

Cash If You Want It At The Post Office

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have been forced to relax the rules on pension payments.

After months of campaigning by pensioner groups up and down Britain the DWP have announced that those individuals who do not respond to requests from the Pensions Service to have their pension paid directly into a bank, building society or post office account will be sent a weekly cheque which can be cashed at the post office.

For months the government have insisted that all pensioners must have their pensions and benefits paid directly into a bank account after the pension book is phased out after February next year. But pressure from the NPC and its affiliated groups and organisations

including a 50,000 signature petition and a high profile publicity campaign has resulted in the change of policy.

Helen Grew, NPC Vice-President, said,

"Around five million older people want to collect their pensions at the post office and many of them have been coerced into getting rid of their pension book in favour of opening an account."

"But if they now want to opt for this cheque-based system instead they should be allowed to do so."

The NPC has received numerous complaints about direct payments, including some from individuals who have been given post office accounts, but are physically unable to use them.

Cost of Free Bus Travel

A free nationwide bus travel scheme for all older people would cost the Treasury no more than an additional £260m, Alistair Darling has confirmed in a letter to the National Pensioners Convention.

Much less than fighting a war in Iraq.

A new study by the Office for National Statistics has shown that older people have greater difficulties in travelling to local shops and hospitals and have to rely more on public transport.

The report has also revealed that people over 70 made an average of 700 trips in 2002, compared with 1,100 trips by those aged between 50 and 59.

National Pensioners Convention Transport adviser, Peter Rayner, has said, "We now realise just how little extra money would be needed to transform the lives of millions of older people with free, nationwide bus travel."



Come And Join Us

A question I am quite often asked: "Is it worthwhile joining a pensioners organisation?"

And I always reply with a resounding "Yes!"

"But what do they do?"

They provide a platform from which we can all air our views for a start. They also represent us to the government and other organisations; they let it be known just what we think and they do so with a voice that is growing ever louder, a voice that refuses to be ignored.

And the government is beginning to listen; they would be foolish to do otherwise. There are over eleven million pensioners in this country, a very sizeable portion of the population. Large enough to sway any election, for our voting power is even greater than that vast number would indicate, because older folk, more than any other age group will turn out and put their

crosses on a ballot slip.

We could be even stronger, very much stronger if more of us joined pensioners organisations such as the North East Pensioners Association (NEPA), for membership is only a tiny fraction of the total number of retired people.

Many areas do not have a branch; heavily populated districts like Byker, Walker and Heaton do not have one and expanding membership should be the number one priority for NEPA and other pensioners organisations.

Apart from campaigning for a better life for their members, NEPA branches provide a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and organise 'get togethers' and outings. Many members have found friendship in their local branch and discovered there is no need to be lonely.

So come and join us. You can be assured that you will be made most welcome.

**We meet on the last Friday of the Month, 2pm in
Wallsend People's Centre, 10 Frank Street, Wallsend
NE28 6RN**

Application Form

Annual membership is just £2 and is open to anyone over the age of 18

To join, simply fill in the form and send it to: Wallsend Pensioners Association, c/o Wallsend People's Centre, 10 Frank Street, Wallsend NE28 6RN or just bring it along to one of our meetings.

Name:

Address:

Post Code _____

Tel: _____

A Word from your New Secretary

Just a few short words to say thank you to all the members for making me feel welcome as your new secretary and a thank you to the committee also for making me feel at home.

As secretary I will do my best to help make Wallsend pensioners association one of the largest in North Tyneside alongside North Shields and others who are consistently growing.

I will work alongside Andy as chair and the other committee members as a team to get our group even more recognition that we have already. My motto is as they say 'onwards and upwards'.

I would like to thank Bill Bowman for the years he has spent as secretary and hope he enjoys some well deserved rest but long may he continue to produce our Wallsender.

The branch will be the same but you may notice just one or two slight changes as I may work a little differently to Bill although it's fair to say that both of our hearts are in this pensioner's group at Wallsend.

