



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

No. 2 October 2018 Newsletter

To friends of Islington Pensioners Forum

Sadly, George Durack, our chairman, died at the beginning of September and we decided to produce and circulate our October newsletter early to our members so that they could have the information about his funeral. This, therefore, is a second edition for our friends who regularly receive our newsletter. We have also included a report of the garden party which was advertised in the first edition.

We say farewell to George

When our coach full of members arrived at Islington Crematorium on Friday 28 September for George's funeral, the well over 100 people, his family, friends, trade union brothers and sisters, Labour Party comrades — already standing in the sunshine — warmly greeted our banner and that of the National Pensioners Convention with spontaneous applause.

We know that George would have been moved and proud, because he was never an "individual"; he was a "team player", building solidarity in action, and these banners are a symbol of this.

The chapel was packed — many had to stand and the ceremony was relayed on speakers to those who could not get in.

George's coffin was carried into the chapel to the music of "The Red Flag" — George's own wish.

Watching and listening to the rendering of this Labour anthem at the end of the Labour Party conference two days before had reminded us of George and how much he would have wanted to be with those in that Liverpool hall! He understood to the core of his being that, like our banners, "The Red Flag expresses the solidarity of those who are together standing up for the common cause of equality and social justice.

The Celebrant, Andrew Pavlibeyi opened the ceremony and introduced those who gave the tributes: Dave Ward, General Secretary of the Communications Workers Union, Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, and Elaine Durack, George's daughter.

Together these tributes told the story of George's life in the war, at work, as a workers' representative, as an Is-

lington Councillor, as chair of Islington Pensioners Forum; the warmth and love mingled with determination and intransigence when it came to his principles; also George the ballroom dancer and the humour and extremely funny experiences shared with his family and friends.

George was looking forward to the future even when he knew that he himself had little time left! Jeremy movingly told us that when he said farewell on his last visit to the hospital, George responded with a smile and the clenched fist salute of solidarity.

Our committee will meet on 1st October without George. This is very hard for all of us. We have said "farewell" to him, but we will never forget him and we are determined to vigorously defend and develop his work to build Islington Pensioners Forum.

We are non-Party political and we are not, as an organisation, religious; our members have many political beliefs, many faiths and none. George never hid his secularity or that he was a Labour Party member, and everybody respected him for this, just as he respected all our members and always acted — as our masthead here says — so that IPF is the voice of Islington's older community.

The guidance from George's family for his funeral was "no flowers, but, if you wish, please donate to Islington Pensioners Forum in his name". We very much appreciate this and express our sincere thanks for this act of confidence in us. In good time we will report on the sum received and how we will use this to best remember George and to carry forward his wishes.

“She absolutely loved it!”

We already had a small gazebo in place on the day before our garden party on Saturday 22 September. But the weather forecast convinced us that we should use our large gazebo and then, to be on the safe side, we acquired a second large gazebo.

We were not wrong. . . . it started raining at 11 a.m. and continued all day! Nevertheless a good time was had by all!

Over 70 members of Islington Pensioners Forum, Highbury View residents, families and friends enjoyed a happy afternoon.

Half took shelter in the tenants' bungalow, and the rest,

plus Ikko and Co jazz band* were in the gazebos.

We were warmed by the beef and vegetarian hot-pots cooked by Graham, the fantastic manager of Highbury View, followed by apple pie and cream, plus of course, various alcoholic beverages.

At a time when there is so much news of the loneliness of many older people we were especially pleased to receive the following email:

“Mum commented on how well organized everything was and how plentiful and lovely the food. She also mentioned how calm and efficient the chef and all the helpers were. She absolutely loved it”.



Our pictures show some of the garden party revellers in the gazebo and in the bungalow.

