



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community
February 2020 Newsletter

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Office opens from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Monday & Wednesday (but 'phone first)

DIGNITY ACTION DAY!

“Every pensioner has the right to choice, dignity, independence and security as an integral and valued member of society”.

The above declaration was adopted by the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) at its founding meeting on 14th June 1979.

On International Dignity Action Day (1st February) each year pensioners' forums, action groups and trade union retired members' associations, demonstrate our support for this declaration.

Our picture shows the Islington Pensioners Forum campaign stall at Islington Green.

We sold our knitted hats to raise money for IPF and gave out NPC leaflets explaining what we stand for:

- A National Care Service, funded by taxation, in the same way as the NHS and free at the point of need.
- Meals on Wheels to become a statutory service.



- A basic state pension set above the official poverty level, at around £220 a week and linked to the “triple lock” of the higher of earnings, prices or 2.5%

- Affordable, decent homes appropriate to the needs of older people, whilst recognising the barriers to right-sizing that older people face.

- Retention of the TV licence for over 75s, funded by government, and all other universal benefits such as free bus travel, a £500 winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions.

- A Commissioner for Older People in England, as they have in Wales and N Ireland, with judicial powers to positively promise the rights of older people and deal swiftly with the things that go wrong.

A free seminar hosted by Lambeth Pensioners Action Group for the NPC Minority Elders Cttee

Monday 17th February

12.30 — 3 00 pm at Lambeth Town Hall

- 12.30 — 1.30: Dignity and Care +Q&A
Speaker: Ciara McKay, Guy's & St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- 1.30 — 1.00: buffet lunch
- 2.00 — 3.00: Windrush Scandal +Q&A
Speaker: Cllr. Patrick Vernon OBE

We will meet at 11.30 am at the Main Entrance to Finsbury Park Station to go to Brixton Station. The Town Hall is just a short distance from there.

Please let us know if you will be coming to meet us there — 0207 226 7687 Thank you



Our friend and fellow IPF member, Elizabeth Offiong celebrated her 95th birthday on 25th January surrounded by her family and friends. The colour, the rhythm, the beautiful dresses and hats, the dancing and the food were memorable.

END THE WINTER BLUES PARTY — SEE MESSAGE BACK PAGE

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Sadly, Bob Collins, our chair, his wife and family have suffered the loss of a loved one, and he is therefore not able to write his monthly "View from the Chair".

We send our condolences and best wishes to Bob and his family.

Welcome to Lydia — IPF outings organiser!

With all the best will in the world, the Committee has found it really difficult to organise regular outings and events, and so, with the help of some funding from the Crip-legate Trust, we are very pleased to let you know that we now have a new part-time member of staff who will be doing this.

She will be at our February Forum meeting, but in the meantime she sends this message:



"Hello my name is Lydia Batchelor. I have over 30 years experience in organising outings, putting on events and arranging activities for Senior Citizens. It's something that I enjoy doing. They [that's us!! - Editor] are fun to be around and have so much knowledge to share. I am looking forward to meeting the members of IPF"

GRENFELL — THE GOVERNMENT MUST ACT!

In last month's newsletter we published a picture with story about the Defend Whittington Hospital Coalition lobbying the Royal Courts of Justice when the case of Ryhurst v Whittington Hospital was being heard.

It is absolutely right for the Coalition to campaign against this company being handed the land sale and refurbishment contract for the hospital, and the main reason for opposition is that Ryhurst is a subsidiary of Rydon — the Grenfell Tower refurbishment contractor.

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On Monday 27th January at the second phase of the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry, Richard Millett QC said that the private firms involved in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower showed "no trace of any responsibility" for the blaze that killed 72 people in 2017, despite experts saying work failed to meet building regulations.

He said that these private companies have ignored pleas from the inquiry not to engage in "a merry-go-round of buck-passing"; "in every case, what happened was someone else's fault".

● In fact Arconic, the US industrial conglomerate that made the cladding panels, knew that these were "dangerous on facades", but they believed they "could still work with regulators who were not too restrictive".

