

EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the first edition of Backnumber 2018 and we hope you enjoy reading it. Backnumber wishes all readers a Happy New Year and we look forward, as we always do at this time of year to the first signs of spring and opportunities to get out and about. At the time of writing we seem to be in the midst of a period of stagnant weather - mist, drizzle and overwhelming gloom. Lets hope for much better things soon!



Talking of overwhelming gloom there seems to be no end to which our Tory County Council will not go to cause maximum disruption to the wellbeing of its electorate. Not content with threats to axe vital services they then go ahead and award themselves a 10.5% rise in allowances. Backnumber has no argument that Councillors need to be remunerated for some of the work they do especially those who are having to take time off work in order to carry out their duties. Nor do we argue that Norfolk pays less than the "going rate" and that, in an ideal world, this should be put right.

The problem is that we do not live in an "ideal world". We live in a world where services are being decimated, largely due to the intervention of government and where many people are in desperate need of those services which are being withdrawn. Norfolk's Tories, whilst complaining about the government, appear to be doing precious little to have this put right and give the suspicion that they are happy to do the government's dirty work for them. In particular there seems a danger that bus subsidies will be cut, particularly to rural areas, leaving many people, older or otherwise, isolated and then dependent on others to get to the shops, to doctors, hospitals or relatives. Odd that those self same rural areas seem happy to return Tories to the Council by the bucket load but just maybe the time is coming when that might stop.

(continued overleaf)

Activities

Wednesday February 14th is our AGM (10 for 10.30am). We keep formal business to a minimum and our speakers this year are John Ward, Chair of Norfolk County Council, Chris Jenkinson, Regional Secretary of Unison, Jonathan Dunning, Branch Secretary and **Adrian Hoare**, who will give a brief illustrated talk on Norfolk rebel, **Robert Kett**. There will be a raffle, a quiz and a free buffet lunch at the end of the meeting. We hope to see you there.

If you intend travelling by bus, service 500 at 9.35am from St. Stephens in the city centre stops at County Hall, or services 87 and 88 stop on Bracondale.

WINTER WEDNESDAY TALKS

On Feb. 28th Grant Young will present the **Cambridge Archives**. This promises to be a fascinating insight into historical events, letters and documents which have been hidden away from public view. On March 28th Charlotte Patten speaks about **Victorian Rural Women** [to be confirmed].

WHIST afternoons continue at 2pm on the third Thursday afternoon of each month and.

TABLE TENNIS continues from 9.30 to 12 noon every Monday morning.

All these activities are free of charge. Why not join in?

All these events take place at the NCC Sports and Social Club.

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.

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It is against that background that Tory councillors (and there are some honourable exceptions) decide to award themselves a significant increase in allowances. This against advice from an independent panel charged with advising on the matter. They advised having the same percentage increase as staff but, of course, in Tory world, what's good for staff is certainly not good for councillors. Deciding to accuse the leader of the Labour opposition of stirring up hatred, as Council leader Cliff Jordan has done, is breathtaking in its hypocrisy and inaccuracy.

Can we be surprised if, for example, rural bus services are cut that there will be a massive outcry which says that at least the £140,000 that this costs should be diverted to the budget for buses? There will be much worse examples when the budget is confirmed.

Backnumber recalls that when the then Director of Children's Services, Lisa Christiansen, was facing hard criticism from the local press, (not actually from the County Council) the likes of Chloë Smith, Elizabeth Truss, Brandon Lewis not to mention Norman Lamb (who at least has spoken out against this outrage) were quick to get on the bandwagon of a huge witch hunt to get rid of Ms Christiansen. Where are they now? At least 3 of them are hiding behind their ministerial desks ignoring what happens to their own constituents whilst no doubt privately congratulating their own people. 'Twas ever thus.

Speaking of outrages we cannot let pass the news that Carillion, the larger construction group of which, according to Mrs May, the Government is a "customer", has gone into liquidation. UNISON has been "banging on" about the ill advised PFI process for many, many years and the problems of Carillion bring this into stark relief. Perhaps we might now see outsourcing for what it really is. A shoddy process to provide large profits for Tory Party donors whilst the rest of us end up picking up the pieces.

As ever comments, views, letters or even articles to porterjames172@gmail.com or to the UNISON Branch Office, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH.

