

Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —
Evesham Branch

July 2023

From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths

It has been another busy month. After the fascinating branch meeting about the Battle of Evesham events, members and councillors have continued to be out and about, raising our visibility in the town. It was a pleasure to attend the Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees (EVWR) concert at All Saints Church, where we enjoyed a varied programme of music and were able to meet some of the Syrian families settled in the town. To support Refugee Week, members were invited to donate garden tools for an allotment project that EVWR is setting up. Councillor Heather Kelleher has been out with the Evesham anti-litter group, cleaning up neglected areas in the town. Mary Campbell and Peter Daw celebrated the 75th Birthday of the NHS. Councillors Tasker and Kelleher held the first of their monthly surgeries and our Councillors are starting to identify the issues they want to champion.

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 as well as details of forthcoming events to add to the calendar. The activities we report on are starting to draw interest from members who have not been active and we welcome this. As I am about to enjoy a holiday, I am really pleased to have received contributions for this newsletter from Anne and Joan O'Hagan, Mary Campbell, Mary Tasker, Will Jarvis and Romeo Bond. Thank you all, and thanks to our Councillors for the updates on our district, town, and parish council business. Over the summer we will be out and about campaigning and will be looking for members to support us with fighting the Evesham South by-election, litter picking at the Battle of Evesham re-enactment, and with the gazebo. If you can offer support, please respond to our appeals and help us to build the Evesham branch.

July Branch meeting

Thank you to Brian Gregory for arranging for Lisa Bugg to come and speak to the meeting about Avonvale River Action (a group of volunteers she has established). Water pollution is a national problem and the current state of our waterways, resulting from water companies focusing on profit rather than developing infrastructure, is scandalous. Louise provided an insight into the poor health of the Avon and explained how Avonvale River Action are monitoring the water quality to identify how our beautiful river is being polluted. Her talk was informative, engaging and well received and the audience responded well with questions and ideas. It was lovely to welcome so many new people to the meeting and we hope that some of those will feel encouraged to join us in future.

After the talk we updated members on our recent activities and called on people to support us with campaigning for the Evesham South by-election. The election is to be held on 10 August and we have a very small window for campaigning in the district. Because the election falls at a time when



many of us are taking holiday we will need all the help we can muster with leafleting and at the gazebo. Please keep an eye on your emails as this will be our means of communicating what is happening and when.

Due to the by-election, our planned picnic on 09 August has been postponed. Keep an eye on your emails, as we hope there will be cause for an impromptu party later in August. *[continues over...]*

July Branch meeting (cont.)

Thank you to everyone who responded to Helen Russell's request and brought along donations for the Caring Hands food bank. Helen indicated that Caring Hands are really low on stock and this is a concern as we approach the school holidays so if members are in a position to please consider dropping off donations at The Lighthouse.

<https://eveshamlighthouse.org.uk/>

At the end of the evening Mary Tasker ran the monthly raffle which raised £75 for our funds. Thank you, Mary.

Words from our Councillors...

Wychavon District Councillor Mary Tasker and Evesham Town Councillor Heather Kelleher

On the day of our first surgery, I did some Zoom training on Security for Councillors. On reflection, I wish I had completed it earlier as it made me very aware of the vulnerable position we are in as Councillors. A discussion was held about the principles of personal safety. These included making early choices such as telling people where you are going, what route you are taking, and risk assessing the actual environment of the surgery.

Advice was given about not sitting in low chairs because you can't get out quickly. Sitting opposite your visitor with the exit closer to you, so you can move quickly if necessary. Choosing a room with busy footfall was recommended, and we were advised to ensure we have a strong mobile signal, keep hot drinks on the floor next to you, in case they are thrown at you. We are advised always to ensure someone is with you. To run the surgery, encourage people to pre-register for an appointment, work in pairs and ask them to stay with you until the very end.

When I arrived at the surgery, I ensured the table was where I wanted it and that I sat close to the exit. When Cllr Heather Kelleher arrived, the room was prepared according to the advice I had received. We had two people walk in who I knew very well and they had come to offer support which was encouraging. We had not advertised the first session well but we used the time to ensure we established ground rules for the surgeries and felt comfortable and safe with the set-up.

Before the next surgery, our next step is to deliver postcards so people know where we are and how to contact us. I feel that the Labour Party both locally and nationally are ensuring that we make a success of being councillors with the training, support and resources made available. I personally feel our next surgery will be great and I feel happy and safe in the environment we have chosen.

Offenham Parish Council: Matthew Rea

Once again we had good public representation at our Parish meeting and were encouraged that a local business came along to apologise about how their recent building work had antagonised some residents. Offenham depends on agriculture and it was heartening to see such a big player in our community taking their responsibilities seriously.

The other big topics of the month were drainage and flooding — not surprising after yet another serious collision at Offenham Cross which was significantly exacerbated by huge amounts of water on the road. Now more work is planned for the summer to get ditches and culverts cleared, additional road markings have been agreed to slow traffic, and we hope to get our Community Speed Watch program up and running soon.

