

Senior Citizens Forum Newsletter December 2019

Message from the Chairperson, Celia Steventon

Christmas is just around the corner; it feels like we only put the decorations away a couple of months ago and now they are due to be taken out of the loft again!

We had a very successful Celebrating Age Festival in October which many of you attended, with very positive feedback about the venue and the activities on offer.

We hope you enjoyed our Forum Christmas lunch parties which took place on the 2nd and 3rd December, a great start to the festive season. I hope you also managed to get along to our Election Debate to fire your questions at the local candidates.

Our next Forum is on Monday 20th January 2020 (see page 4) so come along and find out how you can get the best deal for your gas and electricity.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy Happy New year and look forward to seeing you in 2020.

Next Open Forum

Monday 20th January 2020

10.30am - 12.30pm, doors open at 10am

The Wakes, Oakengates, TF2 6EP

Presentations:

Are you paying too much for gas & electricity?

Citizens Advice Telford & the Wrekin

This winter, Telford and the Wrekin Citizens Advice are working on a project focusing on energy, including giving presentations to groups of customers with the view to reducing their gas and electricity bills.

The topics covered in the presentation will include switching energy providers/tariffs, what happens if your supplier fails, smart meters, the energy cap, what help is available to customers, including Warm Home discount, Priority Services register, ECO scheme and any other energy related issues.

You will be able to ask questions and if you feel that you require face to face advice, Citizens Advice will be accepting referrals after the presentation.

Plus

No Place Like Home

Age UK Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

Age UK have secured some funding for one year for a new project providing information and advice to older people who are at risk of homelessness or who may need to leave their homes which may become unsuitable for their needs.

Everyone is welcome at the event; entry is free and there's no need to book. A complimentary light buffet lunch and hot drinks will be served. (Donations welcomed)

Environment & Transport Action Group by Dave Wright, Chair of ETAG

Last Forum we updated you on the Civil Enforcement Parking powers which the council has requested from the Department of Transport and we stated that these powers would be in place on 13 January 2020. We have now been informed that the Department of Transport has pushed this back to 31st January due to work pressure.

ETAG does have an impact on many issues and we will keep doing this on your behalf, but on a small number of occasions it is not within our power to do anything. Some people have raised concerns about parking in Ironbridge, particularly on double yellow lines. This is something we can do very little about except ask the new Civil Enforcement Officers to target the area.

The problem has worsened during periods when the flood barriers have been erected and also the closure of Waterloo Street due to an upgrade to waste services by Severn Trent Water.

By the time you read this the Environment and Transport Action Group will have held their 6th and final meeting for 2019. Being your voice on concerns about the environment or transport within Telford and Wrekin, we have acted on several fronts including traffic calming, overcrowded trains and public transport and we have provided advice and updates via the Forum magazine.

Thank you for your support and we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Think distance, be safe, don't park illegally and remember at this time of year, drinking and driving is not a good mix!

12 simple ways to reduce how much we use 'single use' plastic on a daily basis

1. Invest in a sturdy water bottle instead of buying bottles of water. More and more bars and cafés will happily refill your bottle for you.

2. Consider buying solid toiletries. Or visit Green Options Zero Waste, in the Darwin Shopping Centre in Shrewsbury. We need more shops like this one where you can fill up your own container with handsoap, shampoo and detergent and buy foodstuffs in paper bags.
3. Take your reusable carrier when you shop.
4. Buy loose fruit & veg, but don't use plastic bags. Take your own reusable bag. Sainsburys now offer a reusable bag for 30p.
5. Say no to disposable straws and plastic cotton buds.
6. Invest in reusable containers and cut down on plastic wrap. Use glass or stainless steel containers or silicone lids.
7. Try a bamboo toothbrush instead of plastic. Repurpose used plastic ones by using them to clean around your house.
8. Research and experiment with DIY cleaning products, which can be simple to make with common items like vinegar.
9. Buy in bulk where possible.
10. Avoid using complimentary hotel toiletries, but if you do need to use them, refill them and use them again on future travels.
11. Avoid products with "micro beads".
12. Wash your synthetic fabrics in a special bag as clothing or fabrics breaks down each time you wash it and small pieces of plastic make it to our waterways. You can buy a special bag (GuppyFriend) made to trap them or a Cora Ball.

