

Keeping Kilburn on the Map



Celebrating 20 years of community development and social activities with older people



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Introduction

Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE) is an established charity based in north-west London, primarily Camden and Brent.

Since its inauguration in 2002 KOVE has carried out research and development, organised activities to reduce social isolation and, from the pandemic, introduced a new creative strand. We are known for our depth of community-based research, our use of multi-media and for drawing on the experience and perspective of older people including those with a disability, mental ill-health or cognitive impairment. Examples of our work range from the Home Care Service Partnership (2007) to our ongoing campaigns for street seating and public toilets and, since 2015, our Bench-to-Bench walks programme. We are committed to the full citizenship of all older people.

For the past seven years, 2015 to 2021, KOVE has been a member of Ageing Better in Camden (ABC). Our former Coordinator, Mel Wright, chaired the working group – under the umbrella of Age UK Camden – which led to Camden's National Lottery bid being successful. This had a significant impact in providing funding borough-wide. KOVE benefited directly, in partnership with other Camden groups, by gaining funding for our programmes of social activities and walks, also for wellbeing and community action. Several KOVE members became active participants in the OPAG (Older Peoples' Advisory Group) and the extra income helped with staffing too. Peter Lush joined in 2016, working in various capacities, including Coordinator after Mel Wright's retirement. Deborah Knight joined in 2018 with a Community Development brief that included activities to combat social isolation.

Getting started

The roots of KOVE as a community panel involved statutory professionals, older residents and service users, and voluntary sector representatives, drawing on project funds from the Brent-administered single regeneration budget and Camden's promoting independence grant. John Miles, then a Camden Council development officer, commissioned the setting up of the panel with officers from Social Services and community representatives. They began meeting early in 2002 to pick up and discuss local concerns raised by Kilburn older residents. These included the lack of community podiatry services and poor standards of home care service delivery. A part-time facilitator, Mel Wright (below), was employed to coordinate and help develop the work.



Podiatry and Home Care Service partnership

Encouraged by our initial success of engaging with NHS Camden Podiatry head of community service, and having a strong representation of residents from Vivian Court sheltered housing on the Steering Group, KOVE managed to persuade the podiatry service to improve their clinical practice delivery in Kilburn. This led to the development of a nail-cutting service at Kingsgate Resource Centre.

Alongside this we were also having conversations with home care service users who attended Kingsgate under the management of Lesley Rowe, a great advocate and supporter of KOVE's work. We were able to quickly identify individuals who were not satisfied that the standard of personal care they were receiving matched their care plans, including delays and cancellations without notice or apology. This led to KOVE's first substantial project: the Home Care Service Partnership, established in 2003.

Putting service users at the centre, we carefully listened to their concerns. With John Miles' support we collaborated with Acting Up, a multi-media charity providing community filmmaking, which had achieved significant success at Kingsgate. A core group of KOVE volunteers (Edna Hopewell, Carol Thomas and Phyllis Young) were coached by professional filmmakers John Ladle and Nick Foxell in the techniques of filmmaking using hand held cameras. Expertise was built up in cooperation with consenting service users at Kingsgate and, in consultation with families and primary carers, we negotiated the filming of home interviews. The first was with Margery, a wheelchair-user who lived alone in a block of flats. With no lifts to her floor, she was marooned at home. Margery was very patient, welcomed our visits and talked through her concerns about her personal care.

Community Action filmmaking

We started as novices and discovered that community action filmmaking is not without its technical mishaps and often a comical side – like shooting an interview or scene but pressing the wrong button, only to find out later that we hadn't filmed a thing! At times we forgot to charge the camera beforehand; sometimes we had video with no sound, or sound but no film.

After a filming session we de-briefed with Nick; and he would point out where we'd gone wrong, as well as what we had done well. Gradually, with practise plus trial and error, we improved. We each took turns at filming and recording. We learned about light and audio, getting the focus right and being aware of domestic background sounds like noisy clocks!



Nick Foxell teaching KOVE members to use a film camera.

Under Nick's supervision, we sensitively experimented and explored on film the things that Margery told us. Her flat almost turned into a film set! Each week we brought biscuits, made tea, and with Margery's good humour we had fun between the serious matter of discussing her personal care. This included inconsistent quality and lack of communication, such as not letting her know when her daily carers wouldn't be attending. We also came to understand more about the isolation and loneliness she was feeling.

Margery's film became significant in our development. We incorporated shots of her small kitchen and a trolley with her medication, symbolically central to her daily life. Initial viewings led to KOVE receiving its first solid funded commission, from Camden Social Services for the Home Care Service Partnership. In their quality care standard setting and monitoring role, KOVE, as an independent body, was seen as providing a unique and valued opportunity, collecting important feedback from service users about their commissioned care services.

