



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

September 2018 Newsletter

We mourn the loss of our much-loved chairman, George Durack, who died, aged 94 on 2nd September

George was a leader and a friend. Nothing was too much for him when it came to defending the rights of ordinary people — not

only was he an active leader of Islington Pensioners Forum, he was also a staunch member of the Communications Workers Union (CWU) and of the Labour Party. Throughout his life he shouldered the responsibilities of being the elected representative of working people — as shop steward, committee member, local councillor and pensioners' leader. George

was a genuine working-class hero: down-to-earth, honest, modest, full of love and understanding, but never backward in coming



forward to defend his principles of social and political justice. Even days before his final breath, George set out the message for his

Chairman's Notes on page two of this newsletter. Losing George fills us with great sadness, but we are also filled with enormous pride that we have been led and guided by a friend, a brother, a comrade. We will remember his words and advice as we go forward to build Islington Pensioners Forum, standing up for today's and tomorrow's pensioners — generations

united. Our thoughts are with George's daughter Elaine and his large extended family.

Book your place for the NPC

PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT

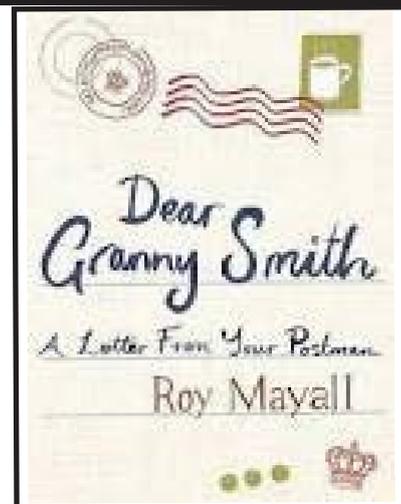
10 - 14 June 2019, Winter Gardens, Blackpool

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



Chapter Two on page three: "you'd go out of the office just as the sun was coming up. . ."

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I (Dot) visited George in the Marie Curie hospice in Hampstead on Saturday 25th August. His birthday cards were on display — his 94th birthday was on 24th August. I asked him what message he wanted to convey in his Chairman's Notes, and he said:

Thinking about the dangerous political situation facing us, leads me to say to all my friends in Islington Pensioners Forum: Remember that our president, Jeremy Corbyn is on our side of the fence!

When Jeremy visited me recently in hospital, he came straight from getting off the train from a tiring visit to Edinburgh and he was smiling and joking all the time. But out of necessity, over many years of responsibility in the Labour and Trade Union movement, including serving as a Councillor when Margaret Hodge was the leader of Islington Council, I know the kind of treachery he is facing.

With him sitting beside my hospital bed, I could see in my "mind's eye" the "guns" pointing at his back, not only from the other side in the House of Commons, but also from within his own party and much of the media.

They all know that Jeremy hasn't got a racist/anti-semitic bone in his body! But their purpose is to destroy and defeat him by whatever means before the next general election. It is difficult to imagine how he is withstanding this constant and unceasing attack which started as soon as he won the right to be a candidate in Labour's leadership election in 2015.

I am therefore convinced that members of Islington Pensioners Forum will join me to reject these attacks and stand up for Jeremy just as he stands up for us!

"An absorbing and eye-opening evening. . . ."

"Bring Back The Love". This was the title of a production by Black Art Productions (BAP) on 10 August at the Haringey Sixth Form College, to which I was proud to have been invited by the host of the event, Hesketh Benoit of BAP, who is also the lead basketball coach in Haringey.

Hesketh was on the North London delegation to the Blackpool Pensioners' Parliament this year; he has joined our discussion about how we can take forward the National Pensioners Convention "generations united" campaign.

The largely black audience representing all age groups became part of the production! "Tonight is about solutions!" said Hesketh opening the evening of 'discussion and drama'. "We know about the tragedy of knife and gun crime — 80 young people have died since the beginning of the year. It is time to get together to discuss and act on solutions."



