



Labour  
Heritage

# Labour Heritage

**Bulletin Autumn 2014**

## **Joining up : the Sunderland Labour League of Youth**

I joined the Sunderland branch of Labour's League of Youth in January 1949. It was then that I was issued with my first party card, although I had attended meetings in the winter of 1948 waiting to be formally accepted into membership. The youth culture that reached its apogee in the 1960s has been the subject of many books and articles. The early post-war period that went before has received less attention from historians and the activities of politically motivated youth in the 1940s has been almost completely overlooked. There is a gap here and I propose to make a contribution to filling it by looking at the Sunderland branch's League of Youth in the 1940s. I recognise that this is the study of only one branch in a particular Northern town and that perhaps other branches did things differently. So be it. My approach is a mixture of autobiography and analysis, leading to some tentative conclusions.

### **The League in Sunderland**

Sunderland's League of Youth held its meetings in the Labour Rooms in Silksworth Row, a Victorian Street of seedy shops and public houses. The Labour Rooms consisted of a large meeting room, a cramped office used by the secretary-agent, and a small kitchen. There was also an attic where old minute books and pamphlets were stored. The rooms were located above the ground floor premises used by a spiritualist church and

had their entrance from the street up a flight of stairs.

League of Youth meetings were usually attended by 15-20 people and were dominated by working class grammar school sixth formers who were clever and articulate. Local grammar school pupil Norman Dennis had joined the branch in 1946 but by 1948 had left Sunderland to study at the London School of Economics, taking the first step towards an academic career. Other members included sons and daughters of Labour councillors who attended largely as a duty to their parents. The rest of us were individuals with our own reasons for joining the Labour Party. In my own case I came from a family of Labour supporters. I was employed as a railway clerk and out of hours I attended a youth club. Among the club's activities were debates and I often spoke in these debates in support of the Labour government. A friend and also a fellow Labour sympathiser who worked as a clerk in a building firm, suggested that we should join Labour's League of Youth. He took the initiative in finding out the times of meetings and the venue. After a few months he ceased to attend meetings when he took up a new job at the Ministry of Social Security. I continued to attend meetings on my own.

The secretary of the branch was a pleasant woman in her early twenties who worked as a secretary in the office of a local rope-making factory. She was friendly and efficient and did her best to make us feel welcome when we started to attend meetings.

## **League activities**

My initial disappointment was that so little time was devoted to politics. I expected discussions on socialism and party policy. Instead a lot of time was devoted to procedural matters. The sixth formers were particularly keen on raising obscure points of order taking up time which in my view could have been better spent on other things.

Outside speakers were occasionally invited to address the branch. I heard Sam Watson, leader of the Durham miners, defend the Labour Government's foreign policy, and Grace Colman, the Labour MP for Tynemouth gave a talk on the economic problems facing Britain. Several local councillors found time to give talks on council affairs. Visiting speakers were listened to with great respect and no attempt was made to give them a rough ride. Youth knew its place in those days. The secretary-agent of the Sunderland Borough Labour Party – a full time official whose salary was paid from local party funds – was a no-nonsense Yorkshire man and he believed the League of Youth's role was to do the donkey work of canvassing and delivering leaflets. I must have appeared to be an eager beaver in need of protection, for a Labour councillor took me to one side and warned me not to allow the secretary-agent to load me up with too much Party work.

There were few ideological disputes in the branch. Attlee's government was implementing the programme on which Labour had won the 1945 general election and everyone appeared satisfied with the progress being made. A small minority- and I was one of them- were critical of Ernest Bevin's foreign policy; were uneasy at the growing rift with the Soviet Union and favoured a more conciliatory approach towards what we regarded as a socialist state. Konni Zilliacus was Labour MP for the nearby Gateshead constituency and he supported that view. I was very

disappointed when he was expelled from the Labour Party in 1949.

## **Local government**

At local level Labour had won control of the Sunderland Town Council and now ran the town. The Council's new leaders had been in the Labour Party since the 1920s and the Labour Group on the Council contained some very able people. The women's sections were very strong in the Sunderland Party and some of their members were prominent in council affairs. The Labour leadership on the Council was overwhelmingly working class. Among the major committees the Watch Committee was chaired by a miner, the Education Committee by a railway engine driver, the Finance Committee by a railway clerk, and the Housing Committee by a woman who worked as a secretary. These committee chairmen had served lengthy apprenticeships in local government before they came to power. Their loyalty to the Labour Party was proven beyond doubt and they expected loyalty in return. By and large they got it: their decisions were rarely challenged. Indeed loyalty was highly valued at all levels in the Party.

## **League members**



Labour's League of Youth had two main functions. Firstly it was expected to help

the Party at election times and support various Labour campaigns. In my experience it performed this role extremely well. League members spent many hours “on the knocker”. Secondly it existed to train cadres for future participation in the Labour Party. How far was it successful in achieving this? The answer is more problematic. Sunderland League members of the 1940s never held reunions or maintained contact with each other in any systematic way. However I have kept in touch with a number of former members of the 1945-50 period and have a good idea what happened to them in later life.

In regard to continued membership of the Labour Party only four of us remained active members. The branch secretary of those years married a graduate engineer and went to live in Portugal. Her husband was a Scot and when they returned to live in Scotland she resumed her Labour Party activities. Another member who became a school teacher also married and moved to South Tyneside where she continued to be active in the Labour Party. At the time of writing they are still active Party members. Norman Dennis took a lectureship in sociology at Newcastle University in the 1960s and returned to live in Sunderland. He served a term as a Labour councillor and was stuffing leaflets through letterboxes on behalf of the Labour Party to the very end of his life. In his last years he wrote several pamphlets and articles urging the Labour Party to return to the ethical socialism of its early years. I remained an active member until January 2003 when I did not renew my subscription, although I continued to vote Labour.

What about the other branch members who did not retain their membership of the Party? Most of the sixth formers moved away from Sunderland and enjoyed successful careers in the civil service. Others became school teachers. The remaining members of the branch were employed in various white collar occupations with a couple later moving

from clerical jobs into teaching. Given that Sunderland was then very much a shipbuilding town it is surprising that the League’s local branch did not attract youths who worked in the shipbuilding and engineering industries. The predominance of grammar school pupils and white collar workers is very striking: where were the craft apprentices and manual workers? My own explanation is that such youths were attending evening classes as part of their trade training and devoted any spare time and energy they had to trades union activities.

### **Loyalty to Labour**

If the League was not a training ground for activists, it certainly turned out a bunch of loyalists who without exception voted Labour for the rest of their lives. Their loyalty was stretched to near breaking point during Blair’s second and third terms in office, but those I have been able to contact admitted that, after much agonising they had ended up voting Labour in the 2001 and 2005 general elections. One told me “I was not going to vote but the old tribalism proved too strong”; and one of the former women members said “I considered abstaining but then thought of women’s struggles to get the vote and felt that I was letting the Suffragettes and the others down if I did not use it. What else could I do but vote Labour?”

