

Issue 17 Summer 2013

# The Assembly Times

Our Community  
Our Voice

Established 2007

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Dear Reader: its been quite a busy time for your committee since the Spring edition of your Assembly Times. The AGM held in March, where we reviewed the previous year, elected your committee officers and welcomed two most interesting guest speakers. Sadly we still have some vacancies on the committee and so please do give some thought to how you might be able to help and perhaps consider joining the committee team - we meet monthly to progress the work of being a voice for the over 55's and to plan the regular public meetings and community events. Speaking of which did you see us on Saturday 4th May in the High Street? Despite the gazebo nearly being carried away by the wind we had a very successful 'Promote The OPA' event and it was indeed most encouraging to receive so much genuine interest in the work of the OPA and we hope it will have enlisted some new members.

We have just begun in earnest to plan and promote the 2013 community event - the theme this year is AGE AWARE so look out for more news and note the date Saturday 14th September 2013.

## Bar Codes - Fact or Fiction!



### CAN YOU IDENTIFY A PRODUCT'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN FROM THE BAR CODE?

Food labelling is often misleading and it can be difficult to identify the country of origin of a product especially with so many confusing labels and bar codes on all that we buy.

Recently the OPA has become aware of articles, comments and emails regarding how to decipher a product's country of origin via the EAN barcode; that's the long label with lots of lines and numbers, often in black and white and usually on the back or base of packaging.

Unfortunately the information is incorrect, each country using EAN labelling does have a country identifier that's used at the start of the barcode. The digits 50 identify U.K., other countries have 2 or 3 digit prefixes BUT these three digits DO NOT necessarily signify what country the product was produced in, it indicates the country in which the company that applied for the labelling are based. The company simply states where they are located to receive their approval to use the prefix, this could be the company headquarters, or an office in that location. This means the company can choose to manufacture their product anywhere in the world although in many cases it will be the same country, but don't rely on the barcode to identify this! ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND LOOK FOR WRITTEN ONFIRMATION OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ON THE PACKAGING. The Food Standards Agency booklet 'Consumer Guide to Country of Origin Information on Food Labels' might help, it contains some useful diagrams and advice on what the symbols and wording mean. Call 0207 2768829 or visit:

[www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/countryoriginlabellingcot.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/countryoriginlabellingcot.pdf)

# South Essex III Service



JUST A REMINDER THAT THE NHS DIRECT NUMBER IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN SOUTH ESSEX.

NHS 111 IS THE NEW SERVICE INTRODUCED TO MAKE IT EASIER TO ACCESS LOCAL NHS HEALTHCARE SERVICES AND AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY; 7 DAYS A WEEK. CALLS ARE FREE FROM LANDLINES AND MOBILES. CALL 111 WHEN MEDICAL HELP IS NEEDED FAST BUT IT'S NOT A 999 EMERGENCY. THE NHS 111 SERVICE WILL ASSESS, PROVIDE ADVICE AND DIRECT CALLERS STRAIGHT AWAY TO THE LOCAL SERVICE THAT CAN HELP BEST.

For more information about the service and when to use: [www.nhs.uk/111](http://www.nhs.uk/111) or [www.southendccfg.nhs.uk](http://www.southendccfg.nhs.uk)

The funding of **Social Care** and **Pension Shortfalls** were among the issues addressed in the *Queen's Speech* on May 8th. The Queen outlined long-term reforms designed to tackle challenges facing a UK economy with an older population. These included probably the most important, complicated new law in what is likely to be the Government's last round of serious legislation before the general election: the Department of Health's cap on social care funding. The ceiling on care costs, recommended by the Dilnot commission will be fixed and set by government at £72,000 from April 2016. April 2016 will also see the residential care means-test threshold raised from just over £23,000 to £118,000. Chancellor George Osborne has said that the cap will give 'peace of mind' to those wanting to plan for their old age and leave savings to their children. He said it should help those not wanting to sell their own homes to cover the cost of their long-term social care. New legislation will also have to define the boundary between free NHS care and means-tested adult social care. Another reform announced is the introduction by Department of Work and Pensions of a single-tier weekly pension set at £144, also starting from 2016. This replaces the current basic pension of £107 plus various means-tested top-ups. **SEE PAGE 7.** Other new laws will see a crime bill aimed at simplifying police powers and giving officers new authority to disperse crowds. This comes in the wake of the Government being accused of downgrading anti-social behaviour legislation. A financial services banking reform bill, also to be introduced will implement the final conclusions of the banking standards commission.. *Copyright Press Association 2013*