Innovatively, the project filmed discussions with home care managers viewing and talking over points made in the film. It also served as a central tool for training care workers. John Miles made the point about how effective and liberating the films were for service users: "One of the most sceptical KOVE participants was impressed at how video helped work with professionals: it was evident that such direct testimony, recorded when a person was relaxed, prompted a different, more considered, response from nervous managers. It thus became possible to develop a critique of service quality in a more interactive, cumulative, way."

(Social networking in real company: multi-media, 'community hubs' and the engagement of older, disabled, people. JM, 2007). <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/homecare>

Over time we ventured outdoors to conduct interviews, but we were still learning, and occasionally overwhelming traffic noise on Kilburn High Road obliterated all of a good interview!



KOVE members interviewing and filming on Kilburn High Road.



Filming at Henna Women's Centre.

Community forums

Over the years the forums have provided opportunities for KOVE to draw out ideas about which community development issues should be pursued, along with sharing local information and hosting speakers on subjects helpful to members. Some have been neighbourhood based, for example the Alexandra and Ainsworth estate forum, chaired by KOVE Steering Group member, Claude James. Others focus on particular health issues, such as arthritis and stroke. (Stroke Freedom Support Group, which KOVE supports, is for people who have had a stroke, have a condition which may put them at risk of a stroke, or are caring for someone who has had a stroke).



Claude James, founder of KOVE's Older People's Forum on the Alexandra & Ainsworth Estate. Claude was an inspiring community activist who sadly died in 2021.

Kilburn Debates

The first Kilburn Debates were set up as a season in 2008, evolving as a partnership between KOVE and the British Society of Gerontology; and held at our then base, Camden's Kingsgate Resource Centre on the Webheath Estate. They provided a dynamic opportunity for the older public to meet academic researchers and hear about their work.

The first six sessions covered homelessness, poverty and income maintenance, ageing in southern Africa, the use of public space, stroke awareness and elder abuse. Senior figures from the universities of Salford, Sheffield, East Anglia, Kent, Oxford, the Open University and King's College, London, were among those contributing. At a national level academic researchers had become increasingly interested in KOVE's activism around the street environment. In this way, KOVE's own work became the fulcrum of the programme, leading to presentations on public toilets, road crossings and the idea of an age-friendly community.



March 2015 saw the most comprehensive of the Debates in which we asked the question '*Kilburn – your lifetime neighbourhood?*' These local issues, related to national concerns, were picked up again more recently, with a smaller scale session on the theme of public toilets at KOVE's AGM on 30 September 2021.

Streetscape – the built environment

When KOVE's focus shifted to the streetscape of Kilburn and West Hampstead we began engaging with local residents about their concerns, such as busy roads with inadequate pedestrian crossing times, public benches for those needing a rest, no public toilet facilities, personal safety in terms of street lighting, restricted walking space and pavements in need of repair.

Public toilets

In 2002 there were no public toilets in Kilburn. When the last one in Victoria Road closed, it was replaced with an Automatic Public Convenience (APC) which proved very unpopular and was eventually removed. At that time the closure of public toilets by local authorities across London was widespread. It was estimated there was only one facility for every 9,000 Londoners! So, with supervision from Acting Up, KOVE made a short film, *For Your Convenience*. We took a vox pop approach: KOVE members Carol and Phyllis chatting to people on Kilburn High Road and in Grange Park: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/for-your-convenience>



Coverage of our campaign in the Ham & High in 2005.

In collaboration with Sure Start children and family services, we undertook a survey of the shops, cafes, stations and libraries in Kilburn where one could use a loo, and what access was like. KOVE then produced a booklet, *For Your Convenience*, which included locations and details of local toilets that could be used by customers. This KOVE initiative was highlighted on *ITN News* 17 years ago, but the situation in Kilburn has not improved! <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/kove-press>

On 19 November 2021, World Toilet Day, John, Phyllis, Lynda, Suzanne and Anne-Marie, interviewed people on Kilburn High Road about lack of toilets, with Nick filming. John has written a blog:

<https://ageingissues.wordpress.com/2021/11/20/public-toilets-in-london-the-age-friendly-city-starts-to-get-the-message>

The Toilet Manifesto

With no significant change in Kilburn for public toilet provision since we began campaigning, KOVE is currently collaborating with the Toilet Manifesto Group for London to help improve facilities. The case for provision continues to speak for itself, with one in five of the population experiencing the ‘loo leash’ – we don’t leave the house as often as we would like to.

More than half of us reduce our fluid intake when we go out, risking dehydration. In the tradition of KOVE’s partnership working, this current project involves collaborating with Positive Ageing in London in producing and lobbying for a Toilet Manifesto: <https://pailondon.org.uk/toilets>.

