

The Pimpernel Trust

Welfare support to serving and retired members of FCDO, FCO and DfID, and their elderly relatives.



Newsletter



SPRING Newsletter 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As Margaret explains below, this is the last Pimpernel newsletter as a stand-alone publication. In future, it will appear only as **The Pimpernel Pages** within the FCDO Association's **Inside Out** - except for those of you who choose not to join FCDOA, and let us know that you would nevertheless still like to receive news from Pimpernel.

Margaret has done a phenomenal job as editor, and we owe her a debt of thanks. She will soldier on with **The Pimpernel Pages**, but if you would be interested in taking over her role, or know of anyone who might be suitable, do let us know.

Anthony Cary

OUR FUTURE

This is the last edition of the Pimpernel Newsletter as a separate publication. Over the last 18 months we have been moving towards closing down the Pimpernel website and incorporating our Newsletter (renamed **The Pimpernel Pages**) into the FCDO Association magazine **Inside Out**. Now that we share an office with the FCDOA, it makes sense to rationalise in this way. But this does not signal the end of Pimpernel as an entity, independent of the FCDOA. The Pimpernel Trust continues as a charity designed to help former members of the FCO and DFID, and the close relatives of serving officers, with issues to do with ageing. In particular we will continue to distribute grants to those who need support with things such as respite care fees or items of equipment (see below).

You do not have to be a member of the FCDO Association to benefit from Pimpernel - but it is easier if you are. So if you are not already a member, do please consider joining the FCDOA. Your subscription enables you to receive **Inside Out** three times a year; get regular online newsletters; participate in interesting visits in London and outside it; attend regular virtual online talks on Zoom and take part in an Annual Lecture – and an Annual Reception too. Membership also offers access to the FCDOA website including the members' directory and the shop (for Christmas Cards and the FCDOA pocket diary). There is information on career opportunities, and more. In short, the FCDO Association offers excellent value for money.

The best and quickest way to become a member is to join the FCDOA online at <https://fcoa.org.uk/join-us/>. The Annual Membership fee is £25 except for members over 80 years of age, and surviving partners of deceased members, who pay a concessionary rate of £12.50 (i.e. half price). For more information, please contact Lucie Portman at lucie.portman@fcdo.gov.uk.

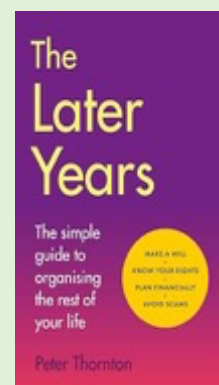
For those who have enjoyed receiving the Pimpernel Newsletter over the years, but do not choose to join FCDOA, we will gauge the demand from those of you who would like us to continue to distribute **The Pimpernel Pages** from **Inside Out** in place of the Newsletter. This would be by email, or in hard copy for those who would prefer that. Please contact our office by email, letter or leave an answerphone message to tell us that this is a service you would appreciate.

The Later Years: The Simple Guide to Organising the Rest of Your Life by Peter Thornton.

In the past we have sometimes recommended books which we think might interest you. Usually someone has read the book but this time the book has only just been published (on 27th February) so our recommendation comes instead from an interesting article published in The Times on 22nd February. 'The Later Years: The Simple Guide to Organising the Rest of Your Life' is written by Sir Peter Thornton who is former chief coroner of England and Wales. He began thinking about and compiling lists of what everyone needed to do before their final exit. Friends heard about his lists and asked him to share what he had written. This led eventually to this book which covers points that we have sometimes discussed in this Newsletter: making a will, setting up Lasting Powers of Attorney, deciding what to do with your digital assets (e.g. photos stored on your computer, music you have downloaded onto your computer or mobile phone, special programmes you might have used for family history research etc.) He also says that he is a fan of the Swedish concept of 'death-cleaning' – tidying up your clutter before you die. Even doing something simple like sorting through the books you really want to keep or downsizing your dinner service or collection of posh glasses (many of us have too much of these things having spent time abroad where you really did need cutlery and plates for 18 people!). Downsizing will be appreciated by whoever ends up by having to sort out your affairs at the end. He also recommends creating an 'On Death File', possibly a section in your filing cabinet if you have one, or making a digital version that can be readily accessed on your computer when the time comes for decision making.