*Norma Playle
Secretary*

Man's scalding death 'accidental

A care home where a pensioner died in a scalding bath had been warned its tap water was too hot, an inquest heard.

John Jones, 83, was found dead in a bath at the Brockhill Woodlands residential home in Leicestershire in the early hours of 30 April, 2003.

The water's temperature was measured at 51^c — the recommended maximum is

44^c. Inspectors had previously told managers the home's water was too hot. A jury returned a verdict of accidental death contributed to by neglect.

The inquest at Leicester Crown Court heard inspectors from the National Care Standards Commission had made the warning about hot water after a visit one month before Mr Jones died.

The commission recommended the home follow national guidelines and

fit thermostatic valves to limit the water to 43^c.

However, the valves had not been fitted by the time Mr Jones, who was suffering from dementia, was found dead.

After the verdict, coroner James Symington offered his condolences and said he would write to the relevant care home authorities, urging that steps were taken to ensure such an accident does not happen again.

Mr Jones was only supposed to bath under supervision but had earlier refused to be washed by nursing staff, the inquest heard.

Clive Cook, the solicitor for Mr Jones' family, said after the inquest: "Mr Jones was a frail 83-year-old man who was blind in one eye and partially sighted in the other and whose mobility was severely restricted so that he could only get around with the help of a Zimmer frame or wheelchair.

"No-one has been able to satisfactorily explain how Mr Jones was supposed to have left his bedroom unnoticed, negotiated two doors and climbed into a bath of scalding hot water."

Peter Van Herrewege, managing director of Prime Life Ltd, which ran the home, said: "First and most importantly, we offer our condolences to the family of the late Mr Jones.

"Circumstances around the death of Mr Jones and the determination of the inquest suggests an accident, and a most unusual one, and one that is much regretted."

Warning on Bogus Workmen

Police have issued a warning after two shaken pensioners lost hundreds of pounds to bogus workmen.

One of the victims, a man aged 91, had £200 stolen from his home in Heaton, and an 80-year-old woman from Kenton Road, both Newcastle, found more than £500 had been taken.

Detectives are looking at links between the doorstep raids which both involved crooks posing as water company officials.

The 91-year-old victim answered a knock on his door and a man claiming to be from the water company asked to be allowed in to make an inspection.

While inside he rifled through the householder's rooms and took cash. He is described as about 25, of

medium build, with a pale complexion and short fair hair. He spoke politely as he conned his way in. He wore a blue T-shirt and jeans.

A fair-haired man claiming to be from the water company managed to talk his way into the woman's Kenton Road home. He was said to be 28-30, wearing a blue T-shirt and grey trousers. He was with a scruffy, dwarf-like man about 4ft tall and aged 40 to 50.

Police have warned the elderly and their neighbours to be vigilant and if they suspect any dubious callers to make a note of their descriptions and vehicles and call police.

HOW WAS YOUR WAR?

To those of us who lived through it, World War II was undoubtedly the biggest event of our lives.

It brought heartache and tears, loneliness when loved ones were separated often for months, sometimes for years and tragically at times forever. Excitement at seeing places we would otherwise never have visited, friendship – there was an air of *we are all in this together*, people looked out for one another and class barriers came down.

One way or another, World War II, more than anything else, helped shape the rest of our lives.

Everyone, no matter whom or what you were during that traumatic and dramatic period has a story to tell and the BBC want to hear it.

Whether you were in the forces or worked in a munitions factory. In the Home Guard or the ARP, a school kid who was evacuated or a housewife and mother who spent long hours queuing for everything. No matter how you spent the war years the BBC wants to hear about it.

They want to create a unique personal record of the nation at war and to be able to do this they need to hear about *your* experiences.

You can write it yourself or tell it to a BBC rep who will set it down on paper for you.

**For more information
contact freephone
0800 150950**

If you lived through World War 2 this means YOU!

My Unfavourite Things

By Bill Bowman

*"Raindrops on roses and
whiskers on kittens,
Bright copper kettles
and..."*

You know how that Rogers and Hammerstein song goes on about a 'few of my favourite things' – but what about the things I hate?