As a first step of this new phase of campaigning, KOVE members are currently carrying out a survey with older people in Kilburn about their experiences of public toilet facilities.



KOVE members campaigning on World Toilet Day 2021.

SHOPPP: Safe and Happy Older People and Parents with Pushchairs

This project, started in Kilburn in 2004, was a partnership between KOVE, Kilburn Sure Start and Kilburn Town Centre Partnership. The scheme encouraged businesses to provide greater access for disabled people and parents with pushchairs, in a drive to implement the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. Businesses were invited to sign up to a Code of Practice, agreeing to provide:

- Friendly, welcoming and considerate staff, willing to help people to reach goods on shelves.
- Clear price signs at eye level wherever possible.

- Good, clear access for wheelchairs and parents with buggies, and employees prepared to help serve such customers if access is restricted.
- A chair available in the shop for a person to rest.

Road crossings

Kilburn High Road is officially recognised as a road traffic accident hot spot. Incidents involving older pedestrians have resulted in serious injury and even fatalities. Just getting around the neighbourhood can be hazardous. Examples are Green Man crossings, with as little as six seconds to cross and a lack of audio on some. Vehicles illegally straddling crossings make it impossible for pedestrians to proceed. Unsurprisingly, many older people feel unsafe.

In response, KOVE organised community forums and visited older peoples' clubs, listening to concerns and frustrations. We began working in earnest on Kilburn High Road with volunteers demonstrating the difficulties they experienced. We were able to collect significant evidence to show to Camden's engineers and road planners and to TfL (Transport for London). <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/road-crossings>



John and Margaret crossing to test the time allowed.

A comical silent movie, *Where's the Green Man?* involved John Miles and Mel Wright. It was made to raise awareness of (and highlight the lack of official information about) the then-new Puffin Crossing traffic signals, which fundamentally changed the position and pedestrian's view of the Green Man lighted signal. The film was well received at KOVE's 60 neighbourhood screenings: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/wheres-the-green-man>. A joint KOVE/Camden council pamphlet, *Getting Out and About Safely*, was also published, explaining different types of crossings.

Our 2013 review, *Getting Around Kilburn High Road*, introduced by Violet Clarkson, considered what improvements, if any, had been made to road crossings for pedestrians. It features Michael, a stroke survivor who has to negotiate road crossings very carefully, Mrs Eckenham, who has glaucoma and struggles to see and manage her local journey, and Tom and Fay. Tom has dementia, Fay is his wife and carer. The film captures the couples' immediate sense of danger as vehicles with impatient drivers scoot around them because they haven't made it to the other side within the 'allotted' (i.e., short) Green Man time. KOVE's film reveals that very little had changed for the better: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/getting-around>

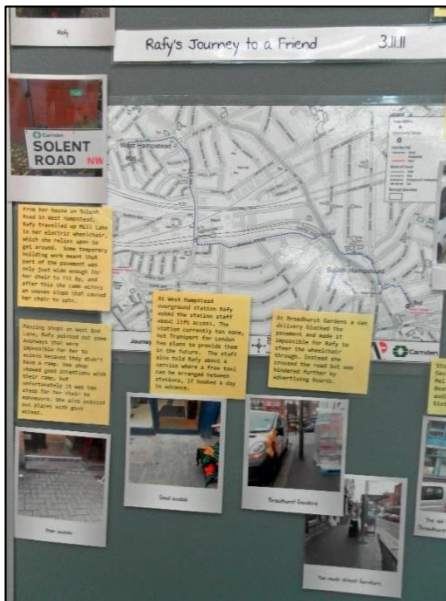
Journey to a Friend was commissioned by Camden's travel planner team. The team requested a 'street audit', with KOVE filming members of the Gospel Oak Older Peoples' Group travelling across Camden to meet a friend: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/journey-to-a-friend>. Each journey ended at either Kingsgate Resource Centre or Charlie Ratchford Centre, with routes planned out beforehand. Types of transport used were bus, overground, tube, electric wheelchair, car and on foot. Along the way places of interest were pointed out, and the drawbacks and positives of the

journey noted. Upon reaching the destination the two friends participated in weaving part of a mural on a table-top loom. Differently coded colours showed how the journey was rated.



Elsa Mae using the loom.

Below: Rafy's journey.



Journey to a Friend was featured in *An Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook* by Sophie Handler, University of Manchester Library, 2014.

Safer Streets... please!

As KOVE developed its community network and links with other older peoples' groups, we were invited to help Camden Central Older Peoples' Committee to survey their own street environment using our community action filming techniques. With Acting Up, we brought our cameras and Nick gave technical advice and training to the group. We met near St Pancras; together we observed this busy area, examining problems with damaged pavements, restricted and obstructed footpaths and unsafe road crossings. Like in Kilburn, these were inadequately timed for many older people to comfortably cross.

