



“Supporting the older Community in Stevenage and surrounding areas”

Issue 40

January 2019

Welcome from the Trustees



Welcome to our first edition of 2019. We have had a huge demand for our Strength and Balance Courses and are due to start the 3rd course in January followed by the 4th course at the end of March. This has been so popular and is such a fantastic way to prevent falls! Back at the end of October, we had a lovely afternoon of Bingo with our very good friends from the Luton Irish Forum and on Remembrance Sunday, Luke and Peggy proudly represented the INS at the Bowling Green Old Stevenage and were very honoured to lay a wreath in memory of those who lost their lives in conflict. Thus marking the centenary year, commemorating the end of WWI. We are thrilled to have collected £150.00 for the Royal British Legion by selling our generously donated, hand knitted poppies at our

events prior to Remembrance Day. Also, a big thank you to Waitrose Stevenage for their Community Matters donations.

We recently had a stall at the Older Peoples Day in the town centre, as pictured, which was very informative and gave us a great opportunity to tell people all about the work we do. As we distribute this edition at our Christmas Lunch we would like to wish our members a very “Happy Christmas and Healthy New Year and to thank everyone for all their help and support over 2018.” Also we would like to add a very big thank you to our priceless Care in the Community volunteer team who are the backbone to the INS supporting the most vulnerable members in our community and as Margaret Rice would say “because they simply care!”



As is our tradition we will be presenting the Mayor of Stevenage with Shamrock on St Patricks Day which falls on a Sunday and we will be selling the tickets at the January Tea Dance. In this edition we have included an article about being a Trustee, starting with our inspiring Chair, Luke Donovan! Please also see inside some pictures from Chris Aherne and his experience on Christmas Island back in 1958. If you would like us to feature a picture and or a story for future newsletters or even on our Facebook page let us know. Please also get in touch if there is anything you would like us to try out!

Wednesday Christmas Club

Wednesday Christmas Club savers saved a whopping £30,000 for the Christmas of 2018. Our savers have already set up direct debits to ensure they are financially prepared for Christmas 2019. Our remarkable tailor-made scheme in conjunction with the Stevenage Credit Union works so well. Funded by the Graham Rowlandson Foundation Fund through HCF they have given us a grant to promote and enhance consistent saving for our members. Every year our membership increases and not only do we have our INS members but their children and grand-children which is great and what the scheme is all about.

The average family is predicted to spend over £800.00 on gifts, food, drink and decorations according to a recent online article. Saving with us can definitely help your families to budget more effectively for Christmas and remain debt-free in January. Please get in touch with Karen if you would like to join on 725400, or you can come and see us at the Sherma Batson Centre or at any of our functions.



Small Acts of Kindness

Small Acts of Kindness is a charitable organisation sourcing distributing practical gifts to older people and connecting communities with kindness. Are you over 55 and living in Hertfordshire? Are you feeling cold in your home? Or do you know someone who is? A Warm in Winter gift pack could help you keep warm. Each Warm in Winter pack contains a blanket, socks, gloves, a hat, a mug and a selection of hot drinks, all packed in a reusable tote bag. Delivered FREE to your home. To order a gift bag for yourself or to nominate some to receive one. Please call 01923 372717 or email info@smallactsofkindness.co.uk For more information about Small Acts of Kindness please visit our website www.smallactsofkindness.co.uk We look forward to hearing from you.

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A Financial Makeover

Each year there are more and more cuts to entitlements and support. So as a charity it is important that we identify what our members needs are and how we can to support them. One of ways is to try and improve our members financial circumstances and ensure they are getting what they are entitled to. We have a volunteer who is a financial genius and is a whizz at completing or challenging the complex DWP Forms. Looking at a recent on line money advice website there are up to 1.6 million pensioners living in poverty and many are failing to claim the benefits they're entitled to. Make sure you aren't missing out – here's a list of benefits you could potentially claim; Pension Credit, Help with your Council Tax, Help with heating costs, Health benefits. We also can help ensure our members are getting the best deals on utilities and other bills. Please get in touch with us in the office and we will book you a private consultation.