Well, not exactly hate. Hate is something I reserve for things like man's inhumanity to man, or child abuse, or cruelty to animals and Sunderland supporters (just kidding).

No, what I mean is the slightly lesser things that simply irk me, irritate me, get up my nose or simply p***s me off (if you will excuse my French).

Here a few of them, a few of my *unfavourite* things.

I am happily doing a crossword or playing Patience when some clever clogs comes along, looks over



my shoulder and tells me to put the red nine on the black ten or that the answer to four across is proboscis (well he should know).

Motorists, who go speeding

by with car windows down and radio blaring.

Barmads, who ignore me, though I've been standing there with my tongue hanging out for what seems an hour, to tend their newly arrived crony.



Kids, who play football on our bowling green, when the nearby soccer pitch is standing empty.

People, who give a long-winded description of their ailment, but won't listen to mine, even though mine are far more serious and much more interesting than theirs.

Parties who visit beauty spots to have a picnic then leave all their litter behind.

Shop assistants, who glare at me for daring to interrupt their fascinating gossip just because I want to be served.

Those clichés, soccer people are so fond of and every now and then they learn a new word, the latest being *awesome* which they use on every occasion to describe a player's performance when the only thing *awesome* about him is his salary.

Like I said, a few of my *unfavourite things* which you may or may not have found fascinating but at least I have got them off my chest. Why not make a list of yours and let us in on it?

Pensioners To Get Older

By Bill Bowman

If the government get their way people will have to wait until they are 70 before becoming O.A.P.s.

Such a move has not yet been proposed. In fact if asked they would strenuously deny such a thing. Well they would wouldn't they? Because that would be one big vote loser — at present.

But, most likely by stealth, a rise in the retirement age will come about.

First they have to get us used to the idea; get us to think the unthinkable, knowing that early reaction, not only of workers but also employers, will be one of outrage.

So a suggestion by an economic think tank that workers stay on until they are 70 (if they so choose of course) has been leaked to the media.

In reply to the angry but predictable protests from pensioners organisations and trades unions, government ministers will state that the afore mentioned think tank is simply thinking out loud, that they are considering many options, and that they (government) have no plans to introduce such a scheme.

They could add, but won't, at present. To be fair to the government, any government, such a step must be up for consideration with longer life expectancy and lower birth rates having caused a pensions crisis.

In the opinions of many, a higher retirement age is not

a question of *if* — but *when*. Before this happens however, there is a deal of persuasion to be done: Employers need to be convinced (some enlightened ones already are) that the experience and reliability of the over 65s will make up for any lack of physical fitness or mental dexterity.

Workers will have to be assured that they will receive equal treatment and not be relegated to a menial role and that their pensions become immediately available should they become unable to continue working.

Trade unions demand that all rights will be safeguarded and agreed to.

The government is already offering incentives to people who choose to delay collecting their state pensions. Perhaps they will make retirement a gradual process with the working week of those reaching the age of 65 being reduced by one day per year and receiving one fifth of their pension to begin with and gradually increasing until at the age of 70 they receive the full amount.

There is also an EU directive, which outlaws age discrimination and stops firms imposing compulsory retirement ages.

The mere hint of advancing the retirement age is anathema to many but like it or not there is more than a strong possibility that it will come to pass.

Not So 'Fare' In Scotland!

Pensioners in Perthshire are being 'humiliated' by bus firm Citylink according to a claim in a Scottish newspaper.

Many pensioners have contacted the Perth and Kinross Pensioners Forum to claim they have been told to wait at the back of the queue until fare-paying passengers have boarded the bus. Jack Stewart of the Pensioners Forum said:

"Our senior citizens are being told to get to the back of the queue until all fare-paying passengers have boarded. Many of them are tourists from abroad who are bewildered at the treatment given to our elderly. Citylink have been approached previously regarding this matter and were told in no uncertain terms to stop treating our elderly as second class citizens — this is not acceptable."

