

# Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —  
Evesham Branch

October 2023

## *From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths*

I am writing this the day after Labour secured two by-election victories in Tory safe seats, Tamworth and Mid-Bedfordshire. Sir John Curtice, Professor of Politics at Strathclyde University commented to the BBC that 'the results represent one of the worst by-election nights that any government has had to endure'. In Tamworth, the 23.9% swing from Conservative to Labour was the second highest in post-war by-election history. No government has previously lost so safe a seat to the principal opposition party in a by-election contest. In Mid-Bedfordshire the swing was a little lower, 20.5%, although, the Conservatives' own share of the vote fell by even more than in Tamworth. This feels pretty good to me, and I am optimistic that Labour's fortunes will change in the next general election. Although Mid-Worcestershire was a slightly safer seat than Mid-Bedfordshire the 2019 election results are similar! It's a big ask but I dare to dream that with the right candidate we might just see the change we want in our new constituency, Droitwich and Evesham. Having returned from Liverpool with a revitalised enthusiasm the executive will be looking ahead and consolidating how we prepare for the general election. When we have a plan, we will be looking

at members to support us with campaigning. The message from conference suggested that we should be getting ready for an election in May, although the media currently favour October! A May election would give us 28 weekends. We will feedback to members as soon as the campaign strategy has been agreed and hope that you will be inspired to help us.

If any members have contacts who would make good speakers for future meetings, please let me know as I want to plan our meeting programme so we can respond to the public when we campaign on national priorities as well as those that impact on us locally.

Please continue to contribute updates and images to our newsletter inbox [newsletter@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:newsletter@eveshamlabour.org) as well as details of forthcoming events to add to 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.

## *The annual Worcester Lecture*

A group from the branch attended the annual Worcester Lecture in Worcester Cathedral on 3rd October. The lecture, entitled *'The NHS is sick? What's the cure?'* was delivered by Lord Victor Adebawale, Chair of the NHS Confederation. The acoustics of the cathedral and his fast-paced delivery required us to listen and concentrate hard.

In the lecture he addressed the health inequalities that exist in the UK and how these have become starker since the Covid 19 pandemic. Whilst clinicians have been aware of this for some time the pandemic made it apparent to the public, the

media and to policymakers. He identified three elements that need addressing to improve primary care; equity, accessibility and digital and went on to identify the significance of each in improving health outcomes for all. The lecture provided a useful introduction to some of the thinking presented at the Labour Party Conference especially the ideas around the use of technology.

After the lecture we were treated to some tasty canapes and a glass of wine in the Cathedral cloisters which provided an opportunity to share thoughts with each other and Lord Adebawale.

## October branch meeting

At the branch meeting those of us who attended conference shared our experience and some of the messages that came from the speeches, fringe events and seminars we attended. We all felt uplifted and enthused by the experience and learned a lot, and are already planning what we might do differently next year when the conference will again be held in Liverpool.

Mary and Dave Tasker share their thoughts on attending conference...

We were excited to attend our first Labour Party Conference. There were planned sessions with different speakers in rooms around the exhibition centre. We got lost more than once! The fringe events were very informative and the main exhibition area where various businesses, trade unions and charitable organisations were represented. Many of the business stands represented green energy companies or technological solutions. There were also different news events going live from the conference so, for example, you could watch MPs David Lammy being interviewed for Sky news, Wes Streeting by GB News and Rachel Reeves by the BBC.

Adjacent to the official Labour Party stall in the main exhibition hall there was a training area where trainers were giving 25-minute bite-sized workshops every hour on the hour. These provided an opportunity to share best practice, meet other campaigners and develop both personal and professional skills which would enable us to plan a good campaign and have the tools to motivate others to our cause.