Christmas Island 1958 - by Chris Aherne

Chris was enlisted into National Service in 1956 and a year later this took him to Christmas Island in the Pacific Ocean. Over the next year he had the compulsory "square bashing training" at the base at Podgate, Lancashire. He was called out with his troop and travelled out as a regular airman on a chartered Oversea National Airline in the winter of 1957. This was a long journey via New Jersey where they changed



planes and it took almost 2 and a 1/2 days to get there. In February 1958, the Hydrogen Bomb test was carried out at high altitude over the largely uninhabited Christmas Island. This was one of the most important range of tests carried out by Brit-



ain, developed with limited resources and in a remarkably short space of time. The bomb was dropped by a four-engined jet, Valiant of No 49 Squadron RAF Bomber Command, normally based at RAF Wittering, Northants. Chris and his troop were on the Island at the time, they were in

normal uniform and were told to turn their backs to the blast and hold their hands over their eyes. Chris described this as a very eerie experience and everyone said there was a big bang and they could see the bones in their fingers like an x-ray machine and everything around them was deadly still! He returned home not long after and had a slow journey back via Hawaii, Nebraska, New York with United Airlines and BOAC. He was finally demobbed at Henlow in 1961.

Friendship Group/Care in the Community

Once a month we have the Friendship Group meeting and it is so rewarding to hear them all the laughing, chatting and even a few songs. This is a smallish group run by Margaret Rice and Peggy Lyons our Vice Chair. Recently we had Admiral Nurses come in and they did a very interesting information session regarding the support they give to people with dementia and their families. Giving them one-to-one support, expert guidance and practical solutions. In this group, there is a real buzz, lots of chatting and sharing of info could be heard! They may be discussing holidays over the years or recent excursions and there is always a story to be told! The members of the Friendship Group all help one another, as you get older it is so important to have a sense of purpose to fend off hideous illnesses like depression and loneliness and so attending this group can help combat this. This group at the moment is full, however please get in touch if you would like to register and we can put your name on our waiting list. Our Care in the Community volunteer team have consistently been supporting our most vulnerable members of the community for just over a decade, which is amazing! They make many visits and phone calls to help the most vulnerable members of our community feel supported and cared for. We have such amazing feedback from our members and they consistently say how they love seeing one of the INS team. "I love visiting the older members and hearing all their tales from the good ol' days and having a chat with them" said Luke Donovan.



IT Classes

With over 4 million over 65s in the UK never having used a computer, many are lacking the skills and confidence to enjoy the fun and interests that can be had via the internet. It can be daunting to try something new but for a couple of hours a week by appointment we have 1:1 IT sessions to help our members to be able to manage their mobile phone devices, iPads and laptops better. This is a sound way of gaining confidence with modern technology. It is so important to be able keep in touch with loved ones and keep up to date with all their news and see what everyone is up to via social media! This also can also help stop loneliness and depression and helps keep the brain active! Plus it is a fun experience. Please get in touch with Karen in the office if you would like help with working out your modern phones and digital devices.



Social Events



We have a fabulous collection of social events we lay on each week. On the first Wednesday of the month at Bedwell Community Centre we have Bingo. One not to be missed as all the profits are given out in the winnings to our members. And recently we hosted a Bingo afternoons for our good friends from the Luton Irish Forum which was lovely. On the second Wednesday also sees us at Bedwell Community Centre; our Tea Dance, the amazing Dave Kaye playing tunes from the past and the

present. Whilst enjoying delicious home-made sandwiches, cakes, teas and coffees! The dance floor is always packed with many of our members using the line dancing skills that they learnt at our classes.

On the third Wednesday of the month at the Sherma Batson Centre, we have our Film Club. We have a real mix of films and listen to what our members would like to watch. Along with freshly home-made scones, teas and coffees. On the fourth Wednesday of the month we are back at Bedwell Community Centre for our Afternoon Social. At our socials we have a variety of different entertainers which has been personally sourced by one of our volunteers.



