



EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the latest edition of Backnumber. The eagle eyed amongst you will note that this is edition 198. Edition 200 will be published at the end of this year so we hope to make a “splash” around that landmark edition. We reckon the first edition must have been around the time of Local Government Reorganisation (when the new Norfolk County Branch was formed) so we would welcome any stories from readers of that momentous occasion.



These notes are being written probably about a month before you receive this and at the time of writing the sun is shining and the weather is warm so we hope people will be getting out and about a bit more given that Covid restrictions are now much less than they were. We are more than aware that it's not all over and that some precautions are still necessary but we hope that people are venturing out a bit more and enjoying the attractions that Norfolk has to offer.

At the time of writing there are so many things going on that may look very different by the time you receive Backnumber. Threats to leave the European Court of Human Rights and the Convention which Britain took the lead in setting up. Potential breaches of International Law in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol. Failure to see the link between the Protocol and the Convention which is central to the Good Friday Agreement and the devolution settlement which would also affect Scotland and Wales. A cost of living crisis which is only going to get worse and which will badly affect all of our members. These are all things that Backnumber will no doubt make comment on in editions to come, especially the cost of living crisis which will continue to cause us all difficult problems.

However, we are also interested in events much closer to home, namely the behaviour of Norfolk County Council and its attempts to avoid scrutiny. The Tory administration seems to be taking its lead from its own Government.

It has refused to appoint a Mental Health Champion, whose last incumbent was Emma Corlett from Labour. The Tories simply decided to axe the post and to tell us that all Cabinet members have Mental Health in their brief. Which means that it will be ignored and pressure to improve the Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Foundation Trust (the worst in the country) will be dissipated.

They refused to provide school meals in the holidays and instead produced a cack handed voucher scheme that virtually no one could access. When the opposition sought a debate on the subject, this was rejected, apparently on advice from officers. The opposition then walked out and Council Leader Andrew Proctor, in a remarkable move, lodged a standards complaint against the opposition parties. This was not upheld but we wonder if Mr Proctor was hoping that opposition members would be disbarred from attending meetings. Proctor is also trying to bring in rules which will reduce the scope for questioning him and his cabinet members and prevent scrutiny of contracts.

Then we find that Broadland District Council Tories have appointed one of their number to chair the Scrutiny Committee a role traditionally reserved for opposition councillors. This against fierce opposition from Liberal Democrat and Labour Councillors.

We think we see a trend. Whether in national or local politics, the Tories are slowly but surely closing down avenues for debate and scrutiny of their policies. In the opinion of Backnumber, this can only be for one reason which is that, if subjected to proper scrutiny, their policies would be rejected.

Letters, comments etc , as ever, to the editor at porterjames172@gmail.com

NEWS FROM THE AGM

The AGM took place on 6 April 2022 by Zoom. The meeting was strictly formal apart from an address by Jonathan Dunning, Branch Secretary, who updated us on developments within the Branch.

The big news was that 3 of the officers, David Button, Secretary, Verity Gibson, Assistant Secretary and Tricia Arnup, Treasurer, all announced that they were standing down from their posts. David and Verity are continuing in membership of the committee but Tricia has decided to hang up her spreadsheets and concentrate on other things. Elsewhere in this edition is a profile of the new Retired Members Secretary, Peter Cotterill, who will also take on the role of Treasurer.

David, Verity and Tricia have been members of the committee for many years and great tribute has to be paid to them all for the work they have done in their officer roles and the debt we owe them is immense.

David became secretary following the untimely death of Joan Fowler. He was previously Joint Chair of the Committee with me. Joan was a highly efficient secretary and it was a difficult job for anyone to take over from her, particularly in the unforeseen circumstances of her death. However, David approached the task, not just with efficiency but also with enthusiasm and rigour. They always say that if you want a job to be done you should ask a busy person. David had huge other commitments within the voluntary sector and was latterly Chair of the Older Peoples Partnership Board, but was always on the ball in distributing information, making sure deadlines were kept and making sure we were up to date with developments within UNISON and in the wider Norfolk hinterland. His contribution as secretary will be sorely missed (especially by me in the chair!) but happily he will be continuing in membership of the committee and will play an important role in the development of the Retired Members Section. David is also the Branch representative on the Sports and Social Club Committee which is an important link for our committee.

