

Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —
Droitwich and Evesham Constituency

April 2024

From the Editor: Sue Wood-Griffiths

Welcome to the April edition to the Constituency newsletter and thank you to those members who got in touch to say how much they appreciated the move to a constituency newsletter. It is exciting to see that the two branches are now working together, something that will become more important when we start to campaign. The newsletter is a vehicle for sharing news and planned events across the constituency. We hope that this will encourage members who are not active to get more involved. We are a welcoming and friendly group and there are opportunities available to join us at meetings, door knocking or even to support Labour from

your own home when you have spare time. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to the newsletter so if you have snippets, photos or forthcoming events you would like to share please email them to newsletter@eveshamlabour.org

The newsletter is produced for members, but we would encourage you to share it with friends and associates who may show an interest in our forthcoming events or wish to become more involved. We are continuing to build our social media profile and would love you to 'like and share' our posts with your contacts.

CONSTITUENCY NEWS

On Saturday 6 April, members of the Evesham Branch joined members of the Droitwich Branch for a street stall with the gazebo. Clad in our Labour fleeces we couldn't fail to get noticed and branch outfitter Dave Tasker has now purchased some Labour fleeces for the Droitwich members, too. We were able to engage with the public and converse on a range of issues. Those we spoke to are very unhappy with the government and unimpressed with our MP.

One elderly gentleman who always votes Conservative was very disgruntled with our MP but said he would probably vote Conservative again. He was then reminded that this meant he would be casting his vote for Mr Huddleston. When questioned about the best governments of his



lifetime he thought for a while and said probably the Attlee government and Blair-Brown. When highlighted that these were Labour governments and it was suggested that perhaps he gives his head a wobble, he laughed and thanked us for prompting him to have a think!

Sad news: David Niblett

We were very sorry to learn of the passing of Evesham branch member Dave Niblett. Dave campaigned with branch members to keep our NHS public and played an active role campaigning

during the 2017 election. Thank you to Helen Russell for sharing this news.

David's funeral will take place on Wednesday 1st May at 2pm at All Saints Church Evesham should members wish and are free to attend.

Evesham Reading Group

The April meeting of the group, hosted as usual by David Haslam, focused on Ian Dunt's devastating critique of our national government systems, *How Westminster Works: and why it doesn't*.

It was introduced by Peter Daw with members of the group having prepared particular chapters each to introduce. The exchanges were lively, with all those present having enjoyed this book (copies of which will be in the branch library after the group has completed their discussion of it). After looking at the disturbing account of Chris Grayling's disastrous privatisation of probation services and how it was allowed to happen, we tackled issues of the selection (and suitability) of MPs and ministers; the side-lining of expertise; the dominance of party whips and much more. We also discussed voting systems, considering the desirability of local primaries to select candidates for election and the pros and cons of proportional representation — more pros than cons! It was heartening to see such a good attendance even if our conclusions on how we are governed were hardly reassuring!

Discussion of the same book will continue at the next meeting of the group on Thursday 16 May.

Quiz Teams

Both branches have a quiz team. At the start of 2023, the Evesham branch canvassed members for activities they would like to see in our programme and ideas of gaining visibility. Holding quizzes and having a pub quiz team was a popular response and Team *Steir Karmar* was formed. Droitwich also have a quiz team *The Red Flags*. Regular attendance at quizzes gets people coming to talk to us and gets us noticed. Evesham Labour donate a monthly raffle prize to the quiz at The Red Lion which has raised between £2000–3000 for charitable causes



since it started last autumn, so we see it as soft campaigning and fun for a good cause. Both teams are keen to have more members, so please get in touch with Sue Wood–Griffiths (Evesham) or Alex Knudsen (Droitwich) if you are keen to join us.

In March *Steir Karmar* was victorious at The Red Lion and declared to the pub that this was just another victory for the Labour Party and a sign of things to come!

The *Red Flags* have been out twice this month securing a second, and joint first place at local quizzes. They are keen to make this a regular commitment and Alex Knudsen would like you to get in touch if you are interested in joining them for quizzing.

The Valkyrie Fundraising Day

Thank you to Mary and Dave Tasker for securing a prime spot in the market square for the Labour gazebo on Saturday 20 April.

