



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

Editorial

I sometimes read newspapers over people's shoulders in the underground. Maybe that's what I was doing because I recently combed through every paper I had brought home and could not find what I was looking for. It was a quote from an Oprah show which said something like 'Those who are expected at a monthly meeting have a higher happiness quotient than those who have lots of money'.

We in OWCH must be very happy women as we are expected at a minimum of one meeting a month, often three! Never mind that many of us attend all sorts of meetings outside OWCH...monthly and weekly. Generally speaking, we are outgoing women, involved in a variety of interests. Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed women can change their world... and maybe even *the* world!

And we have certainly been enjoying working with the wonderful firm of architects, PTE, who are consulting us about every aspect of the land and building we hope to occupy together one day. There is an excited buzz as we gather to discuss the various topics to be considered: position in the street, landscaping, building footprint, communal spaces, and the flats. We all know how unusual it is to be in this position.

We are grateful.

And HAPPY!
Sheila



Our individuality is all, all, that we have. There are those who barter it for security, those who repress it for what they believe is the betterment of the whole society, but blessed in the twinkle of the morning star is the one who nurtures and rides it, in grace and love and wit, from peculiar station to peculiar station along life's bittersweet route.

-
Muriel Strode - American poet
1875 -1930

Dear Editor....

*I wanted to tell you about....
...the book I read... the film I
saw... the interesting article I
found in the paper.... the cartoon
that made me laugh... the
thoughts I wanted to share....*

PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO SEND SOMETHING



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

MOVING THE GOALPOSTS - PROPOSALS FOR THE STATE PENSION AGE

Maria Brenton (from an AgeUK Briefing)

Women's pension ages are being pushed back six years while men's pension ages are being pushed back one year. The Coalition Agreement promised that the State Pension Age (SPA) will not **start** to rise to 66 until 2020 for women - but the current Pensions Bill will break this agreement and speed everything up. It would mean that the SPA for women would reach 63 by 2016 (as planned) but then increase to 65 by 2018 and 66 by 2020 (instead of 2026, so reducing the time women have to plan ahead).

Many older women are unaware of how these changes will affect them. If this Bill is passed in its present form, two and half million women will have to wait longer for their pension although they may have planned their finances against the gradual rise in pension age that previous governments promised. Women born between December 1953 and October 1954, would see their SPA rise by 18 months; women born between 6 March 1954 and 5th April 1954 would see their SPA rise by two years. A woman born on 5 April 1953 will be able to retire at 62 years 11 months; a woman born on 6th April 1954 will have to wait until the age of 66. Women who have to wait two extra years will lose an average of £10,000 in lost pension income. Women on low incomes, who rely on the state pension most, will be affected worst as they will have few savings and probably no employment pension to cope with

having to wait longer for their pension. Official figures show that women's state pensions are £60 a week less than men's.



THE BABAGAYAS HOUSE Maria Brenton



Pour vivre et vieillir en solidarité et citoyenneté...Aux armes citoyennes!

'To assert that 'old age' is not 'retired'. 'Living old is good but ageing well is better'.

The Babagayas House, a name drawn from Slavic mythology around 'old Witches or babagayas' will be a self-managing community of older women in Montreuil, France. The idea originated in the late 1990s with Therese Clerc, who is 83 and said, when reflecting on her mother's dependency on her children and her own reluctance to impose on her own children, *'why not live with friends? If we were a dozen or more we could do things together, help each other and provide a solution to this difficult time in life'.*

The Babagayas registered as a group in 1999, but things went very slowly ('the Long Babagaya Walk') until the



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

2003 heatwave and an article in Le Monde drew attention to this new collective.

They have a site in Montreuil, near the city centre, a few yards from the town hall, and seem to be at a similar stage to OWCH in terms of development with the help of various sources of official funding.

The house will have four mainstays: self-management, solidarity, civic sense and ecology. Independent living means no staff and pooling their resources. Solidarity means what we mean by mutual support. Civic sense means that a selection criterion for membership is 'having a strong political awareness and desire for social transformation' (having been part of a feminist, political or other membership movement). Ecology means low energy construction, lifestyle and support for local food production. Members (age-range 60 to 80+) have to be capable of independent living and agree to be fully participant.

The group, who are about 16 strong, intend a residence for about 20 women in 40 sq m apartments. They want to use the ground floor for a popular university and a spa along with four rooms reserved for young people at the start of their housing careers.

For further information,
<http://www.lamaisondesbabayagas.fr/>

VERY IMPORTANT!! Mail Tracker Programmes --a must read for email users!!!

This information is from a computer technician who spends a lot of time

clearing junk off computers for people.

Do yourself a favour - STOP adding your name to those types of listing regardless how inviting they might sound! Or make you feel guilty if you don't! It's only about getting your list of email addresses, nothing more.

