

# Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —  
Evesham Branch

June 2023

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

After the elation of the election results, our members have continued to be out and about raising our visibility in the town. As our councillors are settling into their roles, issues are emerging for us to champion. We are keen to maintain the enthusiasm of members who supported our election campaign and we are starting to plan a more rigorous strategy for campaigning in the short and medium term that focuses on both local and national issues as we move towards a general election.

In the last newsletter I indicated that we would like to report more on our wider activities. I am really

pleased to have received contributions from Helen Russell and Brian Gregory and am delighted that we have a talented artist in our fold, Sarah Brooks. Sarah has offered to provide us with some topical cartoons for the newsletter which I'm sure members will appreciate! Thank you all, and thanks to our councillors for the updates on our district, town, and parish council business.

This is a newsletter for all members so please don't hesitate to give us feedback, contribute stories, 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.

## June Branch meeting

Thank you to Heather Kelleher for arranging for Mick Hurst to come and speak to the meeting. Mick is the mastermind of the now annual Battle of Evesham re-enactment and the medieval banquet and markets.

Mick is a medieval history enthusiast who detailed the development of the Battle of Evesham events which he has introduced to celebrate the town historical significance. He came with visual aids and bloodthirsty descriptions of how they were used. Members enjoyed examining the swords and helmet and imagined wearing nine-stone weight of battle regalia. He also shared how the events have grown and his estimates of how much footfall and expenditure is brought to the local economy.

His ambitions for the town have expanded from hosting the re-enactment and medieval fayres to rewilding the original battle site and creating a multi-purpose Visitors' Centre which could host up to 200 guests. Mick's tenacity in potentially securing a lease on the land and



David Barlow with a  
(very heavy) medieval helmet!

sharing his plans with those most likely to object is impressive, and we look forward to seeing these materialise.

In the second half of the meeting Matthew opened with a tribute to our friend Green Councillor Ed Cohen who died on 6th June. Ed was very generous in advising the executive on campaigning for the district and town council elections and we shall miss his wise counsel.

Members agreed to nominate Matthew, Mary Tasker and Heather as delegates to the annual conference and Mary Campbell as a delegate to the Women's Conference. At the end of the meeting the calendar of forthcoming events was shared. At the next meeting we will welcome Louise Bugg from Avonvale River Action who will share the work the group are doing to monitor the river water. In preparation for this Helen has led the Big Paddle Clean up and Brian and Neal have attended a meeting (more of which later) and we agreed that this will be the likely focus of our campaigning over the summer.

We welcomed one new supporter, David, who has been drawn back to the group and we hope that he will feel inspired to join us. At the end of the evening Mary Tasker ran the monthly raffle with the star prize coming from the medieval market. The raffle raised £50 for our funds.

## Avonvale River Action Group

At the end of May, Brian Gregory and Neal Cartwright attended the most recent meeting held by the newly-titled *Avonvale River Action* group.

The purpose of this local volunteer group is to support the efforts of the Water Quality Monitoring Network (WQMN) which aims to harness the power of angling clubs, via The Angling Trust, and other volunteer groups to establish a solid foundation of data relating to water quality across England. This data, once aggregated, will be used to better understand the factors affecting water quality, aid in the development of effective solutions, improve water quality and provide the Angling Trust with evidence to support its campaign.

Under this initiative, volunteer groups are required to conduct regular monitoring activities on rivers across England and Wales and, with the support of an Angling Trust Coordinator, will recruit and organise teams of local monitors who will be allocated monitoring sites — hence the formation of the *Avonvale River Action* group. Monitors will gather a range of data for each site on a regular and consistent basis to measure, for example, phosphates, pH, nitrates, electrical conductivity, ammonia and temperature.

The data gathered is not designed to replace the statutory monitoring undertaken by the Environment Agency or water companies or to directly challenge it. Unfortunately, statutory monitoring is extremely limited meaning that there are significant gaps in the understanding of water quality. The WQMN data will help to fill these gaps and the data captured will be used by the local networks and other organisations to help inform the wider understanding of water quality.

The criticality of this work is underlined in this recent Worcester News article: [worcesternews.co.uk/news/23558802.environment-agency-say-chemicals-avon-teme-rivers/](http://worcesternews.co.uk/news/23558802.environment-agency-say-chemicals-avon-teme-rivers/) which highlights an Environment Agency report that the River Avon at Lower Evesham is among the worst affected locations in the country with five 'forever' chemicals found in the river. 'Forever' chemicals are so named because they never break down in the environment.