THE GLAVEN PORTS

This winter's talks are proving to be very interesting and well-attended. The one in October was given by Jonathan Hooton on the rise and fall of the Glaven Ports. Their fall, due the silting up of the channels leading to Blakeney and Cley as the spit expanded. We viewed some fascinating slides detailing its growth over the years.

Jonathan has had an historical interest in the Glaven Valley for many years and he spoke with great knowledge of the history of these ports. He opened by challenging the audience to pronounce Cley; was it Cley as in, lie, or lay? He explained, in records of 1586 it is spelt Cley, in records of 1693 it is Cly; later records have it as Clay, whilst in a record of 1724, it is Clye. Perhaps it comes down to 'take your pick'. His preferred pronunciation was clay which he used throughout his talk. Similarly, the spelling of Blakeney has varied over the centuries. It has been recorded both as Black Island and Blakenye.

In the Domesday records, the Glaven port went past Cley and Wiveton, up as far as Glandford. Blakeney and Cley are recorded as ports from 1230. The grand churches in the both villages indicated their past importance as centres of trade. Most of the trade in fish was with Iceland and across the North Sea to Europe, mainly cod and ling. Other goods were sea coal, timber, wine and even, rabbit skins.

Long-shore drift narrowed the channel to the ports which resulted land reclamation as the salt marshes grew. By the 18th century, foreign trade had ceased due to the inability of sea-going ships to get to Blakeney port; the last to trade. Coal continued to be shipped locally up and down the coast but that ended as the channel narrowed.

It was really interesting to reflect upon these thriving, working harbours gradually turning into the refined villages they are today, with the many private sailing boats lined up where trading vessels used to be.

Look out for details of the next talk in this edition of Backnumber. Why not ask a friend to come along too; they don't have to be Unison members. They come as your guest. A friend who came with me to this talk hopes to come to the one in January.

Jackie Mitchell

WOLVERHAMPTON.

Let's face it, Wolverhampton hasn't got a very good image, not helped by the recent TV series "Raised by Wolves" and I would suspect that Wolverhampton is not high on most people's list of places to visit for a weekend break. So why then did we in 2014 move to this much maligned city? Well, we decided to move to Wolverhampton to be near to our daughter, she made her life over here following her three years at university and we had been visiting regularly since 1995 and we see the good side of the city. Wolverhampton has changed a lot post war. Once a leading producer of all things metal, however, post WW2 heavy industry steadily declined, and although steel and steel products are still an important part of the economy these are no longer the backbone of the area, and now the city embraces new technologies and has become a leader in the manufacture of high tech auto parts, aero space hardware and is a major producer of components for Jaguar/Landrover. Wolverhampton University continues to expand, with around 20,000 students bringing a huge economic dividend to the city. The city is a mixture of Victorian splendour and sixties abominable, there is excellent public transport (the seniors bus pass also gives free access to local rail and tram services as well as the bus) there are plenty of public open spaces and of course a large network of navigable canals.

Culturally Wolverhampton is not a desert, there is a Grand Theatre showing all types of productions, from pop to musicals to dramas. There is a art house cinema called The Lighthouse, housed in the iconic former Chubb locks factory, which apart from showing all new film releases live streams Shakespear direct from Stratford-upon-Avon and ballet from the Royal Ballet.

We are only 1/2 a mile from Staffordshire and three from Shropshire, close by there is the heritage site of the Ironbridge Gorge, the Severn Valley Railway, National Trust properties galore, beautiful walking country and less than fifty miles to Wales so in the space of a few minutes you feel you could be a hundred miles from the city of Wolverhampton.

Although we loved living in Norfolk and miss our friends and neighbours we are glad that we made the move over to the West Midlands and have no regrets - which is just as well!

