



Charity No: 1043081

# ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

## January 2019 Newsletter

***New Year Greetings***  
***to all Members, Friends and Neighbours***  
***Our first Forum Meeting for 2019 is***  
***Thursday 17th January, 10.30 am Islington Town Hall***

We know that 2019 is going to be a test for all of us. In 2018 we lost our long-time chair, George Durack, but we go forward in this new year with his voice still echoing in our ears! Stand up for social justice and basic rights!

**At the top of our agenda is health and social care.**

While Brexit is being fought out in Parliament, the government has six times delayed the promised Green Paper on Social Care, and thousands of ordinary people are suffering the effects of the government's austerity measures.

Figures revealed in a *Daily Mirror* campaign article show that:

- The government has cut state social care funding by 27% since 2010
- This has left 400,000 fewer people receiving professional help
- New analysis reveals that Britain's army of informal (family) carers has surged by 35% since 2001
- 90 people a day are dying as they wait for social care
- Stats show that in 2017-18 there were 32,115 requests from people who later died waiting for a care package

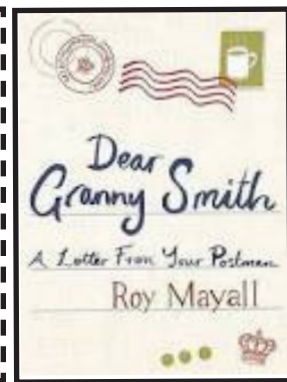
The *Mirror* points out that "every year over 2.1 million adults become carers and almost as many find that their caring duties end. This high turnover means that caring will end up touching the lives of most of us."

Demos, a cross-party think-tank is calling for the £65-a-week Carers Allowance to be increased to at least the Jobseekers Allowance — the National Pensioners Convention also calls for pensioners to be included in the Carers Allowance (which ends as soon as a carer reaches pensionable age).

After widespread research and consultation the National Pensioners Convention has produced a policy discussion paper — **A New Settlement for Care Services**. This sets out the basic rights of all those in need of care within a free National Care Service paid through general taxation. Copies will be available at the Forum meeting on 17th January.

**Friday 1st February is National Dignity Action Day, and groups of pensioners in all parts of the country will be campaigning. IPF will have a stall on that day, 11 a.m. in the Holloway Road (Morrison's arcade). Let's make sure that we do a good job!**

**PLEASE LET US KNOW WHETHER YOU WILL BE ON OUR DELEGATION SO THAT WE CAN MAKE THE BOOKINGS**  
**NPC PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT**  
**10 - 14 June 2019, Winter Gardens, Blackpool**  
**Cost £250 — Pay £10 deposit and spread the cost over the months**  
**BOOKING FORM AND MORE INFORMATION ON BACK PAGE**



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Chapter Six: "The Memory Waltz" -  
"The job is more difficult than you imagine. . ."

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# A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

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**I like to wish everyone a very happy New Year, and thank the committee and all of you who attended the monthly Forum meetings at the Town Hall.**

We, as pensioners, enter 2019 still under attack by government cuts, and must defend our universal benefits, including the free TV licence for over 75s, the winter fuel allowance and the Freedom Pass.

The Tories' manifesto had stated: "We will maintain all other pensioner benefits including free bus passes, eye tests, prescription's and T.V licences for the duration of this parliament."

But provision of the free TV licence had been handed over to the BBC in its contract with the government and in a private message to the BBC after the 2017 general election, the government asked the corporation to simply ignore that promise!

Islington Pensioners Forum along with the NPC and its other affiliated pensioner groups will fight to keep all these benefits. And you will be pleased to know that in this we are not alone.

In the 19th December issue of the *Daily Mirror* there was an article by Ashleigh Rainbird on the threat to withdraw the over 75s free TV licence:

It reported that "at least 53 Tory MPs have charged taxpayers a total of £8,855.87 in a year to buy TV licences for constituency offices'.

Saying that "he reacted with fury', Ricky Tomlinson (the Royle Family star) was quoted, saying "God love them, they can hardly live on their £80,000 a year. How do they expect pensioners to live on the pittance they get? The system is upside down. I'm outraged... they're a disgrace."

He also said: "I don't know much about what's going on in Paris with the yellow vest [protesters], but we should have one called the grey vests, or grey power." If anyone will organise it, I'll be on the front row!"

Gordon Brown, Labour prime minister from 2007-2010 said (in a *Guardian* article on 2nd January):

"Imagine for a second the BBC taking a frail, house-bound, elderly pensioner to court for not possessing a TV licence that for years she has had for free. Then imagine fining her £1,000 – the standard penalty – with legal costs on top; and if she doesn't pay or can't pay, sending her to prison. Unthinkable? In fact, one in every 10 court cases is over non-payment of TV licences."