Any time you see an email that says



"forward this on to '10' (or however many) of your friends", "sign this petition", or "you'll get bad luck" or "you'll get good luck" or "you'll see something funny on your screen after you send it" or whatever --- it almost always has an email tracker program attached that tracks the cookies and emails of those folks you forward to. The host sender is getting a copy each time it gets forwarded and then is able to get lists of 'active' email addresses to use in SPAM emails or sell to other spammers.

These people don't care how they get your email addresses - just as long as they get them. Even emails that talk about a missing child or a child with an incurable disease *"how would you feel if that was your child"* - are email tracking.

You may think you are supporting a GREAT cause, but you are NOT! Instead, you will be getting tons of junk mail later and very possibly a virus attached! Ignore them and don't participate!



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

You can do your Friends and Family members a GREAT favour by sending this information to them. And you will be rewarded by not getting thousands of spam emails in the future and by not helping the spammers get rich!

THIS JUST MIGHT BE SOMETHING
THAT YOU WILL WANT TO COPY AND
E-MAIL TO YOUR FRIENDS - SO
SEND TO YOUR OWN E-MAIL
ADDRESS AND BCC (BLIND COPY)
TO ALL THE OTHER ADDRESSES



D U TXT?

Do you ever think it would be helpful to have abbreviations when you text your friends, like the youngsters do. Here are some suggestions.

ATD - At the Doctor's
BTW - Bring the Wheelchair
BYOT - Bring Your Own Teeth
CCKNW- Can't come - knees not working
CFMK - Can't Find My Keys
FWIW - Forgot Where I Was
FWIWS - Forgot What I was Saying
HGBM - Had Good Bowel Movement
LMDO - Laughing My Dentures Out
OSG - Oh Sorry, Gas
ROFL...CGU - Rolling on the Floor
Laughing...Can't get Up!
WAY - Who ARE You?

BELOW: Beautifully framed by magnolia blossom, Hilary, Barbara, Marion and Anne snapped by Eva during a walk on Hampstead Heath organised by Barbara





Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

Hilary's Adventure, Part 2

My two weeks of teaching scene painting at Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts is at an end.

Although sad to leave my students, I am happy to be going on holiday. This is to be a special holiday as I will be spending it with Kathy, a dear friend I have not seen for 10 years. She is an Australian architect, a Project Manager in the company which designed the Sydney Olympic Village. When I knew I was going to teach in Hong Kong, I phoned Kathy to see if she could get time off to meet me in Asia for a holiday. We agreed to meet in Hanoi and then travel to Laos, and co-ordinated our flights to Hanoi to arrive within 15 minutes of each other. My Hong Kong students couldn't believe that this arrangement had been made when I was in London and I hadn't been e-mailing or texting Kathy all the time I was in Hong Kong to check that she was going to make the flight!

Hanoi Airport is packed when I arrive and I begin to wonder if I will find my friend or even recognise her after all these years. Suddenly I hear my name and there is Kathy battling her way through the crowds, dragging a large suitcase behind her. Apart from the suitcase (she had always travelled extremely 'light'), she looks just the same but with whiter hair. I guess my hair is whiter too!

In the taxi to the hotel we can't stop talking. We are excited at being together and excited by everything we see from the window. I had booked the hotel after reading thousands (!) of reviews on the net and just hoped it would be OK. The taxi stops in a street that sells only

shoes, spilling out of the open-fronted shops and filling the pavements. Kathy has always loved shoes so this seems a good omen. The entrance to the hotel is barely visible through the shoes! The humid heat hits us as we leave the air-conditioned taxi. This is the low season for tourists as it is very hot and wet. I realise I had not acclimatised in Hong Kong as everywhere was air-conditioned and I wonder if the room I had booked, with only a fan, is a good idea.

The hoteliers are charming and the fan keeps our room at the back of the building reasonably cool. However, the room is full of spiders which delights me but I had forgotten my friend is less keen on them. We settle in after I remove the spiders from the beds, walls and floor, carefully dropping them from the bathroom window. I think we fall asleep while still talking!

Our slow perambulations over the next few days reveal an interesting city surrounding a beautiful lake. We are confronted by European and Vietnamese architecture, side by side – temples next to buildings bedecked with communist symbols, modern western frozen yoghurt cafes next to Pho stalls – a wonderful hotchpotch of colour and styles whizzes past. There seem to be millions of moped riders wearing specially designed shirts with cuffs that have a flap which can be pulled over the back of the hands so they don't get sunburnt.

We make the mistake of hiring a trishaw to take us to the Art Museum which, by the way, is not mentioned in our guide books. The journey is hair-raising as we are at the front of the trishaw and the cyclist behind us.