The resulting film, *Safer Streets... please!* helped to show Camden council that older people in different areas experience similar problems: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/safer-streets>

Living Seats

Benches are a KOVE priority. People need to feel they can plan trips and take a rest if needed. Consequently, we applied for funds to have three community benches installed on the Camden side of Kilburn High Road. In the end it was a great success, but not without controversy! For example, Lloyds TSB did not reply to our request to install one outside their branch. Local councillor Mike Katz stepped in, and after The Kilburn Times printed a headline: '*Bank Ignoring Our Request for Bench*' the bank had a change of heart! *Camden New Journal* journalist Tom Foot has also been a great supporter of KOVE's work and our campaign gave us a positive headline in the CNJ: '*Pensioners are at Last Sitting Pretty*'.

Over the years we've been vigilant and steadfast in the face of opposition, plus theft and vandalism have occurred, but these important community assets are valued, as is evident in our film *Living Seats*: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/livingseats>



KOVE members at our bench outside Kilburn High Road station.



KOVE members shocked to find our bench by Grange Park had been stolen. We fundraised to have it replaced.

KOVE members also celebrated benches in poetry and song. Frances Eley's *New Benches* included the lines:

'But as to their comfort I cannot tell
They've yet to be tested and tried
They look OK
But who can say
Till we sit there side by side.'

Phyllis Young wrote this list of songs, which was sung by her group, *The Grange Groaners*:

Sitting on the KOVE bench watching all the girls go by
Seated one day by the park gate
Don't sit under the apple tree – try our bench
Little Miss Muffett sat on the bench
Sit down! Sit down! You're rocking the bench.

2018 saw two benches installed at West Hampstead Thameslink Station, the result of a partnership between KOVE, Sidings Community Centre and Thameslink, which funded the project. KOVE members and local campaigners, Iris Chapple and Ruth Baillie, had advocated for somewhere for passengers to sit near the station entrance when waiting for lifts. Anna Bowman, a close filmmaking colleague and member of KOVE, filmed the official opening: *Behind the Scenes, the story of a bench*: <https://vimeo.com/175567232>

Several benches in our area have been installed in partnership with others. For instance, in West Hampstead with our friends at WHAT (West Hampstead Amenity and Transport) and at Shoot Up Hill with the support of Fortune Green ward councillors. Near Waitrose on Finchley Road is a dedicated memorial seat, commissioned by KOVE Steering Group member, Pran Handa and family, with another on Webheath Estate.



Bench campaigners rest their case

A BENCH has been installed outside an overground station after a community campaign, writes Tom Foot

Iris Chapple and Ruth Baillie, members of Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE), had asked railway operators Thameslink for somewhere for them to rest on outside West Hampstead station. West Hampstead Amenity & Transport (WHAT) and

the Sidings Community Centre got involved and put in a request to Thameslink chief Larry Heyman, and station manager Nadia Paul.

Iris and Ruth said: "We are delighted with the result of our year and a half effort, and are deeply grateful to Larry and Nadia."

KOVE coordinator Mel Wright said: "Public seating is so important for older people having an

opportunity to sit down and rest – they help to keep people mobile and independent."

Above: back row – Sue Measures, manager of Sidings Community Centre; Mel Wright of KOVE; Larry Heyman, manager of Thameslink; Nadia Paul, West Hampstead Station manager; local resident Alan Watson. Front – residents Christine Burnett, Iris Chapple and Ruth Baillie.

At the time of writing, KOVE is awaiting a final decision on installation of benches on the Brent side of Kilburn High Road. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) grant was awarded by Brent in 2018, but refurbishment plans for Kilburn High Road development and then Covid have held things up. We are hopeful that the benches will be in place soon!

Above: *Camden New Journal* report on the new bench at West Hampstead Thameslink station. A second was later installed inside the station.

Below: the late Pran Handa and his family, at the bench Pran funded, with KOVE's support, in memory of his wife.



Wellbeing and personal safety

Personal safety and wellbeing were issues that found a voice through KOVE's community forums. Since neither personal safety nor crime prevention messages were reaching the majority of our members, even when supported by talks from community police officers, we made a film! *Keeping Safer*: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/keeping-safer>

Key crime risks and safety tips were discussed in peer group fashion, with older people sharing their strategies to avoid putting themselves at risk. KOVE realised that 'fear of crime' can lead to self-isolating behaviour, with people limiting their social contacts. This, in turn, might have a detrimental knock-on effect on general wellbeing. Our film discusses these matters and includes official advice from the crime prevention service and police officers.