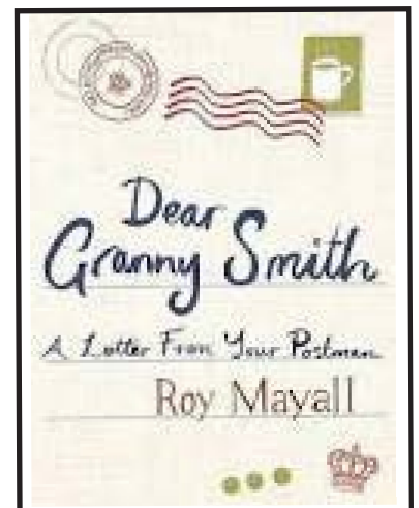
* It is not “Ikko & Co Jazz band” but “WTW Jazz Band” from the community jazz workshop in Islington

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 Three on page
three: Rainy Days
(plus see comment on
page 4)

Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 3 — Rainy Days

Last month we published chapter two of Roy Mayall's book, in this Roy spoke about happiness in the job and ended with: "a little spark of Eden" so to continue. . . .

That was the round. It wasn't always as perfect as that, of course. Sometimes it was raining. Sometimes it was still dark. Sometimes the hail came crashing in from the North Sea like shot blasts from the ice caves of hell. The winds blow, the frosts descend, there's ice on the pavement. But we're a hardy lot, us posties. We take the sun and we take the rain. We take the hail, we take the snow. We take the winter and the summer. We watch the progress of the year through all of the seasons. We know what time of year it is by the stirring in our blood. We are always alive to the weather.

I've been out in every kind of weather. This is what makes me different to you. You early risers and dog walkers, you late-night revellers coming home from your parties. Some days none of you are about. And then it's just me, wrapped up in my waterproofs, labouring against the wind, the rain lashing my face.

But, I tell you what: do you ever remember your mail being wet? In the old days, that is?

No, it never got wet. We had a waterproof tarpaulin bag which went over the mail bag and which tied up at the top, and your mail was snug and dry in there, and if it got wet at all, it was only from the wetness of our hands.

These days the bags let in water and we don't have time to shelter, so if it rains you get wet mail.

Just one more thing to apologise for.

Anyway, whatever the weather, the last letter was always delivered by 9.30 a.m.

You tell the kids that and they won't believe you. The post used to come before breakfast. You could read your mail with your morning tea. And it was real mail too. There were letters. You'd hear the snap of the letter box, and the sound of the mail flopping onto the mat, and there would be a touch of excitement, of anticipation, at what might be in the post today.

I used to get letters maybe three or four times a month. Long letters from friends or family, from all over the country, and from abroad. Letters written by hand. It wasn't some generic font – Times New Roman, or Verdana – it was the real handwriting of the real person who was writing to me. You see, handwriting tells you something about the person. It tells you something about their mood. Something of their personality is in

there, something of the person themselves. Those loops and curves and lines, those squiggles and dashes. And extravagant people would write extravagantly, and shy people would write shyly, and bold people would write boldly, and sometimes people who pretended to be bold but were in fact shy would show it in their handwriting.

Me: my handwriting was always crabby and tiny, filling up all of the space, because I never thought there was enough room on the page to say all I had to say.

So, now, we've delivered the last letter and it's back to the office, to the recreation room, and to a hearty breakfast. An hour's proper break. And we'd get in at the same time as all of our mates. And there was a dartboard in the recreation room, and dominoes, and cards. We had all these leagues going. There'd be jokes and banter and what we saw on the telly last night, and "How's Spurs doing?" and "Your team aren't doing so well". You'd read the paper and drink a proper cup of tea, made in a teapot. So we had a real social life. And some of the guys were mates and some weren't. There'd be squabbles: that's just called being human. But generally we'd get on. It was a great atmosphere in the office.

And after an hour it was back to work, to the facing table.

This is where it gets really surprising.