● Celotex, the company that made Grenfell's synthetic insulation, was worried that its material should not be

used with aluminium composite cladding, raising the question: "Do we take the view that our product realistically shouldn't be used behind most cladding panels because in the event of a fire it would burn?"

● Rydon, the main contractor said that Arconic and Celotex had misled buyers into believing their products were safe for use on high rise blocks despite appearing to know of the dangers.

● The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea sent building control officers to examine the cladding system being installed at Grenfell seven times but found nothing wrong. "The view expressed by building control was that the work was completed to a high standard". But the council has now accepted that it failed in its duty on building safety.

In the meantime, as the inquiry takes place, Scotland Yard detectives are investigating possible manslaughter and corporate manslaughter charges.

Of course neither the inquiry or possible criminal charges can bring back the loved ones who died in the fire or overcome the trauma of those left behind.

It is now three years since Grenfell went up in flames; there are still families that have not been rehoused, and there are still many buildings around the country clad with dangerous tiles and insulation.

The government must act!

Around 20 members came to see "I, Daniel Blake" on Wednesday 22 January. The feed-back showed members' approval. See Joe Hagland's review (p 5)

Our next film show will be on Wednesday 26th February — refreshments from 1 pm for 2 pm Film — "Looking for Eric" (see back page)

Eric Hill — Speaking personally

I did not expect the result of the general election – I thought that a hung-Parliament could be a possibility. and I favoured policies to halt privatisation, develop our NHS and protect hard-won basic rights.

However, now we must face the fact that Johnson is prime minister – always his life's personal priority — and to achieve this, his campaign was founded on lies, misinformation and deception. Let's look at his campaign and what he said:

- He would “get Brexit done”, but it is only just starting!
- He would get a good deal with the EU in 12 months. Unlikely! And “no deal” is once again on the table – something that Johnson refused to rule out a few weeks ago.
- He had a social care plan. A lie! As confirmed by the Health Secretary on the BBC's “Today” programme.
- He promised 40 new hospitals – but then told us: only six over the next five years.
- He promised “new money” for the NHS, but half of this had been given and then frozen by the government last year, and it will barely maintain the NHS at its current level
- His figure of 50,000 new nurses contains 20,000 already in post!

Also I believe that the setting-up of a Commission on government is aimed at placing power in the hands of the Executive and away from Parliament and the Judiciary. This arises from Johnson's anger at the Court's ruling that his first prorogation of Parliament and then the child citizenship fees (£1,102) were illegal. (Indeed Amnesty International stated that these fees were “shameless profiteering”.)

Other areas of concern are the stripping out of the protection of workers' rights and removing the promise to reunite child refugees with their families in the UK, although both were in the withdrawal agreement prior to the election.

In my view, Johnson aims to get a US trade deal, where Trump holds all the cards. This will mean attempts to reduce food and environmental standards, and agreeing to deals with US pharmaceutical companies at massively increased prices for the NHS and increased profits for the US companies.

Johnson's promises and pledges are based on lies and misinformation – they could “come home to roost” and start to fall apart!

Therefore we must step up our campaigning for the NPC Pensioners' Manifesto (see page one) and work to change the government in five years' time!

Eric Hill is Secretary of Islington Pensioners Forum

PM must keep promise to retain free TV licences for over 75s

As the clock ticks down to the May 31 deadline when the universal benefit of a free TV licence for over 75s is scrapped, the NPC says the PM must act fast.

This was first introduced by a Labour government in 1999 as part of a wider package of universal benefits in lieu of a decent state pension.

The NPC strongly believes that it is the government and not the BBC, which has responsibility for it, but the Conservative government passed the £745 million bill for the benefit to the BBC.

Now the BBC is planning to introduce means-testing by giving it only to those who receive Pension Credit. NPC General Secretary, Jan Shortt commented: “Isolation and loneliness are huge issues for older people. For many their TV is their window on the world and the only company they have. With over two million living below the poverty line, they simply can't afford £154.40 for a TV licence”

***The
government,
not the BBC, is
responsible for
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benefit of a
free TV licence
for the over 75s***

Speaking in a pre-election interview with the *Sun on Sunday* in November 2019, Mr. Johnson is on record as saying it was “crucial” to retain the benefit and he aimed to thrash out a new funding formula with the BBC. However, in his first interview after the general election with the BBC on 14th January, he made no mention of the issue.