Evesham Labour provided prizes for the raffle, sold raffle tickets, and did some litter picking in the market square. At the time of writing, we believe the raffle raised £380 for the Vale Wildlife Hospital and rescue. Although the outing was about visibility rather than active campaigning, some members of the public were keen to engage in political discussion and were encouraged to come to a meeting or get in touch. Having newsletters available to take away is a bonus on these outings as it shows us up as a vibrant group engaged in community and political activities. Thank you to everyone who came along although at times conversations were challenged by the volume of the music! *[Understatement! Editor]*

Delighted to support the St George's Day Charity Music Event on Saturday in aid of the Vale Wildlife Hospital & Rehabilitation Centre



Organised by



In aid of



Vale Wildlife Hospital & Rehabilitation Centre

On 23 April, a group of members attended Number 8 in Pershore to watch the National Theatre Live showing of 'Nye' starring Michael Sheen. The Pershore showing was advertised before the simultaneous showing at The Regal which may have drawn other members of the branch. The play was described as an epic Welsh fantasia and took the audience through the life and legacy of the man who transformed Britain's welfare state. Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan is often referred to as the politician with greatest influence on our country without ever being Prime Minister.



A health service free at the point of need; it has happened before and it needs to happen again. We were particularly pleased to be joined by James, the youngest member of our branch who is approaching his GCSEs and aspires to become an epidemiologist! James joined the Labour Party on his 14th birthday and after his exams is going to undertake work experience with Wychavon District Council, an opportunity Mary Tasker supported him to secure.



Since the start of the year, the Evesham branch has been focusing our meetings on concerns raised by the community when we have been out and about. The first two meetings focused on the cost-of-living crisis. We welcomed speakers from Citizens Advice and Caring Hands in the Vale, who shared their work locally, and the increasing demands being made of them. In March we looked at campaigning and having useful conversations when door knocking and phone banking. A common theme that appeared from the presentations was listening and responding.

For the April meeting we were delighted to welcome member Lee Middleburgh and his colleague Lavinia, who talked about their work as volunteers for Samaritans. They were invited as a response to the current crisis in mental health. This escalating crisis affects all sectors of the community and people in crisis are finding it very difficult to access support. The Samaritans usually top the list of places to seek help and the demand for their support is relentless.

Talking about volunteering as a Samaritan has the potential to upset, and their presentation started with an invitation to get up and leave the room should members feel triggered.

Lee and Lavinia framed their presentation around an interactive quiz activity. Members worked on tables to respond to a series of multiple-choice questions. The activity elicited a range of responses and got members discussing their thoughts in small groups. After giving time for the table groups to come up with their ideas Lee and Lavinia went through the answers, and this activity served as a framework for people to ask questions. These questions led to Lee and Lavinia explaining in more detail how Samaritans work as a team, how they look after each other's well-being when faced with trauma, and how the training they receive supports them to listen without judgement.

There were many take-aways from their presentation, some that resonated with me were that the Samaritans receive a call every seven seconds throughout the day and night; the vast range of anxieties that prompt people to call, such as the anecdote of the elderly man not understanding the two-metre rule during lockdown, and

Evesham branch meeting report (cont.)

being fearful of going out, and the personal benefits volunteers gain from their training in listening.

The talk concluded with an appeal to members to consider getting involved. The Samaritans are always looking for volunteers and Lee and Lavinia detailed how much training volunteers undertake, how they are mentored through their early work, and how they work in supportive teams to ensure that volunteers well-being and mental health is looked after. If any members who were not at the meeting are interested in getting involved, we can put you in touch with Lee.

Labour have already declared how they will address some of the concerns about mental health if elected – mental health workers in every secondary school and mental health hubs in every community – but the scale of the problem is such that there will always be a need for the excellent work that the voluntary sector does to support our public services.

Another response to the meeting is that we have decided that it's time to listen. For the May meeting we shall not have a speaker but will draw members' ideas together from recent meetings and how we might develop our future programme meetings in preparation for the general Election.

Droitwich branch meeting report

This month saw the Droitwich branch recommence their regular meetings. Much work went into finding a suitable venue and shifting the focus of the meetings away from the somewhat archaic traditional format that members often associate with this type of meeting.

We arranged guest speakers from the Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Services (HWFRS) to talk about the recent proposal to downsize the fire-fighting capacity across H&W stations. Neil Bevan and Simon Jelfs gave a very detailed presentation of what is quite a complex issue.

In short, most fire stations have a full-time staff that man the primary fire engine and a second on-call team that man the second engine. The Chief Fire Officer for HWFRS has proposed scaling back eight of these second fire engines and using the

money saved to invest in the manning and support of the primary engines. Whilst at first glance this might seem to have some merit, it doesn't take too much analysis before you can see that this proposal rests on the assumption that no station has to fight more than one fire at one time, or even just a very big fire that then draws on engines from other stations. It is also important to remember why there is an "R" in the HWFRS name — Rescue! These people don't just fight fires – they deal with floods, road traffic accidents, and support other emergency services in gaining access to properties.

