

Brain Health News for July 2015

The launch of the new Pewsey Vale Dementia Awareness Group (PVDAG) Memory Café for Pewsey, called the Care Café, took place on June 16th.



Image from the Gazette

Aimed at those caring for and living with dementia. The Care Café was held in the Scout Hut in Pewsey not far from the Bouverie Hall Car Park at 2pm. It takes place the third Tuesday of each month, (except for September when it will be on the 8th). Pewsey Spar Shop has very generously donated the refreshments and an Occupational Therapist was on hand as well. The Café volunteers talked with those attending to find out what sorts of activities they would like incorporated in the following months Café's. Most who attended said they just wanted simple activities like drawing, colouring and word puzzles as well as time for

a chat. The aim is to encourage those attending to develop the café to meet their needs and give them ownership of how it develops.

"We raised £400 through crowd funded donations online and received £250 from the Colin Lampard Trust to support the Care Café and the activities offered. We hope to be able to offer an opportunity for people attending to try out assistive resources such as 'talking tiles' as well." Dawn Wilson Chair of PCAP.

Anyone wanting to support the new Care Café with donations or as a volunteer should contact Susie Brew – PCAP coordinator – pcap@hotmail.co.uk tel 07802 444022. We would also be keen to hear from anyone wanting to attend the Care Café on July 21st.

Music Mirrors Workshop July 29th

We all know moments when hearing a simple snatch of music opens up a whole world of memories and feelings and makes us think of people, places, words and times long forgotten.

This innovative workshop will be delivered by Heather Edwards in Pewsey Fire Station Community Room (at the rear of the building)



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on the morning of Wednesday 29th July.



The purpose of this workshop is to train people on how to create a Music Mirror with an individual so that it can then be used as a memory tool at whatever stage of their life it may be needed. Printed materials, leaflets, information and a manual will be available to back up the training and for referral purposes.

To cover the costs of refreshments, printing and Heather's travel and so on, we are asking for £10 per person. There will be no charge for carers of those living with dementia although they may make a donation if they would like to. Please email sylvie.clayden@btinternet.com to book your place – spaces are limited and must be booked, but please share this information with others you feel may benefit. There is free parking in Pewsey in the

Bouverie Hall car park just across the road from the Fire Station.

[Businesses ignore the dementia timebomb at their peril](#)



Photograph: Katherine Anne Rose

Think of a person with dementia. Which words spring to mind? Perhaps forgetfulness, worry or old age? If so, you've made the same assumptions as many of the volunteers at a Dementia Friends session.

Caring about carers who work for you is part of being a sustainable business

Penny Ellis, a tele-healthcare development consultant at healthcare company Tunstall, asks the same question at the sessions she runs. Tunstall is among the businesses waking up to the growing impact of dementia. The disease costs England-based business £6.2bn a year and the figure is set to rise. By 2025, 1 million



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people will be living with dementia in the UK.

"Businesses ignore dementia at their peril," says George McNamara, head of policy at the Alzheimer's Society. They will increasingly encounter dementia through their employees, their employees' families and their customers. He points out that 40,000 people living with dementia in the UK are under 65, and will be using services for many more years. Meanwhile 670,000 people are caring for family members with dementia – those that become carers for ageing parents often do so at the peak of their career, when their experience and skills are most valuable. *(Read more at the Guardian)*

[Art speaks where words fail for people with dementia](#)

My mother Madge, 92, has lived in care homes for nine years following the onset of vascular dementia. She can't remember what she ate for lunch 30 minutes afterwards, but she can recall the lyrics to hundreds of jazz songs with startling accuracy, silently mouthing the words. But it's not just her memory that comes back to music – a part of the old Madge returns as her face lights up,

her toes and fingers tap, and she literally comes alive.

Weekly visits by a musician to mum's current home in Ramsgate, Kent, dramatically change the mood of a confused, anxious 85-year-old, who only ever says "help me" over and over. Music day is the only time she ever smiles, proud of being able to recall all the lyrics.

Critics think it's just pink fluffy nonsense, but it's cheaper than anti-psychotic drugs and a lot more effective.

