



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

August 2018 Newsletter

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Members and supporters at our 2018 AGM and below Bob Collins in the chair with Jeremy Corbyn speaking

At the heart of our annual general meeting on 19th July was the message from George Durack, our chairman saying: *"Stronger and more forceful action for change is the only way our voices will be heard by a government that will not listen. Let's carry forward Islington Pensioners Forum!"* (see page two)

Over 60 members and visitors attended the AGM. There was a good discussion arising from the annual report and we were really pleased that our president, Jeremy Corbyn MP was able to attend, bringing a fighting message in defence of our National Health Service. The committee was re-elected (see back page for names).

During the buffet at the end of the meeting, members and visitors were able to get to know each other and we recruited a number of new members.

oooOooo

Because of the high cost of postage, our AGM report was sent by post to those members who usually come to our monthly meetings and copies were available at the meeting itself, but if any other member would like a copy, please let us know and we will send it to you.

This report outlines Islington Council's grant to assist IPF to be a hub for older people in the borough, not

only with our own activities, but assisting them to know about the various other activities and events for older people in the borough. We will soon have a database and dedicated website for this.

There is a list of the 11 speakers we have had at our monthly Forum meetings and our activities, including the river trip, the Christmas stall, our "End the Winter Blues" party, lunch and a chat on Wednesdays and the Monday bingo sessions. We also reported on the development of our garden at the back of our hall. If anybody wants to donate plants and/or help with this, please let us know.



Also we report on the 12 newsletters produced since the previous AGM, our determination to build the generations united campaign, and the start of our Pensioners' Parliament campaign (see page 5 and back page)

Finally our thanks to committee members and all those who have helped with all of the above activities, plus thanks to the Council for their confidence in us and a big thank-you to you — our members and supporters.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Despite his best efforts, George, our Chairman, was unable to make it to our Annual General Meeting, but he sent the following message, which was read out by Jeremy Corbyn our President:

Unfortunately my discharge from hospital has been delayed, and so I am not able to be with you at this AGM and am sending this written greeting to you on this important occasion.

It is important that our Forum and the whole pensioners' movement continues to campaign relentlessly for today's and tomorrow's pensioners. Stronger and stronger action is necessary from us all to ensure the provision of health and care for the future of our children and our grandchildren.

Although I do not choose to be in hospital, the experience has shown me and convinced me more than ever that our NHS staff are doing everything in their



George Durack

power to carry forward the best possible care for all, yet our country's leaders are deliberately underestimating the finance required to ensure this magnificent service.

This cheating, pretending and repeating the same old answers to our questions – telling us that they are provid-

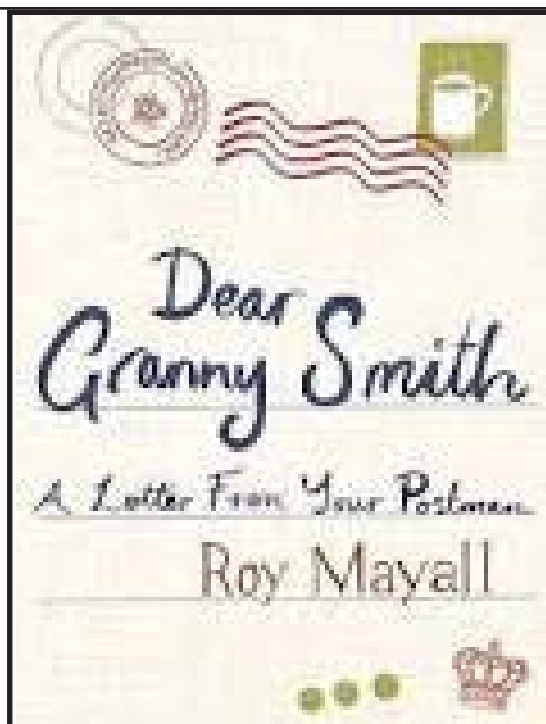
ing adequate funding – means that we must stand up and be counted to defend our NHS and care services.

Stronger and more forceful action for change is the only way our voices will be heard by a government that will not listen. Let's carry forward Islington Pensioners Forum!"

With best wishes, **George**

"Dear Granny Smith" was written and published in 2009. We are serialising it in our newsletter, and invite your comments and experiences about the changes in "your" job over the years.

So turn to page three for the first chapter. . .