However, Citylink say they have to give priority to other passengers because they have booked their places on the buses in advance. A spokeswoman for Citylink pointed out that it is a pre-requisite for passengers to book tickets at least two days in advance. If this fills the bus, pensioners making a last minute decision to take a trip will miss out.

Jack Stewart was not impressed with that view and pointed out that pensioner's fares are already paid by the Scottish Executive and thus should be seen as being pre-booked.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

By Bill Bowman

Once again the government of the day promises, as so many preceding governments have promised before them, to make our streets safe for decent folk to walk on.

They will rid them, they say, of the gangs of youngsters who make so many lives miserable with their aggressive manner; their loutishness and drink/drug fuelled anti-social behaviour. Stricter laws more firmly enforced by the courts, more Community Support officers, doubling of electronic tagging, more rights for families to demand action against jobs and 5,000 more patrol officers (Bobbies on the beat) are to be introduced plus 1,000 more drug treatment places.

All laudable objectives, which we all sincerely hope, will succeed.

But will they?

Not on their own I think. Let us take a look at this *enemy within*, these young people who are after all, our children and grand children and not so many aliens who have dropped upon us from outer space.

What makes a minority—albeit a large minority—act the way they do?

Parents? Obviously they must shoulder much responsibility. Caring though the great majority are, far too many do not take an *active* interest in their children while others pander to their every whim in their desire to be liked rather than be firm when that is required. I have seen many

otherwise loving parents, whilst not exactly encouraging their under-age offspring to start drinking, offer no objection when they do.

Older generations? That means all of us. Yes. We have allowed standards to slip, discipline is now almost non-existent and we are afraid to raise our voices when we witness bad behaviour. We have set a poor example letting the drink and drugs culture to flourish. Under age drinking in pubs and clubs is, as I have seen for myself, commonplace, and while I have no first hand knowledge of the drugs scene it has been sufficiently exposed for all of us to know it is rampant. Even a notice in our local rent office informs us that drugs are available on every street corner — *although whether this is issued as a warning or advertising a facility I am not quite sure.*

Then there is the media. All the Soaps feature the local pub as the centre of community life: *Coronation Street* has the *Rovers Return*, *The Woolpack* in *Emmerdale* and the *Queen Vic* in *East Enders*. Scarcely a film or T.V. drama that does not have couples (often of the same gender) leaping into bed with each other after the briefest of meetings and swearing seems as acceptable as *God Bless* and the tabloids will pay anything for *Kiss and Tell* stories. The more explicit the better. And I remember when Eliza Doolittle in

Pygmalian shocked the nation when she said “Not bloody likely”.

Ah, the age of innocence.

Punishment, when meted out, is of the ‘slap on the wrist’ variety and is hardly the deterrent it is intended to be and while I certainly do not go along with the *‘Bring back the birch/cat’* fraternity, I do believe that punishment should mean exactly that.

One suggestion which does have sufficient merit to be considered is consigning young offenders to work parties removing graffiti and picking up litter or some other useful task and for them to do it at a time they would most like to be doing something else — like enjoying themselves.

But punishment alone is not the answer. ‘The devil makes work for idle hands’ is a truism we should heed and some of the millions earmarked for law enforcement might be better spent providing more facilities to occupy the minds and interests of young people.

Sports clubs, music societies where they can learn to play an instrument, show and film groups which engage their imaginations etc etc. Really there is no limit to the number of directions in which we can point youngsters (our youngsters) to use their constructive abilities instead of hanging round street corners looking for trouble. Some of these already exist but not nearly enough.

Age Takes Centre Stage

Wallsend Pensioners' Association's contribution to this years 'Age Takes Centre Stage' activities will be a 'Social Afternoon' in the Howdon Community Centre.

It will take place on

**Thursday 21st
November from
1pm - 4pm.**

There will be bingo of course, a raffle and entertainment of some sort (which is still being arranged as we go to print).

A 'plate' buffet will be available for a small charge.

Admittance will be by ticket only and they will be available to buy from the branch meeting, the People's Centre, Howdon Community Centre and Age Concern in North Shields.