The BBC says that it cannot afford the £720million yearly bill, meaning millions of over-75s may have to pay for the £150.50 licence, or they might have a means-tested scheme whereby all over 75s who are not on pension credit would have to pay for their licence.

But, as Gordon Brown points out, such a scheme raises civil liberty issues (The BBC would have to access, from the Department of Work and Pensions, private information on the finances of over 75s ) and also it would cost £72m simply to administer the system.

He raises another important issue: "For the BBC to now make judgments that only parliament should make about the distribution of income between social groups is indeed taxation without representation".

The NPC has joined Age UK and other pensioners' groups in a petition saying "Together, we must demand the Government takes back responsibility for funding free TV licences for everyone over 75."

**I urge all members to sign the petition (wording below) which, at this point (6th January) has 30,666 signatures.**

***For over a million of our oldest citizens the TV is their constant companion and window on the world. And now it's under threat. The BBC is considering removing free TV licences from the over-75s. But this is really the Government's doing: they pushed the scheme onto the BBC without asking any of us what we think or providing the funding to sustain it. Together, we must demand the Government takes back responsibility for funding free TV licences for everyone over 75.***

**It can be accessed on line on the NPC website: [npcuk.org](http://npcuk.org) or on <https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/34266/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=ztag32cf>**

**If you haven't got your own computer, please ask your family or friend to help you to sign up, or we can add your name on the IPF computer. Please let us know**

***Bob Collins, Chairman***

The Care awards this year will definitely happen, but not on 1st Feb, Dignity Day. The Department has been a bit stretched recently, not least because one of our domiciliary care providers, Allied, ran into difficulties and there was a lot of work involved in ensuring that the nearly 400 people they served in Islington, did not suffer. However, if anything, the next Care Awards will be bigger and better than ever. I am looking forward to them.

***Councillor Janet Burgess***

## **Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 6 — The Memory Waltz**

*Last month we published chapter five. Roy told us about confused postal workers after a new manager instructed them not to leave their mail bags under their frames . . . . .  
.but after a week things went back to "the way it's always been!"*

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This job is more difficult than you would imagine. Maybe you think, "What's so hard about posting a few letters? You read the envelope, you look at the door; if the door matches the envelope, you push it through."

True. . . . That's the easy part. . . . The difficult part is the preparation. It's in learning your "frame".

The frame is the postie's workstation. It varies in size depending on the size of the round, on the number of addresses you have to deliver to. Town centre rounds with lots of terraced streets, with doors close by each other, are larger than rural or suburban rounds, with lots of gates and lots of drives and lots of walking between them. Rural rounds are usually driven. Town centre rounds are usually walked. Suburban rounds are usually done on a bike.

The frame is divided up firstly by road, and then by number. Each address has a different slot. This would be easy if it was laid out logically, say, 2,4,6,8 on one side and 1,3,5,7 on the other. But that's not how it works. The frame is laid out as you would walk it. So you might do a loop, up one side and down the other. Up to number 23, and down to 2. And then up again to number 37, and down again to number 24. Or you might walk along one road, and take a turning into another, and then back to the first road again, and then into another. Some long roads are divided up all over the frame. So it's not just a matter of remembering where the road is, it's a matter of remembering where certain numbers on that road are, and where the roads are divided.

Being a postie is above all else a feat of memory.

My road has thirteen roads, which I divide up in a variety of different ways.

The roads are scattered about all over the frame.

So my day starts with "throwing off" my frame. I pick a letter from a bundle, I read the address, and I slot it into the frame. And then I do it again. And again. And again. I have 600 addresses on my frame. Some addresses may have ten or 15 letters, and some may have none. I can't tell you how many letters I throw off every day. But I can give you some weights. I usually take out about six bags, generally between 14 and 16 kilos each. You can work it out. That's a lot of letters.

You do this for about 15 minutes, from 6.15 to 6.30 a.m., and then again for about an hour, from 7.45 a.m. till you're ready to go out.

You get into a sort of rhythm while throwing off your frame. You read the letter, you slot it in. You read the next letter, you slot it in. And on, and on. My frame is about six foot high, by six foot across, with two "wings" reaching out to surround me, like the arms of an embrace.

There's a work surface piled up with letters and bundles at about waist height. You pick up a bundle, read off the addresses and slot them into your frame. You have to shuffle back and forth across the length of your frame to do this. Some of the addresses are about waist height, while others are above your head. To the left. To the right. On the wings. So you're moving about, back and forth, turning at the waist, throwing your arms in the air, trying to remember where all the addresses are. You are soft-shoe shuffling across the floor, listening to the radio, reading the addresses, sliding the letters into the appropriate slot. I call this The Mnemonic Shuffle, the Memory Waltz. You are dancing with your own memory.

