

# Time Together

## In this issue:

- 3 Meet Re-engage volunteer Sara Cox
- 4 A royal celebration
- 6 What you've been reading
- 7 Volunteer recipe
- 8 Lives lived

# Welcome



Yvonne and Annie celebrated their 90th birthdays with the Bracknell 1 tea party group in April and they have both lived fascinating lives. In this issue of Time Together, you can read about how Annie met her husband when he turned up at Woolworths, where she was working at the time, and how Yvonne worked full time at her local garden centre for 20 years, finally retiring at the age of 80.

We received a selection of wonderful photographs from tea party groups who celebrated The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in May. We also heard about how guests enjoyed sharing memories of Jubilee celebrations over the years. You'll find some of the photos we received in Time Together, as well as an interview with tea party guest Michael, whose birthday coincides with Accession Day on 6th February 1952.

Radio 2 presenter Sara Cox is a loyal supporter of Re-engage and is both a volunteer driver and a host for her local tea party group. On page 3 you can read about her favourite tea party memory and why she chose to become a volunteer.

I'm very grateful to Peter and Margaret for reviewing **Thrown**, Sara Cox's new novel, for our book review section of Time Together. Peter and Margaret are both members of our advisory panel, which is a group of people who give us valuable feedback about the tea parties, activity groups and call companions. If you're interested in becoming a member yourself, you can find out more on page 7.

And finally, please do take a moment to complete our latest Meryl's Memo insert and post it back to us in the envelope provided. We want to hear about what is important to you so that we can plan for the future.

**I hope you enjoy this issue of Time Together.**

**Meryl Davies**  
CEO, Re-engage

# Meet Re-engage volunteer Sara Cox



Radio 2 presenter Sara Cox has volunteered as a host and a driver for the Re-engage Brent tea party group since January 2017.

We caught up with her to find out what makes the tea parties so special.

## Why did you first decide to become involved with your local Re-engage tea party group?

I actually heard about the tea parties on a radio advert and wanted to get involved. At the time it was a campaign to invite one guest to a Sunday roast and as a family we really enjoyed it. Since then, I've hosted a few tea parties and I try to volunteer as a driver every month. It's just the loveliest thing to do. It's a good way to not only give something back, but to see the results there and then - the smiling faces of the guests as they chat away and tuck into the food.

## What makes the tea parties so special?

The guests have had such interesting lives. They tell fascinating stories. Thelma worked with the military police at the end of World War II and Freda used to hand stitch beautiful wedding gowns. It's great to provide a fun afternoon out for some special people who don't really get to go out and socialise a lot.

Sara's novel *Thrown* is out now. You can find out what our members thought on page 6. Sara's teatime show is on BBC Radio 2 Monday - Friday from 5-7pm.

## Do you have a tea party memory to share with us?

Marie, one of the other drivers, threw a tea party which landed on Royal Ascot weekend. She had cut-outs of horses in the garden, we all wore hats and the guests sipped Pimms in the sunshine. She's also a brilliant baker so it was pretty spectacular.

At a tea party at mine, I'd asked a school mum friend who sings in a trio to come and sing in my kitchen. They sang acapella hits from the forties and fifties. They kindly did it for free and the guests loved it. The trio were super glamorous and performed brilliantly.

## What's your favourite tea party treat?

I'm a sucker for an egg mayo sarnie and I'm going to be bold here and say I make the best ones. In the world. The secret is a dash of salad cream and white pepper.

## What makes you get out of bed every morning?

I love getting up and at 'em. I grab my bigger dog and head up to the yard where I keep my horse and the three of us go out on a hack. Then I try and squeeze in some writing - I'm working on my second novel after *Thrown* - before cycling to Radio 2 to host my teatime show at 5pm.

# A royal celebration

Tea party guests and volunteers attended Platinum Jubilee themed tea parties this summer and we loved hearing about them.