### **Swan song**

The general election held in February 1950 returned a Labour Government with the overall majority of six. The national turnout was a massive 83.9%. Sunderland’s League of Youth did its share of campaigning and I remember canvassing and leafleting on cold dark evenings. The campaign turned out to be my swan song with the League. Three months later I was called up to do my national service in the forces. When I returned to Sunderland in 1953 my youth was over and I resumed

political activity in the senior ranks of the Labour Party. Let me close with some evidence that romance can blossom in the most unlikely places. I first met my wife Elsie at League of Youth meetings in 1949 and we met up again in the same Labour rooms in 1953, shortly after I had been demobbed from the RAF and she had completed a teacher training course at Darlington Teacher Training College. After a courtship spent pounding the pavements and knocking on doors on behalf of the Labour Party we got married and lived happily ever after.

Archie Potts

## Durham Miners' Gala

The 130<sup>th</sup> Durham Miners' Gala marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1984-5 strike and remembered Tony Benn and Bob Crow.



On 12 July 2014 more than 100,000 people attended the 130<sup>th</sup> Durham Miners' Gala. They came to Durham City to enjoy themselves, to celebrate their communities and their past, to watch the bands and banners and to listen to the speeches. They also came to remember and discuss the lessons to be learned from the strike of 1984-5 and to explore the ways in which they might find their way out of the current political and economic mess. The annual Durham Miners' Gala, organised by the Durham Miners' Association, has since the last Durham pit closed in 1995, become a broad based occasion attracting participants from

across the whole trade union movement as well as from community groups and schools.

It has undergone a significant renaissance, and with the numbers attending reaching those of the 1960s, it is a puzzle as to why the Gala doesn't attract more national media coverage. Of course, it was front page news in *The Morning Star*, but one searches in vain for an article in *The Guardian*, for instance. Perhaps this is partly to do with the right wing bias of our press, but surely it also has something to do with the increased concentration of economic and political power in London and the South East of England? This results in a media mind-set which relegates the concerns of hundreds of thousands of people to being of mere 'provincial interest'.

Tony Benn and Bob Crow were firm favourites of the Gala. Tony Benn first addressed the crowds in 1962 and was elected to speak on a record 20 occasions. Bob Crow was a strong supporter of the miners and had spoken at the Gala a number of times. At last year's event he called for the foundation of a new political party to represent the interests of organised labour.

Members of the RMT took part in the procession this year and carried a banner which read: 'Bob Crow 1961-2014, R.I.P. Legend'. The RMT gives concrete support to the Gala and sponsors colliery bands. Those such as Ed Miliband, who refused to attend the 2011 Gala because Bob Crow was due to speak, should understand that the Durham Miners' attitude to those people and organisations who offer them friendship and support is simple – they reciprocate!

This year's speakers were Christine Blower, General Secretary of the NUT; Steve Gillan, leader of the Prison Officers Association; Paul Kenny, General Secretary of the GMB; Dennis Skinner MP; and Mick Whelan, General Secretary of ASLEF. All paid tribute to Tony Benn and Bob Crow.

Before the speeches start a band always plays Gresford (the Miners' hymn) in remembrance of those who have lost their lives. On this occasion David Hopper, General Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, asked the crowd to think particularly of Tony Benn and Bob Crow: "We have lost some of the best fighters the working class has ever seen and it is a sad day that these people are not here..., enjoying the day with us".

Not surprisingly, it costs a lot of money to stage the Durham Miners' Gala and at one point it seemed likely that this year's would have to be cancelled. The Durham Miners' Association is no longer a trade union, having no working members. It is a charity which pursues compensation claims on behalf of former miners. After losing a case in the Court of Appeal on behalf of those suffering from osteoarthritis of the knees, the Association is now faced with paying costs of £2.2m. Fortunately for the survival of the Gala, the DMA had established the Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala in 2012 to help fund the event. After an appeal for more people to contribute and join, the 2014 Gala went ahead. What is more, David Hopper reported that "we'll be back next year, and probably the year after that".

At our last AGM it was agreed that Labour Heritage should become a 'Friend of the Durham Miners' Gala' and send an annual donation of £50. As an organisation concerned with education in the field of labour history, there couldn't be a more appropriate use for our money.

Having grown up in Durham I can see no reason why as a teenager I would have known who Keir Hardie, Aneurin Bevan, A.J. Cook, Tommy Hepburn and Peter Lee were if it hadn't been for the banners parading at the Gala. The Gala helps to ensure the survival of a real living, breathing appreciation of past struggles. In the words of a popular slogan on many Durham Miners' banners: 'the past we inherit, the future we build'.

A recent trend, which is touching and encouraging, is popularity of the banners produced by schools. Artists work with children to design and make the banners which then march behind the lodge banner. Thus children, who have never seen a pithead or a piece of coal, gain knowledge of the history of their communities. For example see: <http://tinyurl.com/ote98qs> .

Kit Snape

*Labour Heritage members can become a 'Friend of the Durham Miners' Gala' by donating at <http://tinyurl.com/nk7va4b> or by sending a cheque, payable to 'The Friends of the Durham Miners Gala' to Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala, PO Box 6, The Miners Hall, Durham, DH1 4BB.*

*Alternatively, a standing order mandate form can be requested from this address.*

*Friends receive an annual magazine.*

*A video of the 2013 Gala as seen through the eyes of the residents of Quarrington Hill can be seen at:*

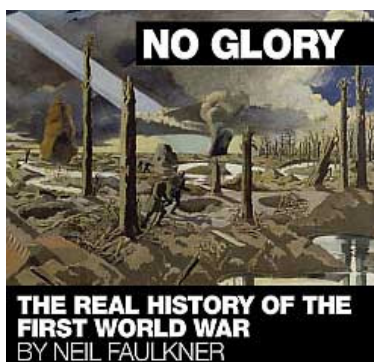
*<http://vimeo.com/70606893> .*

## Labour Heritage AGM 2014

Labour Heritage held its AGM at Conway Hall on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March. Its theme was **Labour and World War 1**.

### **No glory: the real history of the First World War**

The guest speaker was Neil Faulkner, historian and author of a pamphlet *No glory: the real history of the First World War*. This is published by the Stop the War Coalition.