Here is his list of what he recommends putting into your Death File:

- A copy of your will or where to find it if your list is digital
- Birth certificate, marriage certificate
- NHS card and NHS number
- GP contact details
- NI and tax reference numbers
- Details of any accountant, financial advisor or probate solicitor.
- Bank account details
- Insurance policies and pension
- List of income and savings
- List of regular outgoings and debts
- Property details including where to find the deeds to your home
- Other assets, including car
- Any advance decisions (living will)
- Any registered lasting power of attorney
- Your wishes (if any) for your funeral
- A short history of your life and family
- Digital usernames and passwords (or where to find them)



You may be able to think of other thing you'd like to add to this list – it is not exhaustive. You may wish to add, for example, the contact for your next of kin especially if you have no obvious person such as a partner or child.

You can also contact AgeUK and request a copy of their LifeBook which covers a similar list. We featured this in our Spring Newsletter two years ago. Ring AgeUK on **0800 6781602** or visit their website www.ageuk.org.uk

The Later Years: The Simple Guide to Organising the Rest of Your Life

Publisher: Bedford Square Publishing.

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ISBN: 9781835012116

Available from Amazon, Waterstones and other bookshops.



PIMPERNEL GRANTS

Grants are available to serving and retired members of the FCDO, FCO and DFID and their elderly relatives.

We are able to offer grants up to £2000 for respite care or equipment to make life easier for you. We have increased the amount available as we realise that expenses have increased considerably over the past few years.

Here is a reminder of what a grant could mean for you and some examples of the cost of respite care and of possible pieces of equipment:

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|------------------------|--|
| • RESPITE CARE | Average cost around £1500 per week |
| • MOBILITY SCOOTER | Cost around £1500 for a mid-range scooter that does 4 mph. |
| • ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR | For indoor use £1500 - £2000 |
| • RISER RECLINER CHAIR | £1000 - £2000 |
| • ADJUSTABLE BED | From £800 depending on size |
| • STAIRLIFT | £3000 - £5000 (a grant of £2000 from Pimpernel would perhaps make this an option for you). |
| • WET ROOM | Help towards the cost of converting a bathroom to a wet room |

If you would like to discuss applying for a grant with someone in the office, call us on 020 7008 1040. Do leave a message on the ansaphone if there is no one on duty when you call. We will ring you back.

OR YOU CAN WRITE to us at the address below explaining what you would like to use the money for and the amount you would like.

We are sorry that grants cannot be used for ongoing expenses such as help with the cost of home care or care/nursing home fees.

The Pimpernel
Trust
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Room KG.15
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London SW1A 2AH



Or email us at Pimpernel.Trust@fcdowebmail.fcdo.gov.uk

CAR MATTERS

Digital Driving Licences

In a world where more and more things are 'going digital' it is perhaps not surprising to learn that driving licences are to be digitalised and made available on smart phones later on this year. It will be associated with a new government app which is to be launched in the summer. This app – GOV.UK Wallet – will eventually be a means to hold digital versions of government issued documents e.g. Veteran Card, DBS checks, proof of rights to benefits. Paper versions will still continue to be available however. The first document to be digitalised will be driving licences. As with the photocard licence we are all now familiar with, this digital version will enable you to use your driving licence to verify your age, address and personal details such as you need when buying alcohol in a supermarket or proving your identity when you go to vote. Digital driving licences are already in use in Australia, Denmark, Iceland and Norway and the EU is requiring every member state to develop some form of certified digital identity by 2026. The press reports stress that the digital licence is not about replacing the photocard altogether but rather giving people the option to have their licences on their phones so as to allow them a new way to prove their identity and age. You can read about the GOV.UK Wallet scheme by googling 'digital driving licence UK' and going to the government website: www.gov.uk

