

Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —
Evesham Branch

March 2023

From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths

Reflecting on the past month's activities to prepare the third newsletter of the year shows how busy members of the Evesham branch have been in working for election success, supporting the Labour movement and raising our visibility in the community. We continue to receive lots of feedback on the newsletter and I would like to thank members who have provided us with images and news for this edition. This is a members' newsletter and it is a great vehicle for us to share details of members' activities, branch meetings and

campaigning. As we move closer to the 4th May local elections, most of our efforts will be focused on campaigning and this will be the main emphasis of the next two editions but we still want to report on our wider activities, so please continue to contribute stories, updates and images to our newsletter inbox newsletter@eveshamlabour.org. We are also keen to hear details of any forthcoming events that will be of interest to members so we can add them to the calendar.

International Women's Day

As an early celebration of International Women's Day, on March 4th, Helen Russell led a group of Labour women for a paddle on the River Avon from Fladbury. Helen is one of sixteen inspirational women chosen to share their love of paddlesport via social media and on the ground as a #ShePaddles ambassador

#ShePaddles is a British Canoeing initiative which aims to increase the number of women and girls involved in the paddling community.

The #ShePaddles movement is on a mission to close the gap between men, and women and girls' participation in the paddlesport community by creating more appealing paddling opportunities for women. Helen certainly achieved this, and we thank her for her encouragement and Fladbury Paddle Club for loaning their canoes.



Can you help with leafleting?

Even if you can spare just an hour (or two!) this would be really appreciated.

If you can volunteer, please contact angela.mccan@eveshamlabour.org

Be prepared for the new Voter ID rules!

See the web site at www.eveshamlabour.org/voter-id

or scan this QR code on your phone...



March Branch meeting

The meeting opened with an update on membership and the welcome news that all our candidates for the May election have now been approved and are preparing to campaign.

As the branch meeting was held on Wednesday 8th March, it provided a further opportunity to celebrate International Women's Day. The theme for 2023 is Embrace Equity. We remembered some of the pioneering women in the Labour movement who led the way to improving women's lives in the past, including Barbara Castle (Equal Pay Act), Jennie Lee (Open University), Mo Mowlem (Good Friday Agreement), Tessa Jowell (Sure Start) and Betty Boothroyd (first Woman Speaker of the House of Commons), as well as Diane Abbott (first black woman MP and longest-serving black MP).

We then praised our women Trades Union leaders – Christina McAnea (Unison), Sharon Graham (Unite), Pat Cullen (RCN), Jo Grady (UCU) and Mary Bousted (NEU) – who continue to the fight for better pay and conditions for their members. Finally, we considered the women in the current shadow cabinet who are working to develop policy as the Labour Party prepares to form the next government after the General Election.

The second part of the meeting focused on working in small groups to review the initial draft of the campaign leaflet. The design has been influenced by the candidates' participation in the

Labour Party Project Victory webinars and the advice these provided. The work done by the candidates was highly valued and the suggestions for adaptations were largely centred on vocabulary and readability. The campaign group have taken the feedback forward and will embrace this as they review and adapt the campaign materials.

Mary Tasker had put together a magnificent chocolate hamper for the raffle and members brought donations of Easter Eggs to kick off our collection for Caring Hands. Thanks again are extended to Mary, Wendy Logan and Patrick for selling tickets. The fundraising enabled us to add £103 to our funds. As always, we thank members for their generosity.



Out and about...

Since the last meeting, members have been out and about campaigning with the gazebo, attending public meetings and quizzing.

Better Buses

On 2nd March Sue Wood-Griffiths, Lee and Lorraine Middleburgh and Brian Chilver attended a meeting organised by the Town Council called 'Bus Service Improvement'. Held at the Town Hall, eleven local residents were joined by the Chair of the meeting, a town councillor (who failed to introduce herself) and Worcestershire County Council Councillor Mike Rouse, Cabinet member for Highways and Transport. The meeting was poorly advertised and there was an irony in the timing being outside the hours that buses run into the town. The audience were therefore predominantly car users.

Mr Rouse started by being critical of the legislation (Bus Services Act, 2017) that governs bus services. He talked about the County Council's plans and what they were doing elsewhere in the county.

It was very evident that Evesham district is not a priority. He said that since the pandemic, bus use and demand had dropped, with lightweight reasoning about more online shopping and Covid anxiety. Then he presented their concept of demand-led services and designing a common livery for the buses! There was some disquiet from the audience when the penny dropped that if they say there is no demand locally, nothing will be done.

When asked whose responsibility it was to label bus stops, and post timetables and fares, he responded it was the joint responsibility of the service providers and the County Council and that some plans were in hand. It is really not good enough for this information to not be easily available to people who want to use buses and plan journeys. The Council does not acknowledge that the people who are most reliant on the buses are the elderly, the young, the poorest in the community and those with language and learning difficulties, and that some of these groups are

likely to be those who have least proficiency with accessing information online.