Book your place for the NPC PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT 10 - 14 June 2019 Winter Gardens, Blackpool Total cost £250

- Monday 10th June: a comfortable coach with reclining seats and an on-board toilet from Islington Town Hall, returning on 14th June.
- Bed, breakfast and evening meal at the friendly Gresham Hotel, which has a lift, a comfortable lounge and is very near the Winter Gardens.

Pay a £10 deposit and spread the cost over the months cheques payable to "IPF" FORM ON BACK PAGE

Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 1

"Dear Granny Smith": This title is a letter to you, me, all of us, from Roy Mayall, a British postie. It is an eye-opening, heartfelt letter which goes behind the scenes, through the ages, in the sorting room and out on the daily round, to tell the other side of the story.

The world doesn't seem to be made for human beings any more. There doesn't seem to be any room for us. We all have this fantastic new technology: all these computers and mobile phones and Sat Navs and the rest. It's supposed to help us to communicate with one another and to get around the planet without getting lost, but if you ask me no one communicates properly any more, no one gets to know each other, not even their own neighbour, and when it comes to where we are going, the human race is completely lost. No one knows which direction to turn.

I am writing this letter on the day of the national post strike (2009). I've been on strike a lot lately. There have been many days when the mail didn't come. To be honest, I don't even know why I voted for it. But I'm not really sure that the Union had the same set of reasons as me, and I'm not sure, by the time it's all over, whether anything will really have changed.

It wasn't about pay. I'm underpaid. I could do with some more pay. Fortunately I have no responsibilities any more. This isn't true of most of my work mates. Many of them have young families. It's very hard for them, working so hard for so little reward, being so tired at the end of the day that they can't even enjoy their home life properly. But it wasn't about pay for any of us. It was about the future.

It was about the future of public service.

Dos that seem like an old-fashioned phrase to you — "public service" — a bit out of place in our modern world?

It's not a term that the managers use any more. They talk about "products". That term always puzzles me. What products? We deliver the mail, don't we? We stick letters through letter boxes.

I was talking to one of the guys a few weeks ago. We were chatting about when we had first started out as postmen. He'd been on an induction course over in the main office in the nearby city. This must have been a few years back, since no one goes on induction courses any more. He said they had been asked a particular question by the man running the course.

"What does the Royal Mail deliver?" he had asked. There were about twenty people in the room. They all had to write down a list: Letters. Bills. Packages. Post-cards. Birthday cards. Magazines. Christmas cards.

Presents. Books. DVDs. You name it. I'm sure you could make up a list of your own.

Then the guy running the course went round and asked everyone what was on their list, and every time someone added a new item, he put it onto his own list on the white board at the end of the room. It got to be a pretty long list in the end. And then, when everyone was satisfied with the list they had collectively made, the guy said, "But you've missed something out."

"You want to know what you've missed?"

"Yes," they said.

"It's advertising."

See? That's what we deliver most of. Not letters, or cards or presents. Not bank statements or credit card statements. Not even bills. Advertising! The stuff everybody gets but nobody reads. That's what our "products" are: cheaper and cheaper ways to shovel more and more advertising through your letter box. Stuff you never asked for. Stuff you never needed. Stuff which gets delivered anyway whether you asked for it or not. Stuff! We stuff your letter box with stuff. We stuff it through your letter box and then you stuff it into the bin. You say: "Get stuffed!" Then the bin men come round and they stuff it into a hole in the ground; or, if you're really lucky, it gets "recycled", which means it gets made into more stuff before it finally gets stuffed into the ground; or sometimes it gets stuffed into a container and delivered to some Third World country, where it gets stuffed into a hole in the ground.

It ends up in the ground in the end.

So you ask me why I went on strike and I could say, "It's so that I don't have to deliver quite so much stuff." But you ask the Union and they will say, "That stuff pays your wages." Interestingly enough, that's what the managers say too.

See? I'm not sure my strike was for the same reasons as my Union. I went on strike for more time and less stuff and for a return to public service. That seems to me to be the recipe for a happy life.

What follows is my letter to you, Granny Smith. My letter of apology for everything that has gone wrong with the Royal Mail.

(to be continued next month)

The heatwave raises new health problems

We are all aware that cold-related illnesses are the cause of the winter crisis in our NHS, and there is an annual review of winter deaths. Now it is necessary for us to understand the rising problems of the heatwave, especially for elderly people and small children, but also particularly for those with heart and lung conditions.

Sweltering temperatures in 2003 killed over 2,000 people in the space of just ten days, and now Met Office data suggests that such deadly events will be the norm in coming decades, especially with the toxic traffic emissions on our streets.

