

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the winter 2017 edition of *Backnumber* and we hope you enjoy reading it. First, a very Happy New Year to all our readers and we hope you had an enjoyable festive season. We are, of course, aware that the festive period is not unbridled joy for everyone and to all those who are not necessarily at their best we offer our best wishes for the coming year, whatever it may hold.



In this edition we feature an article from Pat Bond on a campaign to extend the Bus Pass provision. We are also pleased to announce the winner of our prize draw, Graham Harbord and include a piece from him which coincidentally carries on the theme from the last issue on "what I did with my retirement".

Many people will no doubt be glad to see the back of 2016 given the sea changes it has brought. It has also been a terrible year for the loss of colleagues not to mention many well known celebrities for example David Bowie and Victoria Wood, both in their 60s with much creativity still within them.

2017 will see the arrival of Donald Trump as President of the USA and the likely triggering of Article 50 as we continue with our withdrawal from the EU. To add to this turmoil we now see that Mrs May wishes to campaign to remove Britain from the European Convention on Human Rights and repeal the Human Rights Act. It will be such a pleasure to join progressive countries such as Belarus (who would like to join but don't meet the criteria) as we leave the EHCR and rely on a Supreme Court which has already been branded as "enemies of the people" to scrutinise whatever Human Rights legislation Mrs May deigns to believe is right for our country as we continue our journey to the 1950s. It's worth noting that Greece withdrew from the ECHR on the assumption of power of the military junta 1968-74. Perhaps that is the model Mrs May wishes to follow. Nonetheless, Happy New Year to all.

## Activities

Our next **WINTER WEDNESDAY TALK** is on **January 25th** [10 am for 10.30] at the **Sports and Social Club at County Hall**. **Rob Spray** will give an illustrated talk on life beneath the waves along the Norfolk Coastline, in particular the Norfolk Chalk Reef, its plants and wildlife. On **February 22<sup>nd</sup>**, **James Porter** will give us a different view of France and the French people in **La France Profonde**, and the final talk of this winter season will be on **March 22<sup>nd</sup>**.

**WHIST** afternoons continue at 2pm on the third Thursday afternoon of each month at the S & S Club.

**TABLE TENNIS** continues from 9.30 to 12 noon every Monday morning. Remember the facilities of the S & S Club are available to all Unison RMs, members of the S & S club and their guests. As well as Table Tennis, activities can include snooker and pool [for a small charge], short mat bowls, darts or just a gossip and the bar is open for refreshment from 12.00.

**The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Retired Members' Section will be at 10.30 am [refreshments from 10 am] on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at the Sports and Social Club. There will be Guest Speakers and after the meeting a free buffet lunch will be provided. If you are looking for a relatively undemanding volunteering role, why not join our committee and help run our activities.**

### We welcome colleagues who have recently retired

We wish you all a long, happy, healthy and rewarding retirement. Do come along and join in the Section's activities, you will find a warm welcome.

If you received this edition of Backnumber by post and you have an e-mail address, please let us know by sending a message to our e-mail address on the back page.

## NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS CONFERENCE, SOUTHPORT 2016.

I was once again privileged to represent the Branch at Annual Retired Members Conference on 4-5 October 2016. This was once again held in Southport, which made it my third visit to what is rather a charming place. We have talked before of Lord Street being the template for Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris and also that, although Southport is a seaside resort one seldom ever sees the sea. On this occasion, however, I did see the sea. My room was on the fifth floor of the hotel which overlooks Lord Street (*the picture below shows Lord Street Arcade*) but also has views to the coast and I definitely saw the sea although had I been at ground



level I may not have done! I am also able to report that the vast number of Italian restaurants remain in place and the excellent Guest House Pub simply does not change and we must hope it never does.

The business of conference goes over two days with a Panel Debate on the first afternoon and then conference proper taking up the second day. The Panel Debate concerned Social Care and the main theme of the speakers was about integration of health and social care as being the way to go. There was also a lot of discussion about Attendance Allowance being devolved to Local Authorities which was seen as a bad thing given the demand for it and the waning finances of Local Authorities. Unison is campaigning to stop this and our Retired Members Section along with the rest of the branch will be engaged in this movement.

I managed to make a contribution on the costs of commissioning. Unison is trying to find out about this nationally and the Branch is also seeking local information on this subject. One of the speakers, Jan Short from the NPC, believed that the cost of commissioning was greater than the cost of provision but couldn't substantiate this view. If it's true then there's an immediate indictment on purchaser/provider splits and the Lansley Reforms.

