

Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —
Evesham Branch

September 2023

From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths

Having spent most of my life working in education, I am programmed into thinking in 'terms and semesters' so, for me, September is a time for new beginnings. The month certainly started well with the Civil War walk and the Fladbury bell-boat regatta, and the AGM was well attended. We really appreciate the support of those who have stepped up to make our branch more inclusive and to widen opportunities for our members. The new executive will be looking ahead to how we prepare for a General Election and five of us are excited to be attending the party conference in Liverpool next month to learn more about policy and campaigning. We will feed back to members at the October meeting. If any members have contacts

who would make good speakers for future meetings, please let us know, as we will be planning our programme when we return from conference. As we approach a General Election, we hope to examine national priorities as well as those that impact on us locally so we can respond to the public when we campaign.

As ever, please don't hesitate to contribute stories, updates and pictures to our newsletter inbox newsletter@eveshamlabour.org as well as details of forthcoming events to add to the calendar. The activities we arrange and report on are starting to draw 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.

Fladbury Bell-boat Regatta

When Helen Russell suggested we enter an Evesham Labour team in the Fladbury Regatta, I was doubtful we could muster a team of eight, but despite two volunteers dropping out we had a team of nine turn up. It was a very hot afternoon and Evesham Labour had the gazebo sited in a prominent position on the Fladbury Recreation ground so we could not be missed! There were nineteen teams participating on the day and each team had three races. The final race established the teams in a rank order. Evesham Labour came tenth. Helen has certificates for those who participated and these will be awarded at our Christmas party. Thank you to everyone who participated and to those who came to support and cheer on the team. It was a wonderful afternoon; we had some very competitive paddlers in the team. Events like this provide an opportunity for people to see us participating in the community and can draw interest. Thanks again to Helen for suggesting this and for the Prosecco and strawberries she shared to celebrate our success.



The Evesham Civil War Walk

On 3 September, a glorious sunny afternoon, members and supporters were able to enjoy an interesting walk around the town centre, led by Helen Russell. The date was the anniversary of the Battle of Worcester and Helen pointed out places of significance and interest during the civil war as we sauntered around the town. How many of you have looked at the flagstone outside The Royal Oak or at the plaque above the old O2 shop? Next time you are in town, look and pay attention!

After the walk, many of us retired to the Red Lion for a drink and some live music which was a perfect finish to a lovely afternoon. Thank you to Helen for suggesting it at our January meeting and for her thorough preparation; we all concluded that she would make an excellent historic tour guide if she wanted a second career. The event drew interest from some of our supporters who we hope will feel encouraged to become more active.



The Annual General Meeting

The AGM on 13 September provided an opportunity to us to review the work of the branch during the past year and to elect branch officials for the forthcoming year.

Matthew shared a presentation of everything we have done over the past year. It provided an interesting summary of the focus of our meetings and our wide engagement and support for events in the community. In summary:

During this time, we have had three venues. The initial move from the Ecgwins club to Cornmill Yard in November 2022 was prompted by needing more space, particularly for members anxious about Covid 19. Cornmill Yard proved to be a hospitable venue, but some members found it difficult to find, and we quickly outgrew the space. Since February we have been meeting at The Boathouse at The Rowing Club. This provides a central, spacious and airy meeting room with lift access and parking which has enabled wider participation in our meetings and a more sociable layout. The monthly raffle organised by our fundraising officer Mary Tasker supports us to pay for the venue with any surplus contributing to party funds.

Our support for community groups is something we can also be proud of. We have continued with our regular Christmas and Easter Egg collections for Caring Hands in addition to a one-off collection of donations at our July meeting when they were appealing for additional help due to low stock and the forthcoming school holidays. We have regularly supported the Evesham Anti-Litter group with the Great British Spring Clean, the Big Paddle Clean Up, The Medieval Market and Battle of Evesham events. The response to the appeal for garden tools for the Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees allotment project was overwhelmingly generous and it was heartwarming to hear that they are now donating some of their produce to Caring Hands. In addition, we have donated raffle prizes and supported charity events organised by the Valkyrie for the Royal British Legion and Midlands Air Ambulance and to the Mayor's quiz for local causes.

Our meeting programme and events have all arisen from the suggestions we gathered at our meeting in January and we regularly review these to shape our programme as we aim to grow the membership, widen our visibility and engage more members and supporters to become active.

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The Annual General Meeting (continued)

During the break in the meeting there was an opportunity for members to borrow or exchange library books. We extend our thanks to Peter Daw for storing and bringing the books to the meeting. We are fortunate to have such a wide selection of reading material and encourage members to take advantage of this facility.

After the break elections were held for the executive roles and the following positions filled:

- Matthew Rea: *Chair and membership secretary*
- Sue Wood-Griffiths: *Vice-chair and secretary*
- Mary Tasker: *Fundraising Officer*
- David Tasker: *Trade Unions Liaison Officer*
- Brian Gregory: *Campaign Strategy Coordinator*
- Mary Campbell: *Women's Officer*

The *Disability Officer* role attracted interest from three members who had different and relevant experience to offer to the role and it was agreed that they would work together to form an accessibility team. Mary Tasker, who trained as a learning disability nurse will work with Jane Fraser, who has experience of assessing accessibility with the church, and Lorraine Middleburgh who has worked as a physiotherapist and has expertise in physical disabilities. They will work together and will be in touch with members so that we can support people who would like to get engaged to become more active in the branch.