We attended training on General Election Planning, fundraising tips, and mobilising members. The points we gathered from each session are as follows:

- Some elections will be held on 2 May 2024, such as local elections, police and crime commissioner elections and it could possibly be the date for a General Election.
- At the time of the training, 2 May 2024 was only thirty weekends away (a sobering thought).
- The trainer stressed that when we are planning for the General Election, we should start from this date and work backwards to develop our action plan.
- Many CLP districts already have a candidate, obviously we are not in that position, but the message was to campaign anyway. The gazebo

needs to be out at every opportunity.

- Campaign on local causes to gain people's interest.
- For safe or 'no-hope seats', we will need to think about offering to support adjacent constituencies where we can. A positive example of this is Redditch supported in Tamworth and we had a Labour gain.



### Mobilising members

- People need to be asked for help; don't assume people will automatically help. This also shows we value their input.
- 20% of volunteers are not party members.
- Make sure if people come to help, they have something to do, even if it is shredding old leaflets.
- Ensure individual campaigns are targeted at what people support.
- Upskilling members using training events.
- Give people a sense of ownership and develop personal relationships.
- Trade Unions will support campaign days as well as The Co-operative Society.
- Politics behind ideas and get petitions going when campaigning, local issues close to people's hearts.
- Everyone can help; run a mobilisation phone bank for members who may not be mobile but can phone around potential voters.



[continues over...]

## October branch meeting (continued)

- Run a new members event such as a coffee morning.
- The message being 'Make it political, make it emotional and make it urgent'.
- Log all events on [events@labour.org](mailto:events@labour.org)

### Fundraising events

- Make it fun.
- Diarise events and promote with posters, leaflets, etc. We do this through our newsletter.
- Get a team to help with events.
- Involve local communities.
- Market events at [events@labour.org](mailto:events@labour.org)

All training courses are available on the Labour training site but please speak to the Labour executive if you need to know more.

On the first evening we all attended a West Midlands region networking event at the Revolution Bar in the Albert Dock. On arrival we were given a glass of fizz and as we had arrived promptly it was quite easy to circulate and speak to other members. Sue was on a mission to book some speakers for our future meetings and introduced herself to a couple of prospective parliamentary candidates who she had seen at earlier seminars. The bar quickly filled up, the free drinks flowed nicely, and the noise levels raised making it more difficult to start up conversations. There was suddenly great excitement as the arrival of Keir Starmer was announced. He welcomed us to the conference with a short, motivating speech which thanked activists and members for supporting him to change the party, reminding us that we all still have much work to do to secure an election victory.

On the second evening we all attended a launch of the *For the Many* network. We had been invited by the band members who supported our 'Get

*Political'* gig in January and who were playing again at the event which also welcomed the film director Ken Loach. It was held in the back room of a bar on Hope Street, a room with much trades union history. The *For the Many* network is a new development which aims to establish a network of grassroots organisations without asking people to leave any parties or campaigns that they currently support. The initiative was launched at an event in Liverpool to coincide with the Labour Party conference. The movement appears to be explicitly aimed at attracting people who supported Labour under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

At the event we heard guest speakers representing various left-wing organisations, including Ken Loach. Some of the presenters appeared to be former members of the Labour party who had either resigned or been excluded, but some were subsequently seen at the conference. The network is based around support for twelve basic principles such as public ownership of services and utilities, employment rights and a fully-funded National Health and Social Care service. Indeed, all but the public ownership of services and utilities were principles that were covered at conference. They even referred to 'bread and roses' as Angela Rayner had in her conference opening speech. After the event we were approached and asked if we would like to sign up to the network. While we broadly agreed with the principles, we didn't feel able to commit to the network which could be seen as actively opposing some of the work of the Labour party. We will watch the network with interest to see how it develops.

## Caring Hands

We shall be holding our annual cuppa and a cake event to accept donations of food for Caring Hands' Christmas food parcels on Friday 1 December from 2.00–3.30 p.m. at Delicious Café, Vine Street Evesham. Please bring along donations and please do make sure that they will be in date at Christmas and are not chilled or frozen items. If you are not able to come along you may bring

items to our next meeting on 8 November (just check dates). We have historically found members to be most generous and 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, and this is a cause we are proud to support.