When you take this in the round and consider that data shows house fires are increasing (due to more houses) and climate change brings increased flood response demands it seems quite illogical to argue for a strengthened primary response at the expense of wider more flexible coverage. It also became clear that the whole consultation process around this proposal seems very murky – possible even just a tick-box exercise. Unfortunately for the Droitwich station, if this proposal proceeds there will be significant job losses — in a service that across Hereford & Worcester now has 100 fewer fire-fighters than fifteen years ago!

The presentation generated a lot of debate, and it was moving to see that these people sign up to a vocation — they have public service in their DNA and their concern for the slow erosion of the service far outweighs their personal concern for job security. We were left wondering whether it will take another Grenfell to act as a wake-up call.

Steve and Alex then ran through some branch business in the new "boring is banned" style and we wrapped up with a raffle that more than covered the cost of the room hire.

The meeting was very well attended with some new faces not previously known to the branch, and at least two attendees put themselves forward for active duties to support our campaigning.

We were also joined by Ed Kimberley from the Worcester Branch. Ed has made a great effort to reach out to both our branches as part of Labour's constituency twinning programme. He encouraged all present to support the Worcester Team in the run up to the local May elections.

Please check the forthcoming events calendar to see details of the next Droitwich branch meeting.

Droitwich Town Council

Cllr Val Humphries' Deputy Mayor nomination: Val's nomination for Deputy Mayor has been sent in by the newly-elected leader of the opposition on Droitwich Town Council. With three opposition parties it was easy to sideline us, but working together we hope to stop that and show the public it is possible to work in co-operation with other parties. We hope this nomination is successful.

Evesham Town Council public meeting

We currently have no Labour Councillors on Evesham Town Council, but ensure that members of the executive attend meetings to hold the council to account. During the mayoral year there has been some disruptive behaviour on the council which has resulted in additional public meetings being called. A delegation of the executive attended the public meeting of the town council on 22 April. This was largely a review of the year, and the committee chairs presented their reports on what has been achieved. Mary Tasker thanked the mayor for his leadership during a challenging year and this meeting was largely good-natured.

Dave Tasker and Sue Wood-Griffiths attended the previous council meeting on 8 April. You may have read reports of this in the local media. The meeting itself was conducted with civility and was uneventful. As we made a hasty exit an altercation between two councillors and a member of the public descended into high drama. Concerns about councillors' and public safety were raised at the public meeting and this will be a priority for the incoming mayor.

District Councillor Mary Tasker

Mary has had a busy month at work and with her councillor responsibilities. On 17 April she held a long-service awards ceremony for staff at The Hawthorns to celebrate and recognise the commitment of the staff. She and her residents were joined by town and district councillors at the event where Mary also received recognition for her fifteen years' service. Mary was then over to the district council offices for training and a council meeting. She never stops helping others and will be very pleased to support any of her constituents who can make appointments to see her at her regular surgeries on the last Tuesday of the month.

Offenham Parish Council

Quite a month for Offenham, as we held our Annual Parish Meeting where every affiliated group and club provides an annual update. The meeting was a reminder of just how many local people are involved in supporting our village, covering everything from keeping footpaths clear to managing the village hall and all the various clubs that use the village playing fields.

April also saw completion of our MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area), which provides an all-weather surface for local children to play ball games. We have to wait for the surface to cure before pitch lines can be painted but this hasn't stopped villagers from already using the MUGA – we've seen residents of all ages giving it a go!

Lastly, we finally got our training session organised for Community Speedwatch (CSW), this was well attended and very soon our CSW team will be seen around the village monitoring traffic speed.

Elections: 2 May 2024

Elections are on 2 May for the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). In addition, there is a by-election for a County Councillor for Evesham North-West Division and there are Evesham Town Council by elections for Fairfield and Little Hampton wards.

Richard Andrew Overton is the Labour and Co-operative Party Candidate for the PCC election. Richard's priorities include investing in community policing, combating violence against women and girls and domestic abuse, tackling violent crime, including knife crime and supporting projects that stop young people from becoming victims of crime, criminal exploitation or offenders. Richard has a record of action for residents: tackling rogue landlords, reducing anti-social behaviour and taking on the fly-tippers. Richard will be a highly visible commissioner working with communities on local plans to focus police efforts on residents' issues. Richard is keen to work with communities in creating his police and crime plan.