When David St Quintin could no longer carry on as Assistant Secretary, Verity Gibson stepped into the breach. She and David Button are partners but apparently they work in different rooms in the house so their conversation

is not tied to the Retired Members Committee business, thankfully! Verity, like David, has many interests within the voluntary sector and is also a busy person but she calmly and efficiently has kept the business of the committee moving on and, into the bargain, produces excellent minutes. The new Assistant Secretary will be Bidy Rawlence and it is a happy circumstance that Verity will still be a committee member and therefore available to help Bidy settle into her role.

Tricia became Treasurer at more or less the same time that David and Verity assumed their officer roles. The job was a bit more complicated at the time because we had control of most of our own finances at the time and so there was quite a lot to do to keep everything under control. However, as time progressed, UNISON decided that Retired Members Sections could no longer keep their own accounts and they were subsumed into the Branch system. The job then became a bit more of a Finance Officer but Tricia was always on top of the finances that we could control and still had to produce annual accounts for the AGM. She was always a great joy to work with and we wish her all the best for the future, even without the spreadsheets!

We look forward to good year and to having our next AGM face/face, presumably in February or march of 2023.

James Porter

BAR CODED STAMPS

Bar coded stamps are being introduced as part of the Royal Mail's "Modernisation Drive".

The reason for this appears to be that used stamps given for charities can often end up inadvertently enabling a form of fraud known as "kiloware" which can be prepared and fraudulently sold as valid postage. Money made from this scam is apparently significant.

If you have non barcoded stamps you can use them until 31 January 2023. You can also "swap them out" but you either have to print out the form from the Royal Mail website or ring 0345 774 0740 and speak to "Customer Experience" and they will post you a form.

Best advice is to use your non barcoded stamps before the deadline and avoid the hassle. If you use them after the deadline the item of post will be subject to surcharge.

PROFILE PETER COTTERILL

As those of you attending the Retired Members AGM will recall, David Button decided to stand down as Secretary to the Section, along with Verity Gibson, the Assistant Secretary and Tricia Arnup, the Treasurer. Much will be said about the work they have done elsewhere in this edition.



So we now have a new Retired Members Secretary, Peter Cotterill, who will also be taking on the role of Treasurer. Peter will probably not be too well known to many of you unless you were active in the NALGO Branch at the District Council level, prior to 1993. Peter was, for a long time, Secretary of the City of Peterborough Branch of NALGO and was also a member of the regional negotiating team which formed, in the arcane language of the time, the Provincial Council, meeting with regional employers. If you can allow your mind to go that far back, you may remember things like Appendix E payments which were made to those being redeployed to offices distant from their original place of work. Those were the kind of things negotiated at that level.

Peter was also very active in the District Council and was its last Secretary, taking over from your editor and was also a member of the Conference Agenda Committee.

He has a long history of involvement in NALGO/UNISON and it was a fortuitous act that he and his wife, Sue, moved to Sheringham some years ago. Since moving to Norfolk he has been a regular attender at our AGMs and those of the Regional Retired Members. He has also represented the Branch on N Norfolk Trades Council. Peter now brings this wealth of experience to the role of Retired Members Secretary and we welcome him on board.

LITTLE SNORING AIRFIELD

One or two people know that I am lucky enough to be able to fly a light aircraft, which I do from the remains of an airfield at Little Snoring, set a few miles from the North Norfolk coast.

Our flying group has operated from Little Snoring for over 50 years. East Anglia still has a few of the airfields that were built during the second world war but the outline of many of them can still be seen from the air. The runways of some still exist, but now with chicken sheds on them!

Like many airfields in Norfolk, Little Snoring was originally built for bomber command during WW2 and played host to a number of aircraft types, including Lancasters and Mosquitos.

Construction started on Little Snoring airfield in September 1942, with the usual RAF 3 runway configuration, the longest being 07/25 at 2,000 yards.

The airfield came online in the summer of 1943, with 115 squadrons and their Lancaster IIs. However 115 squadron's time was to be short lived at Little Snoring and they returned to Witchford in the final month of 1943. The Lancaster's of 115 squadron were replaced with mosquitoes equipped with Serrate Radar Detection of 169 and 515 squadrons.



Today it is a shadow of its former self with only 500 meters of its original 07/25 concrete runway - the remainder dug up to provide hardcore for the Fakenham bypass I understand. The old control tower still provides a useful purpose as a structure to support our windsock.

