



# ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community  
July 2019 Newsletter

1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN  
Telephone 0207 226 7687

Email: ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org Website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.org  
Office opens from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Monday & Wednesday (but 'phone first)

Charity No: 1043081

## Pic: Pensioners at Blackpool Parliament protest at Salford Quays BBC studios, 13 June

- The shameful and cowardly Tory government ditched its election pledge to keep the free TV licence for over 75-year olds.
- They handed responsibility to the BBC, so BBC chiefs, not government ministers have taken the unpopular decision to cut this benefit and introduce means-testing, limiting it to those over 75 on Pension Credit. (By now you will have received the letter from "TV licensing").



● When Theresa May cynically urged the BBC to "re-think" its decision!

● The free TV benefit was introduced by Labour in 2000 as part of a package of universal benefits which offset the UK's very low state pension — fourth from the bottom in Europe.

● "Universal" means that everybody pays their taxes and everybody is eligible for these benefits in old age.

● Many older people rely on TV programmes for company.

● "Loneliness is a reality for too many in our soci-

ety" said Theresa May when she appointed a Minister of Loneliness in 2018.

● But at the same time she was engineering this attack on the over 75s free TV licence!

● Other universal benefits for pensioners are: the free bus pass, winter

fuel allowance, free prescriptions and eye tests.

● We now fear that this will be followed by attacks on these other universal benefits.

● On 22 June the Age UK petition, also sponsored by the National Pensioners Convention had reached 577,494.

● The NPC Regions organised protests at BBC studios in Belfast, Blackburn, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Dunstable, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Nottingham, Norwich, Oxford, Salford, Southampton and Stoke.

**SIGN THE PETITION:** <https://ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/save-free-tv-for-older-people>  
Age UK is also inviting you to call on the next Prime Minister to stop the cut to the over-75s free TV licence. You can fill in the form on the website or twitter site below and Age UK will deliver to the candidates' teams: Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns) Twitter: @ageukcampaigns

## Our Annual General Meeting is on Thursday 18 JULY — 10.30 am in Islington Town Hall

Dear Members,

We hope that you will do your best to take part in our Annual General Meeting. This is the time when we review the past year, elect the committee and prepare for the coming year to ensure that we really are the voice of Islington's older community and that we are standing up for today's and tomorrow's pensioners. Our annual report, including the financial report will be available at the meeting and we are planning to have a display of our banners to show what we have been campaigning on. The meeting will be followed by a sandwich buffet so that members have the chance to talk to and get to know each other.

Best wishes, Dot Gibson, SECRETARY on behalf of the Committee

**FINAL part of "Dear Granny Smith" is on page 3**

---

---

# A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

---

---

Thanks to all members who attended the June Forum meeting. The guest speaker, Arthur Torrington CBE, gave a slide show on the Windrush generation — those who came to Britain from the West Indies to join the workforce here, particularly in the NHS and transport services. There was a very good response from the Forum with questions and stories. See report of the presentation on the back page.

oooOooo

**We are campaigning to stop the decision by the BBC to means-test the over-75s free TV licence, making it available to only those on Pension Credit, but this raises the question:**

What is Pension Credit? There are two types —

● **Savings Credit**

This gives you a small reward if you've saved towards your retirement, but it is being phased out and is now closed to those who reached State Pension Age on or after April 6th 2016.

● **Guarantee Credit:**

When you reach State Pension Age, Guarantee Credit tops up your income if it's below a minimum amount set by the government, currently £167.25 a week for a single person or £255.25 a week for a couple.

If you qualify, you may also be entitled to other benefits, such as free NHS dental treatment, and vouchers towards spectacles or contact lenses, and depending on your circumstances you may also qualify for Housing and Council Tax benefit.

If you're not already getting Pension Credit on 14 May 2019, you can backdate your claim. You could still be eligible to get Pension Credit and can ask for it to be back-dated to 14 May, but you must apply by 13 August.

However, from 15 May 2019, if you're in a couple you'll only be eligible to get Pension Credit if you and your partner have both reached State Pension Age.