Whilst turning out just to cast your vote for a Police & Crime Commissioner may be a low priority, remember that failure to do so will almost certainly result in John Campion being re-elected and us all having to endure four more years of inactivity and progress on what is a key public service.

Elections: 2 May 2024 (cont...)

David Tasker is standing as the Labour Candidate for the Evesham North West Division County Council election

Mary Campbell is standing as the Labour Candidate for Little Hampton Ward

Thank you to all candidates for standing. We do not have much capacity to campaign but urge members to turn out for Labour.

From the Constituency Chair: Alex Knudsen

We have had our first Droitwich branch meeting for a good while, and it was great to get the gazebo out in Droitwich. Despite the strong winds, we had a good morning talking to local residents about their concerns and what they want to see from a Labour government. Thank you to those in Evesham who came along to support us.

We still have no candidate in place for our constituency. We believe the process has been delayed as the party perform more thorough scrutiny following the situation in Rochdale. This, combined with a series of by-elections and the local elections in May, has led to the delay. My hope is that we will hear something after the May elections. The local Party are trying to chase this and will continue to until we have a candidate.

Our media presence is going from strength to strength this year; particular thanks to Brian Gregory and Peter Daw. Since 1 January the reach we've achieved on Facebook is 13.3k, a 93% increase on the whole of 2023! We are refreshing the website and can now accept online donations from supporters.

As a constituency, I believe we have taken huge strides forward, giving ourselves the best chance of improving our electoral success at all levels in the constituency. Thank you to everyone who has contributed, I hope that together we can continue to push forward throughout 2024 and beyond.

From the Evesham Branch Chair: Matthew Rea

I am very pleased so see our newsletter in its new revised format. This really is the culmination of a lot of work behind the scenes. We now have a single joined-up communication process with all members across both branches, and all our actions and activities are aligned around our branch meetings, and social media and physical outreach

activities. This puts us on the best possible footing as we look to gear-up our campaigning efforts in the run up to a General Election. I extend my thanks to all involved in making this happen.

Personally, I feel this has been a great month – probably helped by that fact that it is finally warm and sunny! I attended the Evesham Reading Group which has now become a regular fixture in my calendar and is a wonderful opportunity for those who enjoy a bit of heavyweight debate. I also attended both branch meetings and it was great to see such good turnout and to listen to the engaging issues that our guest speakers brought to light. The subsequent questions and debate that follow from these leave me musing as to whether we will soon need longer meetings! Again my thanks go to all the teams who make this happen.

We have a branch executive meeting next week where we will look to plan out the next six months of branch meetings and campaigning activity. I feel sure this will take us right up to the General Election. It seems impossible to me that Rishi can hold out much longer than November. I am encouraged to see that current predictions show as many as sixty-four high ranking Tories stand to lose their seats and even Rishi is not safe. My hopes are pinned on this being an existential event for the Tories, giving us a clear path to introduce the sort of political reforms and modernisation not seen since the post-war era. I guess the local elections in just over a week will give us some indication of just how it might play out. And who knows, we may even get some news on who our own parliamentary candidate will be?

From the Droitwich Branch Chair: Alan Humphries

Another month of Tory disasters has passed and we're another month closer to a General Election, I don't know about you, but I can't wait. This country needs a Labour Government and this constituency a Labour MP. However, we can't do this without you, our loyal and dedicated supporters.

Sadly, I wasn't at the branch meeting as I was sunning myself on a beach in Greece. Arranged before the date was set, I promise.

Moving forward we hope to have more regular branch meetings with some high-profile speakers. We're also planning future fund-raising events (including a quiz and a summer BBQ) so watch out for more details. It's a good time to be a Labour supporter and so let's keep the faith and get our message out there.

