

GROUCHY GIRLS 2023

JANUARY 2023

The Grouchy Girls had a lot to say about the slogan '**Don't Cook Just Eat**' and the abundance of take-away and delivered meals. What is the impact on our health and the high street?



Gedling has more take-aways than shops and Mapperley is now populated by cafes and restaurants; yet **TV cooking programmes** are popular!

We understand the temptation for busy working parents, but wonder if they know how much *money would be saved by home cooking* - do younger generations know how to cook a healthy, easy economic meal?

Many folks ordered food during the Covid era and that may have changed habits, but we worry that the take-away culture is linked to the obesity problem. We're not 'body-shaming' but worried about associated health problems.

Retailers are filling the gap in the market as it is more profitable, and many enjoy the occasional take-away. We feel that examples of laziness are **porridge and jelly in individual, use-once - and throw-away** plastic pots when a bag of oats is cheap and the kids who love jelly also like making it!



Call an ambulance or drive to A&E?

Call 999 if it is a serious situation as paramedics will treat you enroute.

Call 111 for advice but experiences has taught us that you're often just told to go to A&E to join a long queue, when maybe you didn't need to.

Experiences of GP services varied enormously among us, with some practices arranging an appointment the same day and others in 5 weeks! For minor ailments we thought the pharmacist the first port of call.

We all agreed that **the NHS itself is seriously unwell**, and we need more staff and ambulances. We remember a previous health minister suggesting **increasing NI** and **ringfencing for the NHS**, and some members thought that should have happened. Others felt that addressing the management was as important as increased spending.

One member is unable to lift her disabled husband when he falls and may wait hours for paramedics. Maybe, like in the USA, we should be able to call for firemen as they are well trained.

The Grouchies decided to make **New Year Resolutions** for well-known people. The one for **Putin** is unprintable but for **Trump** - pay those taxes.

For **Harry and Megan** - SH!

For **top footballers** - take a big cut in pay and to the **rocket billionaires**, please spend on global warming & replacing throw-away plastic.

Prime Ministers and presidents - work together to eliminate wars and conflicts.

For us, **Grouchy Girls never make dieting a resolution again!**

FEBRUARY 2023

The group enjoyed having a fresh face trying to exert control while I was away. Many thanks to Pat Garner who I hear did an excellent job.

What do **STRIKES** achieve? What rights would workers have without the strikes in the past? Is there an alternative to striking?

It was agreed that 'strikers' in the past suffered greatly and made conditions better for us all. The brave miners, and their families, suffered in a lost cause, as the demise of mining followed. Members felt that nurses and teachers are reluctant to strike; their cause is as much working conditions and the declining state of hospitals and schools as an increase in pay. There are more women members in unions, especially in these professions. It was generally felt that the right to strike is essential, as working to rule is difficult and there is no effective alternative.

Traffic zones are being introduced in more cities, e.g. now in place in Sheffield. Are they a good idea or will they just make travelling to town centres difficult?

We all want cleaner air and in Sheffield heavy vehicles will be charged. Our city centres are in decline and the people of Sheffield may opt for out of town Meadowhall rather than pay charges. We can be proud of Nottingham as all our buses and trams are electric, and we have good 'park and ride' options. However, our roads are still clogged, so maybe parking zones are the next step. We love our bus passes- a clean and green option.

'The Spare' shares royal family fall-outs and secrets. What family skeletons are you willing to let out of the closet?

I admit to a great uncle who lined his hat with metal to keep the moon-rays out, obviously to avoid lunacy. One member had a publican/coal merchant in the family who served 6 months hard labour for putting a false bottom in his coal wagon to cheat his customers. One member went out with a man who went on to murder his grandparents! Other members were strangely silent on this subject, so I can only guess they had secrets too terrible to share!

MARCH 2023

One of our members was scammed when applying for a driving licence as she was tricked into using a premium phonenumber.



Another had a call from her 'daughter' asking for an emergency bank transfer.

- NEVER give bank account details on the phone or by email
- Set up a password for phone calls from your bank.
- To check if a call IS from your bank; **use a different phone** and call the number on your bank card.
- Ignore '**Post Office**' delivery charge for undelivered parcel.
- **Do not open** emails from HMRC / Microsoft etc. If they are genuine, they will contact you by post.
- **Unknown number calls**: wait for them to speak first then ask what number they are calling from.

Lasting effects of Covid lockdowns

We are worried that school *non-attendance* has increased. Students still having lectures on Zoom. *Getting to know neighbours* has led to a better sense of community. Some of our exercise routines have faded. Cancellation of operations has increased NHS waiting times. More people have mental health problems.

What local opportunities are there for exercise that suit our age group?

We'd like to know if there is a Tai-Chi instructor who might make that u3a group return. Classes at The Loco Centre sound fun, but what else is out there? Please send us details of what you enjoy.

APRIL 2023



The **Grouchy Girls** pondered the recent suggestion that **85 year olds should have to re-take their driving test**. Statistics prove that young male drivers cause the most serious accidents BUT we acknowledged that our health and reaction times are not what they were.

At age 70 it is suggested you ask your GP for a check-up to confirm you are up to driving on our busy roads. The first challenge would be getting an appointment!

Do you drive a **minibus or motor home 3.5 tons** or more? After 70 you must have a C1 or D1 test or your insurance will be invalid. If you have **any eyesight problems in both eyes**, other than short or long sighted, you must tell the DVLA. So maybe we should have compulsory health checks at 80, but heaven help us if we had to learn the highway code!

