

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the May edition of Backnumber. We hope that you are all well and have enjoyed the Easter sunshine.



You will note that this edition does not include the usual "Activities Box". This is because our activities are under threat due to the County Council's intention to charge visitors for parking at County Hall and to insist that they park on the overflow car park which is a very long way from the Sports and Social Club where activities take place. We have registered our opposition to this proposal and will be in discussion with the Branch to see how this problem can be solved.

We see that there is a problem but do not see that the Council is making any creative move to resolve it. This will affect many voluntary organisations in their work and will also discriminate against older people attending County Hall when issues that affect them are being discussed. We intend to work with other organisations as well as with the Branch to get this resolved and will keep members updated through Backnumber and by other means on developments.

Letters, comments etc to [porterjames172@gmail.com](mailto:porterjames172@gmail.com) or write to UNISON Office, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

## UNISON WELFARE

If you read the Branch annual report for 2018, you will have seen a very descriptive report from the Welfare Officer of her role and about what this service can offer.

We thought however that it was worth reminding Backnumber readers of this service and to remind you that it is available to retired members. The Welfare Officer is Frances Crum who is clearly very dedicated to her role despite having no facility time to assist her work. She is contactable through the Branch Office and Confidentiality is her watch word. She liaises with three case workers based at UNISON HQ in London as necessary, received her initial training through them and attends a bi annual seminar at Croyde Bay to keep up to date.

Her work mainly consists of dealing with members who are in financial difficulty and she processes applications which are then sent on to London to one of the three case workers. She has also amassed a huge amount of information about local organisations who may be able to offer assistance. These include Carers UK, Counselling services, local churches who offer services, the CAB and the location of food banks in Norfolk and how they may be accessed.

Retired members may be eligible to a discounted holiday at Croyde Bay, UNISON's holiday resort in Devon. They are certainly eligible to holiday there. They may be entitled to assistance with Insurance and Legal matters as well as assistance if they are in financial difficulties. This includes the provision of Winter fuel grants.

If you are in need of any assistance or any advice about what might be available in your locality, Contact the Branch Office on 01603 222384 and ask to speak to Frances Crum.

*Long stormy spring-time, wet contentious April,  
winter chilling the lap of very May; but at length  
the season of summer does come.  
Thomas Carlyle*

## IS YOUR DEMOCRACY BETTER THAN MY DEMOCRACY?

The result of the June 2016 referendum on UK membership of the EU has created pandemonium, a word created from ancient Greek, meaning "place of all devils". "Democracy" also comes from the Greek "demos" and "kratis", meaning power to the people. The concept was first used by Athenian leader Cleisthenes in the sixth century BC, so we've had loads of time to work out exactly what it means, - or perhaps not. People power in those days meant that free men only were allowed to vote, so no women, no slaves, no foreigners, no debtors, leaving about 10% of the population eligible to vote. Often, people opposing a democratic vote were put to death, as were those when events proved their vote to have been wrong.

'Democracy' is often used in support of an argument in the referendum aftermath. More eligible people voted to leave than to remain, but only 38% of the eligible electorate actually voted to leave. So when a politician claims a challenge to the result is "undemocratic", to which majority, counted in which particular way are they referring?

Many nations, such as Yemen and North Korea regard themselves as democracies and include the word in their name. Is upholding democracy urging the UK to behave more like those countries? Or perhaps this is already the case. The general election of 2017 failed to achieve an overall majority.

However, a **minority** government still holds power only because of a deal with the Democratic Unionists, a party which attracted 36% of the Northern Ireland vote and less than 1% of the UK vote, votes from a country electing to remain in the EU. That support of the DUP was bought with our money. If this had happened in a third world country, we should almost certainly see this as corrupt.

There are, of course lots of different kinds of democracies: They all share a process of soliciting the views of some people about some issues usually involving a voting system, In this country it was not until 1928 that women gained the same voting rights as men, 1946 when all adults over the age of 20 were given the vote, and 18 year olds were included from 1970. So after 2,600 years or so we may have nearly cracked which of us is eligible to vote, but not how we value their votes.

In the 2017 general election, the DUP polled 392,000 votes and won 10 seats in parliament. UKIP polled twice as many but won no seats. The Liberal Democrats got more than 2.3 million votes but won only 12 seats. The Conservatives won the largest number of seats, but needed; on average, 6,000 fewer votes than Labour to win each seat.

Both the referendum and the general election failed to reach an overall majority of the electorate. If you are a trade union, however, the law now says that it must be a majority of the eligible membership and not simply a majority of those who vote for industrial action to be lawful. Another Greek word, hypocrisy, comes to mind.

The last word should go to Winston Churchill who commented "Democracy is the worst form of government .....except all the others that have been tried".

### TUC PENSIONERS MEETING 26.3.19

Jackie Mitchell represented the RMs Committee at this meeting. The speakers were Chris Walsh from Age Platform, Europe and Professor Anand Menon, Director of UK in a Changing Europe.

Amongst the big concerns were that Britain should not leave the EU without a deal and that there would be significant damage to the scientific community if this happened.

The biggest fear of the audience was "cakeism" as Jackie called it - we should have freedom of movement even if Europeans didn't! The view was that a general election may be the best way out of the impasse as a confirmatory referendum might lead to a call for a third.

Since this meeting took place UNISON has announced that it supports a confirmatory referendum.

#### **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.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

This year's AGM took place on 20 February and was well attended.



There were no changes to Committee membership of the group of Officers and there are still 2 vacancies for women on the Committee.

The two speakers this year were Jonathan Dunning, Branch Secretary and Annie Ogden, who gave a very entertaining talk on being a Norwich City Guide entitled "Walking Through the Centuries".

