News and views from the Engage Befriending team

July 2025 www.engage-uk.org

Engage Befriending Drop-In

The Engage team would like our volunteers and Engage friends to come to our Engage Befriending drop-in

Thursday 10th July
in the Atrium Café

Thursday 14th August
in the Atrium Café

Thursday 11th September
in the Atrium Café

From 10.30am to 12 noon
Pop in for a cuppa, say hello and meet other volunteers, Engage Befriending friends, and the team.

We'd love to see you there.

The **Atrium Café** is at Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, RG1 1EH

August Drop-In - Old Baby Photos!

Thursday 14th August, 10.30am to 12 noon
In the Atrium Café at Greyfriars Church

At the August Drop-In, if you have a photograph of yourself as a baby or a child then you are invited to bring along and give it to Jo or Jenny, then we'll all try and guess who is who!

Meet the team... Sarah

I have recently joined The Mustard Tree to help with administration. I will be working with all the projects as well as supporting Katherine the CEO. For Engage I will help with volunteer recruitment, referrals and anything else Jackie asks me to do. I hope to meet some of you at the next Engage drop-in!

I am married with two boys aged 9 and 12. When they're not keeping me on my toes, I love to get my art things out and do some drawing, painting, jewellery-making or mosaics. I also like to try some gardening, but the weeds snails are beating me at the moment!

Favourite drink: Peppermint tea
Favourite food: Chips!
Favourite holiday spot: Brixham in Devon
Fovourite Colour - see my hair

Contact the Engage Befriending team

Main number: 0118 995 2102 | Email: engage@themustardtree.org
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If you would like a large print version of this newsletter, please let us know.

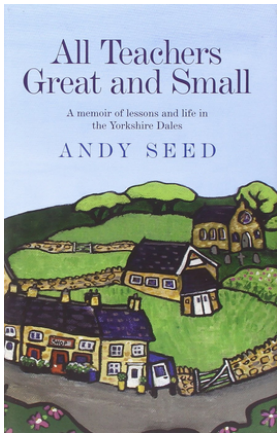
Engage is part-funded by many organisations including:

COMMUNITY FUND

Reading Borough Council

All Teachers Great and Small

Andy Seed



Newly qualified teacher Andy Seed moved to a remote village in the Yorkshire Dales with his wife Barbara, anticipating breathtaking views and the gentle simplicity of the countryside.

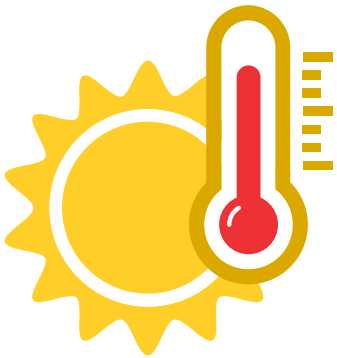
The picturesque scenery did not disappoint. But life as a primary school teacher was anything but simple. With a classroom full of colourful characters whose capacity for misunderstanding was exceeded only by their enthusiasm and their ability to leave him incredulous, Andy fell in love with teaching and with village life.

Warm, touching and very funny, it transports you to a time that may be gone but has never been forgotten.

This is the true story of Andy's first year at Cragthwaite Primary School - how he bravely negotiated the vagaries of the local dialect, made disastrous bids to provide a family home, naively and hilariously tried out new-fangled ideas in a school stuck in a 1950s time warp, and ultimately discovered a little part of England he was proud to call home.

Keeping cool in hot weather

July is often the hottest month of the year.



How can I stay cool when I'm out and about?

- Avoid spending too much time outside or exercising during the hottest part of the day (between 11am and 3pm), and keep in the shade.
- Wear a sun hat and carry a bottle of water with you.
- Wear light-coloured, lightweight cotton clothing can help keep you cooler.
- Keep an eye on the weather forecast
- Apply sun cream. You should use at least SPF 30 and apply it regularly. Make sure you don't miss any spots – it can be easy to forget bald patches, for instance.
- UV levels can still be harmful when it's cloudy out, so be careful even when it's not sunny.
- Talk to your optician about prescription sunglasses. Make sure any sunglasses you wear have a CE mark and UV400 label

How can I stay cool when I'm at home?

- Keep blinds or curtains closed during the day, especially on sun-facing windows, to block out heat.
- Most medication should be kept below 25°C – so it can be best to keep it in the fridge when it's really hot.
- Check your skin for changes every few months. If you notice that a mole has changed colour or shape or has been bleeding, go and talk to your doctor.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid getting dehydrated, but avoid alcohol as it can dehydrate you. And keep eating even if you're not feeling too hungry.
- A damp cloth or a splash of water on the back of your neck can be better at cooling you down than a fan.
- Open windows on opposite sides of the home during cooler times (early morning or late evening) to create cross-ventilation.
- Limit the use of ovens and stoves during the hottest parts of the day to reduce indoor heat.

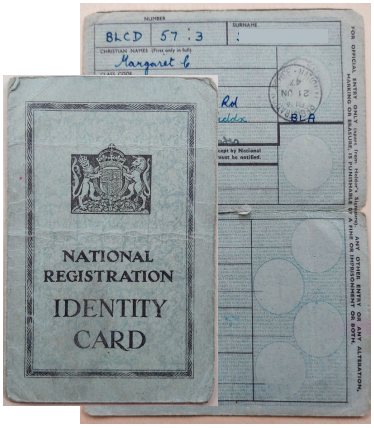
If it's going to be particularly hot and you think you might struggle, ask someone to check on you. It's also a good idea to check on others you think might struggle in the heat.

If you feel unwell because of the heat (headaches, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, weakness, heavy sweating or a fast pulse) and these symptoms persist then call your doctor or **NHS 111** for advice.