Neil spoke about the former education secretary Michael Gove's attempts to celebrate British victory in the War, and to counteract images of it as displayed in the film *Oh what a lovely war*, which he believes reflects the left-wing sentiments of the 1960s. The government has spent millions of pounds engaging right wing historians to prove that Germany was uniquely expansionist and had to be stopped. They also want to focus on the cultural concept of the "hero" rather than the sacrifices of all who lost their lives. Neil argued that patriotism was essentially a reactionary ideology, telling British workers for instance that they had more in common with their millionaire bosses than with workers of other countries. In fact all the major European powers had been expansionist. By 1914 Britain controlled one fifth of the world's land and a quarter of its population. France had Europe's second largest Empire. But the

War which began in 1914 was to see carnage on an industrial scale – different from any war which had taken place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Very few people had seen this coming. What about the causes? There were atrocities committed by the German armies in Belgium, but British troops had committed atrocities in India and Africa; and Belgium had committed atrocities in its own colony – the Congo, where children had their arms amputated if they did not pick enough rubber. Marxists such as Engels and Lenin had predicted the carnage which would ensue if a European war were to break out. They argued that the workers' enemy was their own ruling class. Lenin called for the defeat of the Tsarist regime in Russia.

In spite of the previous anti-war policies of the socialist Second International, when war broke out it assumed a life of its own. Socialists and trades unionists were carried along with their government's war efforts, and recruiting campaigns. Only a few such as Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie stood the test and opposed the war. It was to be several years before popular opinion swung against the War, throughout Europe. When it did, not only the War but whole regimes were challenged as revolutionary waves swept Russia, Germany, and Austria, and there were strikes in Britain. But this was after years of killing.

The lesson was that war had to be stopped by popular protest before governments could get stuck in. Anti-war feeling over Iraq had made people war-weary, and governments in the US and Britain could no longer feel that they had a free hand to intervene in Syria – or the Ukraine.

Two members of the Labour Heritage National Committee also gave talks.

### **World War 1 and the response of the left**

Stan Newens spoke on World War 1 and the response of the left. As at the Essex

conference in October 2013, he outlined that way in which the world had been carved up by the European powers before 1914. This was backed up by a militarist propaganda machine in all countries. He spoke of the courage of those who opposed the War, a minority at first. In Britain conscientious objectors were given white feathers and risked imprisonment. In Germany socialists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were imprisoned, and French socialist leader Jean Jaures was shot dead by a sniper, following his anti-war statements. However there was significant opposition to the War which was to come to a head in 1917. He did not belittle those who had sacrificed and lost their lives. The point was that the War should never have taken place. (a fuller report of Stan's talk to the Essex Labour history conference in 2013 is in the spring 2014 *Labour Heritage bulletin*)

## **When the war began – in Chiswick**

John Grigg gave a talk on the outbreak of World War 1 and its impact on the population of Chiswick.

World War 1 may have started in 1914 but for many years the local papers had reported anxieties at local political, church and society meetings. At some meetings there were warnings that our navy must keep pace with Germany; at others there were calls for peace and friendlier relations with Germany. Local fears reflected those at national level.

But by 1914 Germany was seen as an enemy, war was inevitable, and stories of spies and plans for German invasion were rife in the national newspapers which were the only means of communication - apart from word of mouth and rumour.

### **Spies and secret agents**

Albert Holden, a post-card photographer of Goldsmith Road, Acton was preparing to take a photograph of Southsea Castle in

May, three months before war broke out, when he was arrested by two soldiers under the command of an officer. He was taken under armed guard to the castle and kept for three hours while the plates were developed and examined. He was released and told he was fortunate 'as the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southsea are full of German spies.' Mr Fenton, the Chiswick Fire Brigade Superintendent, was similarly detained on the Isle of Wight when he had foolishly snapped a torpedo boat coming into the harbour.

A Belgium soldier who had fought the Germans and had escaped to England was quartered in Grove Park Road, Chiswick. He was arrested by a London Defence Corps private for making a sketch of Tower Bridge. The matter went to court and the case was dismissed after the Belgium Consulate spoke up for the accused. Another man was arrested at Brentford Docks in possession of 'plans' that in fact were 'harmless water colour sketches'.

This spy mania spread to fears that German agents were secretly preparing for an invasion, and at an Acton District Council meeting the Surveyor was asked if he would inspect the district to discover whether any concrete foundations had been prepared for German guns. The surveyor said the council had no power to do so and it was a matter for the military.

There was a sensation at Acton Wells when, acting upon information received, a large body of police raided the premises of C. Roder & Co, the London factory of a German music publishing company, and arrested 23 German workers. Most of the firm's 200 employees were English. The information received was that the concrete roof was two feet thick and commanded a wide view over the Great Western Railway line and junctions.

When questioned by a press representative the firm referred the reporter to the

architects of the building who said the suggestion that the roof could be used as a platform for guns was absurd. He showed a photograph of the saw toothed roof, which was composed mostly of glass, the concrete being only two inches thick.

Pigeon fancying was a popular pastime and John Klewhein, a Bavarian who had been in England since 1898 and had an English wife, lived in Hamilton Road, Brentford. He kept pigeons and the suspicion was that they could be used to send messages to Germany. It was explained that the birds were hatched in Brentford and if let out wouldn't fly anywhere. Despite that he was fined £5 and the birds ordered to be destroyed.

In Bath Road Hounslow smoke was seen near a van and at once was thought to be the work of German spies. Close observation proved it to be nothing more than fumes from a cartload of manure. The Fire Brigade, who had been warned, were relieved of anxiety. The anti-German mania ran to demands that the public house near Acton Town Station called 'The Crown Prince of Prussia' be changed to 'The Crown Prince of Russia' and that Brandenburg Road be renamed. It was later renamed Burlington Road. In Isleworth German sausage was transformed into breakfast sausage.

Military guards were placed on the Great Western Railway. 19 year old William Ellis, who was apparently stealing walnuts from a garden and was challenged by a special constable, ran away along the railway. He was called to halt by one of the armed soldiers. He refused and was shot in a nearby brickfield. He died the following day in Acton Cottage Hospital. A verdict of 'justifiable homicide' was returned and the soldier was commended in the coroner's court for doing his duty so promptly.

### **Aliens interned**

Once war was declared on August 4th all unnaturalised Germans, Austrians and Hungarians had to register at Police Stations. 75 year old Henry Bettcher of 32 Heathfield Gardens, Chiswick, who had lived in England for 36 years, was prosecuted for not registering. He told Acton Justices that he had once been told by a judge that he was a British subject 'for Jury service' and it was not necessary for him to be naturalised. He was fined £10, an amount he could not pay immediately. As he was led towards the cells an English friend said he would pay the fine and Mr Bettcher was released. So distressed was he by the proceedings that he collapsed and tragically died the following Sunday.

There were other cases reported in the local papers, including an English woman who had married a German and didn't realise that she had therefore 'chosen' German nationality. Registered aliens were watched by the police and several were arrested and fined for travelling more than five miles from their registered addresses.

In October the Home Office ordered the internment of all un-naturalised aliens of enemy countries. One local wife of a German, who had been arrested and taken away, had difficulty in finding him. Laden with food and other items that her husband might need, she went to Olympia, which had been commandeered as a detention centre. She was directed to Newbury and then to place after place, until she found him at the Aldershot concentration camp.

