

GROUCHY GIRLS 2024

JANUARY 2024

Started by agreeing that “**you are never too old to learn.**” Some of us are learning to speak another language (via the internet or u3a) and learnt new skills like crocheting and accountancy. In fact, lots of new interests have been acquired through the u3a (blatant plug). New fads have encouraged some “**old dogs to learn new tricks**” like Wordle, sudoku and how to use an air-fryer. Technology has encouraged people to use supermarket self-checkouts, online banking and use smartphones... despite having to find out how without instructions! Most importantly, lots of ladies have learnt how to lunch.



The housing crisis made us consider what incentives could encourage single people to downsize so that larger properties become available for families. The topic was fraught with **problems**; not enough suitable housing, houses can be cherished homes, leaving friendly neighbours, and wanting spare rooms for visiting family. **Incentives** might include reduced council tax, heating bills, cleaning and maintenance, offer of disabled facilities and shared gardens etc.

Lastly, we talked about acts of kindness, and it was generally agreed that these were always appreciated and we should graciously accept them and generously reciprocate whenever we can.

FEBRUARY 2024

Our guest speaker on Russia told us that *Catherine the Great of Russia* is regarded as the best Russian leader. That made the Grouchy Girls wonder ‘**What would the world today be like if women held the top power positions?**’ Do you need to be ruthless to hold power? We thought of many great influential women from Bodecia to Angela Merkel.

We agreed that women as world leaders would be unlikely to start wars, but would use armies for defence. In native American culture, when two tribes were in the same territory, men stayed back and first children and then women went forward. Children naturally played, not fought. **If a youth offers you a seat on the bus, are you grateful, or does it make you feel old?** Some of us felt a bit shocked the first time we have a concession to our age, but after that, we felt fine and believe we should show appreciation as a rebuff would be discouraging.

Other concessions we appreciate are bus passes, free prescriptions, winter fuel payment, 10% off in Iceland, and reductions for entrance to National Trust etc.

Some modern pop and rap lyrics are misogynist and crude. Were the songs of our era innocent? Oh my goodness! We managed to think of lots of naughty and suggestive lyrics, mostly banned by aunty BBC. Some Grouchy girls were happily oblivious to some innuendos, and I for one had no idea what 10cc stood for!



MARCH 2024

A large attendance, and much fun was had at our March meeting. There is no way I can persuade those women to be grumpy!

Quick to complain, but slow to compliment? Bad service needs to be questioned, but the Grouchy Girls try to stay polite and calm. If no result after a complaint, put it in writing and ask for a written reply. We try not to be annoyed with the person on the 'phone as most complaints belong with management. Sometimes a threat to take it to an ombudsman brings results! Many of us get fed up with being asked for feedback every time we purchase something, BUT we learned from Pauline that when she had her annual review, it really helped if people had registered positive feedback. We finished by saying how a compliment can improve our mood, so a resolution was made to try to give 2 compliments every day. That is how lovely we are!

Scams! The curse of modern life. Being on alert for scams cause us a lot of stress. Look carefully at the email address when an email from HMRC, the Post Office etc as they can look very official. Don't respond to calls when you do not recognise the number. It is important to have anti-virus protection on your devices; Jenni recommended AVG. Do not open any email that is suspicious e.g. someone sending 'photos. Contact the sender to verify any messages that you are unsure of.

Diets, food fads, intolerance and allergies. What is your relationship with food? Home cooking from scratch ensures we know what we are eating as all the emulsifiers, sugar, flavouring and additives worry us. Make healthy choices a habit with lots of fruit and vegetables. Be aware that plates are much bigger these days, so use a smaller one. Indulge now and again; salad is good for our bodies but cake is good for our souls.

MAY 2024

In May the Grouchy Girls discussed whether **electric bikes, scooters and mobility scooters** should be on the pavements. One GG was pushed from behind by a mobility scooter and without her husband to support her, would have taken a fall! The driver said they should have got out of the way as he'd tooted, and before they could explain that they are both hard of hearing he sped off!

We decided that all electric vehicles should be in dedicated cycle lanes, when possible, and that mobility scooter riders should have to have training. More cycle lanes would be needed, and we appreciate all bikes etc. have to cope with the **potholes!** Some felt electric scooters should be banned, as the riders and pedestrians are at risk.

So many challenges as we acknowledge the pavements and roads locally are often narrow. We'd make helmets and bells obligatory and some felt all electric vehicles should be licenced.

Private healthcare is becoming normal, and as the generation who first benefitted from the NHS, we are truly frightened that we are in danger of losing it. Members shared how the NHS has been their saviour, and although getting GP appointments is a nightmare, serious illnesses are usually dealt with well. Healthcare is becoming a two-tier system, and many folks struggle to pay the rent, yet alone pay for private healthcare. Yet, when in terrible pain and needing a hip replacement, being able to pay is an answer.

Fines for patients who miss appointments could be considered, as we all receive reminder texts. Sometimes the NHS has to repair problems resulting from operations done abroad; not right! GGs who worked for the NHS say it has changed so much, and not always for the better.

We lightened up when sharing tips on **avoiding housework with the excuse of saving the planet.** Ironing = waste of electricity as creases drop out (shock horror from some members) and stop using chemicals and disposable wipes. Washing up - once a day is enough. Basically, do as little housework as possible as you need to go to more u3a groups.



JUNE 2024

Some of us enjoyed meeting for lunch, and swapping books while we waited to be served. Then more members joined us for a lively discussion on the following subjects.

Have we become a 'nanny state'? Divided opinions; particularly because of the housing crisis. People should not be penalised for being poor, with many wonderful people coming from low-income families. Some thought that the 'two child policy' was needed as a method of population control. However, this would not restrict the wealthy from having large families. Should absent fathers be more accountable, rather than the state having to support families? A range of opinions, and sometimes we had to 'agree to disagree'!