We were aware that a number of members living alone had limited social contacts. In collaboration with NHS clinical psychologist Jane Brett-Jones we explored an established international social-psychological framework for achieving a good sense of wellbeing. *The Five Ways to Wellbeing* shows local social activities and older people saying what helps them: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/wellbeing>

In the film we set out to find examples using the five principles of this approach: social connections; being active; learning something new; giving time volunteering; taking notice of nice things around you. The film was a significant move for KOVE, in helping us to develop and engage with new community groups, sheltered housing and individuals, all of whom contributed examples of their own ways of improving wellbeing. For example, while out filming, we met Kilburn resident Diane at the flower stall on Kilburn Market which she visited daily in her electric wheelchair. She spoke about feeling very low but going

out every day and having a chat proved to be the tonic that she needed – connecting and keeping active. Likewise, the Third Age belly dancing group, which met at Old Hampstead Town Hall, the Spanish dance class at Swiss Cottage Community Centre, and a Tai Chi class at Swiss Cottage library, all showed the powerful energy of wellbeing in action.

Continuing the wellbeing theme, KOVE focused its attention on the simple idea of people getting together in their neighbourhood to meet, share their thoughts, ideas and problems over the catch-all cup of tea.



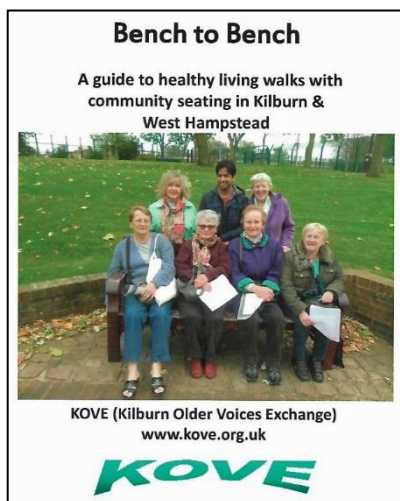
KOVE members at a tea party at West Hampstead Community Centre.

A George Orwell essay provided the inspiration for *A Nice Cup of Tea* <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/a-nice-cup-of-tea>. During the war he lived in Kilburn before being bombed out; we borrowed his title to celebrate the diverse number of social groups attended by older people in the area: the Somali Women's Group, W-Heart & Kilburn Irish Pensioners, and West

Hampstead Women's Centre. All are linked by the friendly cuppa! This helped seal the idea of wellbeing.

Guided walks

With the success of our benches campaign, and as part of wellbeing promotion, KOVE began organising guided group walks. In 2015 we published a booklet, *Bench to Bench Walks: a guide to healthy living walks with community seating in Kilburn & West Hampstead*. The research was done by KOVE members and produced with the help of a post-graduate colleague and friend, Farhan Samanani. It was a great success, attracting new members. It was also a good way to keep an eye on the 'streetscape' and things that need attention.



The scope of the walks developed over time. Members wanted to go further afield and as Camden is rich in potential, we started to explore new areas, notably the historical areas around Farringdon, Bloomsbury, Covent Garden and Marylebone. Prior to the pandemic, twice a month we took groups of 15 to 20 all over Camden and occasionally beyond, visiting parks, squares and places of natural beauty or historical/cultural interest (but never forgetting that some people can only manage short walks and need benches to rest). A sheet of notes was produced for each route and we always ended with a visit to a café for a cup of tea or coffee.

As winter walks tend to be shorter, we often linked them to a visit to a museum or gallery. We have an ongoing relationship with the British Museum's Community Partnerships Team,

enjoying small tours, 'behind the scenes' views and object handling sessions. We also visit other small museums, such as the Wellcome Foundation and London University museums.



KOVE members visiting Tavistock Square on a spring day.

During 2020, in line with government restrictions, we limited numbers and stuck to the open air. Since restrictions have relaxed, we've begun to build up our walks itinerary again and are happy to say that numbers are growing to pre-COVID levels.

Reel Local Film Club

In partnership with other local film makers, we began a monthly film club at Kingsgate, showing classic feature films and locally made shorts. This arose from working with Anna Bowman (Cotleigh Studios) and Claire Desenclos (Puppet Power films).


Having such talented local partners was a real boost for highlighting our campaigning films.



We started by showing our films alongside international shorts at the Kilburn Film Festival, 2008 - 12.






From that positive experience grew our monthly film screenings, *The Reel Local Cinema Club*. We continued showing films at Sycamore Court, gathering members together to see gems from many genres – comedies, musicals, dramas and film noir.

REEL LOCAL
KINGSGATE CINEMA CLUB
presents



It's a Wonderful Life
James Stewart Donna Reed Lionel Barrymore

KINGSGATE COMMUNITY CENTRE
107 Kingsgate Rd NW6 2JH 02073289480
Thursday December 3 at 1.30pm
Also showing: *Where's the green man?*
A short film by the Kilburn Older Voices Exchange
All over 60s welcome! Disabled access. Only 50p!