The branch supported Will Jarvis to attend conference as a youth member. It was his first conference and here he describes his experience of the event.

“On the first day of conference, we started by finding our way to the main hall with all the stalls. We had a look round. I was pleased to see stalls which focused on hydrogen and clean energy. The first day was Angela Rayner’s speech. We went to go see it and it was amazing. By the end my hands hurt from clapping, but it was worth it. The conference hall was full of people. Sue and I went to go see ‘*Breaking barriers to opportunity for young people*’ which was at the other side of the building. Bridget Phillipson (shadow education secretary) and Florence Eshalomi (MP for Vauxhall) and others were on the panel at the event organised by Labour Students. It was really interesting. It was basically young labour members asking them questions on subjects that matter to them (such as poor student housing, low self-esteem and mental health issues, disaffection with school).



At the end of the day, we went to a West Midlands gathering which Keir Starmer turned up too. It was a shock! But Sue raced to the front to get a photo of him.

On the second day we went to see Rachel Reeves. That was also packed full of people. Most of

## YOUNG LABOUR

what she said was just common sense and everyone could agree. The speech brought hope and optimism for the future. I also went to a fringe event with Mary about future foreign policy which had David Lammy speaking which was good. At the end of the day, we went to an event which was very left wing and borderline communist. It was interesting to hear different views and speaker. But yeah, it was a bit strange.

On the Tuesday, David and I went to a fringe meeting about becoming a clean energy superpower. It was good but I wanted to hear more about the impact on the climate. It seems that they were only talking about green opportunities in terms of economics and not about the impact on our environment. After that we went to the Hilton hotel to watch Keir’s speech and that was amazing. I thought the glitter brought the speech more alive. All the speeches bring hope that this country can be better. More accepting, kinder, cheaper and happier. By the end of the speech everyone in the room was clapping.

At the close of the conference, we went to the Cavern Club and pub. That was really fun, and I recommend it. I just wish I had written more notes during conference so I could remember the extra details.”



**Matthew’s thoughts:** For me, the conference experience can only be summed up as full of hope! I think we have all become very used to how thirteen years of Tory mismanagement has erased hope for so many groups of people, from the low-paid, the exploited renters, the environmentalists, and those who believe that Britain should be a caring country. At the conference there was a palpable sense that we are nearing the end of this desert of hopelessness. On every stand, in every corridor, in every speaker session we heard and felt an unstoppable surge of optimism; everyone there absolutely believes that a Labour government is now a “when” and not an “if”.

The speeches of Angela Rayner and Rachel Reeves had a demolition quality about them. What is clear is

that when Labour get into power they will take a wrecking ball to the negligence, self-destruction and corruption that has dogged our country for so long. I don’t think I’ve ever heard such clarity of objective from potential leaders before. Their plans will bring Britain back into the light, put us on a new footing and steer a course that everyone can get behind. Recovering the stolen Covid money, ending compulsory zero-hours contracts, ending the use of overpaid consultants who never deliver, building homes at a scale and cost where everyone can own or rent, and implementing an industrial regeneration strategy that embraces climate-first alongside a real plan to address community decline.

## Forthcoming events

**8 November** Branch Meeting with guest Elise Roberts (Prospective West Mercia Police Commissioner Candidate for the Labour Party).

**11 November** Evesham Anti-Litter clean up in Bengeworth. Meet 10 a.m. in Lidl car park if you are able to help.

**1 December** Cuppa and a Cake 2.30–4.00 p.m. (Delicious Café, Vine Street).

**13 December** Branch Meeting & Christmas Quiz.

The **Book Group** will be hosted by Peter Daw and David Haslam at David's home, 59 Burford Road, WR11 3AG, on the third Thursday of the month from 7.45–9.15 p.m. The next meetings will be on **16 November** and then **14 December** 2023.