Sometimes you forget where an address is. Then you tap the letter on the frame to remind yourself. You tap the letter on the side of your head. You tap your foot. You click your tongue. You tut and you mumble. And then you remember, and a whole new flow of numbers starts up.

You keep on doing this until all the letters are in the frame. After this you do the "flats". Flats are large letters and magazines, A4 size and above. And after this you do the packets. Smaller packets you sort into the frame. Larger packets you put on top of your frame and you turn a letter in the frame to mark it. When you come to a turned letter on your round you know there's a packet to be delivered.

After this you do the redirections, weeding out those letters for people who have recently moved. After this you bundle up the letters into the order you are going to take them out and put them into bags. This can take up to an hour, depending on the weight of the mail that day. You take the bags over to the scales and weigh

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them. Then you put the bags that are to go out with the drivers into a large, rattling metal container called a "york". The yorks are like cages on wheels. The drivers collect the bags from the yorks and take them out to the collection points. The rest of the bags you load onto your bike. I usually have a large bag on the front, a small bag over my shoulder and several bundles and packages in my panniers on the back.

After that you go out.

The other part of the job is internal sorting. This takes place before you throw off your frame, soon after you come into the office, from about 6.30 till 7.45 a.m. This is where you sort all the letters into their individual rounds. This is done collectively. All the full-time posties have to do this.

This, again, is a feat of memory. It is even more complex and baroque than learning your frame. Now you have to know every road in the office, and which frame each road belongs to. You have to read the address and know that, say, number 7 Arbitrary Walk is on frame 13, and that number 2 Existential Parade is on frame 23. Some roads go across several frames. There are pigeon holes for each round in the office, each with a corresponding frame. There are notices above the pigeon holes with a list of all the roads that are delivered from your office, in alphabetical order, with a number to say which frame it's on.

You try reading from an alphabetical list of 150 road names and working out where the letter is supposed to

go. From Agamemnon Street to Xerxes Avenue, including the saints names which all begin the same: St James Road, St. Jerome Walk, St. Judas Square, St Barnabus Boulevard.

Then you try memorizing it.

But you do in the end. Every road on every frame is ground into your consciousness by years of sorting, till in the end, you can almost do it with your eyes closed. After that you can sort and talk at the same time.

I have an image to explain how this happens.

When I first started doing this job, I used to deliver to an estate. It was a brand new estate at the time. I would park my bike at the entrance and do the whole thing in two bundles, round one way, and then round the other, going back to my bike to collect the second bundle

About halfway through the second part of the estate there was a sudden turning, down some steps, to the right, to the left, and into a sort of covered walkway with two doors. And dangling from the roof of the walkway between the doors was a hanging basket. I would post my letters into the first door, turn, walk, then bang my head against the hanging basket. Almost every day I did that, for about two weeks. And every day I cursed myself and that stupid hanging basket. And then, after that, I learned to duck.

That's all the job is really. . . . It's like a banging your head over and over again. . . .

And then learning how to duck.

**Our Assistant Secretary, Annette Thomas wrote to Jeremy Corbyn about her concerns that Universal Credit is causing hardship to so many people; this is his (edited) reply:**

I am deeply concerned about the flaws and failures of the Universal Credit (UC) system and . . . it seems to me that 38 Degrees are doing a good job on this.

- Delays and errors in payments have resulted in inadequate financial support as well as pushed people into debt, rent arrears, destitution and hunger.

- The Trussell Trust has said that food bank usage is about four times higher in areas where UC has been rolled out.

- A National Audit Office report found that UC is creating hardship, forcing people to use food banks and could end up costing the state even more than the benefits system it is designed to replace.

- The UN's Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Professor Philip Alston, recently reported levels of child poverty that were 'a social calamity and an economic disaster', concluding that in the UK, 'poverty is a political choice'.

- Contrary to government claims, UC isn't making work

pay, rather, it's taking money away from families and putting more children into poverty.

- The UK is the fifth wealthiest country in the world, yet many, despite working, are struggling to feed their family or to keep their homes warm.

Following the Chancellor's October 2018 budget, more money has been promised to reduce the waiting time for benefits from five weeks to three and to increase work allowances.