If one of you has not yet reached State Pension Age then neither of you will be eligible for Pension Credit, and the younger partner will have to apply for work and can apply for Universal Credit for working-age people.

● It is reported that despite being eligible for Pension Credit, over 600,000 pensioners have not applied for this and so will not be eligible for a free TV licence;

● If you are over 75, but your income is just 10p over the eligibility threshold for Pension Credit then you will not be eligible for a free TV licence.

The 'phone line for claiming Pension Credit is:  
0800 99 1234

## Being diabetic

Recently I went for my annual eye check-up. While chatting to the young woman doing the screening, I asked her how many people didn't keep their appointments. I was shocked to hear that it was a lot and many are young people.

As some of you will know, it is a fairly simple non-invasive check but it can expose diabetic changes that in many cases reveals that the person's sight is under threat.

It is important to have the check annually even if you see clearly, as diabetic eye disease does not begin with symptoms of bad vision.

If you have a friend or relative, even a grandchild, who has been diagnosed with diabetes urge them to have the test, which is not the same one as going to the optician for spectacles. As the young woman said to me, "once you lose your eyesight, you're unlikely to get it back"

**Phil Richards**

## Would you like to help 7 year-olds with basic maths?

We're looking for volunteers for  
**Drayton Park School**

Would you find it rewarding to provide one-to-one support to children who have fallen behind in maths?

If yes, and if you can be available for 1½ hours once a week during the school day, we'd like to hear from you. You will need to be competent with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division - and be confident in explaining them. We will provide training on the early years' maths syllabus and on creative and fun ways to engage young children with the subject. To find out more, please contact us at:

volunteer@numbersense.org.uk

*'One of the best moments for me was overhearing a child get called to his Number Sense intervention, and him cheering and saying that it was the best part of his day!'*

Head of Maths at a London school

www.numbersense.org.uk

## *Dear Granny Smith : last part of Chapter 11— "So now you know"*

---

I've nearly finished my story now. It is a tale of loss and despair, of the wanton destruction of an ancient and venerable organisation, much loved by everyone who uses it. Once it is gone it will be gone for ever.

And one day, maybe, when it has passed out of the realms of history and into myth, we will talk about it in hushed tones of reverence.

"Do you remember that? The Royal Mail? You could post a letter one day and it would be at its destination the next. There was a whole army of men and women who used to do this work. They worked day and night to get it done.

"Mail criss-crossed the country, travelling at speed. It crossed the world. There were trains and planes and vans and trucks, and huge mail centres, all carrying and sifting the mail. And still, despite the huge volumes, almost all of the mail got through.

"It handled tens of millions of letters a day, millions of packets. It was the oldest state-owned company in the world and people were proud to work for it. It did the work more efficiently than any of its rivals.

"There was a network of distinctive red pillar boxes. They stood on the corner of the street. You could post your letters into them, and they would be emptied twice a day. There were post offices in every town and village, and when you saw a postie on the street he would smile and say good morning."

It's been 30 years since I started work for the Royal Mail: 30 years, almost to the day. I've seen a lot of changes, none of them for the better. I've seen changes to my working practices and hours. I've suffered a huge loss of income and of status. I've seen friends and colleagues at work come and go. I've watched the atmosphere in the office go from cheerful efficiency to weariness and despair. I've seen some of my colleagues almost go out of their minds.

But what I have to say next may surprise you.

The Royal Mail is still sound. At its heart, it is still sound. The network is still sound. It still works. It is not too late to save it. It needs some money. It needs some care. It needs a return to full public ownership. It needs some accountability. It needs people to run it who care about it, who are not just running it down in order to privatise it. It needs a management who are committed to it. It needs a management with a sense of history. It is huge and unwieldy and vast and complex. It needs real attention to detail. It needs some love. It needs some time. Most of all, it needs a management who will listen to its workers and its customers at last. Its real customers. Not the corporations: Granny Smith.