This is always an enjoyable afternoon! We have our Men's Club once a month at the Sherma Batson Centre, a chance to put the world to rights over a game or two of cards! On Monday afternoons we have line dancing again at Bedwell Community Centre, which has been very popular and starts the week off nicely. Interestingly, recent studies show that Line dancing lowers the risk of dementia by improving cognitive reserves and increases the complexity of neuronal synapses. And last but not least Friday afternoons our So Healthy Class again at Bedwell Community Centre which is a gentle chair based exercise class. Please get in touch for more information or any other suggestions as we are all about the members!.

Trustee Profile - Chair Luke Donovan

Luke Donovan, Chair of the INS and we are sure everyone will agree what a grand job he makes of his post! He retired from the building trade in 2002 and took on the role of volunteering with various local charities including Age Concern, the Stevenage World Forum and of course the INS. This was to become the next chapter of his life and soon after helping to set up the INS an opportunity came up to be Chair which he jumped at. Luke has said in the past that "How honoured he is to be Chair of such a vibrant charity with such great volunteers and members."



Luke has a very busy retirement attending and representing the INS at many meetings both nationally and locally to support his beloved charity. He is an advocate on behalf of our members to improve services and works closely with our partners to help shape the support they offer to our members. Most days you will find Luke in the office answering emails, researching various ways to support the older members in the community and making many calls either checking how someone is feeling or arranging a visit. There are many behind the scene tasks that Luke effortlessly does supporting the older people in the community who inspires him to never give up trying!

Activities

1:1 IT Classes Helping you learn what you want at your own pace from basic IT to Facebook or Emailing. Cost is £3.00 per session and need to be booked in advance.

Friendship Group This is a group made up of more vulnerable members. Places are limited and there is a waiting list, so please contact us if you would like to attend.

Film Club What better way to spend an afternoon than watching a film with friends? All films played are requests from our members. We also keep a library of all films shown which can be borrowed free of charge. There is a small charge of £2.00 for tea, coffee and fresh homemade scones.

Men's Club A men's only morning to spending time with friends playing Poker and Dominos. We are also planning on arranging other occasional activities. Small fee of £2.00.

Tea Dance An afternoon of live entertainment including tea, coffee, homemade sandwiches, cakes and scones. Entry is £4.00 for members and £5.00 for non-members and tickets must be purchased pre-event.

Bingo Feeling lucky? Why not come to one of our Bingo afternoons — Entry is £1.00 and it is £1.50 for 3 books or £3.00 for 6 with free tea, coffee and biscuits. All profits are given out as prize money — we have been told how generous we are!

Line Dancing Once a week, one class suits all, each class is £2.00 and open to everyone.

Afternoon Social Everyone is welcome to our monthly socials and entry is £3.00 for members and £4.00 non-members. The afternoon includes a Raffle, Live Music and lots of fun. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided.

Exercise Class Everyone is welcome. A gentle chair based exercise class once a week. £1.50 per person.

For Dates and times of all our events please turn to the next page.

Dates for your Diary

January

2nd - 1.00pm - 2.30pm	Bingo	Bedwell Community Centre
4th - 10.00am - 12pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
4th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
7th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
7th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
9th - 1.00pm - 3.00pm	Tea Dance	Bedwell Community Centre
11th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
11th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
14th - 10.00 am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
14th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
15th - 10.30am - 12.00pm	Men's Club	The Sherma Batson Centre
16th - 12.30pm - 3.00pm	Film Club	The Sherma Batson Centre
18th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
18th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
21st - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
21st - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
23rd - 1.00pm - 3.00pm	Afternoon Social	Bedwell Community Centre
25th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
25th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
28th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
28th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre

February

1st- 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
1st - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
4th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
4th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
TBC - 10.00am - 12.00pm	Friendship Group	The Sherma Batson Centre
6th - 1.00pm - 2.30pm	Bingo	Bedwell Community Centre
8th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
8th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
11th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
11th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
13th - 1.00pm - 3.00pm	Tea Dance	Bedwell Community Centre
15th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
15th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
18th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre

Dates for your Diary

February cont:

18th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
19th - 10.30am - 12.00pm	Men's Club	The Sherma Batson Centre
20th - 12.30pm - 3.00pm	Film Club	The Sherma Batson Centre
22nd - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
22nd - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
25th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
25th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
27th - 1.00pm - 3.00pm	Afternoon Social	Bedwell Community Centre

March

1st - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
1st - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
4th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
4th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
TBC - 10.00am - 12.00pm	Friendship Group	The Sherma Batson Centre
6th - 1.00pm - 2.30pm	Bingo	Bedwell Community Centre
8th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
8th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
11th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
11th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
13th - 1.00pm - 3.00pm	Tea Dance	Bedwell Community Centre
15th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
15th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
17th - 12.00pm - 4.00pm	St Patricks Day Lunch	Holiday Inn, Stevenage
18th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
18th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
19th - 10.30am - 12.00pm	Men's Club	The Sherma Batson Centre
20th - 12.30pm - 3.00pm	Film Club	The Sherma Batson Centre
22nd - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
22nd - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre
25th - 10.00am - 1.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
25th - 1.00pm - 2.00pm	Line Dancing	Bedwell Community Centre
27th - 1.00pm - 3.00pm	Afternoon Social	Bedwell Community Centre
29th - 10.00am - 12.00pm	IT Class	The Sherma Batson Centre
29th - 1.30pm - 2.30pm	So Healthy	Bedwell Community Centre

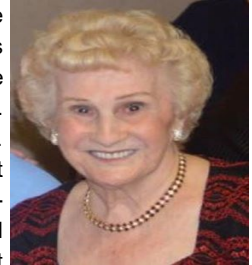
Members Page

Our members have enjoyed this new section in our magazine, so we have decided to continue to feature some of our members. It is nice to learn a little more about them! If you would like to be featured please do contact us.

Gwladys Duffy

Gwladys was born in 1926 (92) in the valleys of South Wales and she lived there all her young life. She had 5 sisters. She fondly remembers working in a grocery shop during the war - A well placed job for the time, they were fortunate as they were unaffected by the bombing. The area was a coal mining own and everyone was in the industry. She left for pastures green with a friend to work at the Royal Aircraft Establishment in Farnborough in 1947. She there met her future husband, Eddie who was from Dublin. He had recently been demobbed after being in the RAF in Palestine for 4 years. It was love at first sight and they married the next year. Eddie, from the RAE was recruited to the Royal Canadian Airforce in 1954. The family moved frequently after being stationed in Canada, France, Germany and Belgium. Gwladys became a dab hand at packing. They moved backed to Farnborough in 1970 and guess what? Worked for the RAE again. They then retired back Wales. Eddie became seriously ill and they moved to Stevenage to be nearer better services and their daughter, Tina who is also an INS member.

Gwladys enjoys Stevenage and its social life now that Eddie has gone. Eddie would have loved the INS! Gwladys has 2 children in Canada, 5 grandchildren, 5 greatgrandchildren and one on the way living in Canada and England. Her heart is split between two continents!



Una King

Born 1942 Ireland Strabally, Co Loais. Una was a middle child of 13 children. She helped her mum a lot around home with the chores and with her brothers. Her father was in the haulage business which is still in the O'Brien family today. As a teenager she moved to Hatfield to live with her sister and then worked at the Kentish Town Hotel, in Kentish Town. Una spent many an evening at the Galtimore Dance Hall, Kilburn. Where she met an Irish man called Tommy and later married him in 1965. She had 5 children, 4 boys and 1 girl and lived in the family home in North London. After a

while their marriage broke down and Una returned to Hertfordshire with her young children and set up home in the Shephall area of Stevenage. She made a lot of friends in connection with St Hilda Church and the local Irish Community. She worked at BAE in a house keeping role whilst juggling teenage children. She has 10 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren who all still live locally. She loves a game of Bingo and socialising with friends and family.