## ARRIVA BUSES ARRIVE !

It's good to be able to report some positive news from one of our bus service providers – Arriva.

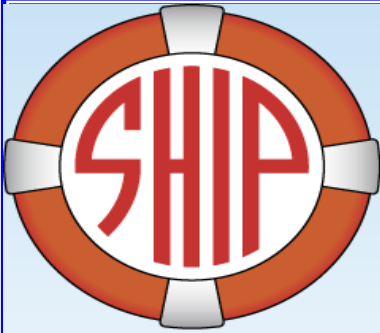
On a dull and bitterly windy April Friday morning after a very **long** walk down **Short!!! Street** to the bus depot I attended on behalf of the Older Persons Assembly the formal delivery of 16 new buses to Arriva's fleet. A splendid sight to behold, all neatly lined up for invited guests to inspect both inside and out. After a short ceremony at which one of the buses was named in memory of Tony Tomassi and

others with names such as Pride of Rochford, Leigh-on-Sea, Westcliff, Shoebury etc. we then took a very comfortable ride in them to the Cliffs Pavillion for a buffet lunch.

The new buses are much the same in appearance as those introduced on the 9 route some eighteen months ago although these have more seating and appear longer by about four feet. The sixteen new vehicles are now running on the number 1 route between Shoebury and Rayleigh. Buses like this do not come cheap and I was told that each bus costs around £128,000, quite an investment for Arriva. Some £3 million had been spent on these and the number 9 route to improve passenger comfort.

New buses now make up 45% of the total fleet serving Southend and with the introduction of the Real Time Information system at selected bus stops in May/June, bus travel should be much improved. Some timetable changes have and will be made over coming weeks and I'm sure there will be plenty of coverage of these on the buses and in local newspapers.

It's good to have these improvements but I still believe that an in-depth survey of all bus routes in the town should be undertaken which should involve the Council, bus companies and the travelling public to assess what changes need be made to improve services to some routes in Southend and surrounding areas. I shall continue on behalf of the OPA to press for this.... *Derek Iles*



## Have you Heard of SHIP?

If you haven't you're not alone, many other OPA members are unaware so please read on...

Southend's Health & Wellbeing Information Point or **SHIP** for short is a free on-line directory from Southend Borough Council.

**Southend's Health & Wellbeing Information Point**

The Directory provides a range of information for Older People about Staying Healthy and Active. It has over 600 records including lots about help at home and in the community; finding things to do, services to help support independence and everything from finding a local GP to a flower arranging club.

The format is good and it's easy to search via the subject headers. Its worth a look...



Find SHIP on line at: [www.southendinfopoint.org](http://www.southendinfopoint.org)

# Victory for the Echo's Blood Test Campaign

The OPA would like to thank all those of you who signed and supported the Echo campaign.

The Echo Newspaper reported: *Doctors & patients from across the community are helping the Echo celebrate a victory for people power. BLOOD testing is to stay local in South Essex after a long fought campaign. Two hundred staff at the pathology department at Southend Hospital were given the news they'd been hoping for since it was announced in December that GP requested pathology services were to move 90 miles away that, according to a consultant who did not wish to be named, there is a verbal agreement to sub contract with CPS, who are the preferred service provider, and the hospitals so that community pathology can continue to be provided locally in a three year contract from April 2014 to 2017. It is understood Southend & Basildon will now act as a South Essex non urgent hub like Bedford, Luton and Dunstable, West Herts Hospitals and Princess Alexandra in Harlow.*