You see, in those days there was an early morning collection. A van would go round and empty all the post boxes from the town, and instead of being taken over to the regional office, as it is now, it was all emptied out onto the facing table and sorted and franked there and then. So we'd sort out and bundle up the stuff for the Big City, which would go up on the train later that afternoon, all packed into mail bags. And we'd sort out the stuff for the main delivery office in the region, for all the nearby towns and villages, and that would go over by van. But any stuff for this town would stay in the office. And any first-class mail posted in the town that morning to be delivered in the town would go into the second post. So you could post a letter in the morning and have it delivered by the second post on that same day. It was almost as fast as email.

NOTE: On page four Roger Moran writes about "Dear Granny Smith" giving his experiences and views of being a postie back in the 1950s— 60s. We are hoping that other members will let us have their experiences of the jobs they did. Many young people today are on short-term and zero-hour contracts, there is a lack of proper apprenticeships — so what you say is important to all of our understanding of what has happened. Don't worry if you can't write, we can interview you — just let us know that you want to contribute.

Past and present — a postie's lot

Comment by Roger Moran

I am writing this after reading the first two chapters of "Dear Granny Smith" by Roy Mayall. I was a postie at the end of the 1950s into the 60s, when ex-servicemen from WW2 and even a few from WW1 were still working for Royal Mail. They brought with them a culture of "digging each other out" as in the desert, and we young recruits absorbed it.

It was early mornings at the sorting office to sort your "walk", leaving by 6.45 so as to deliver the mail by about 9.00. But we had a proper canteen and a rest room. There was always a laugh and a joke, good food and a hot cup of tea.

We also helped with the lifting on and off parcel trucks with three alternating drivers, who I remember so well: Paddy and William (former tank crew) and Bill (infantry).

Like Roy I remember the nice Spring mornings. But sometimes we struggled with bad weather and blocks of flats with no lifts, carrying the heavy bag on our backs; but we were respected by the community for faithfully doing so.

This was so unlike today — with its electronic digital moneyed capitalist methods. This Thatcher's "brain" is taking over from our "weak" bodies where crucially the heart meets the human mind. One consequence: today a postie's meaningless task is the delivery of junk mail. As Roy says: "The world doesn't seem to be made for human beings any more".

Paddy, William and Bill were individuals with their sometimes very different opinions about the war and everything else. But when it came to helping each other out there was that unspoken social bond which I think was carried over from their war service.

So I came to understand that people can still be individuals without becoming individualistic, as Thatcher would have us all be — individually exploiting others in the "no society" workplace — each fighting over their "place" in it.

On Saturdays, as Roy mentions, our walk done we went home early. Today that would not be allowed. But Royal Mail employers, in the 1950s, although monitoring toilet breaks, were, in other ways, less restrictive of their workers than today's personally invasive culture.

Later, I became a PHG (Postman Higher Grade) and yes, we were the ones who mainly ran the show, having more responsibilities than other posties. We had to help others to understand every part of a district (e.g. in detail its villages and hamlets).

Registered mail in the "cage" from a PHG, was signed for by another, and nothing could move until this accountable PHG was satisfied and had duly lead-sealed each mail bag. Then posties were waiting to quickly drag them to lorries and off to the railway.

Although not paid much more money, all of this largely depended on just one PHG. The job of an ordinary postie was in many ways better than the more isolated job of the PHG. Even today, I miss the comradeship of those long ago Royal Mail days.

What have we lost? A free, more spontaneous, human workplace without today's controlling knowledge technology peeping into the workers' very souls. As Roy Mayall says, being a postie from the 1950s to the 70s was a different proposition from being one today. I look forward to reading the rest of the "Dear Granny Smith" chapters.

"We had a proper canteen and a rest room. There was always a laugh and a joke, good food and a hot cup of tea"

Does she really live in sheltered housing?

During my holiday, I visited Burnham on Crouch and got talking to a 93-year-old woman who lives (like me) in sheltered housing.

She said that although the scheme has a really comfortable lounge, because of government cuts there is no manager and there are no more activities, like coffee mornings, bingo, exercises and birthday parties etc.

