

## **Brampton and District 50+ Forum**

Report of the meeting held on Tuesday 14 April 2015 in Brampton Community Centre. Lunch was available for members in the newly-opened community café; 19 members attended the meeting which followed.

The Chair, Jean Taylor, welcomed members.

Ann Oswin then gave some updates and news of forthcoming events:

- Carlisle Carers are holding 'coffee sessions' in the Moot Hall, Brampton: 10am-12noon on 18 May and 2pm-4pm on 19 May.
- Cumbria Voluntary Service is organising meetings for people to have a say about the NHS - 'My NHS'. Anyone can become a member and receive updates on local changes.
- Cumbria Action for Health is drawing attention to a report from Macmillan Cancer Support highlighting the lack of social care support for cancer patients at home.

Ann then introduced the speaker, Maureen Flett, by profession a sports physiotherapist but also a keen gardener and plantswoman and who is a speaker for the RHS.

The theme of her talk was 'Gardening for health'.

Maureen told us that she sees quite a few patients whose injuries are related to gardening so she is keen to describe ways to help individuals garden for longer. She explained the benefits of exposing ourselves to some sunshine - it enables us to make vitamin D, needed to absorb calcium in our food which gives us a strong skeleton.

Gardening also provides steady aerobic exercise - good for heart and lung function - without the increased risk of damage that intensive exercise can cause. It is also proven to help many mental health situations. However more than 80,000 accidents a year are due to gardening, mainly caused by carelessness with tools, slips and falls, bad lifting technique and poisoning. There are 'over-use' injuries especially to soft tissues such as tendons. It was pointed out that it is not just the elderly that are affected; tissue repair becomes measurably slower after the age of about 35.

Maureen explained the importance of choosing suitable tools to make jobs easier and using them in a way which is most comfortable - this may mean adapting your technique. The benefits of trowels, kneelers, trousers with knee pads, tools with different handle lengths were all discussed; the most expensive tools are not necessarily the best. There are tools available ('Thrive') with adaptations for disability. Back pain and avoidance exercises; general aches and pains and the beneficial effects of a warm bath compared with the effects of different painkillers; the dangers to humans and pets of bagged compost, slug pellets and other pesticides; the hazards associated with moving heavy pots and how to avoid injury; all received attention and stimulated contributions from members.

In summary we were told to: pace yourself; accept your limitations; give your body a chance by doing a bit at a time and letting tools do the hard work (or paying someone else to do it); don't take risks. After more questions about the vine weevil and how to get rid of it, and an invitation from a member to join the community garden - they meet on Saturday afternoons and there is an open day in June - the Chair thanked the speaker and the members showed their appreciation for what had been an engaging talk.

The meeting ended with tea and biscuits.

The **next Forum**, the **AGM**, is on **Tuesday 19 May 2015**.