

EDITOR'S NOTES

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

At the time of writing we are enjoying (and for some there might be quite different emotion) a spell of warm dry weather which has been with us almost continuously since May. This provides a particular challenge for those of you who are gardeners and also to those of you who suffer from hay fever and related conditions.



The weather will, we hope, have encouraged people to get out and about to enjoy all that Norfolk (and perhaps Suffolk) has to offer. As ever we encourage readers to let us know so that others can get some ideas of places to go and to see. We are of course aware that by the time you get this it may well be raining with no prospect of it ever stopping!

Also, and as ever, we are aware that not all of us will be enjoying the best of health or will be caring for others in poor health. Our thoughts are always with our members who are having problems and we wish, where appropriate, a speedy recovery to all.

We are living in difficult times and there seems to be no end to the turmoil that faces our country and our planet. We have a President of the United States of America whose hold on reality appears to be, at best, tenuous. It's beyond remarkable that on the day before meeting Mrs May he could trash her efforts to bring about an agreement on Brexit in the Sun and then the next day tell her and us that our relationship is "the highest level of special". To make matters worse, Mrs May, hand in hand with Mr Trump, seems to fawn at the man's feet, apparently oblivious to the fact that his volatility means that tomorrow he may well be saying the opposite of what he said today. It leads us to wonder if this is really a good time to be leaving the EU

Backnumber is aware that many of our members, perhaps a majority, will have voted for Brexit. *(continued overleaf)*

Activities

On **Wednesday, 24th October** our **Winter Wednesday Talks** resume at the NCC Sports & Social Club. We meet at 10am for refreshments and talks begin at 10.30 and finish around 11.45. Our first speaker is **Geoff Caulton** with an illustrated talk on **Women in the Great War**. This is half-term week, so car parking at County Hall may not be too difficult.

Our next Talk, given by **Nigel Wilmhurst** will be on November 28th, same time, same place, on the Norwich philanthropist and social reformer **Elizabeth Fry**. We hope we shall see you at these friendly, informative and entertaining talks.

On **Mondays** from 9.30 am at the NCC Sports & Social Club at County Hall we continue to offer **table tennis** and a mid-morning natter over a cuppa. Other activities [short mat bowls, pool, darts] are available if there is sufficient interest.

Every month on the **third Thursday** at 2pm there is a friendly afternoon of **whist**, also at the Sports & Social club.

These activities are free of charge to our members and their guests. We should love to welcome more people to all these events so why not give it a try and join in?

As we approach the centenary of the Armistice that ended the Great War we mark the founding of the Royal Air Force in April 1918, see page 3.



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

(continued from front page) We know, as a result of internal polling, that 68% of all UNISON members voted to remain but we don't know the figures for Retired Members. However, if demographic trends are to be believed then we can conclude that substantial numbers of Retired Members did vote to leave. Whether they voted for the complete shambles that now faces us must be considered to be another thing. How can it conceivably be that, 16 months after activating Article 50, only now has the government set out a position for negotiation? A position that is riddled with inconsistencies and wishful thinking that defies any description. Mr Johnson, for all his many faults and they are legion, was for once correct in his analysis that the "Chequers Agreement" has zero chance of being approved by the EU. It may be that the government sees this as a point at the start of negotiation but if so, it's very late in the day to be setting this out when agreement on withdrawal must be done well before 29 March 2019. Meanwhile, the Tory Party's headbanger wing, led by the preposterous Jacob Rees-Mogg and aided and abetted by the brain cell free zone inhabited by the likes of Nadine Dorries, Peter Bone, John Redwood and Ian Duncan Smith to name but a few, continues to propel us the the cliff edge assuring us that the journey to the bottom will be exhilarating. It may well be. The crash at the bottom will be quite the opposite. Quite how the DUP, apparently representing the interests of N Ireland, can support this given that the Province voted to remain and that recent polls now put this support at over 70%, defies all logic.

And what of Labour? The policy of "constructive ambiguity" may well have had its merits but the time for that is gone. They really need now to make a bold declaration that, given the government's current position very clearly fails the 6 tests that Labour has set out if it is to approve any deal, they are going to pursue radical means of solving this problem. Labour's policy, set out at its Conference 2016 and something very rarely aired by anybody, is that if the final settlement is unacceptable then the option to remain should be retained and approved either through parliament, a general election or a referendum. It is now time for that policy to come to the fore and for Labour either to try to force a general election in which it will campaign on its policy to remain within the EU or to try to force a #peoplesvote and let the people decide if they want to accept the final deal, leave with no deal or remain in the EU.