Members of the Northwich tea party group dressed in red, white and blue for their Jubilee tea party, with one guest, Marjorie, writing a celebratory poem.

Group coordinator, Bev Owen, said **“It was a truly magical afternoon with guests reminiscing and sharing their memories of the Queen’s Coronation in 1952 and past Jubilees.”**

Pam, who was eight when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the throne, remembers watching the occasion on a rented television.

**“We all got ready and walked round to my uncle’s house as he’d rented a small television especially for the occasion. Adults sat on chairs and the children were all sat on the floor, huddled around the small screen. It was so exciting”.**

Other guests remembered Jubilee street parties, with long tables down the streets, music and people dancing.



*The Thurrock tea party group had a wonderful afternoon celebrating the Platinum Jubilee with a lunch at the Orsett Hall.*





*Michael (far right) with his local tea party group.*

### **A special birthday**

Michael, who is 92, is a retired stock farmer living near Aberdeen. His birthday coincides with Accession Day on February 6th, 1952 - the day that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the throne after the sudden death of her father, King George VI.

Michael's wife, Joan, died 13 years ago after they had been married for nearly six decades. Four years ago, his neighbour, a volunteer driver for his local tea party group, encouraged him to join the group himself and he has been attending the monthly tea parties ever since.

“ I must say I wasn't totally convinced when it was suggested to me, but I thought I'd join the throng and I'm very glad I did. They are very enjoyable events. If any gentlemen were thinking about coming along, I would definitely encourage them. ”

**Michael**

If you would like to join a tea party group in your area, ring us on **0800 716 543**, email us at **info@reengage.org.uk** or visit **www.reengage.org.uk**

# What you've been reading

Long standing supporter of Re-engage, Radio 2 presenter Sara Cox is both a host and driver for her local tea party group.

Two members of the Re-engage advisory group reviewed her new book, *Thrown*, for Time Together.

## Thrown by Sara Cox

When I started to read *Thrown*, I wondered why the first few pages were given over to describing the main characters one by one, instead of being woven into the story. I soon began to realise that I was getting to know a small group of folk and their interests in their local community. The reader will relate to their stories whether they live in an urban or rural area. The group decide upon a pottery making class which brings its own fair share of ups and downs. In my view this is well thought out and a very good read that a lot of people would be interested in reading, so it should sell well. – *Peter Lake*.



The bright cover is enticing, particularly the broken off teacup handle. Is this a clue to something? As I progressed, the broad reaching opening chapters enticed me further. Short, pithy chapters, each concentrating on a particular character, makes it easy to follow the narrative thread, giving the feel of a modern writer. The content is lively and full of information about the characters and their situations, making it very easy to understand. The chapters have a good pace too. What particularly interested me was seeing people, places and ideas through today's eyes. The text is printed in a sensible font and so easier to read than is often the case. I feel a little more educated into the whys and wherefores of today's society than I did before. I'm still not sure I wish to swap my education and habits for the future though. – *Margaret Ward*.

If you'd like to write a short book review yourself (200 words or less), please email us at [comms@reengage.org.uk](mailto:comms@reengage.org.uk) or write to us at Time Together, Re-engage, 7 Bell Yard, London WC2A 2JR.

# Volunteer recipe

Volunteer driver and group coordinator Ali shares her recipe for Brownies with Raspberry Puddles.



**Serves: 18**

## Ingredients

275g unsalted butter, softened  
375g caster sugar  
4 medium eggs  
75g cocoa powder  
100g self-raising flour  
100g dark chocolate chips  
100g seedless raspberry jam

\*The brownies can be frozen.

## Method

Preheat the oven to 180c or 160c fan.

Grease and line a 30cm x 23cm x 4cm baking tin.

Put the butter, sugar, eggs cocoa powder and self-raising flour in a mixer and mix on medium for 2 minutes. This will take around 5 minutes with a handheld mixer.

Now add the chocolate chips and mix them through using a spatula.

