

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the spring edition of Backnumber and we hope you will enjoy reading it.

Spring, of course brings with it thoughts of summer and also of renewal. We have had some fine weather although, at the time of writing it's rather cold. We must hope for something a bit warmer and for the opportunity for people to get out and about as summer approaches. We always make a plea for members to let us know of good experiences so that we can use Backnumber to pass them on to others. Contact details appear at the bottom of the last page of this edition.



The County Council elections have just taken place and, as widely predicted, the Tories now have a whopping majority with which to do as they like. This does not represent good news for our working colleagues or, indeed for any of us who might need the services of the County Council. Labour, which actually increased its number of seats (the only place in the country where that happened) has responded by electing a new leader, Steve Morpew to take the attack to the Tories but with only 17 seats against 55 that seems a daunting task.

Our problem is that it does not matter who is returned to power as they will have serious problems in carrying out any kind of programme that is not dictated by national government. There will be the continuing crisis in Social Care which will not be alleviated by the ability of councils to raise local taxes because this will only offset the rises in the "National Living Wage" as the Tories like to call it. Welcome, if inadequate, though this is, funding is simply not available to make these very modest improvements to wages of those at the bottom and improve the standard of service which is needed. That these services are so reliant on poorly paid staff is in itself a scandal

(continued overleaf)

## Activities

### TALKS

Our season of Winter Wednesday Talks finished in April with a talk by Joe Stirling about his escape from Hitler's Germany to a new life in Norfolk. The next talk will be on Wednesday 25th October, more about this in the next issue of Backnumber.

If you have any suggestions for a topic or speaker you would particularly like to hear, do, please, get in touch.

**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.

### SOME FAMOUS ELECTION QUOTES.

*"Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few."*

George Bernard Shaw

*"Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves."*

Herbert Marcuse.

### 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.

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when we consider the important work that is being done to care for elderly and disabled people whose needs will almost always be complex and needing skilled intervention. Other services, if not already cut, will continue to be vulnerable and yet there is money to build the Northern Distributor Route (aka the Road to Nowhere) and set about a major upheaval of the road system in Norwich which is supposed to favour the cyclist but which in fact attracts criticism from some in the cycling fraternity not to mention people with sight problems who, in some parts of the City cannot find places to safely cross the road. Meantime, no doubt, rural bus services, libraries and Sure Start services will continue to be vulnerable along with funding to a plethora of voluntary organisations in sectors such as Social Care, the Arts and Young People.

These notes were written but not "put to bed" just before Mrs May's decision to call a snap general election on 8th June. Clearly this will be a very important election in that Mrs May obviously wants an opposition-free route to Brexit and whatever other joys are in store for us once she has published her manifesto. All of the above paragraph remains true but the effects of the election of a Tory Government with an unassailable majority are too dreadful to contemplate. At the time of writing the May strategy seems to be to keep under cover and speak only to those who might be true believers. There are hints that policies such as the "triple lock" might be abandoned and the "gray vote" taken a little for granted.

The calls for the "crushing of the saboteurs" from the poisoned pen of Paul Dacre in the Daily Mail do little to assure us that the intention is to unite the country. Rather, it is to silence opposition on Brexit and no doubt other policies and to seek to put the devolved administrations in their place. In that context it is more than disappointing to hear that Jeremy Corbyn believes that the question of Europe is settled when we have no idea what the outcome of the negotiations on Brexit will be.

Still, a vote for the Tories is a vote to kill off public services and so anything you can do to stop that you should do.

## AGM FEEDBACK

The Section AGM took place on 15 February and was well attended. Our speakers were David Ward, Vice Chair of NCC, Jonathan Dunning, Branch Secretary, Brian Lynch, Regional Officer with responsibility for pension policy and Debbie De Spon and Lynne Nicholls, two brilliant speakers from the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) Campaign.

Brian Lynch's talk concentrated on changes to the administration of Pension Funds. Pension Funds are being pooled and we will now be in the ACCESS Fund which covers 11 funds across Eastern and South eastern Regions. There is no ability at the moment to have Trade Union Representation on the pooled fund although this has been achieved in the Northern Fund. The decision to allow representation lies with the Pool although Government is said to be in favour of this representation. We will keep members informed on developments and, in particular, any issues which will affect current beneficiaries.

Debbie and Lynne's talk on the campaign (which has been previously featured in Back-number) was particularly inspiring as both had no previous experience of public speaking. They were preparing for a London Demonstration on the issue and hoping to persuade the Government to change course on what is a great inequity. They were extremely well received by the AGM.

## NORFOLK DIRECTORY

This is a new, online directory that can tell you about clubs, organisations, groups and services in our County. You can narrow the search results to just those within one, five or ten miles of your own postcode. You can even see what is available on a specific day of the week. To find out more, go to [www.norfolk.gov.uk/directory](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/directory).