Chris Payne

BEING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT TAUGHT ME

Your draft letters will always be amended and proposals will only be relevant if they can be taken forward by someone higher up the pay scale.:

attendance at meetings is essential - not because you've got anything to contribute but your absence will be noted down in the Minutes. Your Chief Officer reads them:

Listing sensible options is essential but tactically it's useful to include one that is completely off the wall. You just never know:

Councillors wear political eye patches - they cannot be expected to see the wood for the trees. So, like Hansel and Gretel, drop breadcrumbs on the forest floor – the councillors can then claim the trail as their own:

Bear in mind that chickens come home to roost, so don't stay around too long in the henhouse, keep moving:

Spend your budget allowance – you can't carry forward any monies to another financial year. Besides, any savings will reflect badly on those who prepared the estimates:

Do not expect to receive any thanks at any time for anything. This avoids disappointment:

Listen to surveyors when it involves drains, but don't bother with town planners – left to themselves they would put Tree Preservation Orders on telegraph poles:

encourage the idea of the need for extra help. Drop hints—another assistant is useful and adds to your importance:

There is no substitute to a Committee Meeting on site. Leave early. Aim for 11 am to ensure you are entitled to claim your lunch allowance.

At all times stay under the radar. As a reward you may be given permission to draft a report and reach pensionable age. However, with things as they are in Local Government don't bet on it.

John Vaughan

VOTES FOR WOMEN!



The Pankhursts, Emily Davidson, the Fawcetts. These are some of the famous names for us to celebrate on the 6th February 2018 on the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918, the Act that gave women the right to vote in General elections. It was a momentous event in advancing the role of women as equal members of society. Even then the franchise only applied to women over the age of 30. (Strangely, another Act was passed in 1918 that allowed women to stand for Parliament at the age of 21 although they could not vote!) The Act also gave the vote to all males over the age of 21 regardless of status but it was not until 1928 that women were finally able to have an equal say in running the country, nearly one hundred years after the Great Reform Act of 1832.

Why did it take so long? As far back as 1860 John Stuart Mill had written his treatise on the 'Subjection of Women' and presented a petition, unsuccessfully, to Parliament. This was followed by thousands of petitions and the formation of campaigning groups that became the Suffragettes and the Suffragists. Supporting them were some prominent men who called themselves the 'Trousers Suffragettes' and a growing number of MPs. The opposition to women's suffrage came from a formidable part of the establishment, with Anti-Suffrage Leagues of men and women active in campaigning against. Lord Curzon, Leader of the House of Lords was chief amongst them and it was only because he backed down from voting against the Bill that it passed. The work done by women in the Great War did much to raise their profile and the trend of the previous century suggests that it would come sooner or later.

Historians document the arguments for and against the effectiveness of the militancy of the Suffragettes versus the peaceful lobbying of the Suffragists in the progress to universal suffrage. The jury is still out but it remains a dilemma for social activists of all eras – what is the place of direct action in social change?

In Norfolk Dorothy Jewson was one of the lobbying Suffragettes against direct action and a Union member who eventually became an M.P. Less well-known is Caprina Fahey who settled in Hainford and was imprisoned for her Suffragette activities. Researching her history, she has been nominated by the Museums Service as an ordinary woman who did extraordinary things to win the vote for Women.

The suffragist Dame Millicent Fawcett is to be the first woman honoured with a statue in Parliament Square.

Verity Gibson

UNISON INTERNATIONAL WORKERS GROUP

On 17th January I attended a meeting of the above as I had been invited to take part in a film, commissioned by the Branch, to spotlight issues concerning EU Citizens working in Norfolk. I was in a small group which contained 2 EU Citizens, a Spanish man called Jo and a German woman whose name I did not catch.

Jo seemed very clued up on the Government's position on "settled status" which seems to intend to treat EU Citizens as second class. Jo's other concern was about current treatment which sees people being refused mortgages, refused promotions and generally being treated as itinerants. He has lived in England for 17 years, worked all the time, paid taxes and contributed to the wellbeing of our society.

The woman from Germany said she had been really excited about coming to Britain (I think about 10 years ago) and people had been really interested in her and her background and she had felt welcomed and valued. Since 23 June 2016 her feeling is that she had not understood "how many people didn't like me all this time".

All that the UIMG wants is for people to have the same status as before the Brexit vote, a position that even Nigel Farage purports to support but which the xenophobic Mrs May is unable to concede.

I cannot speak for Unison generally or for retired members in particular but what I can say is that I came away from that meeting feeling shame that our so called "negotiating position" leaves people in this state of limbo and with feelings of rejection through no fault of their own and apparently with no power to influence their future. To put it another way, I was simply appalled.

Jim Porter

WHERE TO FIND US

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

or contact the Unison Branch Office at County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH. Phone 01603 222384

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