Senior Social at The Wakes

THURSDAY 1.30pm

Something different every week!

9th Jan	Film & Cake - Mrs Lowry & Son
16th Jan	Curling, with fruit pie & custard
23rd Jan	Quiz & lunch
30th Jan	Film & Cake - Red Joan
6th Feb	Bingo & pastries
13th Feb	Valentines special film & cake - Brief Encounters

All the above sessions cost £4 and booking is required.

To book please call in at The Wakes TF2 6EP or book online at www.thewakes.org.uk

For enquiries call 01952 567502.

All activities come with complimentary tea & coffee.

A joint initiative between the Forum and Oakengates Town Council.

Bhangra Fitness - a full body work out to awesome bhangra tunes.

The class runs twice weekly, at Ketley Community Centre, 6.05pm on Wednesdays and at The Wakes, Oakengates, 7.15pm on Thursdays. The sessions are 45mins long and cost £4 pay as you go.

Bhangra fitness is easy to follow and enjoy. The group has an age range between 10 and 73years as the aim is to have fun and do whatever you are comfortable with. The feedback has been amazing, bhangra fitness helps people to lose weight, tone up, improve flexibility, ease symptoms of menopause (night sweats), tone muscles and is great for mental health and wellness.

All abilities are welcome at Bhangra Fitness. Everyone is encouraged to follow their own fitness journey in a way that is comfortable for them.

Get fit, have fun and meet new people!

Contact 07851 270409 for more information.

I want to return my goods - what are my rights?

Faulty Goods

The Consumer Rights Act gives you the right to return and get your money back on faulty goods, whether purchased in store, online or by mail order. You have the legal right to a refund if you return the goods within 30 days of receiving it, regardless of what the store's return policy says.

If you find a fault later on but within the first six months, you'll need to give the retailer a chance to make a repair or replacement. If that's unsuccessful, you can then ask for a refund. After the first six months, the burden of proof lies with you to prove the fault was present at the time you purchased the goods.

Non-faulty goods

You can only return store-bought non-faulty goods for an exchange or refund if the retailer has a returns policy. Shops aren't required by law to have a policy, but if they do, they must stick to it. Fortunately most retailers offer an exchange, refund or credit note.

There are often time limits for returning non-faulty products, such as 28 days, but many extend this around Christmas time. If you paid by credit card, you also have extra protection under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act.

If your item was bought online, over the phone or by mail order, you have rights under the Consumer Contracts Regulations, giving you a cancellation period starting the moment you place your order up until 14 days from the day you receive your goods. After notifying the retailer that you'd like to cancel your order, you then have a further 14 days to return the goods to them.

Where possible return your items with the original packaging.

Items that can't be returned

Retailers may state in their return policy that they cannot accept returns of certain items, such as cosmetics, toiletries, DVDs, music and computer software if the seal or packaging has been broken, food and flowers you've changed your mind about or an item that has been made to order or personalised.

Can you exchange or get a refund without a receipt?

Without the receipt, for non-faulty goods the retailer has no legal obligation to give you your money back but many offer an exchange or credit note.

If your goods are faulty and you don't have the receipt, you still have the right to a repair, refund or replacement, you just need to show proof of payment, such as a bank statement with the transaction on it. The seller can't require customers to take vouchers or credit notes where an item has been returned because it is faulty.

(based on an article by which.co.uk)

Could you be a walk leader? Make your New Year's Resolution now!

Walking for Health Telford and Wrekin is a volunteer led scheme that runs a programme of weekly walks from 12 different locations across Telford. Its aim is to give everyone the opportunity to take some gentle exercise, in a sociable setting, by joining a regular local walk.

We have a very dedicated team of walk leaders, but we still need more to keep our existing walks going and to open up new ones. Our walk leaders are simply people who enjoy walking and appreciate the benefits of our local scheme. By having a leader, someone is guaranteed to be there and knows the route and the timings.

They welcome new walkers, take a register (so no-one gets lost!) and keep an eye on the group as the walk progresses. There is no need for leaders to be available each week, every walk operates a rota. Our walks always start and finish from the same place (often with an opportunity for tea and cake) so no need for a map and compass!