Jan Shortt said: “We call on the Prime Minister to keep his promise and take the free licence back under the benefits umbrella as a matter of urgency to give peace of mind to those worried about how they will manage to pay.

Research by Age UK shows many people will fall through the means-testing net and 50,000 could be pushed below the poverty line if the BBC plan goes ahead.

A 634,334-signature petition was handed in at Downing Street calling for the free licence to continue.

Pam Zinkin: The NHS was important in the election

In the general election campaign there was much talk about how many new hospitals the Conservative party was going to build. Was it 40 or was it 6?

But does it matter how many? What is the point of any hospital without staff?

Staff shortages affect all aspects of our NHS.

Waiting time targets in A&E have not been met for years. None of the targets can be met because of staff shortages.

So the Department of Health's solution is to abolish the target!

Just one example of the problem. A young man with severe acute shoulder pain went to a local A&E. Triage was reasonable but the wait for the doctor was four hours with nowhere to sit.

The only doctor in A&E wanted an x-ray so took the pa-

tient himself to the radiographer as there was nobody else at all to help.

Hospital patients can not be safely discharged as the home nursing and social support just aren't there as we saw in the case of Mary from Highbury View, reported in the January newsletter.

We are short of 40 000 nurses.

One reason for this is that the government stopped paying nurses' bursaries, meaning student nurses must pay for their own training.

At the same time the shortage of GPs means it's hard to get an appointment.

So unless ALL NHS staff are valued our NHS is at risk.

And remember: Our NHS is not just for Elections!

We can help by joining patient groups and showing our appreciation of the staff that we have.

COMMENT: it is important to note that two new hospitals are being built in China, WITHIN SIX DAYS, to meet the needs of Coronavirus patients. Thousands of construction workers, as well as army personnel are being organised to achieve this task; water, electricity, beds and medical equipment will be installed in the pre-fabricated buildings.
It can be done! And so one cannot help thinking that the world's leaders could put aside manufacturing weapons of war and turn to pre-fabrication of homes and with electric and water installations to overcome the enormous problems of the millions of sick, homeless and refugee people in so many parts of the world!

So far 24 members from Islington and Tottenham have signed up to go to the 2020 National Pensioners Convention in Southport. . . . bookings have been made at the Scarisbrook Hotel for 30 people, so hurry, hurry! There are just six more places on the delegation.

BOOKING FORM
FOR 2020 NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION IN SOUTHPORT:
Monday 1st to Friday 5th June
£250

Name: **Telephone:**

Address:

Email:

Sharing a room would be helpful and so please tick one of the following:

Single room:..... Share double bed room Share twin-bed room:.....

Enclosed: £10 deposit (cheques payable to IPF)

Post to: Dot Gibson, PENSIONERS' CONVENTION, IPF OFFICE,
1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

“The dark story of the 1930s when Europe went bad little by little”

January saw a number of events, both national and local remembering the Holocaust when Hitler and his Fascist state murdered millions of Jewish people, disabled people, Roma people, socialists and trade unionists, and now the annual remembrance is also for the victims of all the hideous acts of genocide against millions of people carried out since the Second World War — in Rawanda, Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur, Myanmar (Burma)....

At our Forum meeting on 16th January, **Councillor Sue Lukes** talked to us about her own family.

She started by thanking Nicky Winton, a 30-year-old stockbroker from Maidenhead who in 1939 saved over 600 Jewish children from Czechoslovakia, including her father — then 10 years old.

Sue spoke of her grandmother, Hana who had taken the difficult decision to let her son go alone to save his life. It was not just Hana’s son who was saved — it meant enabling the lives of his children (Sue herself) and grandchildren.