Number plate cloning

There is a new, rather scary practice that has been reported in the press recently: car number plate cloning. Described by one writer as 'a modern-day motoring menace' it is the practice of criminals cloning your number plates as a way of avoiding paying parking fines, congestion charges, bridge and tunnel tolls, speeding tickets and, at a deeper level, using your registration number for serious crimes such as homicide and drug dealing. To give you some idea of the scale of cloning it is reported that councils cancelled 19,715 penalty charge notices (PCN) in 2024 compared with 7,878 five years earlier in 2019 on the basis that the plates were suspected of being cloned. The victims of this practice are unaware of what is going on and are only alerted when they receive the PCN through the post for places where they have not parked or journeys they have not made. The onus is then on the victim to prove that their plates have been cloned. What should you do if this happens to you? First report the cloning to your local police force and to the police force where the offence took place. This will then give you a crime reference number which you will need when you write to the council to appeal against the PCN. Give as much evidence as possible (where your car really was at the time of the offence and where you were – at a meeting in town, on holiday etc.) You have only 21 days to appeal if the PCN was sent by post. Contact the DVLA as well who should put a mark on your file and set in motion the process of changing the registration to a new number.

Car Parks

Have you ever been in a car park, tried to pay on one of the parking apps, and found that you have insufficient signal to log in to make your payment? As from the middle of February the 'five minute rule' has been scrapped. This rule meant that if for some reason you were struggling to make payment – cash, card, or by app – you had only five minutes in which to complete the transaction. The rule had been under review for some time under pressure from campaigning groups. Anyone taking longer than 5 minutes faced fines of £100. The change in the rule means that if you genuinely have a problem paying in a short time frame you won't get a penalty fine as long as you pay before leaving the car park. This rule change applies only to private car parks monitored by fixed cameras but not to local authority car parks or those without cameras.

Stamp prices – again!

As from 7th April the cost of postage is rising again. A 1st class stamp will go up to £1.70 and a 2nd class stamp will now cost 87p. 1st class postage has gone up by nearly a pound since 2020 when the cost was just 76p.



HEALTH AND WELFARE

Ultra-processed food

Many of us are opting for eating less processed food because of concerns about the links between ultra-processed food and some cancers, heart disease and type-2 diabetes. It comes as a shock then, to read in the media that some of the products labelled as 'healthy' in fact contain harmful additives. Describing a product as 'naturally wholesome', 'packed with goodness' or '100% natural' may not be accurate. If you read the ingredients on the packaging you may be shocked to find that the so-called healthy product may contain substances such as maize starch, milk whey powder (a sweetener derived from milk), stabiliser (guar gum) and citric acid. Even sour dough purchased from some of the leading supermarkets can include yeast used to encourage loaves to rise effectively and stay fresh longer. Campaigning groups feel that it is important that we be given accurate information before we buy. So if your objective is to eat truly natural products do check out the labelling which, hopefully will soon reflect exactly what the product contains. If you are interested in reading more about this topic the recommended book is *Ultra Processed People* by Dr Chris van Tullekan.



Food to help you to sleep

A recent article about the relationship between food and sleep suggests some foods that really do help with getting a good night's sleep.