Peter Cotterill

HISTORY IN THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE

The volunteers' work on listening to the UOSH recordings and putting details into a spreadsheet ended abruptly at the start of lockdown, when the search room at the Archive Centre had to be closed. Staff continued archiving and cataloguing, however, and 819 recordings were eventually cleared for free online access via the British Library's website from May 2022.

But, you have to have a project! so I began working at home on music and spoken word tapes which had been given by amateur collectors to the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust in Stowmarket. Early collectors like Ralph Vaughan Williams were dedicated to preserving tunes and songs which they thought were in danger of disappearing, but rarely asked the singers where they learned a particular song and what it meant to them. The young folk song enthusiasts of the later revival talked to people and shared songs.

Cliff and Pauline Godbold recorded an afternoon at home with Walter Pardon in Knapton some time in the late nineteen-seventies. Walter, born in 1914, treasured the old songs he'd learned from his family. He sang "The Hungry Army" and the Agricultural Labourers' Union songs he had learned from his Uncle Billy Gee, and told them some local stories:

"They transported one of the blacksmith's sons, Bob Hall, Peter Hall's son. He was caught nearby when someone fired a stack, near Knapton church in the stackyard, policeman came and blamed him for it and he was took off to court and sentenced, I don't know if that was seven or fourteen years transportation, but he never done it. In fact they said that was one of the last things his father asked him, he said, "Before you leave me, Bob, tell me the truth – did you set fire to the stack?" He said, "No, I did not." I don't know how long he was out in Australia or Tasmania, but there was an old man in the village, when he was dying he sent for the parson and said he wanted to make a confession. He said he was the one set fire to the stack. And they sent over to Australia for Bob to come home, but he never did get home. Poor man died and was buried at sea. An innocent man."



Walter didn't think this was in the direct memory of anyone still alive when the story was told to him. Census records confirm that it was in the 1840s; Bob Hall was in the 1840 census, but had disappeared by 1850.

This is the last of my pieces for Backnumber. I hope I have shown how ordinary lives can be extraordinary to later generations. If you have home recordings (any format) which you think might be of wider interest, please contact Jonathan Draper (jonathan.draper@norfolk.gov.uk) at the Sound Archive at NRO. And if you are telling your own story, always start with Who, When and Where, so nobody listening in fifty years' time is left wondering who this fascinating person was!

Rita Gallard

REFUGEES

A friend of mine has this story to tell about refugees. Her father came over to the UK in 1939, catching the last Kinder Transport train from Hamburg at the age of 14. (He was Jewish and as far as I know his extended family perished during the war) He landed at Harwich and arrived in London at Liverpool Street Station, from there he went to Scotland and then back to Bury St Edmunds. At the age of 17 he joined the British Army and at the conclusion of the War was used as an interpreter during The Nuremberg Trials (where he met a British girl and married).

Because of the kindness shown to her father and the fact that families took him in and many like him, this greatly influenced her into doing similar. She and her husband now have 3 refugees living with them Grand father, Daughter and Grand daughter. Hopefully very soon Grand mother will join them. All is going well.

A short reminder that kindness has its own reward and leads to further kindness and maybe a better world.

Dave Beard

REEPHAM



For our lighter relief this month we visit Reepham. If you have some interesting or quirky information about your town/village/area/street, why not drop us a line?

Millions of people will have had the opportunity to look at the beautiful 18th century market-place in Reepham without realising it as it was the set for an episode of the ITV series "Poirot". "The Tragedy at Marsdon Manor", first broadcast in 1991, includes scenes at The Dial House, the market square and at Sennowe Park, ten miles up the road. Marsdon Manor was in Essex in the original short story first published in 1923 by Agatha Christie.

Like so many of our ports of call, Reepham was a part of Norfolk's spider web of railways. In fact, there were two stations, Whitwell and Reepham operated by two companies, Midland & Great Northern and Great Eastern, eventually merging and linking the two stations in 1960 with a 12.5 mile new loop, the Themelthorpe curve. This was mainly for moving coal rather than for the convenience of passengers and Reepham finally lost its railway connections under the Beeching cuts.



Reepham station survives with its platforms and buildings but the track is now part of Marriotts Way cycleway and footpath. The station at Whitwell has been brought back to life as a railway heritage centre and steam museum.



Reepham is one of only two places in [Europe](#) to have had three churches in the same churchyard. The parish church of Reepham is St Mary's which stands adjacent to St. Michael's which belongs to Whitwell.