Years of experience is our strength, but a friend of Pat said **“I’m not a danger to anyone as I always drive at 20mph”...**



Recent news about the police force is negative but what has our personal experience been? We'd like PCs to be accessible and are disheartened that they rarely follow up burglaries and petty theft. It the customers who pay extra because of theft being built into the prices.

At Wilko on Carlton Square a GG reported a theft in progress and no action was taken “It costs more to employ a security guard than the cost of thefts”. If not worthy of a 999 call, what do we do when we see a crime being committed?

Inspections from agencies **outside** of the police are needed to extinguish sexism, racism, and homophobic prejudice. **Bring back Dixon of Dock Green!**

What is your personal **BEST THING SINCE SLICED BREAD?**

- Some great ideas were shared including a one-cup hot drink dispenser & cleaning sticks from a well-known kitchen store
- These days we need needle threaders and contact lenses and we love our time-saving dishwashers and front-loading washing machines
- We now take our iPads and mobile phones for granted and some love Alexa
- A jar of lazy garlic and an air-fryer to make your chips and then a soak in the bath make us content.

JULY 2023

This month we discussed 'being woke'. Maggie gave us some very interesting background to the origins of the expression. Apparently it arose in America to describe the awareness of racial oppression. Had you 'woke' to the issues or were you still sleeping. People in the group discussed the complexity of being aware and respectful especially in areas of race and sexuality. Issues regarding sexual identity have become prominent in the news lately. We felt it was important to try to reach common ground and try to understand each other and to be aware of inflammatory articles in some newspapers.

We also discussed issues with neighbours. Problems with parking was often an issue. Most households now have more cars than they used to, it is now common to have two cars or more. Noise from loud music at antisocial hours were sometimes a problem. Also noise from children playing could be unwelcome. Maintenance of boundary walls or fences could cause disputes. However, some people described how they valued their relationship with their neighbours and that it was an important part of their lives.

We also discussed how we could help those people who always went the extra mile. Sometimes people were afraid to volunteer to help in case the work they took on became excessive. We discussed how sometimes people took on things and then everyone just let them get on with it. Again we decided communication and a bit of kindness were vital.



OCTOBER 2023

Did the media over-react to the **Spanish kiss**? Some felt yes, it was all done in a moment of heightened emotions, **BUT** there is background to the story. The man was holding the woman's head very firmly, and obviously felt this was an acceptable action. On the cheek? OK. Spanish women are tired of having no justice when serious sexual assaults happen. Sadly, we all felt that the football triumph was overshadowed by the action of one macho man.



'There is no such thing as a bad dog, only bad owners' true or false. We agreed some owners don't train their dogs and some breeds have aggressive traits. It doesn't follow that because a dog is big it is likely to be aggressive, but, when dogs are heavy and have powerful jaws, the owner will struggle to manage behaviour. It would be sad to muzzle all dogs, but if a dog has nipped someone it is necessary. Let's have wardens **check that all dogs are chipped** - as on many subjects the Grouches agree that there are so many laws that are not enforced.



The Grouchy Girls look as if butter wouldn't melt... **BUT** in the days when we all **played outside, they got up to some naughty tricks**. Rita ran on to the train tracks to put pennies on the rails while Jo set fire to a bank when pretending to light a cigarette sweet! Most admitted to scrumping, making dens and 'knock-a-door-run, but one bad girl used to post boys caps into the letter box so that he had to wait for the postie to come! There was so little traffic we even had skipping ropes across the road, and played lots of street games. Who remembers pressing button B in case a penny was still in the box?



NOVEMBER 2023

We started with a difficult subject **‘What words to the bereaved could bring comfort’?** This was such a useful discussion, and we appreciate that when we suffer a bereavement, we are very sensitive and easily upset.

Don’t avoid the bereaved person and **do ask** ‘how are you’? Instead of ‘let me know if I can do anything, **take a cottage pie or cake round.** At the right time, **share memories of the person who died, it is OK to laugh or cry together.**

Friends should **keep in touch** with a **visit or message.** Often a **touch on the arm or a hug** may be just what is needed. Be a good listener.



Would you be offended if you received a text or email instead of a Christmas card? The cost of stamps is prohibitive, but if we don’t send cards people might think we’ve died! *‘Save paper, save trees’*, but charity cards might justify sending them.

Some of us send a message saying they are not sending cards but are making a donation to a charity. How often do we write to each other these days?

Some Grouches cherish cards from people they have lost, and bring them out every Christmas. Most of us agreed that online cards were OK. It is nice to receive a real card with a message from faraway friends, but not much interest in ‘round robins’. Avoid glitter cards that cannot be re-cycled.



What super-power would you like?

Seeing into the future, being a fly on the wall, strength to help women have power, invisibility, teleport, ability to fly, and what would we give to stop wars?



DECEMBER 2023

The **Grouchy Girls** joined members of the **Dining Out Group** to enjoy a tasty Christmas Lunch. There was a festive feel with everyone in their glad-rags and sparkle, and 70 u3a members enjoyed a great social occasion.

Sheila and Mel brought Christmas cheer after lunch with a singalong, and for a few hours we forgot the winter gloom.

Many thanks to Mary and Gwen for helping to organise this.