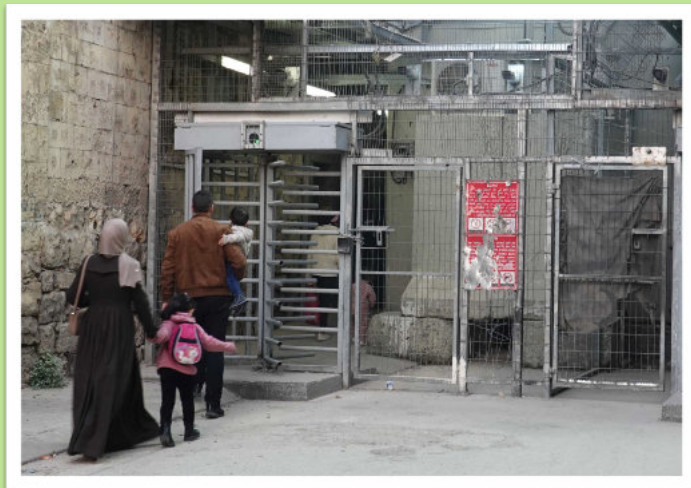
Understanding Palestine

With a case study of Hebron in the occupied West Bank



Speaker Ian Cave, EAPPI Volunteer, Hebron, Jan– April 2023

Questions and discussion



Unfortunately, the speaker for the Palestine talk was unwell and the talk had to be postponed. This has been rescheduled for Wednesday 22 May, 7.30–9.00 p.m. at Evesham Methodist Church.

Wednesday 22 May 7.30-9.00pm

Evesham Methodist Church

71 Bridge Street, Evesham, WR11 4SF

Parking at rear of the church

Free entry, donations to EAPPI Quakers in Britain Charity welcome.

Forthcoming events

2 May Elections for some local wards and the West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner.

4 May 'Love Evesham' day: Litter picking and marshalling, Market Square and Bridge Street.

8 May Evesham Branch Meeting, 7.00 – 9.00 p.m.
Evesham Rowing Club.

16 May Evesham Reading Group: 59 Burford Road.
7.45 – 9.15 p.m.

18–19 May Medieval Market, Evesham.

22 May Palestine Meeting, Evesham Methodist Church. See poster and details above.

29 May Droitwich Branch meeting. Rotary House,
Corbett Avenue, Droitwich WR9 7BD. 7.00 – 9.00 p.m.

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01386 293035

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X (formerly Twitter)

DandECLP

Web site:

<https://www.droitwicheveshamlabour.org>

CALL TO ACTION

Promoting us on social media — just five minutes per day.

Facebook

Those of you that use Facebook are encouraged to join a WhatsApp group that Campaign organiser Brian Gregory has set up to alert members to new posts so that these can be shared more widely.

Facebook can deliver Labour's message to a LOT of people, with just a few minutes of your help.

Brian publishes persuasive posts (words, pictures and videos) to our Facebook page regularly. You can vastly increase the reach of Labour's Facebook messages with a few clicks. Here's how:

Like — the Thumbs-Up icon that shows support (or you can choose alternative emojis, depending on how you feel!)



Comment — “This is brilliant.”; “Bring on a general election”; “Really good point!”, etc. You can tag specific Facebook friends to bring the post to their attention, or check that your share of a post is set to Public.

Share — copies the post into other Facebook groups where it will be seen.



If you would like to be notified of new messages as they're put up, contact Brian brian.gregory@eveshamlabour.org and ask to join the Action Group to get sharing. You can find all previous posts on the Droitwich & Evesham Labour Facebook page.

Join the Gazebo Outreach Team — two hours, twice a month, usually on a Saturday.

Our goal is to take the gazebo out twice per month across Evesham & Droitwich and we need a team of four people minimum at each outing. The gazebo gives us great visibility and always attracts lots of interest. We use it to discuss local resident's concerns, advertise our branch activity and encourage people to get involved with our party. Most of the people we encounter are happy to see Labour out and about demonstrating that there is a real alternative to the past Tory dominance in our area.

Each gazebo session is a maximum of two hours and usually takes place on a Saturday. We provide training and support and can usually help with transport. We always have a key topic to get the discussion going and there are leaflets to hand out as an ice-breaker. If you can join us, please contact Brian or Matthew. We can guarantee you will have a fun time and will certainly meet some interesting people. Gazebo dates are usually published as part of Forthcoming Events.

Phone banking: canvassing voters by phone — as little as thirty minutes per week.

A key part of success in winning an election is about how we campaign and how much we understand about our voters. This information is often captured face-to-face through door-knocking, or out with the Gazebo, but one of the most effective methods is just by asking five or six simple (and non-confrontational) questions over the phone. The Labour party provide a system to do this safely (nobody ever sees your contact details) and the whole process is known as “Phone Banking”.

This is an activity where you can commit as much or as little time as you wish, and you never need to leave your house. The questions you will be asking voters are only about who they will vote for and whether there are any specific local issues we should be aware of. Each call usually just last five minutes. If you'd like to get involved and give this a try then please contact Brian Gregory. He can arrange one-one training and there are further training sessions through Labour Hub (currently on Tuesday and Thursday evenings).