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

So when we turn left across three lanes of traffic which do not want to give way to us, it is our feet that are narrowly missed by buses! It is worth it as the museum has some splendid paintings and sculptures including amazing large lacquer panels of revolutionary scenes from the Vietnam war. Lacquer is a difficult and time-consuming process. There is something very moving about these large panels (1metre x 2 metres) partly because of the muted colours, lacquer being only available in red, white and black. Sadly, there are no books with information about them.

The Temple of Literature is worth its quite high entrance fee even though half of it is closed – something they forgot to tell us at the pay booths! Built in 1070, it became a university to teach the royal children and aristocracy (mandarins) and consists of a series of walled gardens and small pavilions, calm and beautiful to stroll through compared with the traffic jammed roads outside. Besides the beauty of the buildings, the most interesting objects for me are the stone carved stele (upright slabs of stone) each one held up by giant carved turtles. The names of all those who attended the University up until the 1700s are carved on the stele.

We want to see the famous water puppets – a tradition which seems to exist only in Vietnam. I am expecting it to take place on the lake in the centre of Hanoi so am surprised to find it is in a European-style theatre two streets away from the water. The stage consists of a tank of water into which is set a house front with large double doors. I assume the doors will open and we will see the puppeteers operating the

puppets when, suddenly, two dragon puppets pop out of the water and begin to play like puppies with a ball representing a pearl. They are operated on long poles by puppeteers behind the house front and the doors don't open until the very end of the show when the puppeteers wade through to take a bow. The show consists of highlights of several traditional stories all of which have charming and amusing scenes. We laugh uproariously as 'drunken' puppets fall off boats and swim a fast version of the crawl while being chased by giant fish.

We save a visit to Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum until the last day, having checked carefully in three guidebooks for the open days and times. We take a taxi which drops us at the edge of the huge parade ground in front of the imposing tomb. Of course the guide books are wrong and it is closed. So I can now add **not** seeing Ho Chi Minh to my list which includes **not** seeing Mao as it was not a day for foreign tourists, and **not** seeing Lenin as I did not think I'd be able to queue for six hours at -20 without getting frostbite!

The next day we leave our lovely hotel, well before anyone's up, armed with two huge bags of food the staff had made for us, as compensation for missing breakfast. The hotel had booked us a taxi to the airport but after the second time the driver took the wrong turning off the motorway, we decide that 'taxi driver' is a loose term for 'my brother has a car'. However, after a scenic journey past villages and paddy fields we manage to arrive at the airport just in time for our flight to Luang Prabang in Laos.

Stay tuned..... More next time!!



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

Member Profile

Anna Watkins

(assisted by Nicolette)

I was born in 1953 and brought up in West London. I have one older brother and a younger sister. My father worked for the BBC as a producer which so absorbed him that my mother was often left to bring up the children. I never enjoyed school much but everything changed when I got to Art School - I left home to share grotty little flats with other art students and felt that my life as a 'grown up' had begun.

I studied Textile Design at Camberwell, then Theatre Design at the Slade. Then I worked as a junior in the wardrobe department of Prospect where I worked for 3 seasons and learned a great deal. Within a few years I was supervising costumes, working with designers, buying fabrics, employing costume makers, and making sure everything got finished within budget with both the designer and the management still speaking to me!



In the mid 80's I was asked by designer Nico Georgiardi (who had taught me at the Slade) to work on remaking his Covent Garden Romeo and Juliet for the New York based American Ballet Theatre. From then on much of my work has involved organizing the construction of costumes in London and then shipping them out to the USA. I was

still doing at least one show a year at the National or at the Opera House when, in 2005, I became the costume designer for Boston Early Music Festival who do a big Baroque Opera every two years on a small budget. This year we did a tour for the first time, taking Acis and Galatea to Seattle, Vancouver, Kansas City, and finally New York.

I am really enjoying working closely with such great musicians and learning more about the music. I have become close friends with the director and often stay with her after jobs.

I have managed to find enough freelance work in my career to keep me going so far and I hope to work for about another 10 years, retiring around 2020.

I currently do a lot of work in my house so will need to find a separate studio when we are in Barnet. I live in a 30's terraced house in Streatham. I like where I am now but feel the lack of close friends nearby. My various relationships with men begin well but somehow haven't lasted and now I am back on my own which finally, and with great relief, feels fine.

Not having children of my own I feel blessed that my dear sister who is 7 years younger than me has her 3 lovely children and I really enjoy being an aunt. My brother lives in West London and we are all close. My lovely Mum died last year at 89 and lived in her own home until a couple of months before she died. Helping her made me think about my own aging and it was then that I found out about OWCH. My mother accepted all the trials and tribulations of old age and if I can



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

deal with my own ageing with as few complaints as she did I will be doing well!