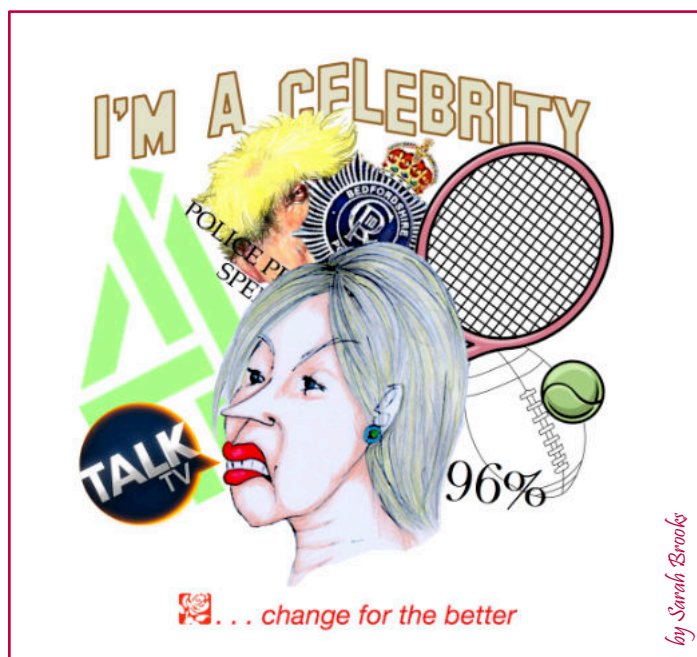
The reading material is under discussion but if you would like to join this group, please inform David [davidhaslam558@btinternet.com](mailto:davidhaslam558@btinternet.com)

**Film Group:** The first meeting of the film group will be an awayday at *Number 8* in Pershore on Friday **17 November** where they will be showing Ken Loach's latest film, *The Old Oak*. If you would like to come along, please book your own tickets and we can look at car sharing nearer the time.

Subsequently, Mary and David Tasker have offered to host a monthly film group at their home in Blaney's Lane in Evesham. They propose showing a socialist film and following it up with a discussion about the issues raised. If this is something that is of interest to you, please email David: [david.tasker@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:david.tasker@eveshamlabour.org) and information and dates of film showings will follow.

## From the Chair: Matthew Rea

Reflecting on last month's newsletter I'm wondering if I should apologise for closing things out on a rather negative note. Let's see if I can do better this month! Our trip to the conference was a huge success, the feedback session at the branch meeting was really engaging, and we absolutely smashed it in two by-elections — clearly cause for optimism and maybe even



elation! Picking through the aftermath of the by-elections I'm encouraged by the news that Keir Starmer says it is time to widen the net, that just about any rural constituency where Labour is historically in a strong second place is now a target at the next election. Is it now time to dream that even Droitwich and Evesham could change colour? Whilst this may seem like a stretch — either way the enthusiasm of the exec team is unstoppable and, fired up by the conference, we are now going to start planning our campaign. So I would urge all our members and supporters to be ready as we will need to throw everything we have got into the election campaign.

I'm trying to avoid finishing on a low note — but I do have to mention the Middle East. Clearly, everyone is appalled by the diabolical actions of 7 October, but there really is nothing to be gained by either party pursuing yet more violence. I think we should encourage all world leaders to stand firm in defending the goals and principles of the United Nations in standing up for the humanitarian rights of anyone that is oppressed. We must encourage the oppressor and the oppressed that the path of reconciliation is the only route to lasting peace. Is it too much to ask that we demand our leaders put principle ahead of populism?

**Contacts:** Matthew Rea (Chair):  
Sue Wood-Griffiths (Vice Chair):  
Newsletter submissions:

### General enquiries:

Call us:

Facebook:

Web site:

[matthew.rea@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:matthew.rea@eveshamlabour.org)  
[sue.woodgriffiths@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:sue.woodgriffiths@eveshamlabour.org)  
[newsletter@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:newsletter@eveshamlabour.org)

[welcome@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:welcome@eveshamlabour.org)

01386 293035

EveshamLabour

[midworcslabour.co.uk](http://midworcslabour.co.uk)