There's an old lady on my round. Every year she gives me a Christmas card, and she always folds a fiver in

with it.

It's always the old people. Old people are always the most generous with tips. There's a kind of old-fashioned graciousness about the way she hands it to me. She touches my hand briefly and looks me in the eye. "For your trouble," she says, with a twinkle.

I don't open the card immediately. I save it till I get home. That's when I read the note: "For my Postman," it says. "Thank you for thinking of me every day." That just about sums it up.

For many people the person who delivers the mail is still an important figure. We mean something. We represent birthday cards and Christmas cards, and letters from their loved ones. We represent holiday postcards and bunches of flowers and mail order gifts from catalogues. We represent order and regularity, contact, communication, certainty in an uncertain world, routine and predictability, the ordinary round of everyday life. One thing you know — barring a strike — the postie will always be there to deliver your mail.

Granny Smith is everyone, but particularly every old lady who is alone and vulnerable, and for whom the mail service is a lifeline. I'm maybe the only person in the whole world who thinks about that old lady every day, even if it's only for long enough to read her name on an envelope and then to post it.

The tension here is between the Royal Mail as a profit-making business, and the Royal Mail as a public service. It is both at the same time.

For most of the Royal Mail management — who rarely, if ever, come across the public — it represents the first, while to the delivery officer — to me, and people like me, your postman or post woman on the street, the one who brings the mail to your door — it is more than likely the second.

We had a Team Talk meeting a while back in which all of the proposed changes to the business were first being laid out. Changes in our hours and working practices. Changes to our priorities. Changes that have led to the current chaos.

We were told that the emphasis was to be on the corporate customer these days. It was what the corporations wanted that mattered. We were effectively being told that quality of service to the average customer was less important than satisfying the requirements of the corporations.

Someone piped up in the middle of it. "What about Granny Smith?" he said. He's one of the old-fashioned sorts of postie, the kind who cares about these things. "Granny Smith is not important," we were told. "Granny Smith doesn't matter any more."

**So now you know.**

---

## Thoughts about the NPC Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool 10-14 June

Hello to you all!

First of all I would like to say this was my first time with the Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool, and I was so delighted that I stopped the five days there. I must say firstly, I had a low IQ about politics, so all that I saw and heard about the said subjects were indeed gratefully absorbed. So now my future prospects can only be better with more understanding to these projects, as to the future to be.

The hotel we stopped at, this being the Metropole, was top of the range, simply because of the character and warmth of the building. So hotel simply magnificent with great splendour. The food there was sincerely a taste of excellence, changing each day with added surprises. The breakfast was the starting of each day and the evening meal was always a pleasure to see and eat, which rounded the day off with sheer delight and a happy tummy! Your room

was very tasty with all mod cons and a pleasure to sit in, watching TV. The entertainment each evening was indeed a plus plus etc. because it brought complete relaxation, after your day of politics.

We also went to BBC Salford by coach to protest about the TV licence programme and I'm sure the BBC got all the info as to why we were there — well informed and explained.

And to add to this wonderful programme, the Tottenham pensioners were all a sheer delight to be with, so all in all we blended as a team of love, loyalty and most of all understanding of the cause. So I take great pleasure in presenting my views to all of those dedicated ladies and gentlemen of that special week and our future to be.

All indeed, take care, God speed, you always,

Best wishes, **Joe Hagland**

### 38% of recent retirees get less than £150 a week under the New State Pension, introduced in April 2016

The 2010 coalition government, and especially the Pensions Minister, LibDem Steve Webb, told us that the New State Pension would create a simpler more understandable state pension system. But the Pensions Select Committee did issue a warning that there would be a lengthy period of confusion.

Now the answer to a freedom of information request from pension provider Canada Life confirms this. It reveals that only a third of individuals that have recently retired are receiving the full new state pension.

Figures from the Department for Work and Pensions showed that almost two in five pensioners — 365,290 people (38%) — received less than £150 a week, while 282,447 pensioners (29%) are receiving more.