Mary Creagh, chair of then Environmental Audit Committee said: "The government must stop playing pass the parcel with local councils and the NHS and develop a strategy to protect our ageing population from this increasing risk."

And Bob Ward, policy director at the Grantham Re-

search Institute at LSE university has warned that many deaths could be avoided if government departments improved their "shockingly poor" communications with the public about heatwaves.

Kathryn Brown, head of adaptation on the government's Committee on Climate Change, said: "You don't get heat as the cause of death on a death certificate, but what we find after a heatwave event is an increase in overall mortality above and beyond what you would expect for that time of year."

Surely now, with this heatwave, the forest and heathland fires around the world and so many other harmful effects of climate change, we must all wake up to these growing problems and demand government action and as a minimum, to introduce regulation to ensure homes, transport systems, hospitals and nursing homes do not overheat, and to limit maximum classroom and workplace temperatures?

Charged for falling over!

Tendering District Council has proposed a £25.92 additional annual charge to around 2,500 Essex residents who use its Careline service, to cover the cost of lifting someone if they have had a fall.

The so-called "lifting service" will mean Careline staff go to the home of the elderly person after they have called the alarm, and help get them back on their feet.

The National Pensioners Convention's local affiliated group has said the proposal "penalises older people for falling."

It also raises the question as to whether someone would be left on the floor if they hadn't paid the additional "lifting charge"!

(source: NPC's monthly bulletin, Campaign)

Over 75s' free TV licence now under attack

The latest attack on the universal benefits available to older people has come from the Intergenerational Foundation (IF).

The think-tank has called for the free TV licence for the over 75s to be means-tested and only available to those on Pension Credit.

The IF claims it is unfair that younger people are funding older viewers. But like much in the phoney generational war, the claims very rarely tell the truth.

The latest audience figures show that BBC viewing by the 16-34 age group has dropped by over 50 per cent in the last eight years, with many no longer using their TV at all to access programmes.

As such, they are not required to even have a TV licence — so it's difficult for them to subsidise others if they don't pay themselves.

More worrying is that the National Pensioners Convention warned of a backlash when the government originally transferred responsibility for the free TV licences from the Department of Work and Pensions to the BBC.

At the time, the Convention said it was part of the Treasury's wider programme of cuts, but the blame would end up being targeted at the BBC.

In order to save money, the broadcaster would then inevitably have to look at ways of cutting the benefit said to cost £200m a year.

On the one hand there is a call to end the free TV licence to over 75s and on the other there are outcries about the increasing loneliness of older people which is the source of so much ill-health.

(source: NPC's monthly bulletin, Campaign)

In response to all your inquiries about George Durack — on Saturday 4th August, he was much better and sent his best wishes to you all. His 94th birthday is on Friday 24th August, so if you want to send a card, please send it to: George, c/o IPF, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

INFORMATION

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| BINGO every Monday | This is suspended for the time being. We will keep you informed. |
| Lunch and a chat on Wednesdays | 1 pm in the IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN |
| IT and Smart Phones on Wednesdays | 3.30 p.m in the IPF Hall, address above |
| Thursday 16th August | OUTING, 11 am coach from the Town Hall |
| Thursday 20th SEPTEMBER 10.30 am | Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. |

IPF GARDEN PARTY will be held on Saturday 22nd September at 1 p.m. We are keeping our fingers crossed for good weather!

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM (membership £5 a year, cheques payable to IPF)

1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

Telephone: 0207 226 7687

Email: ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org

Charity Number: 1043081

Supported by Cripplegate Foundation, the Big Lottery and Islington Council

Office opens from 10.30 a.m.- 2.30 p.m. Monday and Wednesday, but please call first. Sign up for our online Newsletter on our website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.org

Presidents: Jeremy Corbyn MP & Lord Smith of Finsbury

Joint Chairs: George Durack, Bob Collins

Secretary: Dot Gibson **Assistant Secretary:** Annette Thomas **Treasurer:** Eric Hill

Committee members: Frances Bradley, Joyce Herron, Supa Kusumratana, David Milner, Blanche Woodbridge, Pam Zinkin, Eddie Zissler

***TO BOOK FOR THE
PENSIONERS PARLIAMENT 10-14 June 2019***

Name.....

Address.....

Tel:..... Email:.....

Enclosed £10 deposit (cheques to "IPF")

***Post to: Pensioners' Parliament, IPF, 1a Providence Court,
Providence Place, Islington N1 0RN***