# Growing old in the new technology times

My Dad was very sociable, and he met lots of people from different ages. Many of them gave him a note with their contact details. That note would always turn into a water-soaked paper plug falling out of the trousers pocket under the washing line, waiting for the forensic detective. Mobile numbers and email contacts went unused for Dad. At 86 he could use the computer for internet searches and was able to send an email when he needed to (ie to send a letter to the editor) but to think that that would be a way to communicate? No, not for him.

As for the mobile phone, a coffee catch up to show who has a phone wouldn’t be to show who has the best applications or the biggest storage or the latest games. More like the biggest buttons, or even who was still withholding the pressure of getting one – the luddite of the 22nd century.

My mum only wanted a mobile phone for her to ring people, not for them to ring her, she never realised that her number was displayed when she rang and was so surprised when we rang her. With Dad’s big fingers and the small buttons he could never work the phone, for him it was more a talisman that if someone wanted him and couldn’t get him on the landline they could get him on the mobile. But he never got the hang of it and usually hung up while he was trying to answer.

But at 50 with children in their 20’s I feel left behind too. My kids don’t email, that is our generation. Even Facebook is old. Yes, I have a phone, and the conversation at the coffee catch up is about the latest apps and games, but even I’m aware I use about 2 percent of my phone’s capability. My sister in her 60’s can read a message, but can’t answer it so any messages I send must be statements not questions – any questions I send to her husband! My brother in law (also in his 60’s) refuses to get a phone, so anyone wanting to contact him rings his wife – thereby just putting all the pressure of family contact on her instead!

As I look at kids being pushed in prams watching their screens with movies, or playing games, it’s obvious their synapses are actually being formed in a different way than my 20 year old son’s, my 50 year old ones, or my 86 year old Dad’s.