### **Panic in the High Road**

When war was declared there was, like everywhere else, panic in Chiswick. There was a rush on the shops and several in Chiswick High Road ran out of supplies and had to close. One problem was getting stocks from wholesalers because the government had requisitioned many



vehicles and horses. In Brentford alone 150 horses were commandeered for the army from the council, hauliers, breweries and laundries, and a number of Brentford men were out of work as a result.

There was a run on the banks as customers withdrew deposits. A local bank manager said there was a tendency to ask for gold, but when it was explained it was in the national interest to reserve gold, most took bank notes with a small proportion of gold and silver. Another bank manager said everyone was paid out in gold but many brought their deposits back later repenting their hasty action

The government extended the bank holiday to get control of the situation, and when they opened again banks were generally insisting on seven days notice for deposit withdrawals in order to stop any panicky depletion of gold reserves.

### **Reactions to the War**

Excited crowds gathered at level crossings and bridges and a large number of people spent whole nights on the bridge near Brentford Station to cheer the troops as they passed by. Normal timetables were suspended to allow trains carrying troops, horses and guns to get through to Southampton.

German goods were boycotted and J. Bosence, a jeweller of Chiswick High Road was wrongly reported to the police as a German. He could, he said, trace his family back to 1066 in Cornwall. Another High Road trader, Harry Hallier, a baker, put an advert in the *Chiswick Times* offering a £10 reward to anyone providing information leading to prosecution of anyone saying he was a German.

Mrs Dorey, president of the Brentford Needlework Guild responded to an appeal to work making flannel shirts, socks, sweaters, cardigans for the troops and night shirts for hospitals. Another women's group, the Brentford Women's

Working Association that met every Thursday afternoon in Brentford Library, had by the middle of September sent 128 flannel shirts and pairs of socks for the 8<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Battalion B Company.

### **Stranded in Europe**

August was the middle of the holiday season. There were stories of tourists in Switzerland endlessly delayed in returning to England, but the people really in trouble were those behind enemy lines.

John McLaren, a chemist working for the Chiswick Polish Company in Germany was promised repatriation once the English allowed Germans to return. It seems he was not restricted in his movements and said that "most people are quite polite". Sixteen year old Mr Haynes of Bedford Park, who had a job in Vienna, was not so fortunate. He was arrested with other Englishmen, Russians and Frenchmen and imprisoned in Karlstein Castle. Conditions were not good – it was bitterly cold and they slept on straw. The food was poor. "meat was so fat that most of us threw it away." The Englishmen played cricket in the courtyard, coats for wickets, thick branches for bats and a chunk of wood for a ball. His side knocked up 25 runs and won. What the Austrians made of that is not recorded.

Someone else caught behind enemy lines was Red Cross nurse Miss M. Waycott of Derwentwater Road, Acton, one of many nurses and doctors sent to Belgium. She and another nurse were placed in one of many temporary hospitals. Hers was the residence of a Baron Janssen in Brussels, where they treated badly wounded Belgium soldiers.

Ten days after their arrival the Germans occupied Brussels. Belgium flags disappeared from shops and houses and the Post Office was closed so they had no news or newspapers from home. They wondered what would happen to them. For

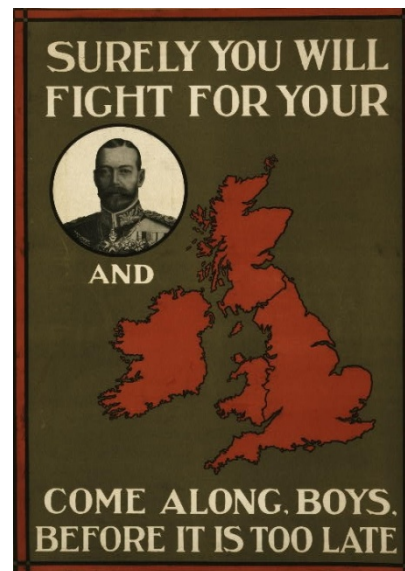
eight days they worked in the hospitals to the sound of gunfire. Their patients became prisoners of war and those fit enough were taken away. One night ten German and two Belgium patients were brought in. "We wondered how the Germans would feel about being cared for by English nurses."

On 22<sup>nd</sup> September the Germans ordered that all English nurses and doctors were to leave Brussels, and after a fortnight they were escorted to the railway station. After delays 150 nurses and 12 doctors were put onto a train that took four days and three nights to take them via Cologne, Munster and Hamburg to neutral Denmark. Each compartment, that held six people, had an armed soldier. There were two in Miss Waycott's carriage who never ceased smoking. Windows had to be shut and the blinds kept down. The train crawled, frequently stopping, and at some stations men opened the doors to laugh and jeer at the English passengers. They had little sleep and food was rarely available. Fortunately they had brought some with them. At Hamburg they were allowed onto the platform to get some food. There were many people at the station and 'from the looks they gave us, I think we would have had a bad time if we had not been so well guarded.' At last they reached the Danish frontier and were thankful to see the back of their guards. At Copenhagen they were met by the English Consul and after a week crossed over to Norway and sailed from Bergen to Newcastle.

### **Joining the Army**

At first there was no great rush to join the army and a local vicar wrote to the *Chiswick Times* to say he was nauseated by the spectacle of be-flannelled young men enjoying cricket, tennis and river punting while others gave their lives in Belgium and France. There was a general belief that the war would be over by Christmas.

Men who had been in the regular army and were reservists were called up straight away. 150 London United Tramways Company employees were on the reserve and the company lost 10% of its work force. Over 200 naval reservists in Brentford were directed to report to Chatham and elsewhere. A large number of reservists at Brentford Gasworks and the Royal Brewery were called up and both places announced that the men's places would be kept open until the war ended – expected then to be by Christmas. The Gas Works would pay half wages for subsistence of their families, and the brewery undertook to look after their families while the men were away.



In September a huge recruiting rally in Acton Park attended by about 2,500 people resulted in 20 volunteers and all but five were rejected on health and other grounds. Similar rallies in Homefields Park, Chiswick Town Hall and Chiswick Empire did a little better. Not many joined up at these rallies, but maybe they had an influence because men started to join up by themselves, and when reports arrived from the Expeditionary Force in France recruitment picked up. Servicemen's letters appeared in the local newspapers. The false war of spies, secret German guns and the High Street panic faded once the deaths and casualties appeared. British

casualties arrived at Chiswick Hospital and wounded Belgium soldiers at Devon Nook in Dukes Avenue, and it was reported that The Duke of Northumberland had placed a part of Syon House and grounds at the government's disposal for convalescent wounded.

The *Chiswick Times* printed the names of close on 1,500 Chiswick men who had 'responded to the call' by the end of November. This included reservists, and those who volunteered for 'Kitchener's Army' or the Territorials.

### **Stories from the front**

The *Chiswick Times* printed the soldiers' horror stories which were often accompanied by the bravado of wanting to get back to the front to 'have another go at the Germans.'

