

SAGA MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2008

EMMA SOAMES
Boomer at large



Images of the past are fun for young and old



Struggling to think of a present for an old relative or friend? May I suggest you have a look at a box of memory jogger cards called Many Happy Returns. They are the brainchild of Sarah Reed, a trustee of Contact the Elderly. Not content with working for the charity which gets old and vulnerable people out for a monthly tea party, Sarah has a website that deals with how the generations connect with each other - or rather dismally fail to.

She realised that the young - all of us under 65 - don't know how best to talk to older people and in many cases are scared of them. Many Happy Returns cards feature on one side an everyday image from the Forties - like an old Decca record or children playing in the streets - and on the other are questions related to the image. Cleverly, much of the information the answers will contain fits in with the National Curriculum.

"Many of the very old don't understand too much about modern life," says Sarah Reed, "but if you talk to them about their personal experiences they respond brilliantly - and the young get inspired by it too."

She's not kidding. Recently she took a group of primary school children into a care home where many of the residents suffer from dementia. Using the cards the children engaged with the residents and the level of chat and laughter rose right across the room. Everyone joined in and the children asked to visit again.

A truly merry time was had by all. So get a set for an old relative or friend - and next time you take the kids round for tea you will be amazed at how brilliantly it works. A set of cards costs £17.99 and can be purchased online.

www.manyhappyreturns.org