- Kiwi fruit: this fruit contains a large amount of the hormone melatonin which is important in helping us to sleep. A study carried out at two universities asked a group of athletes to eat two kiwi fruit an hour before going to bed. Over the month of the trial they reported better sleep time and fewer periods awake during the night. The results suggest that kiwi fruit does impact positively on sleep and recovery.
- Warm milk and cocoa: research has found that milk peptides do help to relieve stress and enhance sleep so having a mug of cocoa before bed could make a difference to your sleep patterns.
- Cheese: contrary to the old saying that eating cheese close to bed-time is not a good idea, research has found that eating two tablespoons of cottage cheese about an hour before bed can help particularly if you suffer from sleep apnoea (snoring) as it helps to boost tryptophan levels. This is the amino acid found in milk products and which has sedative properties.
- And finally one thing to avoid: the negative impact of caffeine which acts as a stimulant and can cause some people's hearts to race, is well known so the advice is to avoid drinking coffee later in the day or changing to decaffeinated coffee instead.

The British Diplomatic Oral History Programme is an archive of transcripts of the recollections of retired senior British diplomats and is held at the Archive Centre, Churchill College Cambridge.

The archive is widely used by historians, researchers, journalists and people who are fans of international relations and is run by a small team directed by FCDO Chief Historian Patrick Salmon and managed by former diplomatic spouse Abbey Wright.

The BDOHP is regularly looking for potential new subjects to be recorded and also for people who might be interested in joining the small group of recorders. The programme is particularly keen to find new subjects in Scotland where it has an active recorder but not many subjects.

The programme can be found online at <https://bdohp.chu.cam.ac.uk/>

For further information please contact Abbey Wright on bdohprog@gmail.com

Update on Travel to Europe

In our Winter Newsletter last year we said that the new Entry and Exit System (EES) for those with UK passports travelling to Europe was due to start by the end of November 2024. This is the electronic system where your photo and fingerprints are scanned on leaving or entering the UK en route to Europe. That date has now been moved to November **this** year (2025). The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) – the visa-exemption service – has also been delayed. Look out for an announcement in the media about the final date for implementation of this service. The announcement is expected to be made in April or May.

Life improves for Dog Owners!

Dog owners

A recent report in the press informed those of us who are dog owners that the Curzon Cinema chain have introduced 'Dog Day Afternoons'. Starting in August 2023 the afternoon screenings at which dogs plus their owners are made especially welcome are now available in a number of London Curzons, as well as further afield. There are some house rules: dogs are not allowed on the seats, owners have to clean up after their dogs in case of accidents but cleaning products are available, and only well-behaved dogs are allowed to attend. For some owners who don't like leaving their dog on its own for any length of time, Dog Day Afternoons could well be an attraction. Curzon's website www.curzon.com can give you details of the cinemas which are now dog-friendly. The Picturehouse chain has also introduced dog-friendly screenings. Try their website: www.picturehouse.com to see if a cinema near you is offering special screenings.

Another place where dogs are now welcome is Durham Cathedral. There are a growing number of churches and cathedrals which are allowing owners and their pets inside. Two thirds of cathedrals allow dogs provided that they do not disturb the congregation and are kept on a short lead. No longer will owners have to take it in turns to visit the cathedral, a pattern which many of us are only too familiar with!

From our correspondent Korus Magpie in Cyprus:

CLEAN MONDAY...3rd March 2025

A day when our Mountain village celebrates the coming of Lent by ensuring they have cleaned out all dairy, fish and meat products - anything that has blood in it. Leaving vegetables, octopus and things that do not swim, like mussels. And bread, mountains of different styles!!



The celebration this year, as in ages past, involves a large veggie and fruit type buffet, local folk music to sing and dance to, wine, zivanere, kite flying and story telling - the usual 14 residents bolstered by relatives to about 150! Located right next to the village church in a totally refurbished (EU funded) old village school, courtesy of a far sighted Muhtar (headman).

The stars of the show were a 94 year old diva who threw her walking stick into the crowd and danced with the Muhtar, and the village priest - Papas "Morning Star" who hitched up his cassock threw his legs into the air and mimicked the Ball at Killimuir. The village sang along (local folk songs - NOT the Ball at Killimuir!).

We know how to enjoy ourselves up here in the mountains.
KM

BEST WISHES FROM ALL OF US AT PIMPERNEL

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