Full details have still to be finalised as we go to print but it looks like tickets will cost 50p and all tickets bought will be entered in draw for a prize.

Look out for posters advertising the event or come along to a branch meeting to find out more. See page two for details of branch meetings.

Poet's Corner

NOTHING STAYS THE SAME

By Lily Revell

There have been so many changes in our lives
No wonder there is a generation gap.
Anyone born before World War two
Starts with a generation gap.
Few people had phones then
Now they flood the land.
Everyone walks round
With a mobile in their hand.
The invention of the jet engine
Made the world much smaller.
Even Mars and the Moon
Have had one or two callers.
Then came the decimal system
And we were none too pleased.
Instead of a pound it was half a kilo
And our pennies became new pees.
I still don't know my weight in kilos
Or my height in metres to date.
As far as I'm concerned.
I'm five foot five and ten stone seven in weight.
We are so used to changes
That it's hardly worth a mention
I now need a ruddy pin number
To collect my old age pension.

WE PENSIONERS

Norma Playle

Being a pensioner is not much fun,
you walk real slow and you sure can't run.
You can't walk up hill, you can't kneel down,
Everything hurts, you say with a frown.
The pension won't stretch, they don't give
you enough,
You pay your way, you pay all your bills,
There is nothing left for social skills.
But still we will fight and make a stand,
We've a right to be heard all over this land.



**Editorial: Bill Bowman
Wallsend Pensioners'
Association**

c/o 10 Frank Street
Wallsend NE28 6RN

There are five branches in North Tyneside

The **WALLSEND** Branch meet at the Wallsend Peoples' Centre, 10 Frank Street, Wallsend, on the last Friday of every month, at 2.00pm.

Contact: Norma Playle (0191) 263 5570

The **NORTH SHIELDS** Branch meet at the Catholic Social Club, Cecil Street, North Shields on the second Tuesday of the month at 1.30pm.

Contact: Jean Mullen (0191) 252 9626

The **SEATON BURN & WIDEOPEN** Branch meet in the Morpeth Avenue Recreation Room, Wideopen on the last Thursday of the month, at 2.30pm.

Contact: Betty Bell (0191) 217 0667

The **FORDLEY & DISTRICT** Branch meet fortnightly on Tuesdays in the Wright Drive Day Room, Fordley at 1.30pm.

Contact: Alma Memola (0191) 250 0465

The **PALMERSVILLE** Branch meet in the Palm Court Recreation Rooms, Palmersville, on the 1st Thursday of every month at 1.30pm.

Contact: Dorothy Lunn (0191) 250 0800

North Tyneside MPs Surgeries

Rt. Hon. Nick Brown MP for
Newcastle East and Wallsend.
2nd Saturday of every month at:

Allendale Road, Community
Centre: 10am-11am.

Jubilee Club, Walker:
11.15am-12pm

Wallsend Town Hall,
12.15pm-1.15pm.

Office: (0191)272 0843

Stephen Byers MP
for Tyneside North.

1st Saturday of every month at:

9.30am: Emmerson Court,
Shiremoor;

10.15am: Chapelville Residential
Home, Seaton Burn;

11.00am: Festival Cottages,
Burradon;

11.45am: The White Swan Centre,
Killingworth;

12.30pm: Customer Service
Centre, Arndale Shopping Centre,
Longbenton;

1.30pm: 11 Palm Court,
Palmersville;

2.15pm: Battle Hill Community
Development Project, Battle Hill;

3.00pm Howdon Community
Centre, Howdon;

3.45pm: Percy Main Primary
School, Nelson Terrace, Percy
Main.

Office: (0191) 268 9111

Alan Campbell MP
for Tynemouth

1st Saturday of every month at:

locations around the constituency
and every Friday, by appointment
only, at the constituency office.

For details of all surgeries around
the constituency and for Friday
appointments please ring the
constituency office at:

(0191) 257 1927



Thousands of pensioners marched in London on June 19th for better pensions