

Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —
Evesham Branch

November 2023

From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths

After the excitement of our trip to the conference, the exec has started some long-term planning to prepare for the forthcoming General Election whenever that will be. The campaign group has been re-established and Brian and Neal have been looking at data and strategies that we can implement to encourage people to vote and to increase our vote share. These ideas will be shared at a future meeting and will include using the newsletter as a focus for our campaigning as well as for sharing branch news.

The December meeting is going to be a Christmas social and quiz, Mary Tasker is planning a bumper raffle with her legendary hampers as prizes. If you have any left-leaning friends, please bring them along as we are keen to welcome potential new members to support our campaigning in the new year.

We will start the new year with a focus on the cost of living and I can confirm that for our January meeting we will be welcoming a speaker from Citizens Advice who will be able to share how they are supporting people locally. If any members can

suggest contacts who would make good speakers for future meetings, please let me know. We want our meeting programme to equip members to respond to the public when we campaign on local and national priorities.

Thank you to those who have contributed to this newsletter, including Brian for the update on Avonvale River Action, and Peter for the news on the reading group. Please continue to contribute updates and images to our newsletter inbox newsletter@eveshamlabour.org as well as details of forthcoming events for the calendar. The activities we report on are drawing interest from supporters and members who have not been active, and we welcome this, as we aspire to provide a varied and accessible programme of events for members. Our most recent speaker Elise Roberts from Shrewsbury CLP was very enthused by her visit to our branch meeting and emailed to say *"Thank you for your warm welcome. It was fabulous to see how proactive your CLP is, I will be taking my experience with you back to my own."*

November branch meeting

The November branch meeting seemed to quickly follow the October meeting because of the change to our usual meeting pattern to accommodate the conference trip. Nevertheless, we had quite a lot to report on. Matthew indicated that we have had six new members join the CLP (four of these are attached to the Evesham branch) and we are in the process of personally welcoming them to the branch and hope that they will become active members.

We are trying to make our meetings accessible to all and this was the first meeting where we used a microphone to amplify the sound for our hearing-impaired members. This was a welcomed initiative although our visiting speaker elected not to use it and one member reported that she should have done as it made a significant difference. We will continue to do this and provide paper copies of any slide shows for those that struggle to view the

screen. To avoid us overprinting, it would be helpful if members that require printed copies could let us know.

When sharing the calendar of forthcoming events, it struck me how varied our programme is. It is really encouraging to see that members have access to supporting our community (litter picking and foodbank collection), engaging in political education (book group and film club) and socializing (Christmas quiz, *Get Political II* gig) as we build a team to campaign for a Labour government.

Our speaker Elise Roberts is hoping to be selected as the Labour candidate for the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). She approached us in July to ask if she could come and speak and introduce herself to us, as she is keen to learn what concerns people in different areas of West Mercia.

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She is an experienced Labour councillor who had recently been mayor of Shrewsbury. She has had a varied career working as a riding instructor, dental nurse working in prisons and is now a teacher in a special school. The ward she represents in Shrewsbury is in an area of deprivation and, as a councillor, she has worked with the police advocating for young people and those with special needs and learning difficulties.

She has lived experience of being supported and failed by the police and claims this will support her if she were successful in her bid to be the West Mercia PCC. Her ideas for improving policing across the region align with those Yvette Cooper presented in her conference speech. She feels that

women and vulnerable people, particularly those with learning difficulties and poor mental health, are currently being let down and need to feel secure. She thinks, like Yvette, that this means building strong communities where people pull together instead of turning on each other. Her experience leaves her well placed to support Labour's intention of bringing together services and communities to support young people as this is what she has been doing in her community. She endorsed the concept of new youth hubs to tackle the crisis in youth mental health, give teenagers the best start in life and stop knife crime that Yvette unveiled at conference. We wish Elise well in her bid to stand as the Labour candidate and thank her for her visit.