Private Dawkins was with twenty of the London Scottish when they were cut off in a wood and engaged in hand-to-hand combat. He bayoneted one German and shot another, and escaped being bayoneted himself as he lay on the ground twisting and turning. Private Rutherford saw half the head of the man next to him shot off. Private Goode of the East Surreys returned home wounded to 40, Corney Road. His unit had been ordered to scout a wood, was fired upon and surrounded. He was knocked unconscious by a rifle butt and somehow was taken back to the trenches. His regiment lost 262 men and 4 officers. He lay in the trenches for four days with the head wound.

Seaman Edward Scott was home wounded at 4, Dorchester Grove, Chiswick. His ship, The Cressy, and two other ships were torpedoed twenty miles west of Heligoland. 1,459 ratings and officers were lost. He survived in the water for three or four hours by clinging to a plank before a Lowestoft trawler picked him up. A man with him couldn't hold on and slipped away.

The *Middlesex Independent* reported that Private Court, oldest son of Mr G. Court, the gardener at the Ealing and Old Brentford Cemetery was wounded on 9<sup>th</sup> August after passing unscathed through the battle of Mons. A prayer book in his trouser pocket saved him. The bullet passed through the book and ricocheted into his thigh otherwise the result would have been fatal. He was hit twice further and was in Devonport Hospital.

There were other stories and the horrific part is that these events were small compared to what happened later in the war.

### **The Middlesex Regiment**

Men joined either the regular army (Kitchener's Army) or the 10<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Territorial Battalion based at Stamford Brook or the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Brentford, whose base was in Hounslow. By the end of August 80 extra men had joined the Middlesex 8<sup>th</sup> Territorial Battalion at the drill hall HQ in Ealing Road. The 10th Middlesex started the war with 700 men and a further 1,300 men had joined by the end of the year.

When 1914 ended there was still hope that the war would be over in a few months. Many soldiers and sailors showed great courage and loyalty to their comrades. Many were terrified and broke down and were damaged for the rest of their lives. They may be called 'heroes' but the tragedy behind the names on local war memorials, and of the millions of all nations across Europe, is that they were the victims of European leaders and rulers who sacrificed their populations in a struggle for power in Europe.

*(Sources: Chiswick Times, Acton Gazette, Middlesex Independent, Middlesex Regiment Records.)*

The AGM also heard reports of Labour Heritage activities over the past year, and discussed future plans.

The following officers were elected ; Chair – Stan Newens; Secretary- Linda Shampin; Treasurer-John Grigg; Bulletin editor-Barbara Humphries. The following also were elected to the National Committee – Kit Snape, Bill Bolland, Richard Hawkins, Alan Spence, Khatchatur Pilikian, Derek Wheatley, and Stephen Bird as an honorary member.

### **Thirteenth Essex Conference on Labour History**

The thirteenth Essex conference on labour history was held at the Witham Labour Hall on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October. Sponsored by the Essex Labour Campaign Forum, Labour Heritage and the SW Essex Co-op Party Council, it was chaired by Charles Cochrane of the Essex Labour Campaign Forum.

### **The awakening of the labour and trade union movement in Essex and East London before 1914**

The first speaker was Ted Woodgate, (WEA lecturer and researcher on farmworkers), who spoke on the awakening of the labour and trade union movement in Essex and East London before 1914. He spoke of the tectonic plates in society, those of capital and labour, whose movements had a huge impact in the three decades prior to 1914. There was a close link between Essex and East London. As the agricultural depression kicked in between 1875-1900 there was a migration of farm workers from rural Essex into the industrial area of West Ham, which is now seen as part of outer East London, but was still part of Essex in the 1880s.

The National Union of Agricultural Labourers (NALU) led by Joseph Arch

had gained much support across Essex and Suffolk, but by the 1880s the depression in farming had led to its decline.

Nevertheless its political impact had more far reaching effects. Its support for the Liberal Party had pressurised Gladstone, as prime minister to introduce voting for farm workers in 1884, and in the 1885 general election, Liberal candidates were to be elected in Saffron Walden and Maldon in Essex. This was against the bitter opposition of the Conservative landowners. NALU was instrumental in mobilising the vote of agricultural labourers by means of public meetings and assisting a largely illiterate electorate in exercising their right to vote.

By 1888 labour was on the move in East London. The turning point for trades union victories for a casualised and previously unorganised workforce came in 1888 with the strike of the match women at Bryant and May in Bow (East London). These women struck against their appalling working conditions. But their strike and victory was not a one-off. It attracted a large rally against sweating in Hyde Park where some of strikers carried cardboard match boxes displaying their demands. John Burns who chaired the rally called on male workers in the East End to follow the example of their sisters and fight for the eight hour day. In 1889 the gas workers at Beckton took strike action for the eight hour day, led by Will Thorne. 20,000 workers joined the union of gas workers and general labourers for the first time. Following this was the famous dock strike led by Ben Tillett, which pulled out 100,000 men and put the London docks to a complete standstill. The dockers were successful in their aim of sixpence an hour, and guaranteed shifts. They had to combat attempts to import blackleg labour from rural Essex and the transfer of work from London to the Tilbury docks in Essex, which had just opened. Ben Tillett led the strike to victory by recruiting casual labour, winning over the support of skilled workers on the docks, such as the

stevedores and preventing work from being transferred to Tilbury. The dockers also held processions which gained public support, and received financial support from dockers from as far afield as Australia. These strikes coincided with growing support for socialist parties such as the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party. There was also a lull in the depression and a tight labour market was to assist the struggle of the new unions, whose existence was based on unskilled workers and was therefore precarious. As economic conditions deteriorated into the 1890s, these unions did not survive, but the political lessons of their struggles did. In the early 1890s there was a brief revival of the agricultural unions in Essex, encouraged by the victories of trades unions in East London. In 1892 59 branches of NALU were reported, and in parts of the county there was 100% support. In towns such as Ipswich and Harwich the Eastern Counties Labour Federation claimed 17 branches. The political breakthrough for labour in East London came in 1892 with the election of Keir Hardie as MP for West Ham. The Liberals had stood aside for him, but he was regarded as a labour candidate. Two other labour candidates were to be elected in the same year, in Battersea and Middlesborough. The Liberals were the main beneficiaries of the 1892 election, taking 80 seats off the Conservatives. Pressure and support for the Liberals from the agricultural labourers led to the establishment of Parish Councils by the Gladstone government. In areas where NALU was strong these Parish Councils were to get a strong representation of farm worker, who were mainly Liberal supporters. But the 1890s were to see reverses for the unions, both in rural Essex, and in London. The famous strike of workers in Silvertown was defeated, the gasworkers were defeated, NALU collapsed, and Keir Hardie lost his seat in West Ham. By 1895

the Conservatives were back in government nationally, and on the backs of the Boer War they won the Khaki election in 1900. But the political gains of the previous decade did not go away. In 1900 the Labour Representation Committee was formed. This was to encourage the growth of socialist organisations, and ILP branches and Clarion clubs spread across Essex as in the rest of the country. In 1906 29 Labour MPs were elected. The agricultural unions were rebuilt supporting socialist policies, and by 1914 there were strikes across the county of Essex. These were cut across by World War 1.