Our next training is planned for Spring 2020. We go through what is special about our walks, with many opportunities for discussion and input from the participants. We then go on a demo walk to experience the points covered. After the training day, participants shadow a walk leader, before leading a walk (accompanied by an existing leader) and gaining their certificate.

So, if you walk with an existing group or are thinking of setting up a walk, come along. We'll cover all aspects of organising, planning and leading local walks.

Training is free and you can register your interest by contacting:
training@walkingforhealthtelfordandwrekin.org.uk
Tel 07512 123995

Don't get left behind - it's never too late to learn

Technology has come a long way over the last 20 years or so and the internet has opened up so many doors for older people and can benefit their lives in a huge number of ways.

While younger people find it easy to use modern technology, having grown up with it or used it in their working life, older adults can sometimes find it difficult to understand how it can be used to their benefit.

The Office for National Statistics states that 41% of adults aged 75 years are now internet users and around 78% in the 65-74 age group. Among women aged 75, internet users have almost trebled in the last 8 years. More than a quarter of people over the age of 75 now use tablets and 41% of people aged over 75 have a social media account.

The internet

The internet opens up a whole range of opportunities. You can:

- order your weekly shop direct to your front door.
- video chat with your friends and family over Skype.
- share photographs on social media websites such as Instagram.
- play video games with friends – keeping your brain active in the process.
- organise all your bills and bank accounts.
- book holidays, travel, restaurants and theatre tickets.
- watch TV shows and movies through website such as Netflix.

The possibilities are endless. The internet can help to prevent boredom, keep you connected with friends and family and help you to stay organised and taking some simple steps can help you stay safe and secure when using the internet.

Make 2020 the year to get to grips with technology

We can help you at our four weekly computer drop in sessions, run by volunteers:

Learn how to get more from your device, whether it's a laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Stay connected by getting to grips with email, video calling, social media.

Learn how to navigate the internet safely.

Manage photos, type letters and much more.

You can come along to get advice, solve a problem, learn something new or just gain more confidence and chat to others.

No need to book, just turn up!

Forum Computer drop in sessions (free)

Butter Cross Court, Stafford Street, Newport, TF10 7UD, Wed, 11am – 1pm

Hartshorne Court, Burton Street, Dawley, TF4 2BY, Wed, 10am - 12noon

Oliver Court, Ladycroft, Wellington, TF1 3BU, Wed, 2pm - 4pm

The Hub on the Hill, Southgate, Sutton Hill, TF7 4HG, Mon, 2pm - 4pm

Call us on 07932 828333/07552 975676 for more details.

'Alexa, open my talking newspaper.'

Did you know that if you are blind, partially sighted, or have any kind of difficulty reading print, there are over 500 talking newspapers and magazines in the UK, providing local news and information?

There are websites offering access to talking newspapers but if you have an Alexa device, you can ask it to read them to you. Just say "play", then the name of the newspaper. Or say "find a talking newspaper" if you haven't got one in mind.

Wellbeing Independence Partnership

A new partnership has been formed to provide Information, Advice and Guidance to adults and all-age family carers with social care and health needs in the borough.

The Wellbeing Independence Partnership (WIP), a consortium of local voluntary sector organisations; Telford & Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin and Taking Part, has been awarded the contract by Telford & Wrekin Council and Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who are joint-funding the new service.

Councillor Andy Burford, Cabinet member for Health and Social Care said: 'We are delighted to award the contract to the Wellbeing Independence Partnership. By combining 'My Choice' and 'Carers Centre Services' under one contract, access to information, advice and guidance will be greatly simplified.

'Individuals will benefit from only having to tell their story once, rather than to multiple agencies. People in Telford & Wrekin can expect a swift response when they contact the service, regardless of their need, disability, role or age.'

Debbie Gibbon, Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin CVS, added: 'This is a great opportunity for us to provide an integrated approach to help adults and all age family carers with social care needs get the right help at the right time. We all bring different areas of expertise to the partnership and we are delighted to have secured the contract formalising the partnership under one umbrella to better support people living within Telford & Wrekin'.

If you or someone you care for require first time help or if you are unsure about what help is available, contact 01952 916030 or go online to livewell.telford.gov.uk, the online community directory and search for the service you require.

The Post War Years

Thank you to Forum member Katherine, who shares the second instalment of her memories of growing up during the 40's.