Will the proposed smoking ban be effective? At least we were unanimous on this subject- NO! Young people want to rebel and would easily access cigarettes. We'd prefer the government to research the unknown consequences of vaping. We hate the fact that flavours, e.g. candyfloss, are aimed at the young, never mind the terrible plastic waste. We all appreciate the restrictions that came into force to ban smoking inside public places. We have many ex-smokers in the group, and one member who enjoys four cigarettes a day. *The average price of 20 cigarettes – an eye-watering £15.67*

We were sad to hear of the death of Dr Michael Mosely, as some of us had benefitted from his research. We were glad he experimented on himself with tapeworm - a step too far!

We shared our own health tips: - daily walk, golf can be a 4 mile walk, socialise, sing, use an air fryer, and try not to fret!

JULY 2024

24 Grouchy Girls met at The Willowbrook in July 2024. Half the group enjoyed a pub lunch and afterwards, James, from the NHS gave us a brief outline of using the NHS App. He then gave individual support to some Grouchy Girls.



As usual, we then had a magazine and book swop before discussing our first topic: -

Beware of crunching smelly crisps or rattling ice-cubes in your drink at a live performance if there is a Grouchy Girl nearby! **We decided that in a theatre or music concert eating should be confined to a cough sweet if necessary.** Things could be more relaxed in a cinema or festival setting. People often snack in front of a TV, but at the theatre or a concert, save it for the interval please.

Our next grouch was that second home ownership making homes unaffordable for first time buyers. In holiday areas village schools and shops fail when the resident population are forced out by holiday homes.

Some felt it is Ok if they had to pay high rates or they are renovating an empty property. Homes should not be standing empty when we do not have enough affordable homes. Large numbers of student housing or rented properties can also have a negative effect on local housing. Not everyone fancies **camping** but maybe a **hotel**? Enjoy your holiday!

How do you deal with a friend who criticises mutual friends? It depends on if it is unusual or petty, when it might be best to ignore. Don't join in, and if this person often does it, the chances are they might be criticising you behind your back. Keep calm but try to reason with them or diffuse the situation. This could stop unpleasantness or possible bullying.

AUGUST 2024



UNANIMOUS! For once all the Grouchy Girls agreed that the train service should be nationalised. It was not perfect before, but since it was split between different owners, train travel is SO confusing. We'd like humans at stations to tell us ticket prices, and there to be one system of booking. We cannot get back the money wasted on HS2 but we hope there would be investment in infrastructure.

The Post Office scandal does make us worry so there must be more accountability. Members then shared experiences of train travel nightmares.

Has age made us lose any power over our lives? Some Grouchies admitted to having given up physical activities, but know there are other opportunities out there, usually with prefix 'gold'! Those of us who have struggles with IT don't like to admit it, plus a bit of 'brain-fog doesn't help.

Technology helps with communication but remembering passwords etc. can be stressful. We acknowledge that giving Power of Attorney to a trusted person is sensible, as any of us could might have a stroke or accident. Hold on to as much power of your lives for as long as possible- we are a generation that gave women more autonomy and opportunities. Power To The Grouchies!



Being a '**Swift**' seems like an obsession. **Were the Grouchies groupies or mega-fans?** We loved remembering all our teenage passions, including collecting bubble-gum pictures of the Beatles to stick all over our bedroom walls. The power of pop groups is amazing, and Oasis are predicted to make millions from their reunion. Some things never change.

OCTOBER 2024

The October meeting of **Grouchy Girls** grappled with GROPING, following the media coverage of 'the Strictly Grope'. We were divided on this issue, including the question what **IS** a grope? After much discussion we did agree that it was usually a man touching a woman in any way that made her feel uncomfortable, and that reactions would be individual. Sadly, we felt that in our youth, we hardly dare make a fuss as men got away with a lot more, and it was often in the workplace, with abuse of power.

Were reports of THAT grope blown out of proportion? We did agree that we wouldn't put up with any touching now, and would advise any teenage girl to object, move away and if on the street, go into a shop and confide in someone if followed.

Winter gloom can get you down, so the Grouchies cheer themselves up with home made soup. One group turned into recipe swapping, and Pat advised using butter to sweat the veg, and if worried, sprinkle some statins on top! * *this idea is not recommended by the u3a* We are more tempted by sweet things popular. Most important down to TV in the planning a sunshine



on dark days, and chocolate and crumbles are is to socialise (hurrah for our u3a) and cosying evening. We recommend SAD lights and holiday!

Memories of **childhood sweeties** made us nostalgic. In the *GOOD OLD DAYS* we were trained up to smoke with sweet cigarettes and liquorice pipes! The grouchies remembered Wagon Wheels as being huge and buying 4 fruit salads for a penny. My favourite was aniseed balls, so if anyone finds them- yes please. Sherbet dips and kaylie (no idea how to spell that coloured sugar in a paper cone) and thank goodness we can still buy Love Hearts but you can keep your Parma Violets!



DECEMBER 2024

14 members enjoyed a festive lunch at The Willowbrook on 18th December. Mary provided a Christmas quiz and a list of carols for us to sing. We did an Oscar winning rendition of the '12 Days of Christmas' - with actions! We hoped the exercise would help work off some Christmas pud, though more likely one brussel!

Any female members reading this, do not think the group is not for you because of the Grumpy name. We share our thoughts on serious issues, always learning from each other. It is good to be with a group who have many different life experiences. Plus, we always end on a happy note e.g. confessions of the naughty acts from our childhood, or the sweeties of yesteryear that have disappeared.