## SOME MORE FAMOUS ELECTION QUOTES

*"The English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during election of Members of Parliament; as soon as the members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing. In the brief moment of its freedom, the English people makes such a use of that freedom that it deserves to lose it."*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

*"The only thing we learn from new elections is we learned nothing from the old."*

Anon

## DAVID ST QUINTIN

David will be known to very many of our retired members having been an active member of NALGO and latterly UNISON and in particular known for his skills of advocacy, negotiation. and his particular interest, publicity. He finally retired from the Retired Members Committee in 2016 having experienced poor health and has since become a resident of Ellacombe, an establishment run by NORSE Care for elderly people. Jen, his wife, has also recently been very ill and both were made honorary members of the committee in recognition of their work for UNISON.



To mark the occasion of David's retirement from the Committee, a small gathering took place at Ellacombe to celebrate his enormous contribution to NALGO/UNISON. This was also to mark David's contribution to the Sports and Social Club of which he was a founder member. An excellent tea was provided by NORSE and funded by the Branch. Joining David and Jen were David Button, Secretary of the Retired Members Section and organiser of the event, Jim Porter, the Chair, Pat Bond, Chair of the Sports and Social Club, Ralph Gayton, former Secretary of the Norfolk Branch of NALGO and Fellow founder member of the Sports and Social Club, Alan Cabbage with whom David worked closely in Norfolk, Ralph and Netta Murray from Suffolk with whom David had worked on publicity at Regional level along with our own Jimmy Fisk, who was also there as the official photographer. David was presented with a framed photograph taken from a Martinews Review of about 1976 and a "This is your Life" type of photo album celebrating his work for NALGO/UNISON and the Sports and Social Club.

## HEMBLINGTON CHURCHYARD

At the end of April I went to a talk about Hemblington Church and then for a wildlife walk in the churchyard. The Church has a Saxon Tower and some very important wall paintings.

As it is my local Church (I'm not a churchgoer but am a Friend of Hemblington Church as it really does need to be preserved) I was obviously aware of the wall paintings and some of the history of the church but my real interest was to walk the churchyard and to experience the wildlife that lives there. We were lucky to have a couple of wildflower experts to guide us.

The Churchyard is in two sections. To the north is former farmland which, I think was donated in the 1930s. That to the south is probably exactly as it was 500 or so years ago. The north still has a cultivated feel although wild plants and flowers are in abundance. The south has the feel of ancient meadows and contains many old plants some of which are relatively rare. Some of the plants identified were cuckooflower, crosswort, oxeye daisy, primrose, common sorrel and star of bethlehem.

For me, the importance of this exercise is to see that the church and the habitat of its churchyard is preserved. It is the case that many country churchyards are havens for wildlife and if you have an interest in this you can contact [norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/churchyards](http://norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/churchyards) or specifically for Hemblington [www.hemblingtonchurch.org.uk](http://www.hemblingtonchurch.org.uk).

**DID YOU KNOW: ENGLAND HAS 181 ROUND TOWER CHURCHES,  
126 OF THEM ARE IN NORFOLK.**

Jim Porter



## THE GREAT WAR

The months of April and May mark the centenary of the Battle of Arras, another gruesome battle of WW1.

**Samuel Leighton Green** was curate of St. Barnabas Church in Norwich, but volunteered because he felt the allied cause was just.

He served with the City of London battalion of the Royal Fusiliers [blasphemous and foul-mouthed] with whom he lived in muddy, rat infested trenches under enemy fire. During the war he was gassed, wounded, and suffered trench foot and trench fever, but sent monthly updates to his parish magazine back in Norwich. On Easter Sunday 1917 he went "over the top" with his men. He describes wave after wave of men going forward and then gaps in those waves as the enemy machine guns fired



on them, and the mass burials which followed.

In one contribution to the St Barnabas newsletter he wrote *"Rats infest the trenches in huge numbers, so that as you walk along the trench at night you tread upon them. They run up and down the dug-out over your bed and everywhere."*

On one night he recalls waking *"with a rat hanging on to my nose."* He adds, dryly, *"I have never liked rats since."*



Rev. Leighton Green was awarded two Military Crosses for his bravery.

He returned to Norwich after the war but suffered a breakdown in 1920. He recovered and went on to be vicar at All Saints, Mundesley, where he died in 1929, aged 49.



## LEGION D'HONNEUR AWARDED TO ONE OF OUR MEMBERS.

At an impressive occasion on 22<sup>nd</sup> February at the Assembly Rooms in Norwich, **Eric Procter**, together with 22 other WW II veterans, was appointed as a Chevalier of the Legion d'honneur This is the highest award given by



the Republic of France. The medal was presented by General the Lord Dannatt. to honour Eric's service to France at the Normandy landings in June 1944.

The award recognises Eric's military service as a member of 183 Field Company of the Royal Engineers for their bravery in preserving the security and freedom of France. Eric also holds the British Empire Medal for military service in Egypt in 1949.

Eric, now 92, remains an active member of the Unison RMs section committee as well as membership of the Tas branch of the Probus Club, two bowls clubs and the Thorpe British Legion.

The citation says that "we must never forget the heroes of the British and Commonwealth forces" for their contribution to the salvation of France and Europe on D Day and the invasion that followed. Eric is one of those heroes.

## 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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