I'm still surprised at how memory works or doesn't!

At the end of the 2nd world war, we moved from Wiltshire to Mid Wales. I remember this involved a cattle lorry, but did we travel in it as well as the furniture? It was a long trip for a family of five with children aged 6,3 and 1 but I can't remember a thing about it.

Our small stone cottage had no mod cons. The water came from a well at the end of the garden in which assorted small animals drowned. I can't think why we didn't all get very ill? Paraffin lamps and candles provided the only light we had. Access to the main road was 1 mile down or up and the winter of 1947 was really bad with deep snow. School was closed for 6 weeks. The snow was so deep and frozen we could walk over the hedges. When it finally melted and we had floods instead, dead cows could be seen floating down the river.

The wild flowers were amazing. At that time you could actually pick them. There were primroses and violets in the grass verges along the lane, bluebells and wood anemones under the trees and meadows full of lady's smock, cowslips and orchids, as well as today's survivors, daisies, dandelions and foxgloves. Fireflies were quite common then and more than once I saw baby cuckoos perched in very small nests.

I could, and did, go off on my own for hours, and still, without a watch, manage to get home for meals on time. Somewhere at some time we acquired a 3 wheeler van. The fruit, vegetables, eggs and plants we grew went to market. And I used to help out on the market stall during holidays. I loved that and got paid for it. I also got paid for feeding the hens every day - 6d (old money) a week.

Aged 10 I was sent to live with my grandparents in North Wales so I could try the 11+ exam with the promise of a bike if I passed (I did!). It was my first venture into civilisation, life was never the same again.

National Service Royal Air Force Association

This group meets at the Swan Hotel, Wellington, TF1 2NH, at 12pm on the third Monday of every month. Army veterans and WAAFs attend too, as the group welcomes anyone who served in the forces.

It provides an opportunity to have lunch, meet others, listen to a speaker and have a go at the raffle.

Just turn up on the day and give it a try, or for more information call Georgina on 01952 596860.

Independent Age's Friendship Service

If you need a good chat with someone who cares – perhaps because you're living on your own or your health is changing – you could get regular phone calls from Independent Age's Friendship Service volunteers who enjoy listening, talking and getting to know people, and the service is free.

If you could do with a regular chat and want to find out more, call them on 0800 319 6789.

Could you volunteer for the new Telford Stroke Group?

A few hours a month can make a world of difference.

The Stroke Association is setting up a new Telford Stroke Group, which will support people affected by stroke and their carers. The group will meet fortnightly, where there'll be a range of different support, activities and outings on offer and they'd love to hear from both prospective members and volunteers to help run the group.

Could you spare a couple of hours a fortnight to help people affected by stroke and their carers to rebuild their lives? You'll be making a real difference and it's an opportunity to do something you'll enjoy while meeting new people and developing a skill, as well as experiencing something new.

If you'd like to volunteer or if you're interested in attending the group, please contact Jo Weston on 07392 080003 or jo.weston@stroke.org.uk to find out more. You can also visit www.stroke.org.uk/volunteer

Telford Patients First Group

We are very keen to attract more members as we want the voice of Telford and Wrekin patients to be heard.

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month, starting at 3pm and finish at 5pm. Normally we meet at Dawley House, Dawley, Telford. However, if our grant request to continue using this venue in 2020 is refused then we will be looking for a new place to meet.

Our meetings are very informal, patients' voices are heard and from our discussions, if there are issues we need to escalate then we will do this. We invite speakers from various health organisations to come along and update us on potential changes or to discuss any problems we have raised with them.

The main objectives of the group are to canvass residents' and patients' views to help deliver the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes for residents of Telford & Wrekin, and to challenge the Clinical Commissioning Group, commissioners and the local authority.

Membership is open to individual patients and representatives drawn from the GP Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) within Telford & Wrekin.

Anyone interested in joining our patient group can call:
Lynn on 07954 077199 or Patrick on 07770 353685, or email:
steven@quaker site.plus.com

Think you need medical help right now?

When you need medical help fast, but it's not a life-threatening emergency, you can go straight to NHS 111, by phone or online, where you will be advised on the best course of action or be connected with a healthcare professional.

NHS 111 is free to use and allows you to have access to advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by phone and online.