Following the meeting, Brian and Neal have both signed up to undertake water sampling. This will require a monthly visit to a designated location on the Avon to collect samples and take measurements. Brian has also reached out to Evesham Town Council with a view to securing

funds for the purchase of an additional monitoring kit, cost approximately £130.

Louise Bugg, who spearheads the *Avonvale River Action* group, has kindly agreed to attend the Labour branch meeting being held on 12 July 2023 to present the activities and findings of the group. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining the group or wish to know more, please contact Brian at [Brian.Gregory@EveshamLabour.org](mailto:Brian.Gregory@EveshamLabour.org).

## Big Paddle Clean-Up

Members joined with Anti-Litter Evesham and local paddlers to clean up a stretch of the River Avon as part of this year's national Big Paddle Clean-Up.

Litter pickers walked and paddled from Crown Meadow, Evesham and headed along the Avon to Hampton Ferry, collecting over fifteen bags of litter along the way as part of British Canoeing's Big Paddle Clean-Up, a fortnight of action to protect the places we love to paddle and walk from plastic pollution.



In a variety of craft including stand-up paddleboards and kayaks, the aim for those on the water was to remove as much litter as they could, before it travelled downstream and out towards the coast.

The volunteers removed sacks full of plastic pollution, with the usual suspects including plastic water bottles, drinks cans and fast-food packaging, along with some rather unusual items including part of a car roof rack and a VW car wheel.

British Canoeing launched its Access and Environment Charter, Clear Access, Clear Waters, in 2018 championing the case for fair shared sustainable open access to inland waterways. As part of the Clear Access, Clear Waters campaign, British Canoeing is pledging to continue to protect and improve the health of our rivers, addressing plastic in our waterways and highlighting the positive impact accessing our waterways can have for the environment.

### **Evesham Town Councillor: Heather Kelleher**

My first couple of months as an Evesham Town Councillor have been enough to tickle anyone's taste-buds. Morphing from the traditional and formal to the downright down and dirty, I've seen the traditional quintessentially English side of Evesham and been reminded in no uncertain terms that for so many life isn't easy and everyday creates new challenges.

By the time you read this, the Evesham Town Council website will have been updated with the new councillor photos. A formal group one, robes and regalia compulsory, then individual ones, robes optional. From the selection taken I hope I've picked the one which looks the most friendly, professional and approachable and the least like the ones that came home from my time at school.

I'm a long time supporter of Anti-Litter Evesham and Laura Van Toller and myself are big fans of a bit of "Direct Action". Do you remember the bus stop in the leaflet that was completely overgrown by tree ivy, not any more it isn't! There was a crossing on the Cheltenham Road that was covered in dead weeds, fag-ends and piles of dirt, a total trip hazard to anyone partially sighted or with impaired mobility, it's spic and span now! So please if you see something that isn't good enough for Evesham, report it! Go to the Wychavon website or get in touch with Mary or me.

I went to an inspiring evening held by Direct Access, they have been engaged by Wychavon to see how accessible Evesham Town Centre is and identify how it could be improved. Everyone needs to see the report and I will update you when it is available. Evesham needs to welcome everyone and if you have thoughts on making Evesham more inclusive please let me know.

Finally the quintessentially English bit, a glorious summer afternoon, a picnic, an ice-cream and a brass band? Evesham Town Council have welcomed back 'Bands in the Park'. The town councillor's role is relatively small, we carry a set of keys, meet and greet the band and keep an eye on the weather forecast. It's been lovely to see the park full of people enjoying these events and shows Evesham at its best, a beautiful riverside town with so much to offer.

### **Badsey Parish Councillor: Mary Campbell**

The main subject on everyone's mind is the number of new housing applications for larger builds. An application for 90 houses adjacent to the Blackminster turn is causing great concern. Badsey has had too many applications approved for unimaginative red brick estate homes.

This leads me to wonder if the villages should be developing a joint forum to discuss plans for new housing?

### **Offenham Parish Councillor: Matthew Rea**

Having now attended my second parish council meeting I must say I am beginning to feel more at home and can see a way to be effective. We have some very experienced council members who take a balanced but tough line on planning and it is clear that all issues raised by parishioners are on someone's agenda and getting focus. I'm becoming more familiar with the job and the people I am working with and they are supportive. Key issues remain as speeding and planning. It seems almost everyone with a sizeable back garden or a bit of agricultural land fancies becoming a property developer and the village is resolute that expansion will be supported but only in a planned and contained way.

As for speeding, we have seen yet another near-fatal accident at Offenham Cross and residents feelings on this are running high. More meetings with police and highways are planned. I have joined Community Speed Watch as a volunteer and am now awaiting my training, so watch out if you are driving out to Offenham!