A Clarion Van

### **Origins and development of the Co-operative Party**

The second speaker of the day was Stan Newens, who spoke on the origins and development of the Co-operative Party. Stan outlined the early years of the co-operative movement from the days of the Rochdale Pioneers, who at the outset rejected the socialist ideals of Robert Owen and favoured pragmatic shopkeeping and political neutrality. By the 1880s socialists tried to engage with the Co-op and some co-operators saw the need for parliamentary representation, but this was always rejected at the annual congress. When the congress did support direct representation in 1896, many local societies were not prepared to support this by financing candidates. In 1899 the Co-op was invited to attend the founding conference of the Labour Representation

Committee but it refused, and maintained its political neutrality. However in 1912 representatives from the Co-op agreed to meet with representatives of the Labour Party and trades unions.

This non-political stance was to be challenged during World War 1. The Co-op was undermined by the actions of local food committees, its staff were not exempt from military conscription and it became liable for excess profits tax. This led to the establishment of the Co-op Parliamentary Committee, led by Perry and Watkins. In 1918 it was to meet with the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress (TUC) to try avoid electoral disputes, but no pact was agreed. In the 1918 general election there were ten Co-operative candidates, one of whom was elected as a Labour candidate at Kettering. The number of successful Co-op parliamentary candidates grew and in 1929 nine were elected, some of whom held office in the 1929-1931 Labour Government.

Locally affiliations to the local Labour Party by Co-op societies were far and few between. But as early as 1896 there had been some exceptions. The Stratford (East London) society had elected an ILP member Alf Barnes as its President. He used this platform to try to commit the Co-op to a political vision of the brotherhood of man, and the aim of a co-operative commonwealth. In 1925 the Co-operative Congress endorsed collective ownership as part of its constitution. By 1945 there were 31 Co-op MPs, some who held ministerial positions.

Concluding on the present position of the Co-op, Stan told us that it had 31 MPs in the House of Commons, 9 representatives in the Welsh Assembly, and 5 in the Scottish Assembly. As a former president of the London Co-operative Society he was dismayed at the plight of the Co-operative Bank which had taken over dodgy branches of the Britannia building society and was now partly controlled by hedge funds as a result. He also deplored the attempts to depoliticise the Co-op

based on a survey available to the public asking for approval for it to break its links with the Co-operative Party.

### **1964-1970 Labour government**

The first speaker in the afternoon was Jeremy Corbyn, MP. He spoke on the 1964-1970 Labour Government led by Harold Wilson. 2014 is its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Jeremy's memories of the 1964 election were of canvassing in the Wrekin with his parents, where Labour lost. Labour narrowly won the election by 4 seats after 13 years of Tory rule. There were high hopes for the government. Nevertheless there were two significant losses. Fenner Brockway sadly lost in Slough and Eton, and in Smethwick the Tories won, playing the race card. However this seat was to be won in 1966 by Andrew Faulds.



Harold Wilson

Labour had a young go ahead image – its slogan was ‘let’s go with Labour’. It stood against the entrenched privilege of an aristocratic Tory leader, Alec Douglas Hume. Wilson was a man of the left who had resigned over the introduction of prescription charges in the NHS in 1951. He was disliked by the followers of Hugh Gaitskell who had not wanted him to lead the Party. He was always convinced that they were conspiring against him. He was plagued at the outset by a balance of payments problem for which he sought

financial help from the US government, which was to come at a price – that of supporting US foreign policy in the Vietnam War. This was to infuriate many Labour supporters. However he never bowed to Lyndon Johnson's request to send British troops to Vietnam! He also angered the US government by pulling Britain out of all military commitments east of Suez.

In 1966 Wilson went back to the electorate and increased his majority to 100. His government was to set itself on a potential collision course with the trades unions as it denounced a seaman's union as being led by 'politically motivated men'. It also introduced *In place of strife*, which set out a programme of trades union reform aimed at curbing rank and file trades union activity, via the introduction of legally enforceable fines and penalties. This legislation was abandoned before the 1970 general election, to be replaced by far tougher anti-trades union measures in the forthcoming years of Tory government. However this Labour Government carried out a number of far reaching political and social reforms – Abolition of the death penalty, Race Relations Act outlawing discrimination, the Equal Pay Act for women, rent controls, comprehensive education, and the setting up of the Open University. Losing heavily in local elections in 1968, by 1970 Labour was making a comeback and was expected to win the election. However in June 1970 Labour lost – had the prime minister got the timing wrong or was this inevitable?

The final speaker of the day was John Grigg who spoke again on the subject of Ramsay Macdonald and his stance on World War 1. This talk given originally at the West London Labour History Day, February 2014, is fully reported in the summer 2014 *Labour Heritage bulletin*. Lunch was provided to a appreciative audience by members of the Essex Labour Campaign Forum, who were recovering

from all their efforts in the local Clacton bye-election!

## **The Levellers –talk to the Socialist History Society**

Stan Newens gave a talk to the Socialist History Society on the Levellers and their place in history, at the Marx Memorial Library on July 5<sup>th</sup>. It was attended by 50 people.

The Levellers were a radical movement during the English Civil War of the 1640s. They were, said Stan, the first in the world to call for the right for all men to vote. This had not been the case in ancient Greece, as slaves did not have the right to vote.

The Levellers gained much support in the New Model Army which had been founded by Oliver Cromwell, to further his battles against the Royalists. Formed of 22,000 men, it was run by professional military men, its rank and file were made up of the lower classes. The King's armies had been led by "gentlemen" – dukes and lords. However after the Battle of Naseby, Cromwell had wanted it disbanded. But there were still battles to be fought in Scotland and Ireland, and soldiers were demanding arrears of pay. Fairfax, Cromwell's general tried to take action against the rank and file and moved the army to Saffron Walden. He was faced by a major rebellion. Councils of Agitators were elected and petitions were launched. John Lilburne was the leader of the Levellers. For his political ideas he had spent many years in prison, and had been publicly whipped at the instigation of the King. His ideas on religious toleration, and equality were published in many pamphlets and they were to reach the ranks of the New Model Army, where they gained increasing support. Fairfax tried to move the Army into London to confront the Presbyterians in Parliament, but stopped on the outskirts – at Putney in South West London, where the famous

Putney debates about democratic rights took place in 1647. A council of the army was elected, and Thomas Rainsborough, a rebel officer called for all those men, who did not have a criminal record to have the right to vote. This brought him into conflict with Oliver Cromwell who favoured only property owners voting. Cromwell took action against Charles 1 and had him beheaded, an act which was opposed by Lilburne. But he also took action against the Levellers in the New Model Army – leading to the execution of 350 of them in the churchyard at Burford, Oxfordshire.