Under the new system, introduced in April 2016, pensioners with 35 years' worth of National Insurance contributions are entitled to receive £168.90 a week, but those with an occupational pension may then have a deduction made to take account of the lower amount of National Insurance they paid during their working lives.

Conversely, some can also receive more if they have a protected payment, as benefits built up over the old system are worth more than the new flat rate, Canada Life stated.

A recent National Audit Office report also found that 76% of people reaching retirement age in 2060 will be worse off under the new state pension than if they had been on the old pre-April 2016 system.

### Campaign for public toilets. . . Royal Society for Public Health report aptly named: "Taking the p \* \* \*"

New research from the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) has found that the decline in public toilets is a threat to health, mobility and equality.

In their report entitled "Taking the p \* \* \*", the charity found that the lack of public toilets disproportionately affects people with ill-health or disability, older people, outdoor workers and the homeless.

Three in four of the UK public think there are not enough public toilets in their area — with one in five people saying they avoid going out as often as they would like, in case there are no public toilets available.

Over half of all respondents also said they restricted their fluid intake because they were concerned over the lack of facilities.

This deliberate dehydration can seriously affect health and exacerbate existing medical problems.

At the NPC's recent policy conference, delegates agreed to press for more public toilets to be put into bus and train stations, a call echoed in the RSPH report.

Greater toilet provision for women is also highlighted, with a ratio of 2:1 needed to address the demand.

You can access the report on:

[www.rsph.org.uk](http://www.rsph.org.uk)



## NHS News . . . . . Pam Zinkin

Our NHS is the biggest life-saving institution in the country. Every day one million of us visit GPs and tens of thousands use NHS A&E Services. The NHS provides a vital service to so many people in our communities and has been doing so since 1948.

So when Donald Trump said that the NHS must be on the table as part of any trade deal with the UK after Brexit, we were threatened with the Americanisation of our NHS. NHS doctors are fighting to protect the quality of healthcare of patients by keeping the NHS off limits.

But Donald Trump backtracked on his statement. While this was a big moment for the campaign not to allow the NHS to be part of a trade deal, protecting the NHS is as important as ever.

In the last few days, pressure has been put on the Conservative leadership finalists Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt to promise to protect the institution post-Brexit. However, it is clear that even before major

trade deals are signed, our NHS is changing. The division of the one **NATIONAL** health service into 42 separate units that can determine what services and procedures can be financed means there can be differences in different parts of the country.

Removing the doctors' and patients' ability to decide together on appropriate treatment within the constraints of NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines, and handing the decision to the Commissioners, is to both undermine the practice of evidence-based medicine (since that doctor-patients' shared decision-making is central to it) and to replace *clinical decisions* with *financial ones* by the Commissioner, who is then effectively acting like a commercial insurer.

So many of the services are privatised in a way that we do not recognise, as we don't pay **directly** for these services but through the difficulty in getting GP appointments. Long waiting lists are due partly to shortages of nurses and doctors. More on GPs next time.

---

## Supermarket Tricks . . . . .

Everyone likes to think they're getting a bargain, but ... here are some examples of what local supermarkets get up to.

- **Tesco:** leaving up the labels of special offers when the offer date has passed.
- **Morrisons:** four beers for £5.50, strips along at three shelves, but mixed in with the ones on offer are beers at normal prices.
- **Tesco:** oranges "special offer, under half price" but no actual prices on the bins nor on the goods. Their "half price" was about what you'd normally expect to pay elsewhere.
- **Morrisons:** putting two brands of margarine in a separate area headed "special offer" and with a low price, but one brand was still full price.
- **Tesco:** having one brand of olive oil marked down but not having any of it available, and this at the start of the day.
- **Morrisons:** leaving up the labels of special offers when the offer date has passed, and with the offer date in very small print.

With the current technology used in these supermarkets, there is no excuse for this. Store managers can tell immediately when they've run out of an item, or when an offer has ended.

