News and views from the Engage Befriending team

September 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 11th September
in the Atrium Café

Thursday 9th October
in the Atrium Café

Thursday 13th November
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

SAVE THE DATE

A couple of things happening in October

Wednesday 1st October is **Older People's Day** at **Broad Street Mall** in Reading.

Come along and meet the Engage Befriending team plus other charities and organisations that offer help and advice to older people. Plus there will be activities and demonstrations. More details later.

Thursday 9th October at the monthly **Engage Befriending Drop-In**, **Remap** will be joining us for a chat. They are a charitable company that makes free bespoke disability aids for those situations where no commercial aid is available. Where one does exist but does not work for your particular circumstances, they will adapt it to suit.

REMAP making things possible

September Facts

Autumnal Equinox: Occurs on September 22nd, marking the start of autumn.

The Great Fire of London: Began on September 2nd, 1666

Shortest Month: Due to the shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752, September in the UK was only 19 days long.

International Talk Like a Pirate Day is on September 19th. Aaarrr!

September was also traditionally the month when Anglo-Saxon people harvested their barley. That's why, in centuries past, September was known as the **Barley Month**.

Contact the Engage Befriending team

Main number: 0118 995 2102 | Email: engage@themustardtree.org
Jackie Curtis: 07887 395115 | Jo White 07437 01164 | Sheila Cox 07516 254916
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 the Light We Cannot See

Anthony Doerr

Book Club

A beautiful novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II.

For Marie-Laure, blind since the age of six, the world is full of mazes. The miniature of a Paris neighbourhood, made by her father to teach her the way home. The microscopic layers within the invaluable diamond that her father guards in the Museum of Natural History. The walled city by the sea, where father and daughter take refuge when the Nazis invade Paris. And a future which draws her ever closer to Werner, a German orphan, destined to labour in the mines until a broken radio fills his life with possibility and brings him to the notice of the Hitler Youth.

Now also a Netfix TV series.

Outdoor Art walk

READING MUSEUM

Friday 5th September, 11:00am

Venue: Abbey Quarter - Tour starts at Reading Museum, Belgrave Street

Cost: Free

Booking essential - www.readingmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/outdoor-art-walk-older-peoples-day

Join guides from Reading Museum for a gentle stroll to celebrate Older People's Day by exploring some inspiring outdoor art. Find out about art in the town while enjoying the fresh air and connecting with others in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. The walk lasts around 45 minutes – with plenty of rest stops and time to enjoy the sights. Afterwards visit the Pantry Café for refreshments

Heritage Open Days 2025: 12-21 September

heritage open days

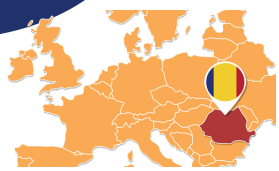
Every September thousands of volunteers across England organise events to celebrate our fantastic history and culture. It's your chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences – all of which are FREE to explore.

There are many places in Reading opening for free 12-21 September. These include:

- **St Giles Church**, Southampton Street - View one of the three medieval churches in Reading. Open 10 am - 4pm on Saturday 13th and Saturday 20th September
- **Reading Abbey Gateway** drop in - An exciting opportunity to visit the Abbey Gateway building where Jane Austen went to school between 1785 and 1786. Saturday 13 September 2.30pm - 3.30pm
- **St Michael Tilehurst - Photography Exhibition** - An exhibition of photographs set in a beautiful and historic church, incorporating: A sale of pictures by local photographers; Self-guided tours of the building and churchyard; Concert by local Chamber Choir "Chorate" at 2pm. Saturday 13 September: 10am - 4pm
- **Tours of Caversham Baptist Church** - A chance to visit and hear more about the Caversham Baptist Church which opened in 1877 and was designed by the well- known architect Alfred Waterhouse - Saturday 13 September, 12noon - 1pm

Plus many others.

September whispers, leaves of gold,
Summer's warmth, a story told.
Crisp air breathes, a gentle sigh,
Harvest moon begins to climb,
Autumn's beauty, pure and grand.



From Caversham to Romania

Engage Volunteer and Newsletter Editor Tony Shares Insights from His Recent Trip.

Tony recently travelled to Romania, where he assisted in running children's clubs and gained a deeper understanding of the needs of the country's most disadvantaged communities.

Sunrise

I was recently privileged to spend a week in the north west of Romania working with the charity **The Smiles Foundation**. They have many projects from children's work, running care homes for the elderly and those with mental health problems, supporting the poorest families, and encouraging children into educations.

I travelled with a group of 17 people from Caversham and we were all invloved in different projects.

Visiting a family in a mud brick house

In 1989 a revolution, triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall, led to the overthrow of the country's communist leader Nicolai Ceausescu. His policy of forcing women to bear at least five children caused the placement of more than 150,000 children into squalid state-run orphanages. You might remember the horrific pictures in the news at that time. Romania is now a member of the EU and there has been a lot of investment in the country mainly for infrastructure projects such as railways and roads. There is little funding for social care.

Tony playing the guitar at one of the children's clubs

Those who were in the orphanages in the 1980s and 1990s are now adults with their own children. Many suffer from physical and mental health issues caused by their neglect as children. It was among some of these that the team from Caversham were helping. There is also a large Roma (Gypsy) community in Romania, many of the older adults without education and thus living in poverty. I was helping with some children's work in one of the rural Roma villages, and also some children's work with other slightly more well off children. I also spent some time in the charity's warehouse helping them to sort it out!

Others on the team visited families in single room mud brick houses, visited care homes, and helped paint some rooms in the care homes.

At church in a Roma village

Visiting a care home

We took local childen on an outing to a petting zoo and soft play place

We often complain about the NHS and social care in this country, and it is by no means perfect. But I am thankful for what we do have when I've seen what happens when people have nothing.

Do come and chat with me at any future Engage Drop-In coffee mornings. I have many stories and hundreds of photos to share!

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.

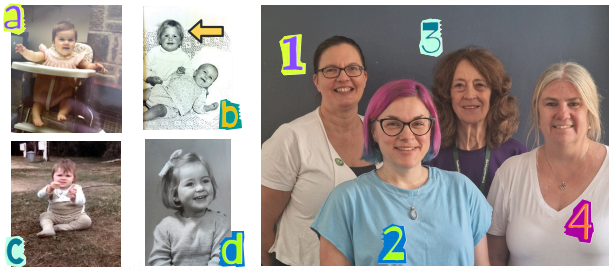
Word Search - European Countries

U A N Y S U N D T S A H N A
K R A B R A S C N E I U A R
R I J N S I O P A R A N T G
A R I O L N T O M B A G A E
I E A R O A E L A I G A N R
N L B W V M K A L A N R F M
E A R A E O T N T O N Y R A
H N E Y N R A D A R S T A N
I D Z I I I N N I A P S N Y
I I A A A C Y P R U S A C L
T B A I N A U H T I L O E V
A T S B U L G A R I A L R R
L S W I T Z E R L A N D O A
Y N A N U R A E S T O N I A

Azerbaijan
Bulgaria
Cyprus
Estonia
France
Germany
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Lithuania
Malta
Norway
Poland
Romania
Serbia
Slovenia
Spain
Switzerland
Ukraine

August Word Search Answers

Baby photos answers



1 - b Jo
2 - a Sarah
3 - d Sheila
4 - c Jackie

Riddles

"What has cities, but no houses; forests, but no trees; and water, but no fish?"

"What five-letter word typed in all capital letters can be read the same upside down?"

Spot the difference - Find 7 differences