Sharpie Mug Bird Feeder is an easy craft idea for spring. By simply decorating a mug with a Sharpie marker, you can create a beautiful bird feeder that welcomes back birds and other wildlife during the season.

What You'll Need:

- Plain ceramic mug
- Saucer and super glue (this is optional)
- Sharpie markers (in various colours)
- Twine or string
- Birdseed

To Make:

Step 1: Using superglue stick your mug to the saucer (this is optional, you can hang your feeder from a simple mug as well).

Step 2: Use colourful Sharpie markers to decorate the mug with nature-inspired designs.

Step 3: Let the mug dry for a few hours.

Step 4: Fill the mug with birdseed.

Step 5: Attach twine or string to the mug handle and hang it in a visible location.

Step 6: Sit back, relax, and enjoy watching birds visit your homemade bird feeder!

Top Tips

- These would make lovely gifts for friends and family.
- You can do any design you want – or if gifting you could write the recipient's name on the mug.
- For people without a garden – place it on a windowsill!
- If you want to attract a variety of birds make a few and add different treats such



Have Your Say
with the G6

Volunteering Changes Lives Volunteering Fair on 25th March 2025



One of the recurring themes discussed at G6 meetings is the importance of volunteering. Volunteering helps to change lives, improves communities, and provides enjoyment and a sense of purpose. Volunteering can take many forms.

HERE TO HELP

To reach the Engage with Age team see numbers below.

We are always happy to receive your phone calls so our mobile numbers are:

John McCandless 07729 516576
Colin McKinty 07468 695593

Sharyn Ruseckas/Sarah Gordon

07423 702721

Paul Hendry 07436 174793

Anna Albrzykowska

07425 627531

Our telephones are available during office hours and weekdays.

If you phone and we can't answer, please leave a message and we will return your call.

The Questionnaire

Name: David Brew

Role: Volunteer with Ability Net

Favourite pastime:

I suppose it's my allotment. It's near Lisburn and it's just the corner of a friend's field. The last couple of years haven't been a great success but every season is different. I like to grow edible vegetables. I have a greenhouse and grow tomatoes and I've have quite a bit of success with brassicas. I take time-lapse films of the variety of pests that visit and attack my crops. It's very amusing. I get pigeons, pheasants and rabbits, you name it. They all love my allotment. I get a mixture of enjoyment from watching my pests, but also some frustration as I'd prefer to eat my vegetables myself. It's important to work with nature. I try to avoid pesticides and I've converted one part of the allotment into a meadow for wildlife.

Why are your pastimes important?

It's a health thing. The work I do volunteering for AbilityNet is very rewarding but can be hard going answering people's requests for help and organising exhibitions. I like the allotment for the total contrast of not sitting in front of a computer screen, listening to the birds and, I suppose it's a cliché, communing with nature. There's also the physical benefit of exerting myself when digging a trench or weeding a plot.

I got an app for my phone from

Cornell University. It helps identify bird song. You get a wide variety of birds about. There are flocks of long tail tits and I love it when they fly through the apple trees.

What is the best thing about living here?

The thing for me is really the people. They are just great in terms of their generosity and their kindness and I find that stimulates my enjoyment of living here.

Favourite Food:

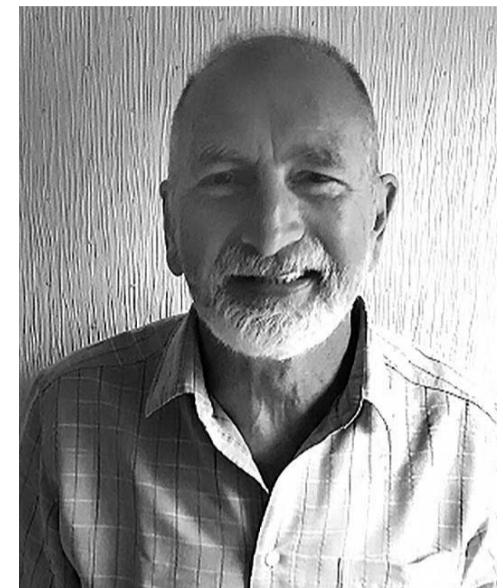
My favourite would be a plate of vegetables that I've grown at the allotment. I enjoy my lettuces and tomatoes. I like making up a nice salad.