The ideas of John Lilburne were developed further by another group called the Diggers, led by Gerard Winstanley. They practised communal ownership by digging on St Georges Hill in Surrey. They however were crushed by the authorities. Stan described John Lilburne as a “socialist before its time”. In 1649 as the Levellers were defeated by Cromwell, he was tried for treason, and died in prison in 1657. England’s time as a republic was short lived – the monarchy was to be restored in 1660 under Charles 2. But this time the monarchy was “to know its place”. Today the Royal Family is not supposed to interfere in politics!

The pamphlets and ideas of Lilburne and the Levellers were to live on – inspiring John Wilkes in his battle for liberty, and 19<sup>th</sup> century political radicals such as Francis Place. John Beller’s ideas on co-operation were taken up by Robert Owen and the Owenites. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century the struggle for universal suffrage continued and in 1928 all men and women over 21 in Britain finally had the vote! This was the legacy which had been initiated by the Levellers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

There was a lively and wide-ranging discussion.

Barbara Humphries

## **Labour archives – an overview**

One of the pleasures of my job as an archivist is cataloguing archives which give a unique glimpse of the past. But I am always conscious of those that got away. As Orwell said, those who control the past control the present. It’s very easy to lose track of archives, which are vital to the history of the labour movement and the constant, unending struggle for improved working conditions. Institutional archives have often survived: the magnificent collection of national trade union records at the Modern Records Centre (MRC) of the University of Warwick is a testament to that. But the MRC’s archives also include papers of individual trade unionists such as Peter Nicholas, Les Gurl, Alan Thornett, and Dick Etheridge. All of these men were shop stewards in the car industry: their papers are a record of factory life. It is these individual records of the labour movement which are particularly vulnerable to being lost. Shop stewards’ archives, in particular, provide an invaluable insight into industrial relations. But archives of activists who were involved in a huge variety of struggles are potentially of great interest to historians.

I have been a professional archivist for over twenty years and so have seen many archive collections. At least one collection I know of was rescued from a skip: another was found abandoned inside a building. Fortunately it was rescued before mould could take hold. If archives are lost, the evidence of working-class lives and the political activism they contain disappears with them. For this reason, it is always worth contacting an archive repository if you stumble across any record of the past which might be of interest. Activists should also consider making provision to safeguard their own archives. My own institution, Senate House Library, University of London, has particularly strong holdings of Trotskyist archives and publications. Other archives



which hold significant Trotskyist archives include the MRC, Hull University, and Glasgow Caledonian University. The archives of the Labour Party and the Communist Party are held at the Labour History and Archive Centre, Manchester. Among the holdings of the TUC Library are archives of the Workers' Educational Association. Local record offices often collect archives of local activists.

The vast collections of labour history at the London School of Economics have recently been supplemented by the archives of the Women's Library. Archives of the co-operative movement are held by the National Co-operative Archive in Manchester. The National Library of Wales, the University of Swansea, and the National Library of Scotland collect archives of the Welsh and Scottish labour movements. Ruth and Eddie Frow saved much unique material for posterity: it is preserved at the Working Class History Library at Salford. The Bishopsgate Library and the University of Sussex are constantly adding to their impressive body of labour and social history archive collections. There is a network of these specialist archives, which meet regularly as the Archives and Resources Committee (ARC) of the Society for the Study of Labour History (SSLH). Their contact details are on the SSLH website,

<http://www.sslh.org.uk/archives.php>.

Please get in touch!

Dave Welsh

**For more information about Labour Heritage and bulletins going back to 2002 see our web site –**

[www.labourheritage.co](http://www.labourheritage.co)

## Book reviews

**Sally Sheard, *The Passionate Economist: How Brian Abel-Smith shaped global health and social welfare*, Policy Press, 2014**

Professor Abel-Smith was a towering intellectual, health specialist, social agitator, political advisor, anti-poverty campaigner – and quintessential Fabian.

For me, who met him only a couple of years after graduating, it was as an academic, pamphleteer who worked for Barbara Castle and subsequently Peter Shore. But what made him such a Fabian were two other attributes: an astonishing ability to bind together serious expertise and evidence-based policy with deep political commitment in a searing practicality, plus the numerous hours he willingly spent on the mundane tasks of Fabian committees, peer reviewing draft pamphlets and the thankless post of Fabian treasurer.

He was loyal to Labour and the Fabians, even (at the height of his international and academic career, as an advisor to international agencies and governments) returning to the treasurership in March 1981 when, with the setting up of the Social Democratic Party, our then treasurer, John Roper MP defected. I recall rushing straight from Dartmouth Street to his LSE office and asking him – eminent and high-powered though he was – to help us out of a hole. There wasn't a nano-second between my request and his agreement.

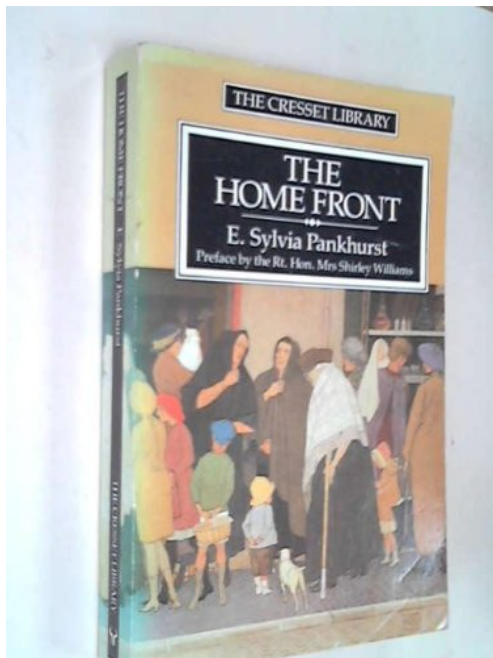
To a wider audience, he was known for his Fabian and other publications including two with Peter Townsend (*New Pensions for Old* in 1955, and *Social Security: The Real Agenda* in 1984) as well as on inequality. His work on pensions and

poverty, helping to create the Child Poverty Action Group, sitting on health boards, advising ministers, campaigning for improvements to the lives of others – all have lasting legacies.

Whether – had his (then illegal) homosexuality not prevented him becoming an MP – he might have achieved more in parliament, I doubt. By influencing a swathe of decision makers, in addition to students (many of whom later becomes Professors at LSE and elsewhere) and opinion formers, he saw his ideas become reality. As the book's brilliantly selected title summarises, he shaped health and social welfare globally because he was that passionate economist.