If necessary, they can arrange for you to speak to relevant healthcare professionals, including nurses, emergency dentists, or even GPs. The advisors can also arrange face-to-face appointments, and assess if you need an ambulance and, if you do, one will be sent immediately.

NHS 111 provides you with a convenient way to get the right help or advice when you need it. So, if you think you need urgent medical help, call 111 or go online.

Visit 111.nhs.uk

Feed the Birds

If you are a keen bird feeder and struggle to get outside to feed them, then Feed the Birds could be for you.

We are looking for members of our community who feel lonely, struggle to get out and perhaps have few visitors, who would benefit from a bird feeding friend.

Volunteers will visit once a week to top up the feeder and have a chat over a cuppa about the birds that have visited.

If you or someone you know would like more information please call Kerry on 01952 385114.

Snow Wardens

Snow Wardens are volunteers who play an active role in their community when the weather takes a turn for the worst. They help clear side roads and pavements of snow and ice in their local area. This will not only help neighbours but also our more vulnerable residents who can't help themselves. To find out more about the role, contact 01952 380455

All Nations Church invite you to:

Telford's Carol Service

Sun 22nd December, 10.30am, free refreshments, all welcome.

All alone Christmas Day?

Come Dine With Us

Wed 25th December at 10am.

Free festive meal for the community.

To book your place please email:

telford@allnations.org.uk

Holyhead Road, Ketley, TF1 5DS

All Nations Telford, Holyhead Rd, Ketley TF1 5DS

New singing group in Church Aston

for anyone living with memory problems, their families and supporters.

A mixture of favourite songs and hymns, accompanied by the keyboard and ukulele.

3rd Wednesday of the month, 1.30pm.

St Andrew's Church, Church Aston, Newport TF10 9JG

Alarm Bells or Sleigh Bells?

Are you worrying about what to get your niece and nephew for Christmas? Are you wondering if the supermarkets will still be stocking turkeys? Are you concerned that you won't have enough to go around and that on Christmas Day you will suddenly realise you didn't get the stuffing?

Well, for your reassurance we all have these fears and we all think about them regularly! Particularly, during the next few weeks.

My answer is.....GET ORGANISED! I can hear you saying almost, "but how, I have so much to do". Yes, it's busy and time is running out but with a bit of pre-planning and organisation all can be achieved! Yes, really it can!

The first and most important thing is to make that all important list! I cannot stress the importance of lists in my life. They are basic but brilliant as they not only remind us what to do and what to buy they also keep us focused and more importantly give us some level of control, which keeps us happy, calm and most importantly keeps our general wellbeing in check.

But what about after the list is completed and the panic really sets in due to the amount of 'stuff' on it? Breaking up the tasks into bite size pieces makes time consuming tasks manageable. Instead of setting out to get everyone's Christmas presents in one afternoon and feeling deflated when you don't, break it down and plan to complete a quarter on the list, that way if you do complete more; you'll feel so much better and may even want to continue shopping!

If you've asked people what they would like and they don't come up with an answer, don't feel bad about getting a voucher or giving cash. We all like to receive a gift and we all like to put some thought into what to give others, however, it's really not worth getting anxious about! I'm sure no relative or friend would want that!

So, take a deep breath and start that list. Two may be better: 'things to buy' and 'things to be done'.

The other burning question is 'do YOU have to do everything'? Delegate where you can, it may feel uncomfortable but 'two hands are better than one'. It's not cheating; it's just using your common sense and time more effectively.....so go on, ask!

It's easy to get things out of proportion when we feel under pressure but, at the end of the day all most people want is time together, a hot meal and a small but heartfelt gift!

So....calm thoughts and get 'listing'!

Visit: www.smart-lifecoach.co.uk

Email: dianne.srsmart@gmail.com Tel: 07896 955 911

Wrekin Arts Photographic Club

welcomes photographers of all abilities to join them and explore photography in a friendly environment. The club meets every Friday at The Belfrey Arts Centre in Princes Street, Wellington, TF1 1JG at 8.00pm.

There is a comprehensive programme of events, lectures, demonstrations and displays from some of the top photographers in the country. It also runs a weekly "Learner Hour" starting at 6.45pm on Fridays for those members keen to learn more about photography and improve their work.