Favourite TV Show:

I'm a big fan of "The Sopranos". That was a brilliant show. And there was another one called "The Wire". They are both from a few years ago but they still stay with me.

Tell us something that not many people know about you?

My enjoyment of computers came from the ones you bought as toys. The first computers we had in the house were the "toy" computers that you bought for your children. I remember the Amstrad computers and the Sinclair ZX Spectrum. They were really fun. Later on we bought a BBC Micro. They were serious computers that you could programme.



What advice would you give to a young person?

Try to get away from the rat race of qualification achievement. I think it's more important to find a role that is rewarding for you rather than trying to get more and more qualifications.

David is a volunteer with AbilityNet, the charity to make computers and IT accessible for all. If you would like assistance from AbilityNet, please telephone 0300 180 0028. See the articles in the rest of this month's Gazette about computers and volunteering!

Night Blessing

Submitted by Audrey Lynas

Restfulness and impatience change nothing except our peace and joy. Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustfully and quietly.

#niteblessing

G6
Greater Belfast
Seniors Forum

The older people who are part of the G6 are themselves volunteers representing their local older people's forums. In turn, many of them volunteer in their neighbourhoods. Many older people throughout Belfast give their time to volunteer on a weekly basis, while some dip in and out of opportunities as they arise. Volunteer Now is an excellent source of information (details below).

An excellent example of volunteering that originates from the G6 is the weekly group "The Grapevine", which is a drop-in group that runs at the 2 Royal Avenue venue every Tuesday between 11am-1pm. It's a very simple set up; older people can attend and meet other older people, have a chat and a free cuppa. The project is run by volunteers and its impact on the

people who attend is significant.

Hazel McLean, from the Shankill Older People's Forum, is one of the volunteers at the Grapevine, and Hazel says: "There are so many benefits to volunteering I don't know where to start!... We set up the Grapevine Hub in the centre of Belfast every Tuesday morning in 2 Royal Avenue to let people come along and have a coffee, to learn about different activities and events happening in the city. We find that just by getting out and about, people can feel better in themselves, it gives them a goal, a purpose."

A Volunteer Fair is taking place at 2 Royal Avenue on Tuesday 25th March 2025. If you fancy finding out more about volunteering this is the ideal place to go. There will be plenty

of organisations there with information on how you can give a little time to make a big difference to help in your community.

The Fair runs between 12.30-2pm on Tuesday 25th March 2025. For more information contact Joanna on 07827 823998.

If you would like more information on volunteering in general, contact Volunteer Now on 028 9023 2020, <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/>

BIN COLLECTIONS

There have been a number of complaints raised by older people about bin collections. If you have any trouble with your bins being collected, damaged or stolen, please contact Belfast City Council direct on 028 9027 0230 and staff will try to help.

WHAT'S ON

WALKS

There will be walks in East Belfast every Wednesday afternoon at 2.00pm.

If you are interested in taking part, contact Paul on

07436 174793 or email palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

South Belfast Walking Group, weekly on Mondays at 11.00am in Botanic Park.

To join in, contact Paul on **07436 174793** or email

palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

THE KEEPING IN TOUCH GROUP (KIT GROUP)

Every Thursday 2.00pm. Dee Street Community Centre, 12-16 Dee Street, Belfast BT4 1FT.

Every Friday 2.00pm at Finaghy Community Centre, 1-6 Geeragh Place, Belfast BT10 0ER.

To join in, contact Paul on **07436 174793** or email

palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

T'AI CHI

Every Friday 11am at Dee Street Centre, 12-16 Dee Street, Belfast BT4 1FT.

DANCE GROUPS

Every Friday at 2.00pm. Contact Engage with Age for details on this fun dance group.

Tuesdays, 2.00pm at Morton Community Centre, Lorne Street, Belfast BT9 7DU
(Line/Sequence Dancing)

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COFFEE MORNING

11.00am Thursdays 13th and 27th March 2025.

To attend, RSVP to Paul at palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

In all instances above, please phone Paul first on 07436 174793 or email palproject@engagewithage.org.uk for details

Free Computer and IT Support from Ability Net

Computers and IT are an increasing part of our lives, sometimes whether we like it or not!