The pathologist added: *"The Echo did a fantastic job of bringing it to the public's attention."*



## KEEP SAFE - BE SCAM AWARE

*Michael Armstrong Crime Reduction & Architectural Liaison Officer Southend Police District writes....* Is it a SCAM? Sadly all too often the answer is YES. The word SCAM can be used to describe anything from criminal fraud to sharp, but legal, selling practices designed to cheat someone. None of us likes to think that we've wasted or, even worse, been conned out of our money. Unfortunately, there are plenty of situations in which you can act in good faith and suddenly find you've come off worse from a transaction. Fortunately, a lot of scams and bad purchases can be avoided if you know what to look for.

Over the next few editions I shall share some good advice that I've found about the most common scams and what you can do if you fall victim to one. Most of us can protect our self from scams if we have the right information and advice so in this Summer's edition, I have some general guidance and then a short focus on Bogus Callers.....

If you are contacted with what seems like a good deal, don't be afraid to take advice before making a decision to buy or invest. **Ask family and friends what they think.** If a company has a website it does not necessarily mean they are reputable, even if there are customer testimonials, these could be false. What do reviews on other websites say? Similarly, if you're talking to a salesperson, do not take their claims at face value. Even legitimate companies will praise their products and downplay any limitations. Look for other opinions to get a balanced view. The internet can be a good way to research anything that you're unsure about. If you aren't confident using the internet or don't have access to a computer **ask your local Age UK** for help, many offer training sessions and advice on getting online for older people. Your **local library** might also offer computer training. You could ask neighbours and friends whether they can recommend someone who's done a good job for them. Remember that when someone approaches you offering a service, you could phone the relevant trade association or look it up on the internet to see whether they are a member before you agree to them carrying out work for you. You should always get a quote for the cost of the work and decide whether you think it's a fair price, before you agree to it. Be cautious if you're asked for payment before you receive products or services and don't make cash payments to traders you don't know until you're sure the work has been carried out to your satisfaction & **get an invoice/receipt.**

**BOGUS CALLERS**...Bogus callers are people who try to con their way into your home to steal from you or trick you out of money. They might pretend to be an official from your gas or electricity company, or a salesperson. They might pose as a charity worker, although there are also many legitimate door-to-door fundraisers. It may be someone with a hard luck story claiming to need to borrow a few pounds or wanting to use your telephone in an emergency. A recent scam involves people knocking on the door and claiming they're conducting a survey.

**BEWARE:** Before you answer the door, remember : **LOCK:** all your other outer doors, **CHAIN:** put the door chain on, **CHECK:** ask for an identity card ,**REMEMBER:** you do not have to let strangers into your home. If you are suspicious OR the caller will not leave, dial 999 and ask for the police. Or to report a non-emergency call 101. NEXT EDITION I'll write about Rogue Traders. Send any questions you have or topics you want me to cover to the OPA and I'll include in future editions or respond directly to you. *Michael Armstrong.*

### TRACING LOST BANK AND BUILDING SOCIETY ACCOUNTS

If you have mislaid details of savings or other bank or building society accounts, there are account tracing schemes that can help you to locate your money. If you think you may have some unclaimed assets in a bank, building society or National Savings and Investments, you can make a single online application to have your account traced at [My Lost Account](http://www.mylostaccount.org.uk) website [www.mylostaccount.org.uk](http://www.mylostaccount.org.uk) Alternatively contact the British Bankers' Association 0207 216 8800 and/or the Building Societies Association 0207 520 5900 for details of how to make a postal application.

## Back In The Garden

**Gardeners** .. now that the frosts have finally gone and it's time to get BACK out in the garden in earnest here's a few tips that you might wish to consider before getting those gloves on to avoid gardening back pain. If we don't prepare ourselves first, then we are risking that déjà vu moment from last year of "my back is really hurting - I think I've overdone it in the garden"!

After a winter away from our garden tasks and long periods of inactivity or sedentary living, it's not a good idea to have serious bouts of digging or sweeping without first preparing our bodies for the tasks ahead. These periods of heavy activity often entail poor posture with repetitive lifting, carrying, and twisting so.....