Visitors and potential members are welcome to attend the club any Friday evening for just £3.50. There is no obligation to join the club. A warm welcome is assured. For further information please contact the club secretary, Sheila Thomas on 01952 617170. You can also look at our website at www.wrekinartspc.com where you can see the programme for the year and some of the members' images.

If you're keen on photography, then please come along.

We'd love to see you!

Flying with a Disability

Set yourself up for the trip of a lifetime by thinking ahead.

Most of us take holidaying to far-flung destinations for granted. It's easy to hop on a plane and jet off somewhere luxurious. For those flying with a disability, things can be slightly more challenging.

But while that's the case, it shouldn't stop someone with accessibility needs from flying. It takes a bit more planning and preparation, but travelling with a disability is something which is easier than it's ever been before.

Make sure you have medical clearance from a healthcare professional to do so.

Contact the airport to ask about additional assistance, they will require information about your condition and how it might affect you while travelling.

you'll need to tell the airline about your mobility equipment and you can travel with two different types.

Ask at the airport about:

- getting help moving round the terminal, through check-in points and security and on to the departure gate.
- help available to get through the gate, find your seat on the plane and stow your carry-on bag.
- one-on-one safety briefing or alternatives if you are, for example, hard of hearing or visually impaired.
- a clear and easy route to the bathroom for wheelchair users.

At your destination airport

You may also be entitled to help through the airport. In some circumstances, this could be all the way to a train or bus station. This is something you might want to liaise with the destination airport on ahead of time. It would be useful to know what is and isn't covered at their end.

DO

- travel with a carer, friend or partner.
- plan what you need to carry with you at all times.
- get travel insurance.
- find out about travelling with medication.

DON'T

- forget to plan for your worst days.
- spread yourself too thinly – plan for plenty of rest when needed.

Everyone has the right to enjoy a trip abroad and it's easier than ever to enjoy a holiday as a traveller with a disability.

Article is based on information from www.parking4less.com/flying-with-a-disability

Visit the above website for lots more detailed information.

Hidden Disabilities Scheme

This scheme is focused on providing support to airport users with less visibly obvious issues. Many airports offer Sunflower Lanyards to enable staff to recognise that you have a hidden disability without you needing to declare it. This allows you to travel independently through the airport whilst knowing that if you need any additional support during your journey, staff have been specially trained to spot and assist the wearers at every opportunity. Contact your departure airport to enquire about this scheme.

Train & Coach

Train and Coach companies also offer assistance to travellers with disabilities. Contact the company before booking.

For train travel Passenger Assist on 0800 0223720.

National Express Assisted Travel Team 03717 81 81 81

Disability & Travel Abroad - www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-travellers

Scam Update

Watch out for police imposter scams - the number of cases being reported has increased recently.

The criminal calls you purporting to be a police officer, telling you they are investigating a fraud on your bank account. (They may also claim to be from the bank.) They then ask you to transfer money to a safe account to protect it. They may ask for more details, such as card details or PIN numbers or ask you to key the number onto the telephone keypad.

The police or your bank would never call you in this way, and never ask you to transfer money to another account, nor ask you to send cards or cheque books to them by courier or have them collected.

Hang up if you get a call from someone saying they're from the police, HMRC, your bank, Microsoft, BT, insurance companies, charities, Paypal etc. If unsure, ring them back using a number from correspondence or from their website. Or speak to a friend or family member, talking it through can really help you decide if something seems like a scam.

Great War Poets and Authors Part 2 - Frank Richards DCM MM

by Dave Wright

In the last Forum we looked at the life of Lieutenant Wilfred Owen (MC) who was an Officer and a war poet. In this issue we look at the life of a private soldier who was an author in later life, Frank Richards (1883 – 1961).

Born Francis Phillip Woodruff in June 1883 in Monmouthshire, at the age of nine he was orphaned and brought up by his aunt and uncle in Blaina. The uncle, his mother's twin, adopted Frank whose name was changed to Frank Richards. During the latter part of the 1890s Frank worked as a coal miner.

6584 Private Frank Richards joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers in April 1901 enlisting in Brecon and serving in India under the Raj and in Burma from 1902 - 09. He transferred to the Army Reserve for the remaining four years of his 12-year enlistment.