Celebrating 75 years of the NHS: Mary Campbell

On Wednesday 5 July, members joined campaigners from KONP (Keep Our NHS Public) in Evesham to celebrate 75 years of the National Health Service and the fantastic service we have from dedicated staff, that is free to all.

More than ninety people signed birthday cards which will be sent to MP Nigel Huddleston to demonstrate the public's support for the NHS. The support we received was greatly underestimated and we ran out of cards in only 45 minutes! A hugely satisfying result. Please accept our thanks for participating so enthusiastically.

If you are a supporter of Evesham Hospital, please consider joining the Facebook group 'Evesham Hospital Supporters'.

Any data geeks?

The only poll that matters is how people vote on the day, but if any of you enjoy trawling polling data, *Electoral Calculus* is an interesting site. The predictive data for this constituency has shifted significantly of late, probably due to the shift in constituency boundaries and changing demography in Evesham and Droitwich.

In Mid Worcestershire in 2019, Nigel Huddleston secured a majority of 25,894 votes. The predictive data for Droitwich and Evesham suggests that the seat would still be a Conservative hold but with a majority of only 1649 votes. This implies that with some tactical voting by Liberal Democrat and Green Party members, Labour could be in with a chance. If you are interested please take a look <https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk>

Tool Collection for Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees

To mark Refugee Week, we decided at the June meeting to support a request made by Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees (EVWR) and collect tools for their allotment and community garden project.

Following the meeting we sent an email out to members and supporters requesting contributions and were overwhelmed by the response and our members' generosity. It was particularly pleasing that members who are not 'active' in the sense of attending meetings, responded and we would like to thank everyone who contributed. Ian Lockren and Richard Prior, who live in Pebworth organised a village collection of tools to support us. Ian is pictured below with his grandson, Matthew, delivering the tools.



On Saturday 8th July we were able to hand over our collection to Ros Gowers and Chris Sheehan from EVWR who were delighted and, as you can see from the picture, they needed a big vehicle to transport it all!



Supporting Strike Action: Anne and Joan O'Hagan

The strikes are still on in many parts of the public sector, and Evesham Labour Party members and supporters have joined picket lines organised by postal workers and teachers in Evesham and nurses at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch.

Shrinking pay packets was just one of the reasons the workers were forced to walk out. Many of these public sector workers are suffering enormous stress caused by pay cuts, changes to their working conditions and worsening of the quality of the services they can offer. Postal workers on picket lines told us that the proposed changes would fundamentally alter their jobs. Nurses were heart-broken watching the NHS being torn apart. They all wanted to be back at work but felt they had no option but to protest about the lack of funding and the inability of the service to recruit, value and retain sufficient staff.

Some sectors may reach an agreement in the near future but for others, the fight continues and our support on picket lines has been much appreciated.

It's a good idea when you arrive to introduce yourself to the organiser and, if you've got Labour badges or flags, they would probably appreciate you checking with them if they are happy for you to display them. And they might be happy to take your contact details to keep you in the loop.

Here are the websites for some of the main strikes:

Postal Workers:

<https://www.cwu.org/news-and-activity/>

United Voices of The World:

<https://www.uvwunion.org.uk/en/>

Amazon in Coventry:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/amazon>

Doctors: <https://www.bma.org.uk/>

Nurses: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/>

Teachers in schools: <https://neu.org.uk/>

Teachers and Lecturers in FE and HE:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/>

For info about how the TUC is supporting union campaigns: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/solidarity-hub> or <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/>

Most of the unions will have good coverage on Facebook and Twitter as well. Strike plans can change at the last minute, so it's worth keeping an eye on social media for the latest time/venue info.

Boris Johnson's fall is cause for national introspection, not for gloating.

Romeo Bond

As a Labour member, my first instinct upon reading the report from the Partygate Inquiry was naturally jubilation. After all, the hammering in of the final nail in the coffin of the most despicable, unfit for office, Prime Minister in our history would engender elation in any rational Briton. However, that was quickly punctured by shame at how our nation got to the state of a former Prime Minister resigning from parliament to avoid a 90-day suspension.

At one point, our country was the inspiration for an ordered, stable, responsible government. Now the world watches and laughs as we are forced to publicly defenestrate a former Prime Minister who lies as easily as he breathes. And, more than this, they watch and laugh as our major papers, our backbench MPs and our prominent pundits jump to defend this sorry excuse for a statesman. This month we have become a nation tearing itself apart, not over ideology or policy, but over one man. A man who is a liar, a cheat, a charlatan and perhaps worst, a coward.

I think everybody in our party is ashamed and bewildered at the idea that our fellow countrymen can defend Boris Johnson, that they can insist the emperor is beautifully robed as he wanders bewildered and naked out of parliament. I think the question that seems to have slipped our mind is the one that really matters.

How did this man become our Prime Minister in the first place? It is easy to blame the Daily Mail, the Tory right, Brexit, or even Jeremy Corbyn for his election. These targets however are not the root cause of our greatest electoral mistake. Boris Johnson was propelled into power by the poisonous state of our political discourse. The fire and vitriol of modern politics is itself the driving factor behind the success of toxic leaders and those leaders will not go away until the poison does.