Jonathan spoke of the difficulties the Branch faces on a whole host of issues and problems they have faced in trying to defend the existence of Children's Centres in particular. He also spoke about the Council's intention to return to a Cabinet System having previously returned to the committee system which gave greater opportunity for scrutiny. This is going to be a marked change especially as there is no longer a Chief Executive Role which, it seems, is largely going to be carried out by the Council Leader, Andrew Proctor. There is a Head of Paid Service, Tom McCabe, as is required by law.

Jonathan was also concerned that with Highways being outsourced to NORSE this would reduce the contributors to the Pension Fund and increase the actuarial risk. This will not affect current pension fund members but will cause the fund to potentially fail in the distant future.

There have been some successes, though, with the saving of Burman House, near Heacham, an establishment for Older People being one example.

Annie Ogden gave an excellent talk about organising walking groups through Norwich to inform them on the City's history. These happen throughout the year and attract people from all walks of life and from many places within the UK and beyond. The training to become a guide is quite rigorous as you really have to know what you are talking about if you are going to lead such a group. There are down sides as well. Annie told us of an experience on 24 June 2016, just following the EU Referendum. She was with a group of Italians and was appalled to hear people suggesting they "Go Home Now" as it seemed there were those who thought for-



eigners would now never grace our shores. This is an unusual event but nonetheless dreadful for that. It may be that one of our talks next year will be a walk with Annie and, if this happens, it is to be highly recommended.

The meeting ended with an award being made to Tony Olley and Barbara Selby who have been organising the talks for the last 3 years but now are taking a break from the task. They have done an excellent job. There then was an excellent lunch, as always.

J Porter

### NORFOLK SWIFT RESPONSE

Did you know that if you have urgent unplanned care needs or have fallen but are unhurt you can call on Norfolk Swift Response?

This 24-hour service provides help, support and reassurance if you have an urgent, unplanned need at home but don't need the emergency services. So for example, if your partner or carer is suddenly admitted to hospital, the Swift Response team can assist you with getting up, washing and dressing. Or if you have a fall but are not seriously injured, the team can bring special lifting equipment to help make moving as safe as possible for you.

The service is free for Norfolk Residents over the age of 18 and operates 24 hours a day  
CALL 0344 800 8020 - OPTION 1

## CARERS MATTER NORFOLK

Carers Matter Norfolk provide free, independent and confidential support for carers including young carers and families. You can telephone on 0800 083 1148 or email at [info@CarersMatterNorfolk.org.uk](mailto:info@CarersMatterNorfolk.org.uk). You can also contact through facebook [facebook.com/CarersMatterNorfolk](https://www.facebook.com/CarersMatterNorfolk) or tweet @CarersMatterNfk. You can also text (only) on 07537417850. Services include Community Support, Counselling, Carers Voice, Education and Training and advice and support for young carers and families. They are also looking for volunteers to support their work.

There are 100,000 carers in Norfolk supporting people with illnesses, disabilities mental ill health or addiction who cannot do without the help of carers. If you are one of those carers then Carers Matter Norfolk are available to help.

### ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!

- After 46 games Norwich City topped the table to win promotion to the Premiership,
- They achieved this with a squad costing the club less than some individual players in the Premier League,
- They defied the pundits and even the bookies,
- Despite not being assured of this remarkable success until Sunday afternoon, preparations were in place for a civic reception with all the right messages,
- Thousands of pounds worth of merchandise was printed and ready for sale before 9am on Monday and throughout the day,
- 50,000 people turned out on the coldest May bank holiday on record to share the moment with the team,
- Roads were closed and bus routes altered to make way for the colourful, noisy and happy parade,
- A replacement open topped bus was swiftly found when the first choice broke down,
- Nearly 20,000 fans went to Carrow Rd to see a final lap of honour by their team and to watch the charity match between a Wes Hoolahan side and a Russell Martin side,  
Fans behaved like fans and not fanatics and a great day was celebrated and enjoyed by so many people, glad to put aside the misery of Brexit for a while.

A year ago, nobody would have thought any of this possible but one of the greatest attributes of the Norwich City team this season is never to give up. We look forward eagerly to a campaign in the Premier league.

## NORFOLK GARDENS TRUST RESEARCH PROJECT

Norfolk Gardens trust aims to promote historical awareness of the gardens and designed landscapes of the County. The most recent publication of the Trust was "Humphrey Repton in Norfolk". (Published May 2018).

This year the Trust Research Group has turned its attention to the gardeners and gardens in Norfolk during the Victorian era. As this is a long time span and the sources many, the Research Group has decided to concentrate on the more modest gardening, from the clergy houses to the humble backyard plots.

Do you (or your friends) have pictures or family photographs showing Norfolk Victorian gardens, gardeners, greenhouses, conservatories, garden buildings, vegetable plots, market gardens, orchards or plant nurseries? If so, the Trust would love to see them so that a record can be made of what was happening, what was in fashion, who was gardening and what they were growing. At this stage the Trust are assembling an archive of images but for anything it would like to print in future publications it would, of course, ask your permission first.

The Trust knows from the Research Group's studies on Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton what a treasure trove of material is stored in cupboards and attics and they would also be interested to see garden journals, nursery catalogues, horticultural society material, gardening adverts, design plans or plant lists from this period.

If you are able to help or can suggest other sources of information I would love to hear from you. Please contact Sue Brown, Blofield and District Gardening Club and member of NGT Research Group on [susanbrown902@gmail.com](mailto:susanbrown902@gmail.com)

### 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)

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

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