**Warm Up** -simple stretching exercises to loosen up joints ready for the task ahead.

**Pace yourself** - don't try to do it all in one session, vary the tasks to reduce the duration of repetitive movement.

**Digging** - dig to the front, level and parallel with hips, bend from the knees when lifting the soil.

**Raking** - maintain a straight back and pull the rake towards your body then to one side to reduce twisting forces on your back.

**Planting** -use a kneeling pad or stool. Stand up frequently take a break, do some back stretches. Use a sensible height work surface when potting up.

**Refreshment** : Make sure to take on plenty of water, especially if it's warm.

**Golden Rule:** To avoid gardening back pain....**Don't Overdo it!!!**



## Hobbies are Good for You

The second of our new Hobbies features is from David Stansfield, our Treasurer who tells us a little about his hobby of Bridge and why it can be good for us.....

The history of contract bridge, one of the world's most popular partnership card games, dates from the early 16th-century invention of whist. Bridge departed from whist with the creation of 'Biritch' or Russian Whist in the 19th century, and evolved through the late 19th and early 20th centuries to form the present game that is so enjoyed by lots of us.

I have belonged to bridge clubs for many years and have noticed one amazing and at the same time comforting fact, none of the members suffer Alzheimer's degeneration. Yes, it's a fact. Regrettably, like the rest of the population demographics takes a hand so the most common reason members leave is quitting the mortal coil!! But that's a failure of the body not the mind.

I hope that from this you will realise a lot of the members of bridge clubs are elderly. But, hey, that's us so read on.... The next good reason to learn and play is it's a game that can be played to any standard and by any of us, simply for pleasure or competitively. All that is needed is four players and a pack of 52 cards. The standard of play for some goes all the way up to an Olympic mind game. Essentially in Bridge you are challenged to think logically and once play is under way memory is needed and that's how your brain is kept in good fettle.

Like any good game the rules are simple so it takes relatively little time to get started and from then on skill is developed to whatever your limit or interest. Naturally, it helps to take lessons as this is the best way to improve. I'm a member of Leigh and Thorpe Bay Bridge Clubs, both of which hold lessons for beginners and improvers. Interested in learning? give me a call. Want to improve? let me know.

*David Stansfield*



### DO YOU HAVE A LOST PENSION?

If you moved between jobs while working did you perhaps lose track of a pension that you had with one of your employers? The **Pension Tracing Service** can help you trace a pension that you've lost track of, even if you don't have the contact details of the provider. Collect as much information as you can about the employer: any previous names it had, the type of business it ran, whether it changed address, and when you belonged to the scheme. Call the Pension Tracing Service on **0845 600 2537** [www.gov.uk/find-lost-pension](http://www.gov.uk/find-lost-pension) - they will check your information against their database of pension schemes. They should be able to give you details of the pension's administrator, whom you would then need to contact to ask about your pension. *Source Age UK*

**STEPPING THROUGH LIFE...** Having recently become less able I am now more aware of the problems that confront the disabled when it comes to travelling on the bus or a train. I thought you might like to share my latest experience of public transport travel with my journey via London to my final destination at the leafy suburb of Roehampton. Southend Central to Fenchurch Street I had only minimal issues and to be fair Fenchurch Street Station offers reasonable facilities for passengers arriving there. A lift is available to take you down to street level and also an escalator and from the station forecourt, depending on walking speed it is no more than five to ten minutes walk to the underground station at Tower Hill, Here one starts to "STEP THROUGH LIFE", SIX steps down to the ticket hall, TWENTY plus steps to the platforms for Circle and District line trains. Worth a note that this station was extensively re-built and is now situated some THREE HUNDRED yards east from where it was but why did they not install escalators or lifts when they had the chance? Onwards then, West to Victoria Underground and here again TWENTY plus steps up to the ticket hall and exit to the Main Line Station, and another TWENTY plus steps to the main line trains. I was told I could get a train direct to Putney, NOT SO I had to change at Clapham Junction and use the FOOT BRIDGE across the lines from platform 2 to platform 18 !! but by now the sun was shining and yes there were newly installed lifts towards the end of the platform to take me up to the footbridge. At Putney I was confronted by mountains of scaffolding and THIRTY steep steps up to a temporary footbridge then another THIRTY steps down to platform 1, a short walk along this platform and here we go again another TWENTY FIVE steps up to the ticket hall. But joyous news; the reason for the scaffolding they are installing lifts at this station but not for another EIGHTEEN months. So beware if you are planning to shop in Putney. A pleasant bus ride to Roehampton village, nothing much having changed there but for the faceless housing estate that now covers what was once a large orchard and walled garden of a monastic order, a dual carriage way where once was a B-road up to Wimbledon Common, Oh! and let's not forget the group of alcoholics sitting on the wall opposite the Post Office. I am now in recovery at home having had an interesting day out, climbed in excess of THREE HUNDRED steps and all for the price of an all zones travel card for £14.25. Happy Travelling from Derek Iles.