My father was a Catholic and my mother a Protestant so although I was brought up as a Catholic I still went to Jumble Sales and Harvest Suppers at my mother's church as somehow the Catholics did not go in so much for these fun activities. I left the Church when I went to Art School but during my mother's later years I took her to her church in Isleworth where she had been worshipping since 1960. There was a wonderful woman vicar and a lovely congregation and I realized that I found peace there. I found enormous support from the Church when my mother died, and I am now a new member of an Anglican congregation in Streatham.

I love buildings both old and interesting modern ones so I enjoy my membership of the National Trust and also the Open House weekends. Last year I visited several of the Wren Churches in the city with a friend which was a wonderful day. I have a group who I walk with once a month and enjoy a long walk in good company especially if finished with a good tea.

It seems really exciting to be a member of OWCH at this time and to be approaching my 60th birthday and to be involved with such an exciting project.



Quote of the month:

**"May today there be peace within.
May you trust that you are exactly
where you are meant to be.**

**May you not forget the infinite
possibilities that are born of faith
in yourself and others.**

**May you use the gifts that you
have received, and pass on the
love that has been given to you.
May you be content with yourself
just the way you are.**

**Let this knowledge settle into your
bones, and allow your soul
the freedom to sing, dance, praise
and love.**

**It is there for each and every one
of us."**

*Secular adaptation of a prayer of St Teresa
of Lisieux*



Onwards and upwards, girls!



Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45



A Shaggy Duck Story

A woman brought a very limp duck into a vet. As she laid her pet Cuddles on the table, the vet pulled out his stethoscope and listened to the bird's chest. After a moment or two, the vet shook his head and sadly said, "I'm sorry, your duck, , has passed away." The distressed woman wailed, "Are you sure?" "Yes, I am sure. Your duck is dead," replied the vet.

"How can you be so sure?" she protested. "I mean you haven't done any testing on him or anything. He might just be in a coma or something."

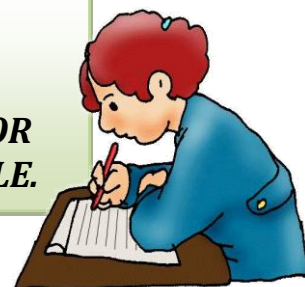
The vet rolled his eyes, turned around and left the room. He returned a few minutes later with a black Labrador Retriever. As the duck's owner looked on in amazement, the dog stood on his hind legs, put his front paws on the examination table and sniffed the duck from top to bottom. He then looked up at the vet with sad eyes and shook his head. The vet patted the dog on the head and took it out of the room. A few minutes later he returned with a cat. The cat jumped on the table and also delicately sniffed the bird from head to foot. The cat sat back on its haunches, shook its head, meowed softly and strolled out of the room.

The vet looked at the woman and said, "I'm sorry, but as I said, this is most definitely, 100% certifiably, a dead duck." The vet turned to his computer terminal, hit a few keys and produced a bill, which he handed to the woman.

The duck's owner, still in shock, took the bill. "£150!" she cried, "£150 just to tell me my duck is dead!"

The vet shrugged, "I'm sorry. If you had just taken my word for it, the bill would have been £20, but with the Lab Report and the Cat Scan, it's now £150."

THIS SPACE IS FOR YOU TO WRITE A COMMENT, HAVE A PICTURE OR A CARTOON PRINTED, OR MAYBE FOR SHARING AN INTERESTING ARTICLE.





Quarterly Newsletter May 2011 Issue # 45

**And finally..... can you guess
which OWCH member's
mother is featured in the
following article**
Swindon Advertiser

11 March 2011

Ms Reed, who has been editing the publication for the past 25 years, thinks it would save a "great deal of work" if everyone wrote their own obit.

"At the moment I have to rely on the vicar after the funeral to slip me the



Residents of a Wiltshire village are being asked to write their own obituaries for their local magazine.

The Lydiards Magazine is a monthly publication which covers the village of Lydiard Millicent. Each month it features an obituary and its 87-year-old editor, **Constance Reed**, is finding it hard to keep up.

"With an obituary every month, it would be useful to the rest of us left behind if people would prepare their own obituaries before they die," she said. "When friends and family are grieving they don't really want to be sitting around working out your life story."

notes on the life of the person," she said. "So I can get the material like that but it takes a lot of time."

In the March issue of the magazine, residents were asked to write their own 400-word obituary and submit it in "good time". Even Ms Reed has yet to write her own, although she does know what she would leave out. "My list of lovers," she said.

"So everybody should write one because the next generation is going to want to know what happened and what it was like to live in Lydiard Millicent."

Guess whose Mum this is - answers to the Editors please!