Last week was Offenham Wake Week which the parish council used to meet residents, discuss our plans and collect feedback. I particularly enjoyed our last council meeting when the call went out for a gazebo for the council stand at Wake Week — you can imagine how tempted I was to offer the Labour Gazebo!

### **Wychavon District Councillor: Mary Tasker**

My first month as councillor has been really busy. I have been placed on the planning committee and undertaken planning training, so I now have an overview of housing and the policies surrounding this.

I am keen to learn and so have participated in training on the Economy and environment, finance strategy and resources. Next week I will have civility and social media training.

Although it has been hectic it is really interesting being shown what the District council does and the responsibilities we all have to stand by. I am confident that my Labour values will support the locality and the people who live here. Now it has started I am feeling more confident about my role and am loving it!

## Forthcoming events

Mary and Heather's surgery will be on the last Tuesday of each month, commencing **27 June**, at the Unitarian Chapel in Oat Street, Evesham.

**12 July** Branch Meeting with speaker Avonvale River Action

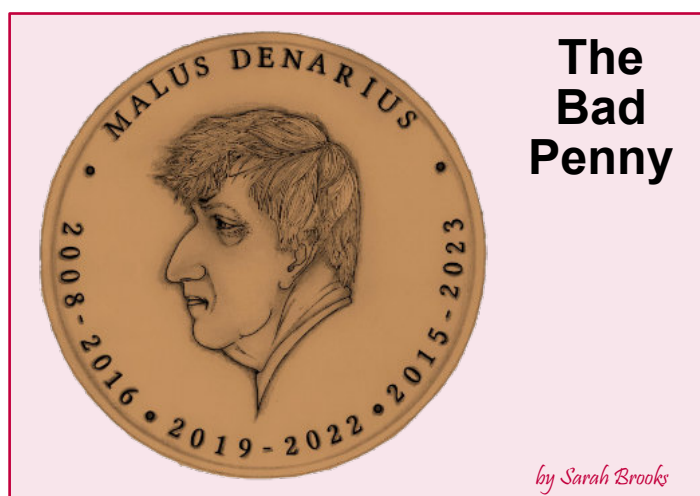
**9 August** Branch Meeting Picnic in the Park with gazebo (weather permitting)

**3 September** Evesham Civil War walk led by Helen Russell (details tbc)

**13 September** Evesham Branch AGM

**7 October** Labour Party National Annual Women's Conference

**8-11 October** Labour Party Annual Conference



### The Bad Penny

by Sarah Brooks

## Members' news

We thought it would be nice to share Helen Russell's continued sporting success with you. May was packed with races and saw Helen win the European Middle Distance Quadrathlon Championships (1500 m river swim, 7 km kayak, 30 km bike and 10 km run) held in Brigg, Lincs. This win adds to Helen's collection of international quadrathlon titles, having won her age group in the World Middle Distance Championships in 2019 and the World Sprint Championships in 2018. Helen has also secured a place on the podium in this year's GB SUP (Stand Up Paddleboarding) National Distance Race Series after finishing 2nd and 1st in the first two races of the season. The Series rewards consistency through the season, with competitors' two top scores from three series



races counting. The final race in the Series is in September. As well as racing, Helen is a British Canoeing 'She Paddles' Ambassador and is working to get more women paddling. Any women members that want to give SUP, kayaking or canoeing a go should contact Helen on [info@hrussell.co.uk](mailto:info@hrussell.co.uk)

## From the Chair: Matthew Rea

With the good weather here, I always sense renewed energy for attacking my long list of things that 'need doing'. Now that the election is behind us, it is good to start ticking some items off the to-do list. The Exec have met and there has been a flurry of volunteers for new positions, so I am pleased to welcome Brian Gregory as our Campaign Strategy Officer, Mary Campbell as our Women's Officer and Heather Kelleher as our Press Officer with special dispensation to manage all relationships with non-political local community groups. This nearly doubles our team (the relief is palpable) and already these new Exec officers have plans to start making an impact.

Broadly our mission remains unchanged — to grow and build a stronger presence in Evesham, and be ready to fight any elections that come along. Whilst we do have a lot of work to do I really feel I must also thank the Tory party for their contribution in ticking off some items on our task list. I never could have imagined that they would make such a good job of imploding their own party – good old Kamikaze Boris – maybe he will take the whole ship down and save us all a lot of effort. We will, of course, make maximum capital from their problems — last week our litter-picking team reported visibly stronger public support for Labour when they were out and about. Happy days!

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