COUNTY COUNCIL WATCH

Members will know that very recently the Leader of the County Council, Cliff Jordan, sadly died having had lung cancer. Those who knew him would describe Cliff as a "character". He was a man of Norfolk and always sought to do the best he could for the County although on many occasions his view of what was best did not necessarily accord with those of many others, particularly those of us within the Trade Union movement. Nonetheless our thoughts are with his family and friends as they come to terms with their loss.

As a result of this sadness we now have a new leadership team at County Hall. Andrew Proctor, also leader of Broadland District Council, has been installed as Leader whilst Graham Plant, also leader of Great Yarmouth District Council, has been installed as Deputy Leader. The Labour opposition has always been against what it calls "twin hatters", those councillors who sit on District and County Councils and what we now have is a spectacular example of where that can lead us. There is major concern amongst our working colleagues that both Mr Proctor and Mr Plant are on the record as querying the continued existence of the County Council. We know that work is at an advanced stage to merge Broadland and South Norfolk Councils which could easily be a preamble to creating the kind of council which could assume service provision currently the responsibility of the County. Consequences for services and those staff who provide them will be, at best, difficult to determine and at worst disastrous. Backnumber will keep closely in touch with events and will inform members as best we can of developments.

The most recent County Council meeting does not augur well. The Tories, with only 9 women members out of 54 voted not to improve mindfulness of its public sector equality duty. It then went on to keep charges in DIY waste at recycling centres (the Tory Tip Tax as it will now be called). They blamed the EDP for the furore and the fly tipping! Finally Labour councillors decided to leave the meeting following "biased decisions, interruptions and rulings from the chair". They will be making a formal complaint. Not exactly a good look for the new leadership.

ROYAL AIR FORCE

On 1st April this year the Royal Air Force celebrated its 100th birthday.

The History

On December 17th, 1903 the Wright brothers made history with the first powered flight lasting less than a minute and covering 852 yards. Six years later Louis Bleriot made the first flight across the English Channel. In 1910, Lt. George Colmore, a serving Navy officer, gained the Royal Aero Club Aviator Licence followed by other officers who trained at the RAC Club in Kent, forming the Royal Naval Air Service. Criteria for training were to be unmarried and personally able to pay the fee! In 1912 the Royal Flying Corps was created as the air arm of the Army with the motto "per ardua ad astra", still the motto of the Royal Air Force. On 4th August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany.

Throughout WWI the war found many uses for manned flight, from observation of enemy movements, directing artillery fire and tracking shipping to bombing, supporting ground forces, defending and protecting civilians and eventually fighting each other in dogfights. The battle of the Somme had shown that air superiority now made a crucial difference. In May and June 1917 the Germans bombed Kent and London, leaving more than 250 civilians dead and 600+ injured. Shocked, the Government asked South African Jan Smuts to explore the best way to organise and deploy British [and Empire] air forces. From his work, on 1st April 1918 a new Air Ministry, the RAF and WRAF were created by merging the RNAS and RFC.

The Places

At that time there were about 16 flying stations in Norfolk of which only RAF Marham remains today as an operational base. Sedgeford, for example, now a quiet village near Hunstanton with a population of about 600, was a major training airfield. It had over 1500 personnel of several nationalities. From the beginning of 1918 until the Armistice, 71 Sedgeford pilots were killed and over 700 aircraft written off. This was a busy place, not least its mortuary, one of the few remaining buildings.

Gt Yarmouth, too, was important, as one of the original eight RNAS airfields in Britain. It had about 30 planes, their pilots famously shooting down Zeppelins and damaging a U-boat. After the War, Gt Yarmouth continued as a RAF base until it was decommissioned at the end of 1920. It was used for commercial flights into the 1930s.

RAF Mousehold Heath survived after the War and was variously home to training and bomber units but was mainly used for storing aircraft made locally by Boulton & Paul and Mann Egerton. It became the first Norwich civil airport in 1933 and fell into disuse during WWII. Pulham St Mary deserves a mention as a major base for the development and operation of airships.

The R34 was the first aircraft to make the East-West Atlantic crossing in 1919. The station also had a role in setting up national air traffic control and researching parachuting. In its heyday, about 3000 personnel were stationed at RAF Pulham.

The Machines

In 1918 there were many types of British built aircraft and airships, some of the most famous makes being Avro, Bristol, Fairey, Royal Aircraft Factory, Short, Sopwith and Vickers. The production line was not invented until the end of 1913 so these were largely hand-built in workshops. Two local manufacturers were Mann Egerton and Boulton and Paul, both building a variety of designs under licence but they also designed their own aircraft. Boulton and Paul built airframes for airships too. The end of WWI halted demand for these flimsy planes – in November 1918 the RAF had about 22,000 planes [Boulton & Paul had built over 2,500 of these] but by 1939 this had dropped to about 200. Mann Egerton made furniture in place of planes and in 1934 Boulton & Paul moved their aircraft manufacture to Wolverhampton.