We were delighted with this response and hope that any members who currently feel excluded from being active will feel encouraged. Sue Picton indicated that she has a vehicle that can transport a wheelchair which she could make available if required. We extend our thanks to all.

Tories by the numbers

We know that our bus service has declined as traffic jams have grown, but did you know by how much?

Between 2010/11 and 2021/22, the number of bus passenger journeys in England fell by 38% — a bit over a third. But not in Tory-run Worcestershire. Here, the fall was 64% — almost two thirds — down from 17.2 million journeys then to just 6.3 million now*.

If the missing 11 million trips are all now by car, that's an extra 30,000 journeys on our roads *per day*. It's championship stuff — Worcestershire

The *Political Education* role remains vacant, but we are delighted that David Haslam and Peter Daw have stepped up and offered to run a monthly book group. This is something that has been very successful in the past with members who enjoy some intellectual engagement with politics.

The group will be hosted by David Haslam at his home, 59 Burford Road, WR11 3AG on the third Thursday of the month from 7.45 – 9.15pm starting 26 October 2023, then 16 November and then 14 December 2023.

The reading material will be announced, but if you would like to join this group, please inform David davidhaslam558@btinternet.com

Film Group: Mary and David Tasker have offered to host a monthly film group at their home. 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 at david.tasker@eveshamlabour.org and information and dates of film showings will follow.

Youth Group: we have not elected a Youth coordinator but have had an expression of interest from a member who has some ideas and will be following this up. We recognise that our younger members have to prioritise their education but we are keen to extend our engagement with young people.

The other executive positions remain unfilled. We still feel we need to establish a communications and social media team and are hoping to get some ideas and training from the party conference. If any members have experience in this field or might be interested in getting involved in some way please get in touch as we are always open to ideas.

County Council has been the fifth most successful of 92 English local authorities at cutting bus use.

Fewer buses and destinations, higher fares — it would be good to know how Evesham's bus services had changed. If you know where I can get timetables or fare details from around 2010, please let me know: Neal Cartwright, 07951 043101, nealcartwright@yahoo.co.uk

(*Source <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2022> Data table BUS01e)

Forthcoming events

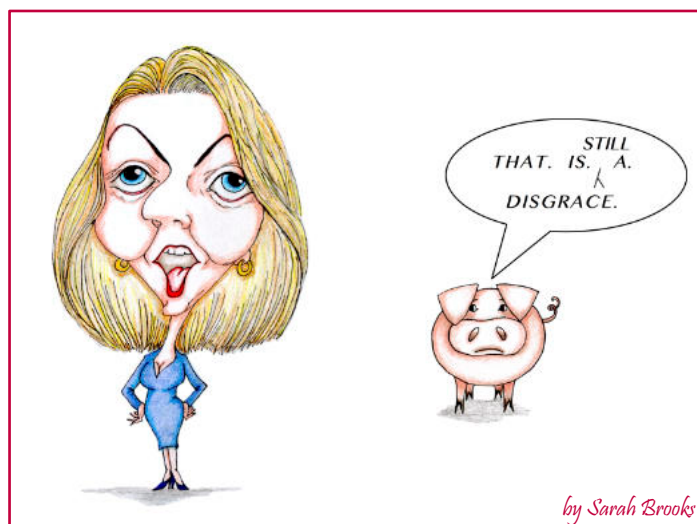
7 October Labour Party National Annual Women's Conference

8–11 October Labour Party Annual Conference

18 October Branch Meeting: Feedback from Conference (*note change of usual meeting pattern to account for Conference*)

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

13 December Branch meeting & Christmas Quiz



Social Media – campaigning opportunity



As we move closer to the next General Election, it is essential that we deliver our message to as many target voters as possible across the newly-formed

'Droitwich and Evesham' constituency.

In addition to the traditional approaches such as leafleting, one of the fastest and most effective methods of doing this is via online social media channels.

At both constituency and branch level we have an active presence on Facebook but little or no presence on any other social networking platforms. It is these platforms, such as Instagram, that are mostly adopted and preferred by younger voters. To be successful and to reach target voters we must build a much wider and regular social media presence going forward.

Is this something that you can help with? Do you have knowledge of, or an interest in, social media or perhaps a desire to learn more about campaigning through these platforms? Or do you know someone else that does? If so this is a great opportunity to learn and contribute to our campaign efforts going forward.

It is important to stress that your participation and contribution can be as small or as large as you want it to be and ideally we can build a small group who can work together to share ideas and knowledge. You will also have the opportunity to be part of shaping the social media approach that is developed.

Whatever your level of interest, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Gregory, Campaign Co-ordinator – brian.gregory@eveshamlabour.com who will provide further details and help get the ball rolling. Every contribution will count!

From the Chair: Matthew Rea

I have to confess to a sense of relief now that we have got our AGM out of the way. The AGM does require quite a bit of preparation and there is always a risk that key exec roles will go unfilled, which then constrains what we can achieve as a branch. I was really encouraged by how many people volunteered for some of these roles especially the one focused on driving inclusivity.

Also great to see some volunteers prepared to start a book/film group which will create new ways for people to engage with us. So a big thank you to everyone who attended and especially those who volunteered. Now we turn our focus to the Labour Party Conference when we expect to get some real clarity on General Election strategy — a great start to our new branch political year.

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