Live music events

In recent years KOVE staged several free concerts at Kingsgate Community Centre. They were very much a partnership between KOVE, Kilburn & West Hampstead Pensioners and Live Music Now, a charity that helps young professional musicians to get work and put on public performances.

Types of music, discussed with KOVE members, ranged from classical to folk to jazz. Singers also performed. A development in the year before the pandemic was the involvement of Kingsgate Primary School choir. The children enjoyed singing to a new audience and some parents attended, along with up to 40 KOVE members.

Kilburn & West Hampstead Pensioners Action Association and KOVE present Live Music Now Concert Ainsley Hamill and Toby Shaer



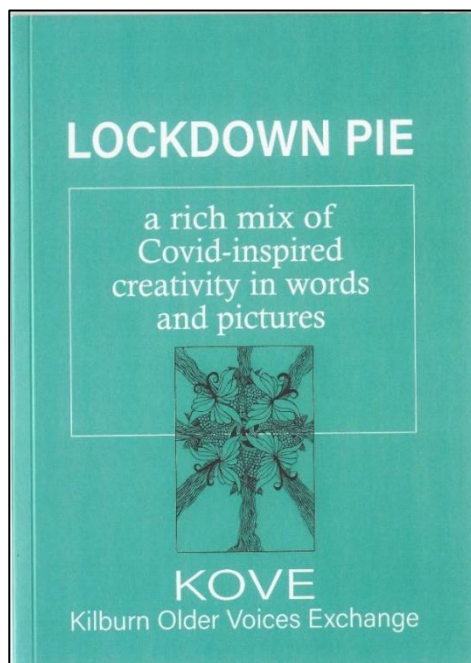
1.30pm Thursday, 15 November 2018

**The concert includes songs by the Kingsgate Primary School Choir
and a guest appearance by local singer Phyllis Young.**

Creative KOVE – *Lockdown Pie*

During the first three months of lockdown we became aware that many of our members were continuing to engage in creative activities, either remotely via Zoom groups and online classes or individually at home. Some were rediscovering old hobbies, others trying their hand at new ones. So, in June 2020 we sent out an invitation for people to submit their writings and artwork. We were delighted with the response and the idea for an anthology was born.

In November 2020 *Lockdown Pie* was published: a 34-page collection of poetry, prose, photography, crafts, drawings and paintings. A copy is free to download from KOVE's website: <http://www.kove.org.uk/>



Kilburn neighbourhood work

Webheath: It's Your Estate

Lynda Stuart, KOVE Trustee and Vice Chair, lives on Camden's Webheath Estate in Kilburn. Passionate about the care of her neighbourhood and about other residents, she single-handedly formed a Tenants & Residents Association (TRA). The grassroots work on the estate was done in partnership with KOVE; together we have helped develop a hands-on community of residents who feel more connected to Kilburn's neighbourhood facilities and social groups: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/webheath>

The film *Webheath 50th party*, focuses on the estate's 50th anniversary celebrations in May 2018. It includes interviews with Tulip Siddiq, MP for Hampstead and Kilburn, and Camden councillor and Camden Older People's Champion, Alison Kelly. They tour the estate with Lynda and note the problems that need following up, plus community representatives and local residents talking about what needs to happen to improve quality of life on the estate. Community action – in action!



Lynda by a flowerbed produced by neighbourhood planters in Kingsgate.

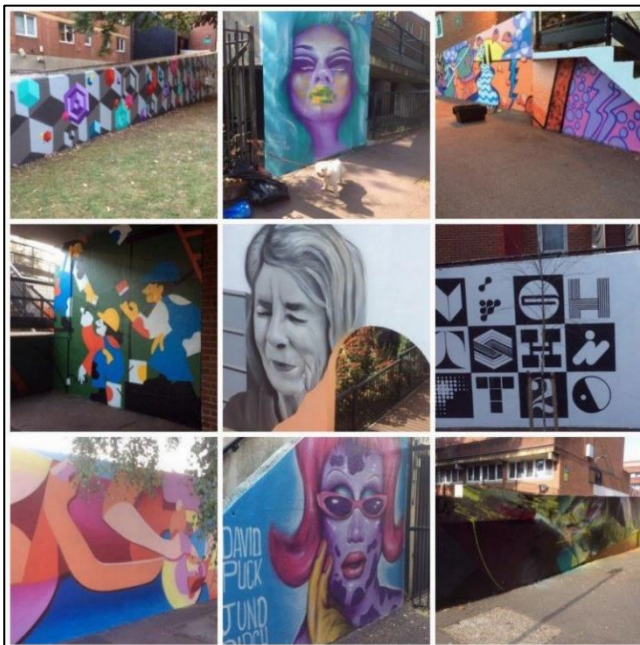


Bench assembly, Webheath community garden, donated by Pran Handa.