In 1914 when the Great War broke out Richards was still a reservist soldier, working as a timber assistant, and whilst having a drink in the bar of the Castle Hotel in Blaina, he heard the news of the outbreak of war. So, at the age of 31 he re-joined the 2nd Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers, in which he remained for the duration of the Great War.

Remarkably, Richards saw action in virtually all of the major British campaigns on the Western Front. He won the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) in 1916, the second highest award for gallantry in action after the Victoria Cross. The DCM is the Other Ranks equivalent of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for bravery by commissioned officers.

On the 25 March 1916 the War Office decided to introduce the Military Medal for bravery in battle whilst the DCM was to be reserved for exceptional acts. 6584 Pte Frank Rickards also won the Military Medal during his career as a soldier. A very brave man who never rose above the rank of private.

Fifteen years after the Great War ended, Richards published his classic account of the war from the standpoint of the regular soldier, and the book gives an excellent insight into the life of a soldier in the early 20th century, which differs in many ways from memoirs written by officers.

'Old Soldiers Never Die' was an instant success and in 1936, Richards wrote about his service in India in 'Old Soldier Sahib'.

Silly Christmas Jokes

What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?
A rebel without a Claus.

What happens to elves when they behave naughtily?
Santa gives them the sack.

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?
A Mince Spy!

What says 'Oh Oh Oh'?

Santa walking backwards!

What did one snowman say to the other snowman?
Can you smell carrot?

Why did Santa put a clock in his sleigh?
He wanted to see time fly!

Christmas Number One Pop Quiz

Do you know who had Christmas number one hits with the following songs? Answers on next page.

- 1 Christmas Alphabet 1955
- 2 It's Only Make Believe 1958
- 3 Return to Sender 1962
- 4 I Feel Fine 1964d
- 5 Lily The Pink 1968
- 6 I Hear you Knocking 1970
- 7 Merry Christmas Everybody 1973
- 8 Mary's Boy Child 1978
- 9 Merry Christmas Everyone 1985
- 10 Saviour's Day 1990

Extra question: Who had the original Xmas number one with 'Mary's Boy Child' in 1957?

Answers to Christmas Number One Pop Quiz

- 1 Dicky Valentine
- 2 Conway Twitty
- 3 Elvis Presley
- 4 The Beatles
- 5 The Scaffold
- 6 Dave Edmunds
- 7 Slade
- 8 Boney M
- 9 Shakin' Stevens
- 10 Cliff Richard

Extra question: Harry Belafonte

Join us today! Become a member of The Forum

To become a member of the Senior Citizens Forum, either phone 07932 828333 or 07552 975676 or email us at enquiries@twseniors.org.uk or follow the link 'Contact Us' on our website www.twseniors.org.uk

Membership is free and open to people resident in the area, in middle and later life, or anybody with a particular interest in older people's issues.

As a member you will, unless you notify us otherwise, receive our newsletter every two months by post or email.

Postal address:
FREEPOST RTGZ-UAGU-TXHJ
Senior Citizens Forum
Box 7, Unit D
Stafford Park 9
Telford TF3 3AF

How we handle your data

The Senior Citizens Forum is committed to ensuring that your privacy is protected by using your data fairly, lawfully, securely and solely for the purposes for which it is required.

We collect data to allow us to register you as a member of the Forum so that you may receive our newsletter every two months. If you choose to receive it by post, we pass your name and address to a mailing company. We sometimes use the data for statistical purposes. We will not sell, distribute or lease your personal information to third parties unless we have your permission or are required by law to do so.

If you believe that any information we are holding on you is incorrect or incomplete, or you wish to have your details removed from our records, or wish to stop receiving any correspondence from us, please contact us at the address above, or by calling 07932 828333, email enquiries@twseniors.org.uk

The Senior Citizens Forum is a registered charity and has no regular income. Don't forget that you can help – if you get the opportunity to nominate a charity for funds please do think of us; or if you would like to make a donation, it would be much appreciated. Cheques, made payable to the Senior Citizens Forum, can be sent to our freepost address above.

The newsletter is entirely independent and is not tied to any political party. Information is, to the best of our knowledge, correct at the time of going to press but no liability will be accepted for any errors or omissions. The inclusion of an article does not necessarily imply a recommendation of its aims, policies or methods.

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