So I would implore all of us, despite how well deserved it is, to refrain from jubilation and gloating about the end of Boris Johnson's career. We must instead look inwards and examine the causes of a political environment which rewards his deceit and evil. And we must see that despite politics returning to the centre, it remains as poisonous and divisive as ever. We must begin the fight back against this form of politics with our own

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behaviour, which means that we have a duty, instead of tweeting our happiness, or a snarky comment at Nadine Dorries, to embrace those who we disagree with, and work every moment of our lives not just to beat the Tories but to heal our nation and move forward together.

My thoughts on campaigning: **Will Jarvis**

For us to get a Labour MP in Droitwich and Evesham, I think we need to go out in the gazebo early, beat everyone else to it. This would mean people will see us and will remember to vote Labour at the election. I also believe we should be doing surveys in Evesham, asking people what they want and what they are angry about. We need to communicate with the people, otherwise we will be out of touch. Leafleting is a big help because it means people can keep information about us in their homes to look at. In addition, we should go around houses, talking to people and asking what they want from a Labour government.

Key policies that what we should be focusing on are

- GB energy, making sure it concentrates on producing green energy. I am very supportive of the blocking of new oil fields in the North Sea. I hope this policy is seen through because the young are running out of hope.
- I hope Labour looks into lowering the voting age to sixteen, as this would strengthen our democracy.
- If Labour expands more on climate policies, we would attract more young people to vote for Labour.
- A policy I hope Labour would think about in the future is changing the education system.
- Changing the electoral system to include a First Minister of England.
- A very strange Idea I have is that the House of Lords should be changed from people who were former MPs or Bishops to normal people who have contributed to society.

The King or Prime Minister should appoint people who have done something which has changed the country. These would include charity workers, NHS nurses, veterans, actors, and social workers, etc. It would be ordinary people who had done something great, reviewing laws that the government has made. I will probably expand on these points in future articles.

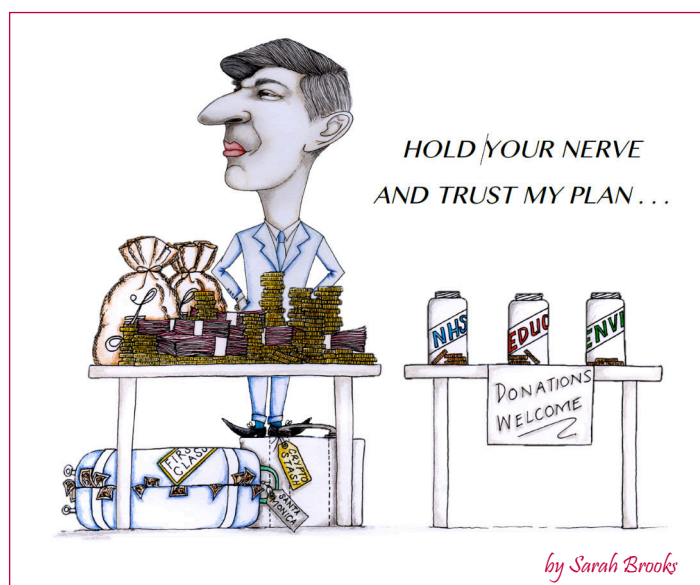
Forthcoming events

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

13 September **Evesham Branch AGM**

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

08–11 October **Labour Party Annual Conference**



From the Chair: Matthew Rea

Who would have thought we would be thrown back into election mode so soon? However I am amazed by how quickly our team have mobilised for this and we approach the District Council Evesham South election with more than a good measure of optimism. As an exec, we spent many hours reflecting and learning from our experiences of the May elections and this is now paying off. With a slightly expanded exec team and a more 'back room' power we've produced our leaflets and

banners for Evesham South in record time and have already been out canvassing the area. The early feedback confirms there is good Labour support but we're not complacent at all — after all, the Green party has invested a lot of time in this ward over the last few years.

In terms of branch activity, this has been a busy month with lots of previously-inactive members coming forward to contribute time and effort. The July branch meeting saw the highest attendance we've had in more than a year and confirms our strategy to continue with a program of relevant and engaging topics and speakers. We enjoyed meeting many new faces, some even travelling from as far as Droitwich. Keep spreading the word — Labour is active in Evesham!

This is now the seventh monthly edition of our Newsletter and each month it becomes harder to fit everything into our original four-page design, so don't be surprised if you find yourself reading this at the bottom of page 5 this time. The goal was always to make what we are doing more relevant and visible to all Labour supporters, to make everyone feel they can get involved and see that change is coming. This month we've had many contributors and I thank you all for your input. I will indulge myself by picking out just one and thank Will Jarvis particularly. Will is a regular active supporter and can be found out and about on the gazebo in all weathers. His enthusiasm, energy and ideas always remind me that you can safely place your faith in the young people of this country. Will represents a generation who will have to deal with climate change, undo thirteen years of Tory mismanagement, and restore essential rights and equalities that the Tories have washed away. Their time is coming! Go Will, go!

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