After WW1 change continued apace. Initially, peace and an impoverished economy meant that fewer aircraft, fewer airfields and fewer personnel were needed. Most of Norfolk's airfields returned to agriculture. Aircraft development was largely carried out for commercial carriers and scheduled passenger, mail and freight services to European destinations began in the 1920s and 30s. In the late 1930s war threatened again and the RAF rapidly built new airfields and aircraft to defend Britain, to support land and naval forces and to carry the fight to Germany. 1940 was perhaps, as Churchill suggested, the "finest hour" of the RAF as Spitfires and Hurricanes piloted by lads in their teens and 20s - The Few- defended the skies over Britain. There followed the jet age and then the cold war and the RAF saw the deployment of THOR and Bloodhound missiles in Norfolk, but again the absence of war and economics saw most RAF bases decommissioned. Marham is now the sole RAF presence in Norfolk, a base for Tornado GR4 fighter/bombers and the new Lockheed F35B, the latter flown by the famous 617 Dambuster Squadron. Technology and the pursuit of warfare have changed the RAF beyond recognition over the last 100 years. Will it survive – even thrive – for another hundred? In a world where threats come from computers, chemicals, nuclear devices and remotely controlled drones, the RAF will need to continue to change radically to help meet these challenges. What is remarkable, however, is how little remains from the endeavours and sacrifices made by those early pioneers of 1918. If you have any family history or records dating back to that time, we should love to hear from you.

David Button

FAVOURITE EATING HOLES CAFÉ NR2

If you happen to be in or near Chapelfield in Norwich, wander across the park, cross Vauxhall Street and behind Winchester Tower on Trory Street you will find a cafe called NR2 in what was once the home of The Kimberley Arms pub, which closed in 2015.

Owned by Teresa and Peter Carr, who live above the business, NR2 offers simple fare for breakfast and lunch, with cakes and other deli items available throughout the day. Open Tuesday – Saturday 'til 4 and Fridays 'til 8 their menu features granola breakfast bowls, Bray's Cottage pork pies, Scotch eggs, soup, a selection of sandwiches, salad bowls as well as hot beverages, wine, gin and beer. A range of vegetarian and vegan dishes are also available. As well as this, customers are able to purchase flowers and various locally sourced products including Pump Street Chocolate, Crush Foods sauces and Candi's Chutney and delicious bread.

What I liked about NR2 was the mix of customers- oldies like us, young mums with pushchairs, students engrossed in their study and smarter business folks buying take-away lunches. The premises are not large with some outside seating but we were made very welcome and seating rearranged when necessary. A good place to meet friends or treat yourself.

BACKNUMBER DISTRIBUTION

We do appreciate all of you who have chosen to receive "Backnumber" by email. This is a great help, as it relieves the branch of some costs in a time when funding is coming under pressure.

This brief note is a plea for those of you who still receive it by post. It would be a great help if you could think about getting the copy via email. As mentioned above this would ease costs and help the branch.

If you are willing to now get "Backnumber" by email, will you let Leon Kilbourn know at the following email address leon.kilbourn@unisonnorfolkcounty.co.uk and this will take effect from the Autumn issue.

Mik Pearce

Ed. our grateful thanks to Mik for his organisation and production of Backnumber distribution. Our thanks to you for your continued support.

WATCH HIS LIPS

Faced with a choice of the ventriloquist or his dummy,
I like the dummy. His eyes are brightly alive
whereas
the ventriloquist seems self absorbed. I say
seem
because he doesn't say much. Besides, the
dummy has
the gift of the gab and smiles. The ventriloquist
cuts
only a flinty grin. It is as if he is still struggling
to remember his lines. Meanwhile the dummy
works
the audience, tells jokes and shares anecdotes.
With him we are at ease.

It doesn't matter that he isn't politically correct,
often direct, and says things as he finds them.
Sometimes he insults us, calls us names and
swears.
We feel we can trust him. And when he speaks
to us
in confidence he winks, deliberately lowers his
voice
to keep the ventriloquist from hearing anything
he shouldn't. We can't help but think if he
would drop
the man altogether and stand for Parliament,
then
we could vote for him.

John Vaughan, February 2017

NORWICH OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUM AGM
Wednesday October 3rd 2018, 10am - 1pm,
Blackfriars Hall, Norwich
'Bridging the Gap' across the generations.
There will be displays, discussion and a
buffet lunch. All Welcome.

WHERE TO FIND US

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

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