AvonVale River Action Group (ARAG) — Brian Gregory

Many members joined July's branch meeting to hear Louise Bugg deliver a captivating presentation describing the purpose and work being undertaken by a group of volunteers concerned about the state of the River Avon and its tributaries. The group, now titled AvonVale River Action Group (ARAG), is dedicated to sampling water quality regularly at various points along the Avon and feeding those results into a nationwide programme called the Water Quality Monitoring Network (WQMN).

Having just been trained on how to use recently-acquired testing kits funded by Evesham Town Council, Neal Cartwright and I conducted our inaugural set of tests over the first weekend of November at sites along the Avon and Isbourne. This will now be a monthly trip for both of us, weather and flooding dependent of course.

We measured four important water quality factors — electrical conductivity, water temperature,

phosphate levels and nitrate levels with the results uploaded via an app to the WQMN system. The interest in the group's activities is increasing with ARAG now having ten testing kits and fourteen volunteers trained. For anyone that might be interested, all results collected can be viewed on the ARAG website <https://avonvaleriver.org/> and on the WQMN site <https://five.epicollect.net/project/water-quality-monitoring-network>.

If you would like to get involved then please get in touch directly with me (Brian.Gregory@eveshamlabour.org) or directly via the ARAG website which also includes an option to sign up to the monthly newsletter.

ARAG represents 'citizen science' at its best and is much needed against the backdrop of appalling behaviour of water companies since privatisation.

Neal won the award for the best collection vessel in the form of a genie's lamp!



Reading Group returns – Peter Daw

On a cold November 16th evening half-a-dozen Evesham Labour Party members met to re-start the Reading Group, which met regularly prior to the pandemic. Hosted and led by David Haslam, the group discussed the chapter 'Markets and Peoples...' from the book 'How Will Capitalism End?' by Wolfgang Streeck. David introduced the session, followed by a lively discussion about the dominance of financial markets in recent government decision-making and the challenges involved in getting the democratic voices of populations listened to. We covered such topics as the almost universal sense that taxation is a 'bad thing' while a fairer tax system is essential if issues of social justice, deteriorating public services and infrastructure decline are to be tackled. The question of how to counter the negative impacts of an unrestrained market economy was examined from many angles, including whether climate and environmental emergencies would help or hinder such necessary change.

The next discussion will also be on Green issues, based on a reading of the magazine New Ground (Autumn 2023), which celebrates 50 years of Labour's Environment Campaign SERA. It will take place at 59 Burford Road (7.45–9.15pm) on Thursday 14 December. Copies of the magazine were distributed but will also be available at the Branch Meeting on 13 December. The discussion will include what can be learned from the examples described which may be useful for our campaigning at local or national elections. All are welcome to attend.

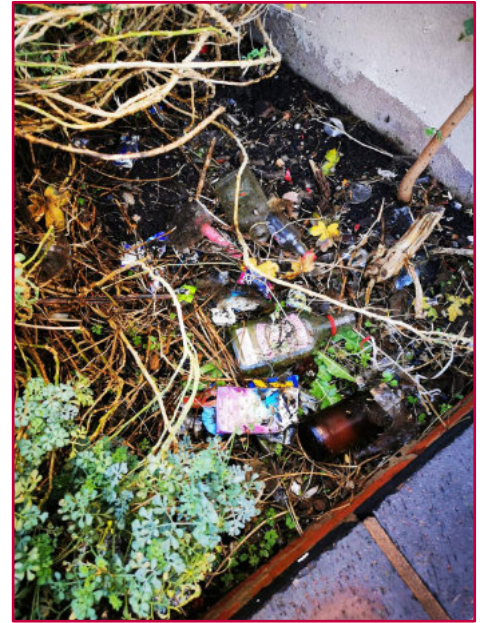


Film Group

The film group awayday was a great success and saw eleven members (with partners) travel to Number 8 in Pershore to view Ken Loach's award winning 2023 film *The Old Oak*. Watching the film was a hard-hitting emotional roller coaster but overall was more optimistic than some of his other work. For those of you yet to see it I shall not share the plot but steal from a review in *The Metro* which describes the film as "a social realist drama about poverty and a story about hope amid sadness and the power of human connection."