Other stores may be just as bad. There are also tricks by food manufacturers. Some fill up the packets with cheaper foodstuff that you will throw away: for example, one third of a can of tuna fish is sunflower oil (or brine).

This is totally unnecessary, and some years ago it was only about one sixth. This occurs both with own brands and well-known brands.

They're all doing it.

A related scam is the reduction in sizes. Cheese used to be in 1lb (454gm) packets; this reduced to 400gm with decimalisation. Many packets are now only 350gm, and there seems to be a move to 300gm. This has been done over several years - probably in the hope that consumers won't notice the 'standard' sizes are getting smaller. Now they introduce 'large' sizes of 500gm or 550gm - ie. not much more than the original 1lb, but of course at a much higher price!

What the supermarkets rely on is that you might not notice the prices on the till receipt, and even if you do, can you be bothered to queue up to get a refund or complain?

Some time ago a few supermarkets had a scheme where you got your money back, plus the goods, if they made a mistake. They soon dropped that scheme. Now there is no incentive for them to charge the right prices: we pay for their 'mistakes'.

Some mistakes are intentional, most could be easily remedied if they had a mind to.

What we can do: read labels carefully, and complain, complain, complain! Smaller shops usually put the price on each packet, so at least you can see exactly what you're paying.

**David Milner**

---

# INFORMATION

Please do not hesitate to send us items of news or opinions for publication in our Newsletter. Send to address on front of Newsletter.

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 pm in the IPF Hall, address above
Thursday 18 July	10.30 am FORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (details page 1)
Saturday 17th August	more information in the August Newsletter
Thursday 22nd August	1 pm IPF GARDEN PARTY AT HIGHBURY VIEW
Thursday 19th September	Visit to the Living Under One Sun garden and Cafe Connect. . . . . Down Lane Park, Park View Road, N 17 9EX
Thursday 19th September	10.30 am Forum at Islington Town Hall. Speaker GLA Cllr. Jennette Arnold also Bernard Manson, Drayton Park School (advert. page 2)

**Claude Moraes MEP invited to speak in October or November on: "Brexit – where we are and what next?"**

## 400 years — the West Indies — from slavery to the Windrush generation

At our June Forum meeting our speaker: Arthur Torrington — chairman of the Windrush Association — said that Britain's "association" with the West Indies goes back 400 years, when children as young as four worked as slaves on the plantations; in the 1700s there was a West Indian Regiment in the British army and hundreds of people from the West Indies were in the British armed forces in the First and Second World Wars.

Then hundreds of people from the Caribbean landed in Britain to join the workforce rebuilding health, care and transport services after the destruction of the Second World War and when many of the indigenous British people were emigrating to Australia and Canada.

He particularly spoke about Sam King who was in the RAF and who was a founding member in 1996 of the Windrush Foundation — this name arising from HMS Windrush which landed in Tilbury on 22nd June 1948 — recognised as Windrush Day by Lambeth Council in 1988 and 30 years later, in 2018, by the government.

He also spoke warmly of Harold Phillips who introduced the Beatles to calypso and the steel-pan (drum). It was Phillips who drove the van to Hamburg for the Beatles' first overseas concert.

The children of the Windrush generation are now pensioners — they have always considered themselves to be British! Yet for over ten years the British government has been treating them as illegal immigrants! Many have been denied jobs, health care and homes. Some went to visit sick and dying relatives in the West Indies only to find that they were denied re-entry.

After belated outrage expressed in Parliament, in the media and in community campaigns, the government backed down and have now set up a compensation fund.

Too late for many, and so the fight goes on for the basic democratic rights, recognition and adequate compensation of the Windrush generation.

**NEW MEMBER**       **RENEWING SUB**

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: .....

.....

POST CODE: .....

TELE NO: .....

EMAIL: .....

ANNUAL SUB ENCLOSED.....£5.00

PLUS DONATION?.....

Cheque payable to: IPF      Send to:

**Islington Pensioners Forum,  
 1a Providence Court,  
 Providence Place, Islington N1 0RN**

Or hand in at Forum meeting (see above)