Una is a kind, strong lady and has the get up and get on with it attitude which is a lesson to us all. She has always made everyone welcome in her home with a cup of tea and food. One of her sons friends ended up staying briefly as a teenager and moved out over 10 years later!



Strength & Balance Classes

In this quarter we are onto our 3rd and 4th Strength and Balance Classes under the wings of our qualified falls prevention instructor. This is a 12 week programme which can help older people to reduce the risk of falling which is so important, as a third of people over the age of 65 have a greater risk of falling. This is a fun but interactive way to be active and also can reduce the risk of other illnesses like heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, depression and even dementia. We start the programme with gentle exercises to build up strength and to improve balance and then we build up from there. These exercises are person centred to each individual to ensure they get the maximum out of each class. We ask that you contact your doctor before enrolling and we have a small fee of £30.00 to be paid in advance of this 12 week programme. The classes are designed to increase your strength as the weeks go on so we recommend that you can commit to as many classes as possible. Please get in touch with Elaine in the office if you would like to attend. This project has been part funded by Stevenage Council and Herts County Council and this was for one year only. So our last 12 week programme will be in March 2019



The Legends of Bedwell!

This picture was taken this year when The Poacher Pub celebrated its 25th Anniversary. In the picture from the left, is Sadie Kelly, her sister Margaret Shaunessy and Margaret's husband Tommy. Sadly Sadie and Margaret have since passed away but the family was part of the Bedwell Irish community from the beginning. When the town was first built it was young people like Sadie, Margaret and Tommy that came and helped create the community and provide support to the new families coming into the area. With nothing in the area it was these families that supported the local churches and schools to grow in the town and helped the local shops and traders build their businesses.

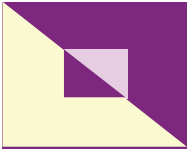


Sadie, Margaret and Tommy always had a strong connection with the town with them all raising their families in Stevenage. Even though they moved from various homes as their families grew, they never moved too far and all stayed in Bedwell. Back in the 1950s when Tommy first came to Stevenage he moved in with his brother Paddy, his first job was building The Gamekeeper which was renamed The Poacher.

Tommy met and married Margaret and when Paddy immigrated to Australia, they moved in with Sadie and her husband Jimmy in Vinters Avenue, they then moved to Bedwell Crescent and then finally Ramsdell. Margaret, Tommy and Sadie have been blessed with large loving families, between them having 7 children, 16 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren! Whilst we have lost many of the towns founding members and Bedwell is very different today, it still retains that sense of community spirit and this is testament to the foundations laid by people like Sadie, Margaret and Tommy.

Sponsors

We work very hard to support our members and the local community and we request support wherever we can to subsidise our events and all our activities. The businesses advertised here, whilst not personally endorsed by INS, have been shown their support by sponsoring this newsletter, which has enabled us to provide even more information about our activities to our members and the local community. The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank these businesses for their continued support.



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Support for Newsletter

INS works hard to support older people within our local community and the newsletter is an important way to keep our members up to date with what we are doing. This newsletter is produced using funds provided by the local businesses and sponsors, and we currently need more. If you would like to advertise in our newsletter please do contact us.

Working in Partnership With

We have been very fortunate to receive tremendous support from local and national organisations and funders. The support has been both financial and practical and the Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank those organisations that have supported us.



Contact us

If you would like to speak to us about anything you have read in the newsletter or about the support we provide please do not hesitate to contact us either by post, telephone or email at:

Sherma Batson Centre,
10-12 Exchange Road,
Stevenage,
Herts, SG1 1PZ.

info@irishnetworkstevenage.org.uk

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Opening Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00am-3.00pm