Anti-litter Evesham

Thank you to those of you who turned out to support the Bengeworth litter pick on a drizzly November morning. The state of some of the streets was quite shocking and they have clearly been neglected by the Street cleaning team



as evidenced by the weeds growing through the pavements and kerbs. This has been reported to Wychavon District Council.

From the Chair: Matthew Rea

November has been a good month for the branch with us seeing the results of some of the new initiatives agreed at the AGM, like the first meetings of the book group and film group. I attended both and it was great to see such a good turnout. I am sure these groups will grow as they gain momentum and I extend my thanks to the organisers.

Like most of you I am saddened to see that the unrest in the Middle-East has not been resolved. Whilst as Sue reported earlier, we have seen new members join our local branch, at the same time the party's public response to this crisis has led to some members leaving, and a great deal of frustration for many others. I was able to join the London march in support of a ceasefire on Saturday 11 November which was a very peaceful family event – this was very well attended and sent a powerful message in the UK to all our leaders. I know many of you will share my anger at how so many western leaders have failed to support the UN in their demands for a peaceful and reconciliatory resolution. As the inevitable General Election looms ever closer, it is imperative that our party's leaders are in touch with public sentiment. I applaud those shadow cabinet members that have stood firm on this issue. I am certain that many of the young electorate attach far more importance to principle and integrity than they do to political colour on issues such as these. At least, as I write this, we are seeing some glimmer of peace as both

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Forthcoming events

1 December 'Cuppa and a Cake' see details below.

13 December Branch Meeting & Christmas Quiz

6th January 2024 Lets Get Political II gig at The Valkyrie

10th January 2024 Branch meeting with speaker from Citizens' Advice.

Caring Hands cuppa and cake

We shall be holding our annual cuppa and cake event to accept donations for their Christmas food parcels on Friday 1 December from 2.00–3.30 at Delicious Café, Vine Street Evesham. Please bring along donations of non-perishable food that will be in date at Christmas. In the past, we have found members to be most generous; if you are unable attend and have donations please contact Sue who can arrange to collect. There are many struggling people and families in the town who rely on the great work of Caring Hands, a cause we are proud to support.

EVESHAM LABOUR PARTY

CHRISTMAS FOODBANK COLLECTION & CUPPA 'N' CAKE

Drop off your donations for Caring Hands foodbank Christmas hamper collection and stop for a cuppa and cake with other Labour members and supporters. Please donate items that can be included in Christmas hampers including Christmas food and treats and ensure best before date is after 25th Dec.

FRI 1 DEC
DELICIOUS CAFE, 2 VINE ST
EVESHAM, WR11 4RE
DROP OFF 14.00-15.30

Labour



by Sarah Brooks

ALL FOR ONE AND (N)ONE FOR ALL

December meeting, 13 December

Our December meeting will be a Christmas Social and Quiz. Mary is organising a bumper raffle with hamper prizes and we are extending the meeting until 10 p.m. This is an opportunity for you to bring along any left-leaning friends who may be potential members and who enjoy a good quiz. The more, the merrier!

From the Chair: from page 3...

side are now beginning to talk to each other and hostages are at last being released.

Finally, on high note, we have all digested Jeremy Hunt's Autumn Statement, which confirms that absolutely nothing has changed with the Tories. Out of ideas and not only blind to the damage they have done over the last thirteen years – but proving that they are prepared to do worse! Already early polling shows that the Autumn Statement has convinced almost nobody that things are going to get better, from which we can confidently predict that this will lead to a wipe-out for them in the next election. Buoyed up from this we will flesh out our election campaign plan in the next two weeks and update everyone at the next branch meeting.

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