AbilityNet is a UK-wide charity that was established to enable people to access and use computers, particularly older people. Formed in 1998, it seeks to make the digital world accessible to all.

AbilityNet runs a team of volunteers across Northern Ireland to assist with computer and IT queries from the public, including older people. Their volunteers are all trained and experienced, and they are all Access NI and security checked.

AbilityNet can organise for a volunteer to call at your home and help with any

aspect of your computer, be that fixing a particular problem or explaining how to use any aspect of IT.

AbilityNet is an inclusive, innovative charity, collaborating with a wide range of organisations to provide the best support while upholding high standards of integrity.

The contact number for AbilityNet helpline is 0300 180 0028.

There may be a waiting list at times, though they will be very pleased to take your call.

If you are online and want to know more, or want to book an appointment online, visit AbilityNet's website on <https://abilitynet.org.uk/>



'THE GRAPEVINE' CONNECTION HUB

Tuesdays 11am - 1pm in 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast City Centre. Drop in event each week. An opportunity to enjoy a chat, meet new people, become involved in events and learn about new services.

ONLINE EVENTS

CHOCOLATE BINGO

7.30pm Thursday 13th and Wednesday 26th March 2025. Via zoom. Contact eamon.quinn@engagewithage.org.uk for the link.

THE PUB QUIZ WITHOUT A PUB

7.00pm Thursday 20th March 2025. Via zoom.

Contact palproject@engagewithage.org.uk for the link.

FREE IT ASSISTANCE

If you are over the age of 60, live in Belfast, and have a computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone, you are eligible. The training is provided by Ignite IT and can help you with your email, getting online, online safety etc.

To avail of this, call Paul on **07436 174793**.

TEXTING FOR SENIORS

Everyone texts these days, and Whatsapp is used more and more by older people. Many people use acronyms in texts to shorten having to type out a whole phrase. Common acronyms include: "lol" (laugh out loud) or FYI (for your information).

In this digital age, we thought it might be useful to provide some texting acronyms that are useful for seniors. lol... though we aren't completely serious...

ATD – At The Doctors

GHA – Got Heartburn Again

LMDO – Laughing My Dentures Out
WTP – Where are The Prunes?
SMH – Shaking My Head
IMHAO – Is My Hearing Aid On?
WMG – Where are My Glasses?
BTW – Bring The Wheelchair
TTYL – Talk To You Louder
WDICIH – Why Did I Come In Here?
FYI – Found Your Insulin
FWIW – Forgot Where I Was
GGPBL – Gotta Go, Pacemaker Battery Low
BYOT – Bring Your Own Teeth
ROFLCGU – Rolling On Floor Laughing, Can't Get Up

Ten Top Tips For Your Garden in March

At the PAL Gazette we are keen you get the most out of your garden and your containers. Here's ten top tips for the month of March.

1. Finish pruning your roses early in the month.
2. Tidy up any flower beds and borders and get rid of any newly germinating weeds.
3. Sow wildflower seeds.
4. Plant summer flowering bulbs.
5. Plant early potatoes.
6. Check containers to make sure soil

- hasn't dried out.
7. Scrub your watering cans with hot soapy water to prevent fungal diseases.
8. Top up veg planters and raised beds with compost and top soil.
9. Give your gardening tools and your potting shed a spring clean before the season really kicks off.
10. Look forward to how you're going to enjoy sitting out in your garden or beside your containers in the warmer months.



WORD SEARCH



Enter our Word Search competition for a chance to win a £10 Tesco voucher.

Find the following 9 words hidden in the word square above:

- MARCH • SPRING • CHICKEN
- ROAST • VEGETABLES • SHARPIE
- MUG • SEEDS • BIRDFEEDER

To enter, phone Lois Kennedy on **07595 261 253 on weekdays, 10am-4pm**. Please note due to the popularity of competitions all correct entries are placed in a draw and the winner chosen at random.

The winner will be announced in the next edition of The PAL Gazette.

Entries for this edition's word search need to be in by 14th March 2025.

The winner of February's Edition (Edition 58) was Wendy Wilson.

Tips to prevent high Blood Pressure



Maintain a healthy weight



Reduce your salt intake



Limit the amount of alcohol you drink



Be more active and exercise regularly



Eat more fruits and vegetables

nichs.org.uk/highbloodpressure

Tea Time Quiz

Answer each of these five questions correctly for your chance to win a £10 Tesco voucher.