## COOKS CORNER

### Maureen's Easy Apple & Banana Crumble

#### Ingredients:

2 Bramley Apples – peeled	1 Cinnamon Stick
3 Cox's Apples – peeled	50g Unsalted Butter
3 Bananas – chopped	125g Caster Sugar

#### For the Topping:

150g Plain Flour, 100g Unsalted Butter, 150g Demerara Sugar

#### Method

Preheat the oven to 180c/gas mark 4.

To make topping rub **flour**, **butter** and **sugar** together. Spread mixture on a tray and bake for about 12 minutes until crisp and golden (you may need to mix it a bit half way through). Meanwhile cut the **apples** into thick wedges and place in a pan. Add the **sugar**, **cinnamon** and **butter** and cook until just soft. Fold in the **bananas** and spoon into individual pie dishes. Spoon the **crumble topping** mixture over the **hot fruit**. I would serve it with crème fraiche or Total yogurt, but you could use cream or ice-cream if preferred.





## What Does The New Single Tier Pension Mean For Us?

The Queen's Speech in May confirmed the government's proposal for State Pension reform for people reaching State Pension age in the future. How will the proposed new single-tier State Pension affect future pensioners? What does it really mean for existing pensioners? The existing system is complex, has high levels of means-testing and produces inequality, e.g. women tend to have lower State Pensions than men. The government says reforms are intended to address these issues and the aim is to introduce a simpler, fairer system where people have a clearer idea about what the state will provide making it easier to plan their retirement savings. The Government has said that the new pension will only affect people reaching State Pension age from **6 April 2016** so it will **not affect people who are already in receipt of a state pension**. The new single tier weekly pension is to be set at £144 and will replace the current system of basic pension of £107 plus various means-tested top-ups for new pensioners from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 .

Britain's biggest pensioner organisation, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) has criticised the latest report from the Work and Pensions Committee for failing to highlight the unfairness contained in the government's plans. The NPC claims that future generations will end up getting less pension than under the present system, but have to pay more for it and work longer before they can receive it, whilst existing pensioners – many of whom would benefit from an increase in their state pension – will be completely excluded from the changes. Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: *"There is considerable evidence to show that 1 in 5 older people are currently living below the official poverty line of £178 a week (before housing costs). The state pension proposals will do nothing to address this. No amount of telling people what the changes to the state pension are going to be will make them any less unfair. Millions of existing pensioners, particularly women don't get anywhere near £144 a week and are left to struggle on with a complicated means tested Pension Credit which 1.8m older people still don't claim, despite being eligible. The government may well introduce a single-tier pension, but we'll be left with a two-tier pension system. The outlook for future generations of pensioners is even worse."* Source Mature Times.

If you feel the proposals are unfair & want to make your views known write to your MP. Let us know what you think - remember the OPA is your voice and will continue to speak out on your behalf.