Margaret's war time memories

At the Engage Befriending monthly drop-in Margaret shared some of her memories from the war. There isn't space to include all the memories she shared.

Margaret was junior school age when World War II started. She lived with her family in Hounslow near Hounslow Barracks.



Her earliest memory of the war was her father collecting her from Sunday School and on arriving home they listened to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on the radio announcing that Britain was at war - "... I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany." Almost straight away there was an air raid siren, but they did not yet have an air raid shelter.

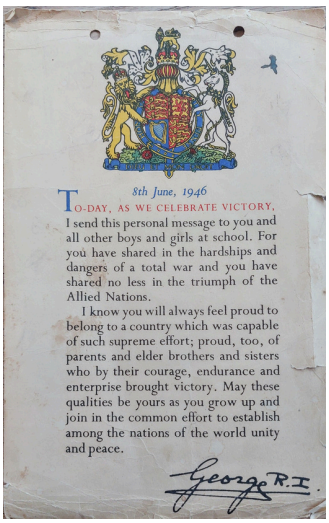
Everyone was issued with an identity card, a ration card and a gas mask. Margaret's identity card is pictured here. It had to be shown when requested.

In the part of the cul-de-sac where Margaret lived three men, including her father and some neighbours, worked together and dug the ground and constructed all the Anderson shelters for their homes. During the Blitz, the sustained aerial bombing from September 1940 to May 1941, Margaret and her family did not go to bed in their house but went straight to their shelter to sleep the night.

Later in the war Margaret remembers the sound of the "doodlebugs" - the flying bombs. When they went silent she knew that one was about to hit its target. One landed near her home and they had to be evacuated.

In May 1940 Winston Churchill took over as Prime Minister leading a coalition government. Margaret can remember listening to his speeches on the radio.

Most of the men in the area had gone to war. Those left, including Margaret's father, were on ARP (Air Raid Precautions) duty - checking blackouts, responding to air raids by sounding alarms, providing first aid, and other duties as needed. One time when Margaret's father was on duty, a lump of burning shrapnel landed in a bucket of water right outside her shelter. If it had been closer Margaret would not be here to tell us her memories.



8th June, 1946

TO-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations.

I know you will always feel proud to belong to a country which was capable of such supreme effort; proud, too, of parents and elder brothers and sisters who by their courage, endurance and enterprise brought victory. May these qualities be yours as you grow up and join in the common effort to establish among the nations of the world unity and peace.

George R.I.

Margaret's school was next to Hounslow Barracks. Often when crossing the road the children would have to wait for the troops to pass by. The children waved and blew kisses to the troops, who waved and blew kisses back. They were probably remembering their own children that they had left behind.

Heston Aerodrome was nearby. Margaret saw many Spitfire and Hurricane aircraft flying out on their missions. On their return they would fly in formation and it was easy to spot if any were missing. She would say to her mother "One missing tonight".

On VE Day there was a street party. Her mother and the other ladies managed to provide party food even though there was rationing. It wasn't quite the end of the war - the war with Japan was still on going. Margaret remembers the atom bomb being dropped on Japan which finally bought the war to an end.

Tell Tony!

Tony is eager to hear from you! He is a member of the Engage team responsible for assembling this newsletter. Feel free to share any local happenings, suggest content ideas, write an article, or ask a question that we can address for you—just reach out!

You can contact us via email at **engage@themustardtree.org** or send your thoughts to: Engage Befriending, 4 Sackville Street, Reading, RG1 1NT.

Word Search - Similar sounding words

S M E W N E U T A E L E A N
P E A K S R I A H E E I R M
A T U N H M M S E W A B T A
A A N E N K K A O A M M R N
A A N T N E T R E R E E G O
B A R E T L R E M E E A E R
S L R E S R T I A W T T T E
H T A T A R P S N T W E R A
R A E T A E R T T N O A U E
B E L T W I I E K M H H R E
L E W T T R W A P E E K N A
T H G I E W T L K T E A A A
T R A E B A S M T T A N N A
N A U N T R N N T R B E E A

ant
aunt
bare
bear
hair
hare
manner
manor
meat
meet
peak
peek
steal
steel
wait
weight

June Word Search Answers

July Facts

King Henry VIII witnessed the sinking of his flagship, **The Mary Rose**, on July 19, 1545

These are often know as the **dog days of summer**, characterized by warm, sometimes humid weather.

It can be traced back thousands of years to the days of the Roman Empire. It refers to the dates from July 3 through August 11, which is 20 days prior and 20 days after the star Sirius (the "Dog Star") rises and falls in conjunction with the sun.

July 15 is **St Swithin's Day** - According to an ancient tradition, if it rains on St Swithin's Day, it will rain for the next 40 days.

The story began in the year 971, when the bones of St Swithin (who had died over 100 years before) were moved to a special shrine at Winchester Cathedral, and there was a terrific storm that lasted for 40 days. People said that the saint in heaven was weeping because his bones had been moved.

On July 5, 1946, the **world's first bikini** was unveiled in the famous Piscine Molitor swimming pool in Paris.

July 14 is **Bastile Day**, commonly known as **le 14 juillet** or **la fête nationale** in France. It is the anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille which was a major event in the French Revolution. It's a time for French people to celebrate their national identity and heritage.

The start of July sees **The Henley Royal Regatta**, a prestigious rowing event held annually on the River Thames in Henley-on-Thames. It is one the the social highlights of the year for many spectators, who have to follow a strict dress code to attend.

World Emoji Day is an annual unofficial holiday occurring on **July 17** each year, intended to celebrate emoji - the symbols people sometimes use on their phones to express an idea or emotion, such as smiley faces.