Webheath also boasts several large murals, created by Global Street Art between 2018-19. In 2020 a dozen international artists held a weekend festival on the estate, resulting in mural portraits of residents, featured

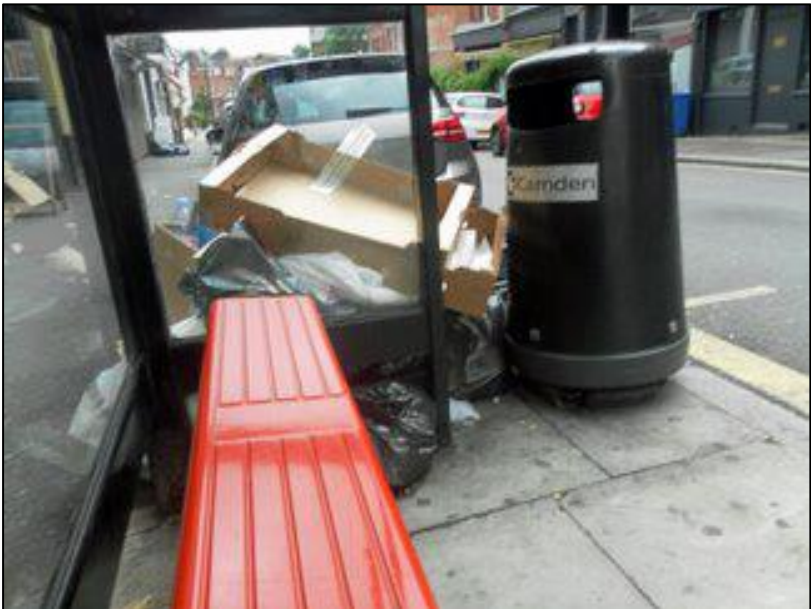
by BBC television news:

<https://koveweb.wordpress.com/kove-press/>



Public Transport

KOVE has continued to keep an eye on public transport services: buses, overground, tubes, taxi card services, Camden transport etc. Our surveys of older people over the years have revealed shortfalls in service satisfaction, so with this project KOVE was looking for positive suggestions. Transport for London (TfL) and Camden Transport supported our initiative. We worked with Ageing Better in Camden groups to overcome some of the problems, which led to a cross-Camden forum. 80 people attended, including TfL and Camden council representatives, and we premiered our film *All Aboard!*
<https://koveweb.wordpress.com/allaboard>



Rubbish at a bus stop in West Hampstead.

The film examined local bus services and bus stops. Bus travel is popular with older people in Kilburn and West Hampstead, but bus stops had become a matter of concern. Many KOVE members reported they were uncomfortable while waiting for a bus, especially when there was no indicator board, seating or shelter during bad weather. In many cases buses failed to pull into the kerb, making it hard for some people to board or disembark. Stops servicing multiple routes meant crowds and therefore added difficulty in boarding.

KOVE volunteers who helped us to make the film included Margaret Gibbs, Alan Watson, Eleanor Burke, Yvonne Klemperer and Phyllis Young. The positive link created with TfL led to a helpful and interesting KOVE visit to Cricklewood bus garage. Meeting and talking over these matters with bus drivers helped to forge a better relationship between drivers, managers and older people.



KOVE members and transport staff at Cricklewood Bus Garage.

Intergenerational work

As chair of Camden's Intergenerational Network, Dr John Miles has successfully drawn KOVE into various activities linking older and younger people, including Camden's 2018 Intergenerational Week and film, *Camden Intergenerational Week Video* (ageuk.org.uk). Pre-pandemic, KOVE was involved in a series of lunches at Belsize Community Library. In partnership with The Winch (a Camden charity working with young people) and aided by late KOVE member and Primrose Hill activist Myra Newman, isolated migrant women with young families came together with older people. The multi-generational group engaged warmly. Friendly cultural exchanges led to a buzz of chat, games, and even group singing! Food and hospitality provided by American student volunteers helped to make these joyous occasions.



Early intergenerational meeting, Hampstead School.

Chairing KOVE and looking to the future

The group has had two long-standing, distinguished Chairs: Barry Peskin (2005 to 2017) and the late Ags Irwin (2017 to 2021).

Barry Peskin

A prominent member of Camden's Labour-led council, elected ward councillor and Chair of Social Services, Barry brought to KOVE a wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding about older people and their concerns. In his chairing, Barry acted independently by his measured, decisive leadership and democratic participation. He supported KOVE's activities at arm's length while being perfectly in tune with all the projects that we undertook.