Hesketh Benoit

A number of well-performed sketches explored the issues: drill music (the provocative lyrics), lack of youth clubs — nothing to do, children recruited as drug carriers (county lines), the death of friends and siblings, fear of the gang leaders, police "narks"; these were followed

by audience participation with comments by an expert panel: Leroy Logan (former Hackney Met Police supervisor), Pauline Campbell (lawyer), Cheryl Phoenix (Black Children's Agenda), Davis Williams (Manhood Academy).

Members of the audience spoke from the heart of their own children, of their own experiences of violence and imprisonment, of their community groups and actions, of the need to come together and "bring back the love". It was an absorbing and "eye-opening" evening. North London MPs would do well to take the whole production plus audience to Parliament!

Dot Gibson

Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 2 — Dawn colours and bird song
Last month we published chapter 1 of Roy Mayall's book, ending with: "What follows is my letter to you, Granny Smith. My letter of apology for everything that has gone wrong with the Royal Mail" so to continue. . . .

I first started working for the Royal Mail in November 1979. I transferred from BT, which in those days, if you remember, was part of the same company. It was called the Post Office. This was the same year Margaret Thatcher came to power, but before she started "selling off the family silver to pay for the servants", as Harold Macmillan so memorably put it.

It was a different job in those days. For a start we had proper training. I was trained for a whole week, going out and shadowing one postie, who taught me all the tricks of the trade; all the short cuts and the best way round every walk, how to pack my bag, how to bundle up the letters, how to do loops, where to leave my bike, what to look out for and what to avoid and where all the fierce dogs were. These days people are just thrown out onto the street without any training at all and if a dog goes for them, it's their own fault.

There was a four-man rota, covering these deliveries, with one man in reserve. It was a six day week, seven hours and 40 minutes a day. Saturdays was "Job and Knock", meaning when you finished delivering on a Saturday you went home. It was a lighter day too, with no second delivery, so you were finished by 9.30. That's why we didn't mind the six-day week. It was almost as good as having the whole week-end off. Better, in fact, because we got an early start.

We don't have PHGs any more. They abolished the grade a few years back. The PHG earned a few quid more than the rest of us, but then they decided to phase him out. His wages stopped increasing, and as the differential faded and the ordinary postie's pay started to catch up, as all the old PHGs retired, so the grade quietly slipped out of existence, like an old postman's cap dropped into a river and carried out to sea, and then slowly sinking beneath the waves.

Our last PHG was Bill. That was over two years ago. But the PHG was important to the structure of the Royal Mail as it was. He wasn't management. He came up from the ranks. So he was like a sergeant major. He had more authority than the rest of us: a few more duties.

For instance, Bill was in charge of "the cage". This is the secure part of the office where the keys and valu-

ables are kept. It's called the cage because it is reinforced so no one can break into it. It is here, too, where we keep the Special Deliveries, that higher-priced premium mail in which you place valuable goods and documents and which is guaranteed to arrive by 1.00 p.m. the next day. Us postmen have to sign to say we've received it, and then sign again if we have to return it.

At one time the PHG was in sole possession of the cage and no one had access to it without Bill's permission. These days there are at least half a dozen ordinary postmen who do the same job. The PHG no longer exists, and there's no discipline any more. Bill was kind, stern and funny all at the same time.

He'd say, "Oi, oi, Mr. Mayall" and call me over to the office for a ticking off whenever I made a mistake, which I often did in the early days. And when he's finished with me he'd say, "We'll learn you. We'll make a postman of you yet." I loved old Bill, and I was even an assistant PHG for a while. That was before they abolished the grade, of course. These days there's nothing left to aspire to.

Anyway, as I say, we started work at 4.45. First of all it was the internal sorting. The mail came in in bags, and we'd tip it all out and then sort it into all the original walks. There were more walks then, and more of us to do them. There was no junk mail in those days either, or very little. No advertising leaflets. No special offers. No mass mail out catalogues. No charities begging for your cash. No generalized mail addressed to "The Householder" or "The Occupier". No surveys. No letters with pens in them to help you reply. No promises of a guaranteed free gift that always turns out to have strings attached. No garish envelopes offering cash prizes. No miniaturized sachets containing free samples of hair conditioner. No free energy-saving light bulbs. No pizza adverts. No two-for-the-price-of-one deals.