She said that, of course, the scheme was linked to the alarm system (like our Islington Link), which means that on paper it can still be called "sheltered". But her recent experience made her think that this was an anomaly.

She slid onto the floor from sitting on the side of her bed and although unhurt, couldn't get up. She managed to activate the alarm (on a cord round her neck) and explained the problem.

However, nobody was available to help her and so the staff telephoned her two nephews — the one who lived within the county was abroad on holiday, but the other one and his wife came all the way from Southampton — over 100 miles to help her to get up! She was on the floor for hours!

The question is: does she really live in sheltered housing?

Dot Gibson

P.S.

Whilst the cuts are biting and many, like the woman above, are very lonely, the government provides grants for charities for schemes to "overcome loneliness". . . . it doesn't make sense, until you realise that, of course it is much cheaper to do this than keep the services in place!

NHS news: Whittington Trust faces a legal challenge by Pam Zinkin

The Whittington hospital trust is facing a legal challenge from Ryhurst — part of the Rydon Group — after it abandoned a proposed 10-year deal with the company in June. This shows the danger to the NHS of outsourcing to companies whose legal responsibility is first to their shareholders and not to us.

Ryhurst had been due to form a joint venture company with the hospital to mastermind the sale and redevelopment of NHS land and buildings. Because of Ryhurst's association with Rydon (the company responsible for the cladding of Grenfell, the Whittington Trust decided it was not safe to proceed and cancelled the contract. At a national rally, days after the decision, Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn MP, said the anti-Ryhurst campaign victory was of "great significance".

Hospital chiefs, including chairman, Steve Hitchins, and chief executive Siobhan Harrington repeatedly warned that backing out of the deal with Ryhurst would lead to a lengthy and costly legal battle. Mr. Hitchins sensa-

tionally predicted last October that walking away from the deal would have catastrophic consequences — and could even "shut down the hospital".

However, the hospital's board announced in June it would scrap the deal, claiming it had received an unexpected windfall — believed to be around £19 million — from the Department of Health after successfully hitting various health-funding care targets. It said it could afford a legal battle and run its estate services in-house.

The cost of the legal challenge is unclear, but Ryhurst last year submitted a claim for £2million against the Countess of Chester hospital foundation trust and Wirral University teaching hospital — both in the north-west of England. Both NHS trusts had abandoned similar plans to hire the firm as a "strategic partner". The two trusts said the decision had been taken partly because of "uncertainty and risks" in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Our trees endangered by heatwave

Autumn arrived early! Islington's parks and green spaces team started collecting the falling leaves in August. This is a sign of the damage done to our trees during the heatwave. Look around and you can see among the leaves lots of tree bark which has fallen from the water-deprived trees in the searing heat. One of the parks team said that there are lots of instances of whole branches breaking off and young trees are more at risk than the large older trees whose roots are deeper. Is this a sign of things to come in global warming?

NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT : 24 OCTOBER 2018

11.30 am meet at Old Palace Yard (George V statue opposite House of Lords)

1.00 pm Committee Room 14 House of Commons for RALLY

Speakers include:

Jack Dromey MP (Shadow Pensions Minister)

Dot Gibson (NPC Assistant General Secretary)

Sharon Hodgson MP (Shadow Health Minister)

Roger Mackenzie (Assistant General Secretary of UNISON)

Mark Serwotka (General Secretary PCS)

Carole Dineage, government Social Care Minister was invited but is unable to come

IPF members — meet at 10 am at Highbury and Islington Station

INFORMATION

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| BINGO | 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 |
| Tuesday 9th October 1 - 4 pm | Older People's Day joining with our neighbouring pensioner groups: campaign stall at Haringey Leisure Centre. Philip Lane, N15 4JA |
| Thursday 18th October 10.30 a.m. | Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall |
| Wednesday 24th October | NPC Lobby of Parliament (see page five advert for details) |

We are planning a Christmas lunch in December at The Plough pub in Crews Hill. More information to come

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

Chair: 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**