Ags Irwin

Ags brought great experience of both the voluntary sector and the Kilburn and West Hampstead areas, where she had lived since 1980. She provided KOVE with inspiring leadership, supporting the Steering Group and staff to organise a wide range of activities for older people, and working to ensure their voices were heard in decisions that affected their lives.

A personal reflection from Vice Chair, Lynda Stuart: “In 2017 Ags obtained funding for a mural project for Grange Park, ‘Love has no Borders’. Artwork was prepared and I turned up in my boiler suit ready to paint but the day was postponed and the project eventually cancelled. I next joined her in Grange Park to talk to anyone and everyone over tea and cake. As Webheath residents recognised each other it was wonderful to see them chatting. It was great that Ags became Chair of KOVE, keeping us on course and always inclusive in her approach and outlook. I accepted a few reprimands and respected her enormously. Knowing she was ill I saw her fighting spirit; she refused help and I cried over her poetry in *Lockdown Pie*. Thank you, Ags.”



During 2021 Lynda stepped up as acting Chair until we were able to recruit a new permanent person to take over.

KOVE's campaigning activities and community development over the past 20 years have been ambitious for such a modest sized group. KOVE is led by older people themselves – their collective concerns aired and ideas for solutions enthusiastically expressed. This co-production has been autonomous and as a 'bottom-up' approach it has, at times, been challenging for our limited resources. Nevertheless, KOVE has been creative in tackling community matters and we are very proud of what has been achieved; the community project has proved a substantial and significant force for the Kilburn neighbourhood.

The future for KOVE as we emerge from the pandemic and lockdown presents even more complex issues relating to social isolation of older people. KOVE will continue to tackle its streetscape initiatives, including public toilets and benches, walks and film club.

Positively, with KOVE's recent election of trustees and the start of The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington (managed by the Mercers' Company) generous funding, a new era is evolving. KOVE plans to rebalance our programme to deliver a mix of community development and social wellbeing activities for older people in Kilburn and West Hampstead.



KOVE's funders, staff and associates

Funders

We have been funded by:

The London Borough of Camden (Core costs and film funding)

Bridge House Trust for London (Core costs)

Ageing Better in Camden (National Lottery, community development work)

The Mercers' Company (Community work)

The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington (Community work)

Waitrose Community Fund – John Barnes and Brent Cross branches (Community work)

KOVE staff and associates

Staff:

Mel Wright: Co-ordinator, 2002 to 2018.

Peter Lush: Administrator, Assistant Co-ordinator, Co-ordinator, 2016 to 2021.

Deborah Knight: Community Development Officer, 2018 to present.

Associates

Nick Foxell: community filmmaker (see KOVE short films)

Dr John Miles: Research Associate

KOVE's partners

Abbey Community Centre abbeycc-kilburn.org.uk

Ageing Better in Camden ageingbetterincamden.org.uk

Age UK Camden ageuk.org.uk/camden

Age UK London ageuk.org.uk/london

Camden Carers Service camdencs.org.uk

Camden Traffic Planning Team camden.gov.uk/traffic-and-road-safety-schemes

Cotleigh Studios – local filmmaker and documentarist
vimeo.com/annabowman/videos

Friends of Hampstead

Cemetery cemeteryfriends.com/members/hampstead.php

KAT (Keeping Acting Together) cawh.org.uk

Kilburn Irish Pensioners Group irishinbritain.org

Kilburn & West Hampstead Pensioners Action Association
brent.gov.uk/your-community/community-directory/kilburn-and-west-hampstead-pensioners-action-association/

Kingsgate Day Service/Day Centre

cindex.camden.gov.uk/kb5/camden/cd/service.page?id=68MhyRpbXA

Living Streets livingstreets.org.uk and London Living Streets
londonlivingstreets.com

National Pensioners Convention – Greater London

npcuk.org/greater-london

North London Cares northlondoncares.org.uk/home

Puppet Power Films puppetpowerfilms.co.uk/About-Us

Ransackers Association ransackersassociation.org/home

Sheltered Housing, Camden camden.gov.uk/sheltered-housing

Sidings Community Centre sidings.org.uk

South Sudan Women's Skills Development
abbeycc-kilburn.org.uk/index.php/about-abbey-community-centre/south-sudan-womens-skills-development

Somali Cultural Centre
cindex.camden.gov.uk/kb5/camden/cd/service.page?id=4pZl8PlbO4w

Toilet Manifesto for London pailondon.org.uk/toilets

Transport for All transportforall.org.uk

Webheath Tenants & Residents Association
cindex.camden.gov.uk/kb5/camden/cd/service.page?id=l6dHC25Q-VA

West Hampstead Amenity & Transport (WHAT) whatnw6.com

West Hampstead Community Association and W.Heart
cawh.org.uk



Come snow or sun – KOVE members stride out!



KOVE@20

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