No. In those days, there were letters, there were bills, there were bank statements, there were postcards and birthday cards and anniversary cards; there were a few packages, some Special Deliveries and Recorded Deliveries; not much more. If we had one bag of mailsort a week we complained.

continued on page four.

Let me explain what “mailsort” is. Actually, you would recognize it. It’s a form of third class corporate mail, very cheap. It has a big “M” in the right-hand corner instead of the Queen’s head, and is the means by which all this advertising comes through the post. If you want to know what to throw away, there’s a fair chance it will have an “M” in the corner. Probably more than two-thirds of what we deliver these days is mailsort. Thirty years ago it hardly existed.

So sorting was finished fairly quickly: say in about an hour. Then we prepared our own rounds, slotting the letters into the individual addresses, before bundling up the mail, and putting it into a bag ready to go out.

That was at 6.45.

Notice I said “a bag”. Not ten bags, which is what we take out these days. One bag. Admittedly it was a very full bag. There were no weight limits in those days either. We stuffed all the mail into one huge bag, piled up like the Leaning Tower of Pisa on the front of our bikes, and took it out. There were no drop-off points. No secure boxes where the mail was kept so you could pick up your extra bags. There were no extra bags. I think this was probably different in the metropolitan areas. They did things differently in the city. But all of the rounds from our office were done on bikes, and we took them out in one load.

So now, here’s something I want you to imagine. Probably some of you are early risers, so you know what the world is like at that time of the morning. It depends on the time of year, of course, and the weather, but sometimes you’d go out of the office just as the sun

was coming up, and it was like you were cycling through your own personal corner of Eden. That lovely soft, golden light of the early morning, listening to the birds singing, the suburban garden all bursting with flowers. And there’s just like you, the milkman, a few dog-walkers and the occasional late-night reveler who’s winding his way home from the night before.

As a postie you’ve already been up for two hours by now. You’re fresh, in the peak of health. There’s no traffic, no traffic fumes, just the wind bustling in from the coast, and the great, vast garden of the earth all around you.

It’s like the whole earth has grown bigger, like it has taken in a breath and expanded itself, is stretching itself to shake off the night.

See. That’s what it was like That was why posties were always so happy, why, if you said “good morning” to a postie, you would always get a cheerie reply. I mean, I can’t speak for everyone. Everyone is different, of course, but I seem to remember – and I don’t think I’m imagining it – that us posties were amongst the happiest workers in the whole world.

So that’s it. That’s what I want you to imagine.

I want you to hear the song in the postie’s heart as he slides your letters through the letter box. It’s a song made up of dawn colours and bird song, and your letters are bathed in morning light.

That’s what your postage stamp used to pay for. Not just getting a letter from here to there, not just a delivery, but a little spark of Eden.

(continued next month. . . .)

Arsenal Fans’ Anger

Many of our members have been Arsenal Football Club supporters since childhood and proudly wear their red and white scarves. Now they are really upset and angry that one billionaire shareholder, Kroenke will borrow from Deutschebank to buy the other billionaire shareholder, Usmanov’s 30 per cent stake for £550 million.

The Arsenal Supporters’ Trust had previously launched a “fanshare” scheme encouraging supporter ownership. Now this “stitch-up” will mean that the club’s status as a limited company will end. The club will be privately owned and Kroenke will exercise his option for the compulsory acquisition of the remaining shares, many of which are held by individual fans.

It will end the long-standing official role of Arsenal supporters in the running of the club, reducing the accountability and transparency over key decisions.

Get up and dance!



Tottenham & Wood Green pensioners were let down by the musicians due to play at their August party. But that didn’t deter them from dancing and singing when the “kareoke man” turned up to save the day.

INFORMATION

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 20th September 10.30 a.m.	Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. Speaker: Luke Daniels, chair of Caribbean Labour Solidarity — Windrush
Saturday 22nd September	GARDEN PARTY (see page four)

We are planning a Christmas lunch in December at The Plough pub in Crews Hill. More information in the October newsletter

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

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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***