Madge is just one of a growing number of dementia patients to benefit from dedicated art and music sessions in hospitals and care homes. The [Creative Dementia Arts Network](#), which links arts and music specialists with those caring for people with dementia in the UK, says that while people with dementia often have trouble finding their way, or remembering names and places, their capacity to respond to music, colour and texture remains intact, providing them with a means to communicate when words fail.

[Research published last month](#) found that exposure to music can help dementia patients to respond and communicate and



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even improve memory. And an American study of 256 people with an average age of 87 found that older people engaged in arts and crafts were 73% less likely to develop mild cognitive impairment than those not exposed to it. (*Read more at the Guardian*)

[As dementia takes hold, my mother's personality is disappearing like water down a plughole](#)

If you know anyone who has dementia – and few people are unaffected by it today – you may recognise my younger sister Catherine's description of our



"lovely, crazy, giggling" mother, who was diagnosed with fronto-temporal dementia four years ago: "Those who know her will remember

how she really loved to laugh and tease. She liked nothing more than to get stuck in at a party with the red wine and a fag or two and get to the nitty-gritty of a political discussion.

"Today the debate and her intellect have gone but the laughter is still there, though the difference now is that none of us really know what she is laughing at."

Symptoms of the kind of dementia our mother has are a loss of social and personal awareness, and "behavioural changes". Her chief difficulty now in navigating her way through life is she cannot remember anything that's just happened or that someone has said to her, which must mean that she is profoundly confused all the time, far, far more than she lets on. And as Catherine says, the bit that's still there, in vestigial form but there, is the sense of the absurd, the ability to find things funny. It is as if she has gone through the reflex of laughing so many millions of times through her 70-odd years, that even with everything that's happened to her brain, she has held on to this much-repeated social mechanism. It means that she clicks with children immediately. They live in the present, they don't worry about the



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past, and this obviously suits mum. Nor are they, yet, inhibited by conventions about when it's appropriate or not to guffaw uproariously. We were all having lunch one day, and the children had ice cream in bowls, but mum had finished hers, so she simply reached over with her spoon – as if it was the most normal thing – and scooped up our seven-year-old daughter's ice cream. For a second you could see the children thinking: what did granny do? Then they roared. They thought it was hilarious. And granny joined in.

Even so, two things we know for sure: that it will get worse, and that there is nothing we can do about it. There is no medication that will slow the disease's inexorable progress. We look on as mum's personality – or key parts of it – disappears like water down a plughole. (*Source the Telegraph also the image*)

[Coloring Books as Activity for Dementia - Ann Haiden](#)

Memories Coloring Books are here because of my own journey with my own mother. Mom had her first stroke at 75. She is now 89. It has been a long road.

From the beginning, she has been unable to find words and

communicate her thoughts. We have seen her progress as the years go by into worsening multi infarct dementia. We have struggled with finding her the most helpful memory activities, especially as she has progressed.

For many years, she enjoyed playing solitaire and doing endless word find puzzles. We would play cards with her, and as the years went by, bent the rules more and more.

In the months before Memories Coloring Books was born, our dad passed away. With her memory and aphasia challenges, mom had depended on dad a lot, and now he was gone. He was heroic in his care for her. It was only during the last year that mom had needed to be in a nursing home full time. Her word-find books were going untouched. She couldn't do them anymore, even with help.

Follow the title link for more and to access the adult colouring pages.

[Breakthroughs in Bournemouth: how the BSO is providing relief for people with dementia](#)

Fifteen months ago, Pam Winter's husband Richard, now 75, was diagnosed with dementia. The



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couple, who live in Bournemouth, were enjoying an active retirement; they were season ticket-holders to the [Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra](#) and had a wide network of friends. But Richard's diagnosis and the development of his illness were the catalyst for a dramatic change.

Their GP asked her if she was getting enough support. "Carers will often say, 'I'm fine', which I did, but [the GP] persisted. I admitted that actually, I wasn't getting much help. The GP gave me details of memory clubs. We went along to one and, from there, we were invited to [Bournemouth University](#) to take part in a project. We were both a little daunted, but I was determined to lead us there together. And, well, it was just absolutely amazing."