1. In which English city is Coronation Street set?
2. Who painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?
3. In which year did the Titanic sink?
4. Which actress played Violet Crawley in Downtown Abbey?
5. Can you name Cornwall's only city?

To enter, phone **Lois Kennedy on 07595 261253 on weekdays**.

Please note due to the popularity of competitions all correct entries are placed in a draw and the winner chosen at random.

Entries for this edition's quiz need to be in by 14th March 2025.

Winner of February's Edition (Edition 58) was **Essie Clarke**.

For all quiz lovers, join in The Pub Quiz without a Pub, 7pm Thursday 20th March 2025.

For zoom link email palproject@engagewithage.org.uk

The answers to August's quiz were:

1. Winston Churchill 2. General Practitioner 3. 11 4. Old Trafford 5. Jane Austen

Recipe Chicken Roast Dinner

A roast dinner with hardly any washing up that it costs only £1 per portion with minimal waste!

Ingredients

- 1.5-1.8kg/3lb 5oz - 4lb chicken
- Olive Oil for roasting
- 1/2 swede, peeled and chopped
- 3 carrots, cut into chunks
- 2 onions, chopped
- 100g/3 1/2oz barley
- 2 chicken stock cubes
- 500ml/18fl oz hot water
- 2 garlic cloves, flattened
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 head spring greens, shredded
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

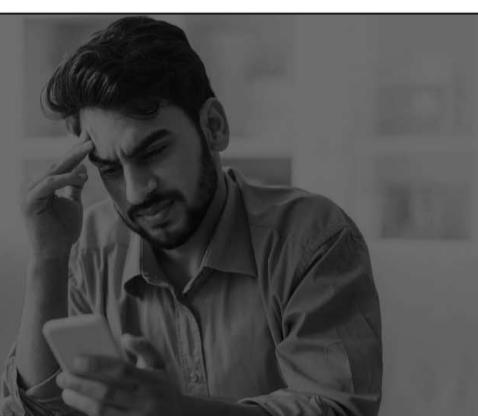
Method

1. Preheat the oven to 240°C/220°C Fan/Gas 9, or as high as it will go.
2. Put the chicken into a large casserole dish, drizzle with oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 15 minutes to brown the chicken, then remove from the oven and reduce the temperature to 220°C/200°C Fan/Gas 7.
3. Transfer the chicken to a plate, then put all the ingredients except the spring greens into the casserole. Lay the chicken on top and cover with the lid.
4. Set the casserole over a high heat on the hob for 3-4 minutes, until

you hear the liquid in the bottom of the dish start to boil. Transfer to the oven and cook for 40 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through completely.

5. Carefully remove the chicken from the pan with a pair of forks or tongs and set aside covered in foil to rest for 15-20 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, stir the spring greens into the vegetables and pearl barley, cover with a lid and leave to stand while the chicken rests.
7. Carve the chicken and serve with the vegetables.

Top Tips: You can use any left-over chicken to make sandwiches or soup. Serve with potatoes if you wish.



Forward suspicious text messages to 7726. This enables your provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious.

Send your letters to:

The PAL Gazette, Engage with Age, East Belfast Network Centre, 55 Templemore Avenue, Belfast BT5 4FP. Or you can email: info@engagewithage.org.uk



FLU VACCINE

From Wednesday 15 January 2025, the flu vaccine offer will be extended to everyone aged 50 to 64 years.

Those who are at greatest risk and are currently eligible to get the flu vaccine are advised to make arrangements now to get it ahead of an anticipated increase in demand.

HSC Public Health Agency

actionfraud.police.uk/phishing

Received a suspicious text message?

ActionFraud

Forward suspicious text messages to 7726. This enables your provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious.

OLD JOKES HOME!

What's a lamb's favourite song in March? Ewe Are My Sunshine!

What starts with 'e' and ends with 'e' but only contains one letter? An Envelope - submitted by a fun caller who wishes to remain Anonymous.

Engage with Age thanks its supporters and funders:

HSC Public Health Agency **HSC** Belfast Health and Social Care Trust **Belfast City Council** **HALIFAX** FOUNDATION for Northern Ireland **COMMUNITY FUND**