*Dianne Hayter*  
*Former Fabian General Secretary*

### ***The Home Front* by Sylvia Pankhurst**



Whilst the Womens' Social and Political Union dissolved itself into nationalistic fervour at the outset of World War 1, one of its leaders – Sylvia was to maintain the struggle for women's suffrage. Her war

work was to support those who suffered at home from the consequences of war. In the East End of London she organised support for women and children who were to find themselves destitute and starving. Her book *The Home Front*, originally published in 1932, describes vividly the class divided society that existed at the outbreak of the War.

At the outbreak of war, men were urged to join the army. Eventually their dependents would be entitled to a small separation allowance, but that was to be a long time coming. In the meantime families, who had lost their breadwinner, were abandoned to their fate. But rents still had to be paid, and landlords did not hesitate from evicting those who could not pay. Sylvia took up a campaign for a rent strike in East London by means of her newspaper *The Dreadnought*. Food suppliers took advantage of shortages to hike up prices, again causing more misery. Although conscription did not come until 1915, the dislocation of industry which threw thousands out of work at the beginning of the War, was to effectively act as a form of economic conscription! It was the only chance that many men had to earn a living. Men aged between 21 and 40 would often find it impossible to get a job, as employers refused to take them on, and after a strike over war bonuses on the London County Council (LCC) trams, the management refused to re-instate those of military conscription age, pending arbitration to end the dispute.

As munitions factories were opened, women were conscripted to work in them, often working a 12 hour day, 7 days a week, even when they had dependent children. Conditions were dangerous and many suffered illness or death due to poisoning from TNT. Their skins turned yellow – hence the nick-name “canaries” given to women munitions workers. These factories were under the control of the War Ministry, which had no sympathy with the women because their working conditions were judged to be less dangerous than

being a soldier at the front. But the factories were under military control – workers could not voluntarily leave their jobs. Pay was lower than would have been paid to men, and there was no sick pay.

*The Times* called for strikers in factories to be dealt with as harshly, as those who desert at the front. Women outnumbered men in the munitions factories by three to one.

But there was another war for the rich. Food prices doubled over the course of the War. Profiteering went largely unchecked and there was no attempt to tax war profits. Increased taxation was born by the working class – as taxes on beer, tea and for some, income tax was doubled.

Companies with government contracts increased their profits enormously due to the War, but rather than taxing these War profits, the government preferred to allow the costs of the War (£362,000,000), to be raised through debt (!), which future governments were still paying off at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To add insult to injury, gifts from the Dominions to the British people were high-jacked by the Government, and instead of being distributed to the hungry, were used to send as supplies to the troops, or in some cases left rotting in warehouses. It is worth getting hold of a copy of this book – a side of World War 1 which we may not hear so much about, and much contemporary evidence.

This book has been reprinted since 1932 but it is not currently in print. Try to get a library copy.

Barbara Humphries

## Obituaries

### Joan Davis

Joan Davis, a longstanding member of Labour Heritage, died on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2014, and her funeral took place at Harlow Crematorium on 11<sup>th</sup> August.

Born into a Labour family in Kensington on 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1927, she attended Labour Women's Section meetings with her mother and twin sister, Phyllis, before she started school. Her mother served as a Kensington councillor for twelve years and an alderman for a further eight.

Joan worked in the 1945 General Election and joined the Kensington Labour League of Youth, of which she became secretary and, later, chairman.

At 22 she became the first woman and the youngest ever chair of Kensington CLP, but at 24 married Frank Davis and moved to his native Bethnal Green. From here she moved with her husband to Debden, Loughton, where they both became pillars of Chigwell & Ongar (later Epping Forest) CLP. Frank became an Essex County councillor and Joan became a Loughton local councillor and a member of Epping Forest Council. On the latter, she held her seat from 1973 – 2006, with a break when she lost an election, and served a stint as leader of the Labour Group.

Joan was also an active co-operator and trade unionist.

After her divorce, she remained active as secretary of Epping Forest CLP and was instrumental in raising £3,000 for the miners in the 1984/85 strike.

Joan is survived by two sons and two daughters and numerous grandchildren.

Stan Newens

## **Christine Oddy**

Christine Oddy a member of Labour Heritage for many years sadly died at the Royal Marsden Hospital on 26th July this year. Unfortunately the third cancer she suffered in 2013 ultimately led to her death but not before she was able to enjoy a holiday of a lifetime cruising along the coast of South America, down the Amazon and to the West Indies and another cruise around Ireland, with her elderly mother, who died just before Christine.

Christine was born and educated in Coventry and came to London in 1974 to study law at University College which is when I made friends with her as we had rooms next door in a hall of residence. After she graduated she qualified as a solicitor with a top City law firm before going to work for Age Concern as their legal adviser, for the European Union and as a law lecturer. She was the European Member of Parliament for Coventry from 1989 and 1999, a position she enjoyed enormously in serving her home city and for which she was extremely well qualified as a lawyer with a flair for languages. But she was always willing to help her constituents as well as make and review law. Unfortunately she was not put high enough on the Labour Party list to remain an MEP when the system changed to multi member larger constituencies. She instead resigned and fought as an independent, winning more votes than any other candidate in Coventry and picking up all party support outside the city. However she was unable to beat the party machines and she went back to being a law lecturer specialising in EU law.

Unfortunately the after effects of cancer treatment meant that she had to retire on ill health grounds but she was able to continue her role as an election observer for the EU in new or troubled countries and took the opportunity to study arts at the V&A and the Courtauld Gallery and to further expand her knowledge of languages. She also continued travelling across the world and had visited exactly 100 countries in her lifetime. Her two most memorable trips were to Cuba and Tibet with meetings with Fidel Castro and the Dalai Lama respectively.

Christine bought her flat in Queensway 30 years ago and split her time between there and Coventry throughout, apart from when travelling or when at the EU Parliament. Holland Park was on her doorstep and combined everything she loved about living in central London - a chance to walk everywhere, enjoy urban wild life, open space and gardens, the theatre and as a route to the V&A and the Royal Albert Hall and other cultural venues. The cafe in the park was a particular favourite of hers - especially since she hated cooking and so often ate out! More recently she would often walk through the park when going to the Royal Marsden for treatment and serving on committees as a patient rep.

Christine will be much missed by family and friends including ex MEP colleagues (from all parties). We hope that others will pick up the baton in helping those people for whom Christine worked tirelessly, to address their disadvantage or discrimination.

Holland Park is a place that will always bring back happy memories for me of a talented eccentric friend who refused to both conform and accept injustice but whose life was first constrained and then cut short by cancer.

Anne Crane

## **TWO DATES FOR 2015**

**West London Labour History day,  
Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February, Ruskin Hall, Acton**

**Labour Heritage AGM  
Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March, Conway Hall,  
Holborn**

**More details available later for this 70<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of 1945**

**Bulletin contents- Labour League of Youth,  
Durham Miners' Gala, Labour Heritage  
AGM 2014, Essex Conference on Labour  
History, Levellers, Labour archives, Book  
reviews, Obituaries**