On a very sad note, Conference proper was chaired by the President, Eric Roberts who died very recently having contracted a rare and highly aggressive form of cancer. He chaired the meeting very well and came across as a genuinely good person. It is very sad to see that he has passed away.

The conference itself was well managed and there were some excellent contributions particularly on a series of motions discussing the "media profile" of older people. To say that people were unhappy is a major understatement as speaker after speaker railed against the attack on "baby boomers", the depiction of older people that they've taken everything and left nothing and the idea that "we're all soaking up the sun in Spain, drinking gin and tonic and fiddling while Rome burns" as one speaker put it. Not surprisingly conference wants a different profile which embraces the contribution we have and continue to make to society as a whole. A job for the Retired Members Committee to take on in the New Year.

We can also expect to be involved in campaigns to try to see off the idea of devolution of Attendance Allowance and the extension of the bedroom tax to pensioners, which is due to happen in April 2018.

I managed to make two contributions to debate. One on more transparency in the election of Pension Boards and the other in relation to an Emergency Motion from the National Retired Members Committee on Brexit. It seems UNISON wants to ensure that Trade Unions are involved in the Brexit "Plan" and were persuaded that that should include ensuring that any outcome of negotiation should be subject to a second referendum. As I put it you wouldn't send those 3 buffoons (Fox, Davis and Johnson) into any negotiation without having a vote on the outcome. I also made the point that Retired Members would want none of the crass racism and xenophobia which was coming out of the Tory Conference which was happening at the same time as our conference.

Next year the Conference is in Llandudno and we will ensure that we are represented there.

Jim Porter

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

*Backnumber* Editor Jim Porter addresses the Norfolk County Council Nalgo Branch AGM in 1986.



## A FARE PROPOSAL?

Until the 1995 and 2011 Pension Acts women had an expectation, since the 1940s, that they would receive their state pension at 60. Many readers will be aware of this legislation and how it unfairly and disproportionately impacted on some women and the consequent WASPI campaign which has been widely publicised.

However what does not seem to be such common knowledge is that changes in pension age also means that some of those affected will also not be entitled to an older person's bus pass until they reach the New State Pension Age (NSPA). Indeed the 39 page briefing report prepared for parliament (<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7405/CBP-7405.pdf>) in response to the WASPI campaign makes no mention of this additional disadvantage. Men as well as women are losing out as the NSPA applies to men born on or after April 6<sup>th</sup> 1951 as well as women born after 6<sup>th</sup> April 1953.

The reason that only some are affected is because the unfairness is compounded by the fact that the age at which an older person's bus pass can be applied for varies according to where you live, not just when you were born. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the qualifying age is still 60, as is the case for those residing in a London Borough. In addition some local authorities offer concessionary travel schemes to enable elderly residents to use public and community transport more affordably.

No thought seems to have been given to making the Older Persons Bus Pass less of a postcode lottery. Whilst other transitional arrangements to help those who have been affected by the changes in NSPA have been called for provision of a bus pass isn't one of them. Could the Government be asked to cost out and consider such a measure?

If bringing the age down to 60 nationally isn't affordable then even the availability of a bus **pass** for anyone who is over 60 and retired but not getting a State Pension would help redress the situation. Persons in that category (and you have probably guessed by now that includes me!) are in one of the few sectors of those not in employment who do not get any form of concessionary travel.

I appreciate that the administration of the bus pass scheme is probably more efficient when it isn't means tested but would including the opportunity for those such as myself to apply really be such a burden? Maybe Inland Revenue records could be used and, for example, as a minimum anyone who is over 60 and does not pay more than a given amount of tax per annum would be eligible to apply.

This imbalance needs to be addressed and I hope that the UNISON Retired Members Committee can take this up as an issue for 2017.

Pat Bond  
December 2016

## E MAIL ADDRESS PRIZE DRAW

Readers may recall that we offered a Prize Draw of £100 or a tablet to the same value to persuade people to opt to have their Backnumber delivered by e mail. We said that all addresses would be included in the draw, not just newly received ones as this seemed fair to all.

At the time of offering the prize we had about 350 e mail addresses and at the time of the draw in early November this had risen to 628. We are obviously pleased with this initiative and are also pleased to announce that the winner is Graham Harbord.

Graham has done a short piece about himself which we print here and, as a by product, it also feeds into the idea of "What I did with my retirement" which in the last edition featured John Butcher and his move into literary ranks.

Congratulations to Graham and lets hope we hear about more exhibitions!

"On leaving school in 1969 I started work at the Norwich City Council, Planning Department Traffic Section. There I joined the Union which was then called NALGO.