We left the meeting feeling angry that these meetings are not well publicised, and our frustration was compounded by there being nothing about improving things here and now. It was all '40 hospitals' down the line.

Quiz

On 25th February, Team *Steir Karmar*, emboldened by their win at The Labour Party quiz, entered the Cornmill Yard quiz and ran a close second. During the interval the team were tasked to make a model of the team that included all the members and the team's name! Our creativity knows no bounds and if this task been a point scorer a victory would have been ours!



Gazebo

On 25th February we took the gazebo to Bretforton and placed it in the 'newer' part of the village on Coldicotts Lane just opposite the cricket club.

Having found a nice spot near the bus stop we were quickly impressed by the number of encouraging toots and waves we received. David and Mary Tasker had brought Welsh cakes to keep us going and Angela brought her dog. We got a few opportunities to speak to residents and received the usual encouragement, including a lengthy discussion with a woman and child who talked in depth about the bus services and the impossibility of ever owning her own home. We also enjoyed a flying visit from Joan who set a record for 'gazebo tooting'. All in all, we were pleased with the response. After packing up, we did a 'reccé' around the older part of the village to check out whether we could squeeze the gazebo

in near The Fleece for a future date and met a few more supportive residents.

On the 11th March we took the gazebo to the top of Greenhill. Another spot with limited footfall — but a huge opportunity to advertise to a lot of cars that Labour is active. We resorted to the now trusty whiteboards with appeals for 'Hoot for change' and 'You'll need Voter ID'. The overall response was amazing, with hardly any drivers giving us a thumbs-down or other similar hand gestures.

There were a fair few dog walkers out and one in particular stopped for a long chat explaining how he had just recently re-joined a Union out of frustration with his employer's dismissive stance on worker's rights and opinions. This, it transpired, was a well known 'Big-Corp' in Cheltenham, and he explained that they had now reached the required Union membership threshold for the employer to recognise them!

We had gone out clad in multiple insulating layers, but were surprised as the morning warmed up. Just before packing up we heard an unusual tooting from a passing bicycle, only to discover that Neal Cartwright had come to offer his support.

The De Montfort School Picket

Thank you to our members who made an early start to join teachers on the picket line at TDMS. Their support was much appreciated by the members of the NEU who were picketing at the school gates.

Historically, strikes have closed schools and teachers have joined rallies in their county towns. The current arrangements with partial closures have led to more pickets and we will try to keep members updated of future Union activity.



Forthcoming events

24th March Easter Egg Collection for Caring Hands

Don't forget that we are holding a Cuppa and Cake event at The Brew Bear from 2.00–3.30 pm, and hope that many of you will be able to support this. We made a good start to our collection at our March meeting. The café owners have requested that this year donations are only brought to the event and they will not be accepting them at other times. If you are unable to get to the event and want to make a donation, please contact Sue (see below) to arrange for us to collect. We thank Brew Bear for their continued support with this worthwhile initiative.

Gazebo dates

25th March	Hampton	Cheltenham Road by Austin Court
26th March	Big Litter Pick	Outside Town Hall
1st April	Jess Phillips	Norbury Theatre
2nd April	Evesham	Near Iceland
8th April	Badsey	Near the shop
9th April	Offenham	Near the shop
15th April	Greenhill	Opp. Blayney's Lane
16th April	Hampton	Roundabout by the Farm Shop
22nd April	Evesham North	St. Egwyn's School
23rd April	Evesham	Near Iceland

Jess Phillips event



Photograph:

David Woolfall CC BY 3.0

The Mid Worcestershire Labour Party is delighted to announce that we will be joined by our guest speaker Jess Phillips MP as we launch our District, Town and Parish council election campaigns. Please come along to hear from Jess, our CLP Chair, and our candidates as we kickstart our campaign to get more Labour representation at a local level.

The launch is open to all, so do bring fellow members, supporters and friends along to make this a launch to remember.

The event will be held on 1st April at the Norbury Theatre and Cinema, Friar Street, Droitwich WR9 8ED. The venue is ten minutes' walk from Droitwich Spa station but there is a long-stay car park just off Friar Street with a short-stay connected to that as well.

We are going to try and operate a lift-share system for those that would like to attend, so please email Sue or Matthew (see below) by Wednesday 29th March if you need a lift, or can offer to take passengers.

From the Chair: Matthew Rea

The run-up to the May local elections does feel a bit like climbing a mountain but at last the summit is now in sight. Looking back just a few months, there was a point where we couldn't even be sure we would be able to field seven candidates, so my thanks go out to all those who have thrown themselves into this process. Through the campaign planning it has been very heartening to see the enthusiasm, dedication, and hard work the team have put into this — now we just need one last push through April to get our

message out in the wards where we are standing. I would ask that anyone who has some time to help with leafleting gets in touch with Angela (see page 1). Next month our meeting on the 12th April at the Rowing Club will only focus on campaigning, as once an election has been called we cannot hold any branch meetings. Please come along — we hope to use the time to get out and deliver some leaflets and meet residents, and by then it will be British Summer Time!

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