**However, this does not go far enough** - the Office for Budget responsibility have confirmed that this will only reverse around half of the previous cuts from 2015

- **I am committed to rebuilding and transforming our social security system to ensure that it offers genuine support to people who need it.**

- **Labour will stop the roll out of Universal Credit and ensure that our social security system is there for any of us should we need it.**

*Jeremy Corbyn MP*

# ONE FOR THE ROAD *with Finbarr Wall*

Like rare fauna and flora the Irish diaspora  
Is dwindling most rapidly  
With the habitat changing and things rearranging  
As the church and its values erode  
Let's take one last look back at our life and the facts  
Of our life on the Holloway Road

There was many a youngster straight off the boat  
Alone in a strangers' land  
Found a home far from home in the Holloway Road  
And familiar things close at hand  
The strains of a jig sliding out a pub door  
The hurling games played in the park  
In the shops, county papers and Barry's fine tea  
Things dear to an immigrant heart

With back-breaking work digging roads, sifting dirt  
Our countrymen gave of their best  
Come Saturday night a welcome respite  
Time for a drink and a rest  
With haircut and suit pressed  
And looking his best, Pat like Colossus bestrode  
Till each penny was spent, the full range and extent  
Of the weekend on Holloway road

Now Ireland's doing fine and it's not before time  
And homeward our folk do return  
But we whose abode is the Holloway Road  
Must stay here to ponder and yearn  
For each one that goes back there's a little less cred  
A piece of our culture they're taking  
But our sorrow will end  
And surely they'll send us over black pudding and  
bacon

In the Holloway Road now there's scarcely a pub  
That doesn't serve wine and haute cuisine grub  
Where bacon and cabbage was once all the rage  
It's polenta and scallops and salad and graze  
Where a pint of good stout was the drink you would  
order

Its now white wine spritzers and mineral water  
If you strike up a stare, to the door you'd be shown  
Ne'er a tune or a song on the Holloway Road

There's still workers crossing over the sea  
But this time they're from Albion's counties  
Seeking employment on Erin's green shore  
And a share in the tiger's great bounty  
There's chippies from London and plumbers from  
Leeds  
And men skilled in drains and foundations  
There's navies from Blighty, Oh dear Christ almighty  
Now I've seen everything in creation

Now our neighbours are leaving  
They're going back to join this new dispensation  
And we who are left even though we're bereft  
Must face up to gentrification  
There's health clubs for chaps with red braces  
Sure what can you say each dawn brings a new day  
And each night an old one to erase

So the nouveaux move in and the work it begins  
For they all must have designer homes  
Duplicated by me as shown on TV  
By Lawrence Llewlyn-b-b-Bowen  
If you were in my shoes you'd be singing the blues  
At these off-whites so bland and serene  
How you'd long for a hint, twinge, tint or glint  
Of the forty shades of green

So to Ireland at last there come prosperous times  
With oodles of Euros to spend  
And I hope that the old ways of famine and fast  
Have finally come to an end  
So here's to the Irish where e'er they be  
May light be their spirits and load  
And may someone an odd time, give voice  
For a song: this song of the "Holloway Road".

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## NHS News : Pam Zinkin . . . . .

**OUR NHS IN 2019:** Such a lot is happening, mostly behind closed doors, with more threats to the fundamentals of our loved NHS, that it would take pages to tell it all. But I'll just begin with PoLCE. Do you remember? It's "Procedures of Limited Clinical Effectiveness" (previously known as Low Priority Treatments). This "low priority" list has got much longer and it is now quite clear that the objective is simply to save money. We already had NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) which did at least have some respect from the medical professionals as a **non-** departmental public body that provides national guidance and advice

to improve health and social care in England. The NICE guidelines are continuously developed and updated so PoLCE is not needed in my opinion. The PoLCE list destroys one of the most precious aspects of our NHS and that is the trust most patients have in their doctors. It is rationing and although most doctors would agree that not all procedures help their patients, it is up to them, the relevant consultant and you to decide together what is right for you — the individual.

**Prof. Sue Richards will speak on this at 17 January Forum meeting and there will be a public meeting at Islington Town Hall on Thursday, 7th March.**

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# INFORMATION

BINGO	This is suspended for the time being. We will keep you informed.
Lunch and a chat on Wednesdays	1 pm in 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 17th January	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting, Islington Town Hall. Speaker, Professor Sue Richards on PoLCE (See Pam Zinkin article on page five)
Friday 1st February	11.00 a.m. NATIONAL DIGNITY ACTION DAY: campaign stall (Morrison's arcade, Holloway Road)

**48 IPF members and residents of Highbury View Sheltered Housing enjoyed a Christmas lunch on Saturday 15th December, and we thank the Barnsbury Housing Association for the donation of £500 towards this seasonal celebration**

## **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](http://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 PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT 2019 IN BLACKPOOL**

*10 June: a comfortable coach from Islington Town Hall, returning on 14 June*

*We will have bed, breakfast & evening meal in the Gresham Hotel just over the road from the Winter Gardens, where Parliament takes place*

*There are informative sessions on issues of importance to all of us and there is a great social evening in the Winter Gardens ballroom on 12th June*

**Name.....Address.....**

**.....Post Code .....**

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

**Enclosed £10 deposit (cheques payable to "IPF")**

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