Participants were encouraged to learn new instruments, engage in

body percussion and sing. Those who already played an instrument were invited to bring it to the sessions and play with the group. In each workshop, BSO musicians would tutor participants in their instruments, with everyone working towards the final public concert. The music ranged from popular songs such as You Are My Sunshine to classical favourites such as Ravel's Boléro, all arranged so as to include every member of the group, regardless of their ability, with the BSO musicians filling in the gaps. The end result, the country's first dementia concert, was a moving summer concert. *(Read more at the Guardian)*

[The Doctor's dementia review: 'You live with dementia, you don't suffer it'](#)

It takes one hell of a woman to burst out laughing at the thought of her own torturous hallucinations of ringing phones, babies crying and typewriter keys tapping. Dr Jennifer Bute is that woman. In [The Doctor's Dementia](#) (Radio 4), Jennifer tells the no-nonsense story of what it is like to live with her condition. She was in her late 50s and working as a busy GP when she noticed she was becoming forgetful, a symptom she blamed on getting older.



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But Jennifer was diagnosed with dementia – and realised her condition was deteriorating when she left her internet shopping delivery on the hob and instinctively turned on the four “twirly things”. The plastic packaging melted while she watched. “It was only when the bananas exploded that I was brought to my senses,” she says.

“I discovered when people found out I had dementia they avoided me,” she explains. “They don’t know what to say.” So she produced leaflets for her children and friends to help them cope. And when she realised she couldn’t find her way home, she bought a satnav.

It’s a practical approach to dementia, and a reminder that life goes on for the person involved. Little strategies go a long way. She finds Facebook useful as it involves short sentences and a picture of the person she’s interacting with, making it easier to remember who they are. Singing also helps. “It’s like a workout,” she says.

If there’s any question of dementia bringing Jennifer down, it’s ushered out of this life-affirming documentary. As a doctor, she’s well aware of what lies ahead, but as a Christian she just shrugs her

shoulders because everyone’s going to die, aren’t they? “You live with dementia, you don’t suffer it,” she says. “We’re not victims.” Jennifer is anything but. She’s an inspiration. (*Read more at the Guardian*)

[As a music therapist I can give people back the power to communicate](#) - Helen Odell-Miller

I have always been passionate about the potential for music to change people, situations, and particularly to help communication when words are not available. I am a singer, pianist and violinist and using live music has been central to my work where music is used to work towards therapeutic change for adults with a variety of mental health problems including dementia, schizophrenia, depression and personality disorder.

Latest studies show both that music affects the brain positively, and also that regular music therapy sessions reduce agitation and anxiety, and the need for medication for people with dementia. Leaving someone without the power to communicate is not right – music has the power to address that. Music therapy addresses the emotional, physical and intellectual needs of people



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with dementia and I have just begun talks with the local [NHS](#) trust where I work about referring more people with dementia for music therapy. (Source the Guardian)

Pewsey Arts Group

The art group, supported by Alzheimer's Support, is for people living with dementia and family carers in the Pewsey area and meets at the Bouverie Hall every Wednesday morning from 10am to 12 (term time). Carers welcome to stay or have time out

This is a relaxed and informal group where individuals may take part in various fun and engaging art projects. There may be a small charge for materials. For more information or to book a place, contact Jackie Allen on: **07776 455018**.

Email jackiesallen3@gmail.com

[Reading Group for people with memory loss \(and their carers\)](#)

Picture courtesy of Wiltshire Times



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This group meets at Pewsey Library every Thursday, 2pm – 3pm. Teas, coffees, soft drinks, cakes/biscuits provided. It's a friendly, supportive group.

No need to book, just turn up on the day, or contact Josephine Corcoran on 07812 238503 or email josephinecorcoran@thereader.org.uk.

[Singing for the Brain](#)

The groups run by Alzheimer's Support, are friendly and inclusive. Being good at singing is not necessary, and we have plenty of laughter along the way. For general information about Singing for the Brain®, contact Stephany on 01225 776481 or go to www.alzheimers.org.uk/singingforthebrain

Lockeridge, near Marlborough Thursday mornings at Kennet Valley Hall, Lockeridge, SN8 4EL. Call Jackie on 07777 655018C

This is a collation of news posted on the [Pewsey Vale Dementia Awareness Groups](#) Facebook Page.

Comments on this newsletter can be made to the address below, or emailed to pcap@hotmail.co.uk