Sue’s father died in 2014 — a distinguished scientist, but before that he was a Jew, an orphan, and a father, who had thrashed around trying to make sense of his life. There was loss and abandonment at the centre of his life — all his life.

Sue explained the dark story of the 1930s when European democracy went bad little by little — first there was violence and hate crimes, there was the blaming of minorities, then laws were passed, excluding these

minorities, identifying them as “different” and less entitled. It is a “hidden” truth that — in 1939 laws were passed in this country threatening the livelihoods of Jewish people — their citizenship, their professions, their businesses. How was this policy sold? Well, since people hate jews, let’s remove their rights to assuage public opinion.

The worry is that some of this is happening in England today! Children can be considered for a life in this country, but not their parents. In other words “good migrants” are children, but not parents.

People move around the world for all sorts of reasons, and governments can try to stop them. They can make their lives hell, or they can make their lives easier, more productive, happier.

Sue reminded us that in the same month as Nicky Winton died, David Cameron described migrants as “a swarm”. Theresa May quoted Nicky Winton in her resignation speech, but she was the architect of the hostile environment policy, which victimised the Windrush immigrants.

Sue said: “You have the power to make London a welcoming place, that invites in: music and colour, that offers refuge and solace.

“Once you decide all migrants could be good you can write your own stories, and fill them with people like Hana, like Nicky Winton and like my family. Horror story, or Fairy tale ending? Its up to you.”

Councillor Sue Lukes is Islington’s Migrants Champion

Joe Hagland on “I, Daniel Blake”

“I, Daniel Blake” — what a great film! The story of this working man brought a light on the facts of our society today and also for many of us threw a light back on days past.

Daniel, a skilled carpenter with heart trouble, finds himself out of work, and so comes up against “Big Brother” (the state bureaucracy) when he tries his hardest to find work.

Daniel has no experience of IT — but he MUST use the computer to fill in forms and write a CV. He goes to the library and, sitting among others using the computers, asks some young people to help him. But his time on the computer is up before he completes the task.

Finally he gets the forms printed by the young men living next door to him, but even that is not good enough for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)! “Hard copy is no good — everything must be accessible on line!”

This film portrays the exceptional power used against

honest people — leading some to thinking of taking their own life. People are not only knocked down, but given an extra knock to keep them down!

Daniel is thrown out of the DWP office when he sticks up for a young woman with two children, who also has problems.

The depression Daniel experiences must have been enormous, and being knocked down time and again by those in power eventually pushes him to writing on the wall of the DWP office “I, Daniel Blake demand that my appeal . . .”

Eventually, but not before he has sold his furniture for £200, he is granted an appeal hearing and the young woman who he has befriended goes with him. But all the pressure has badly affected his heart condition. . . the agony is finally over!

For me, the moral of this story is that we should all stand our own ground, support others and be constructive in our views of the past and the present.

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
Monday 17th February 2020	Free seminar in Lambeth Town Hall (see advert on front page)
Thursday 20th February 2020	10.30 a.m. Forum Meeting in Islington Town Hall
Wednesday 26 February	FILM SHOW — buffet from 1 p.m. film at 2 p.m.(see below)

Islington Pensioners Forum officers and committee 2019-2020

Chair: **Bob Collins**,

Secretary/Treasurer: **Eric Hill**,

Assistant Secretary, **Annette Thomas**,

Committee: **Frances Bradley, Luke Daniels, Dot Gibson, Irma Gomez, Eula Harrison, Joyce Herron, Alice Kilroy, David Milner, Eddie Zissler, Pam Zinkin**

“LOOKING FOR ERIC!” (a comedy)

BY KEN LOACH, WITH FOOTBALLER ERIC CANTONA

Our next film show is on Wednesday 26th February — Buffet from 1 pm, Film at 2 pm in the IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

***Dear Members,
This space was ready to advertise our “Beat the Winter Blues” party. However, there has been no room available in the Town Hall in February, and so the Committee has decided to postpone the party until a Town Hall room is available. . Therefore information will be published in the March Newsletter.
Our apologies for this delay***

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)