After a couple of years or so, I took a one year contract working on the Gt.Yarmouth and Lowest-off Area Transportation Study at the end of which I came to Norfolk County Council, in 1973, as a Technician in the Highways Department. 40 years on, and many many reorganisations later, I retired in 2013 as Team Manager of the Intelligent Transport Systems team (aka Urban Traffic Control or UTC) based in the North Wing at County Hall. Originally we were based in the ground floor under St. Andrews Multi-Storey car park (aka the dungeon) until it had to be demolished. With Norfolk Constabulary moving to new premises at Wymondham at around the same time, this gave the opportunity of moving us to County Hall.

Since retirement I have started running (well jogging with breathing recovery breaks really) and been able to spend more time developing my hobbies of pastel painting and photography. I had a very successful solo exhibition in October 2015 and several commissions as well. It's not a business, and I wouldn't want it to be, but selling my work does give a great sense of satisfaction and helps to finance new equipment. If anyone is interested in taking a look you can search Facebook for 'artandimages' and look for my profile photograph of the barn owl in flight and the cover picture of sunset over Halong Bay, Viet Nam. Any comments always gratefully received.

I was very surprised to know that I had won £100 and I will put it to good use in buying that next bit of 'must have' kit." Graham Harbord.

## THE GREAT WAR

Taken from a History Of Norfolk in 100 Objects by John A Davies and Tim Pestell we find two exhibits in the Norfolk Regimental Museum which are of interest to students of the First World War.



The first, and in the book Object 86, is the Norfolk Regiment First World War Casualty Book. The Regiment, which was formed in 1881 and during WW1 fought in Mesopotamia, Gallipoli and was also present at the Battle of the Somme. It seems that the Casualty Book may be a unique record and gives us a picture of an infantry unit at the time of WW1. 32,374 men fought with the Regiment of whom 5,576 were killed.

The second object, and in the book Object 87, is the whistle used in the Christmas Truce of 1914. Described by the museum as the "World Famous Whistle", it belonged to Sergeant E C Hoy. Whilst playing some carols a German asked him to play "Home Sweet Home", which he did, and the German joined him on his mouth organ. This led to "fraternising" on the top of the trench and then to the famous football match. Sergeant Hoy tells us that not a shot was fired all day.

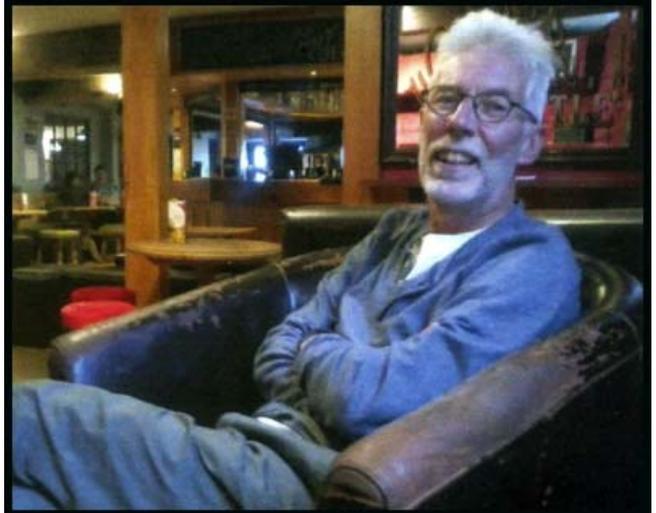


**Taken from A History of Norfolk in 100 Objects by John A Davies and Tim Pestell and published by History Press at £14.99.**

## LAURIE RAINGER

We said our last goodbyes to Laurie, who died on October 26<sup>th</sup>, at a celebration of his life at Colney. At a moving, humanist ceremony, the celebrant was Ken Connor.

Laurie was just 65 and a full and active retirement has been taken from him, from his family and everyone who knew him. He was a sailor, a walker, a cyclist, a car enthusiast and a family man, always sharing his enjoyment with others.



In Norfolk Laurie worked as a social worker, a manager and in training and staff development.

For much of that time he was a steward in the Social Services Department and in each of those roles he enhanced the lives of others with his wit, charm and professional talents. He had the ability to get on with everybody.

Until his final illness Laurie had represented Retired Members and Pensioners on the Norfolk Pension Fund Board.

Laurie brightened and enlightened our lives. We shall miss him.

## WHERE TO FIND US

If you have letters, comments or issues about **Backnumber**, please e-mail the Editor Jim Porter at [porterjames172@gmail.com](mailto:porterjames172@gmail.com)

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