Pour the mixture into the tin and spread it out evenly using a spatula, making sure to poke it in all the corners.

Now dot teaspoons of jam all over the brownie mixture, making sure there are gaps between the puddles.

Bake for 40-45 minutes, until the brownie has a slight crust on top.

Leave the brownie to cool in the tin before cutting it up into squares to serve.

## We need your opinions

Our advisory group is made up of readers of Time Together from across the UK. Four times a year, we get feedback from advisory group members about Re-engage's work and get ideas about how we can shape our future plans.

We get in touch by phone or email, however the person prefers.

We're keen to recruit more people to give us their opinions and advice.

To join, you just have to be someone who is part of a Re-engage tea party or activity group or be someone who has a call companion. If you're interested in hearing more then please phone Georgina on **020 8017 8238** or email **[impact@reengage.org.uk](mailto:impact@reengage.org.uk)**

# Lives lived

Yvonne and Annie both belong to the Bracknell 1 tea party group and in May the group celebrated their 90th birthdays.

We caught up with them to hear more about their lives, lockdown and what the tea parties mean to them.



## Yvonne

Coming from a farming family, Yvonne loves the outdoors and when the weather is good, you'll find her sitting outside in her small garden. For 20 years she worked full time at Wyvale Garden Centre, finally retiring at the age of 80.

“ I just love the outdoors. I was so happy working at the centre and I was heartbroken when it closed. ”

Yvonne

Yvonne joined the Bracknell tea party group five years ago and she's full of praise for group coordinator Jane.

“Jane has been marvellous to me. She often phones me to see how I'm doing – she's such a support. And the group are a lovely little crowd.

“Lockdown was very hard. I didn't go to the shops for two years. But my daughter came over from Colorado for two weeks for my 90th birthday and we had a proper celebration.

“I've lived on my cul-de-sac for 30 years and all my neighbours are wonderful. I'm the oldest resident and whenever anyone wants to know anything about the area, they know exactly who to come to.”

*Group coordinator  
Jane (centre)*





*Yvonne and Annie*



## Annie

At 90 Annie remains determined to be as independent as she can.

She was born in County Durham and was just 8 when she was evacuated to Sudbury to live with her grandmother at the start of World War I.

“I left school at 14 and got my first job doing tambour beading; hand stitching sequins and beads onto gowns. I met my husband when I was 16 and working in Woolworths – he’d seen me about and he just turned up at the shop one day. He was a coat fitter at the time. We had two sons together and he died two and a half years after we celebrated our Sapphire wedding anniversary.

“I taught at a remedial centre in Ashford for many years. I loved teaching there. It was the first job I had to be vetted for and I’ve been vetted twice since; once when my son joined the intelligence corps in the army and then when I went to work for an electronics company that designed bombs. That was my last job, and I was there until I was 60.



“ During the pandemic I wouldn’t meet a soul for days but volunteers from the tea party group would often ring me to see how I was. ”

Annie

“I’ve enjoyed every one of our tea parties and our 90th birthday party was brilliant. We went to a posh hotel, and we had a special chocolate cake.”





*See the Good  
in Everything*

If you would like to  
join a tea party group in your  
area, please call us on  
**0800 716 543**, email us on  
**info@reengage.org.uk** or  
visit **www.reengage.org.uk**

“ I have a big smile on my face after the call. Having the chance to speak to someone perks me up. ”



“ It's so nice to have my own friend to talk to – the time just flies! ”



Call companions is available to anyone aged 75 and over who would benefit from a regular chat over the phone with a friendly volunteer.

If you would like your own call companion, please call us on **0800 716 543**, email us on [info@reengage.org.uk](mailto:info@reengage.org.uk) or visit [www.reengage.org.uk](http://www.reengage.org.uk)

#### Re-engage

7 Bell Yard | London | WC2A 2JR  
0207 240 0630 | [www.reengage.org.uk](http://www.reengage.org.uk)  
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