A third church, All Saints served the parish of Hackford but was destroyed by fire in 1543. The odd circumstance of the three churches on the same site was because each was built on its respective parish boundary.

Another story is that the three sisters represented on the town sign had a "falling-out" and tried to out-do each other by building a church each, or perhaps so as not to have to worship in the same church. The sign was designed by students at Reepham High school.

DIGITAL EXCLUSION

Readers may well be aware that the technology companies, supported by the government, are planning to end the use of landline telephones by 2025. These will be replaced with digital telephones dependant on internet access.

A number of Pensioner Organisations, amongst them being Silver Voices and the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) are fighting this decision and at the moment the process has been paused. A committee of charities has been set up to discuss this further and to take account of the views of older people.

Among the issues of concern are access to emergency services if power and internet signal drop out along with access to care lines for those who use them. Also, there are many people who do not have internet access and still more whose signal for internet and mobile phones is fragile.

This is not all. One of the issues being disputed by the RMT is the closure of station ticket offices. We are all to have an app which we use to buy tickets which will be stored on our smart phones. No human contact and goodness knows what happens when the digital barrier refuses to open. There are countless other examples where technology replaces human contact.

This is not good for older people or indeed for any other group of people who want a friendly voice for help and guidance. It should be resisted and all power to those organisations leading the fight back.

SUMMER OF DISCONTENT?

At the time of writing we are just witnessing the first day of 3 rail strike days organised by RMT with the promise of much more in the pipeline. We know that ballots are being conducted by other rail unions and that there is talk of further action across the public sector as the cost of living crisis begins to bite. Teachers, health workers and local government staff are threatening ballots and even junior barristers, whose pay is shocking mainly due to cuts in Legal Aid, are taking action to try to rectify the problem.

In all of this it is the disingenuous nature of government that shines through. The “not me, gov” approach which says that employers and unions should solve their problems as it’s nothing to do with the government. Except and colour me surprised by this, it turns out that the most recent contracts for rail providers make clear that nothing can happen in the nature of service conditions and wage negotiation without the express permission of the Secretary of State. The this is currently Grant Shapps, a man with at least 3 names who tried to introduce a flawed financial “Ponzi” scheme into the USA (under a different name, of course), cannot fill us with confidence. We can be even less confident when we learn that Oliver Dowden, the Chair of the Tory Party, got up an on line petition to place the blame and therefore the responsibility to resolve the dispute, on the Labour Party. He perhaps doesn’t understand that the RMT is a Union not affiliated to the Labour Party.

For those of us in membership of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme we will be guaranteed a pay rise in April 2023 based on the rate of inflation in September this year. Our State Pension increase should also be based on this rate but given last year’s performance in failing to abide by the Triple Lock commitment, there is no guarantee that the increase will be based on something else. Until then we will have to absorb large increases in energy costs and other cost of living rises with no hint of any help in the interim other than the limited support already announced to help with energy bills.

It can come as no surprise that workers will take action to try to meet the worst of this crisis. Retired Members have no action to take other than to support our working colleagues in their quest for fairness and hope that our time comes soon.

Activities

We continue to enjoy the facilities of NCC Staff Sports & Social Club on **Monday mornings** from 9.30 to midday. At the moment our members use the **Table Tennis** room with a mid-morning coffee break and chat but there is so much more available at the club, including short mat bowls, pool, snooker and darts. We need more of our members to join in and make use of these opportunities. Just turn up at the club in the grounds of County Hall and you will be made very welcome. Friends and family of retired members are welcome, too.

Also, on the third Thursday of each month at the same venue members meet to play **Whist**. Again, more players will be very welcome.

It is time to start planning for our popular series of **Winter Wednesday Talks** and in order to get these going again we are urgently looking for a volunteer to coordinate these. If you think you might be able to thus interesting and not hugely demanding activity, please get in touch via the contact addresses in this newsletter.

Please check Facebook ‘@nccsocialclub’ and the ‘norfolk county council social club’ webpage for more information about the club.

“The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just”.

Abraham Lincoln

WHERE TO FIND US

If you wish to make any comments or raise issues about **Backnumber**, please e-mail the Editor

Jim Porter at porterjames172@gmail.com

The Unison Branch Office at County Hall is closed until further notice and not able to respond to phone calls or post. The retired members e-mail address at County Hall is

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