## Library Review Update



Our latest update on the Library Review is brief as most of you will probably have already read in the local press that concerns are being voiced from the community about some of the recommendations in the Draft Strategy that the Council published at the end of March. Council representatives have advised us *"Cabinet approved the recommendation that the review can now progress to the next phase; which will be consultation on the proposals contained within the report. We are currently in the process of putting together a further consultation document on the proposals. We anticipate that this second, 12 week phase of public consultation will take place between May and July. During this period we will be using a questionnaire both on-line and in hard copy format along with other mechanisms for groups and individuals to have their say on this"*.

We urge all our members to read the draft strategy and supporting documents as should the recommendations be implemented in their entirety this would mean a significant reduction in the local services for us all. If you have concerns there are petitions to sign and PLEASE complete the next stage questionnaire. The OPA is your voice, we WILL on your behalf actively engage in the next phase so please let us know your views. Read the Draft Strategy: [www.southend.go.uk/info/10109/libraries-news\\_and\\_events/1409/library\\_service\\_review](http://www.southend.go.uk/info/10109/libraries-news_and_events/1409/library_service_review)

# DATES TO NOTE

May and June 2013

## DEMENTIA ADVOCACY SURGERIES

Thorpedene Library, Delaware Road, Shoeburyness  
 Friday 3 May & Friday 7 June 2.00- 4.00pm  
 Kent Elms Library, 1 Rayleigh Road, Leigh-on-Sea  
 Friday 10 May & Friday 14 June 10.00-12 noon  
 Leigh Library, Broadway West, Leigh-on-Sea,  
 Friday 17 May & Friday 21 June 10.00-12noon  
 Contact :Lucy White Advocacy Manager Alzheimer's Society  
 Telephone 01268 778959 Website [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)  
 Email [lucy.white@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:lucy.white@alzheimers.org.uk) .

## ARTHRITIS CARE NEW MAGAZINE

The patient support charity Arthritis Care is launching a new magazine **INSPIRE**. The magazine, which will be published quarterly, launches in May 2013 ahead of Arthritis Care Week. To join Arthritis Care or to find out more about the new magazine contact 020738065000 or [www.arthritiscare.org.uk](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk)



Age UK's **Falls Awareness Week** takes place from **17-21 June 2013** when the Charity will be urging people to put their "Best Foot Forward" by keeping their feet healthy and prevent problems with balance, walking and sensation in the feet which often lead to falls. The charity is encouraging people to take part in local activities taking place throughout the Week. For more information about Age UK's Falls Awareness Week 2013 and events in your local area [www.ageuk.org.uk/falls](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/falls) or call 0800 169 6565



September 2013

## AGE AWARE

**SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2013**  
**Southend Older Persons Assembly** are pleased to confirm that our annual popular community event will again be held in Southend Victoria Shopping Centre with a theme of **AGE AWARE**. This year alongside the many static displays we will have a variety of music and entertainment. Look out for advance notification of some of the other attractions we hope to introduce. **PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW.** We are most grateful to Victoria Shopping Centre for again providing the venue and to Leigh on Sea Lions for sponsoring our promotional costs.

Important  
DATE!

## AND DONT FORGET!!

**INTERNET TASTER SESSIONS** - available free at local libraries. See Southend council website or ask at your library for details.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAMS** - hold regular 'beat surgeries' in your area. Officers are on hand to give advice on security and discuss any problems or concerns you may have in your Neighbourhood.

**MARIE CURIE CANCER CARE'S BLOOMING GREAT TEA PARTY** campaign - all this summer. Support the event and host a party - for more information : [www.mariecurie.org.uk/teaparty](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/teaparty) or call 08700 340 040

## OLDER PEOPLES ASSEMBLY MEETING DATES 2013

CIVIC CENTRE – THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

Come and join us 1.00pm registration for 1.30p.m. start

WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE 2013

WEDNESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2013

WEDNESDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2013

If you are interested in supporting the OPA and would like to be more involved please contact our Chairman **Derek Iles** on 07760183633/01702 337034 or email [derekiles@btinternet.com](mailto:derekiles@btinternet.com) for more information about becoming a committee member.

Visit our Website [www.southendopa.org.uk](http://www.southendopa.org.uk)