



Retired Life



The Newsletter for UNISON SW Retired Members' Summer 2019

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Bath Campaigners fight to save 'Lifeline' Bus Pass as local councils feel the pinch

By Lesley Hall

Retired UNISON members are campaigning to protect free bus passes, as local councils around the country struggle to maintain the "lifeline" service.

The Local Government Association warned recently that funding bus passes for pensioners and people with disabilities is becoming "[nearly impossible](#)" amid government cuts. They blamed an "[unsustainable](#)" funding gap of £652m in the free bus pass scheme, which local authorities have been forced to fill.

On Saturday 30 March, UNISON campaigners held an event at Bath Bus Station, where they asked passengers to sign a postcard to their MP to defend the bus pass and promote better support of bus services. There was also a giant bus pass for selfie photos.



They met with good support from the public, with over 50 postcards completed, which were sent to MPs at the House of Commons, along with those from 25 other events around the country. Many passengers arriving from rural areas remarked how important their bus service was, as they no longer run a car.

The postcards urge MPs to:

1. Protect the pass. Keep the national pass and ensure the levels of reimbursement are high enough to actually support services.

2. Invest and expand bus services. Additional finance is needed to both protect existing services and provide greater levels of service – something which is particularly important for many rural communities.
3. Defend the workforce. To ensure that the workforce in the bus industry are respected, listened to and their concerns addressed.

One of the organisers, Rosie McGregor, UNISON said "I was surprised by the number of travellers I spoke to at Bath Bus Station who had no idea that the bus pass was under threat and told me they relied on it for their shopping, going to the doctor, meeting friends and socialising. The loss of the bus pass would harm the local economy, lead to greater reliance on the private car and many poorer pensioners especially those in rural areas would suffer greater isolation and loneliness."

Lesley Hall, also a UNISON retired member, one of the organiser of the event, stood for Labour in the recent local council elections. "When I'm speaking to people on the doorstep the local bus service is a hot topic. They want reliable services which are affordable. Older people are so grateful to be able to use them without worrying about the cost. The passes really are a lifeline."

Pension Update – Changes to Survivor Benefit

By Angela Harrington

A Supreme Court judgment has resulted in all Public Government Pension Schemes ensuring that surviving civil partners or surviving same sex spouses will be provided with benefits equal to those that would be left to the widow of a male member.

The change is backdated to the date the civil partnerships and same sex marriages were introduced – 5 December 2005 for civil partnerships and 13 March 2014 for same sex marriages.

This means that where a member of the scheme has died the pension providers will contact the surviving partner to review the situation.

Workers' Memorial Day in Plymouth

By David Jolly

Every year more people are killed at work than in wars. Most don't die of mystery ailments, or in tragic "accidents". They die because an employer decided their safety just wasn't that important a priority, putting profit before safety. Workers' Memorial Day commemorates those workers.

Workers' Memorial Day is held on **28 April** every year. All over the world workers and their representatives conduct events, demonstrations, vigils and a whole host of other activities to mark the day. In Plymouth we had a stall and engaged with members of the public, making them aware of the TU role in making the workplace a safer place.

Workers' Memorial Day has always been to "remember the dead: fight for the living" and unions are asked to focus on both areas, by considering events or memorial to remember all those killed through work but at the same time ensuring that such tragedies are not repeated.

We also remember that many people continue to suffer from industrial diseases such as mesothelioma, lung disease and carpal tunnel disease long after leaving work which have a huge impact on their daily living.

An excellent conference was my reward for exchanging tropical Cornwall for a wintery Weston Super Mare.

From an unpromising start with the Chair being absent and the Vice Chair in hospital, our opening speaker, Jacqueline Cobb delivered a presentation on pensioners poverty. Amongst the statistics was the unwelcome news that our reliance on the state pension increases with age!

Nigel Costley gave an outstanding performance on jobs vs automation vs ideas and new work. Taking just the way we communicate five generations are defined by write me, call me, text me, email me or message me. Some manufacturing industries will shed massive numbers of employees but new jobs in new fields of work will compensate. (Bah humbug tell the children not to throw the alarm clock out yet).

Neil Duncan Jordan gave an incisive and thought provoking review of the austerity agenda and the intergenerational war/divide.

The last speaker was Jack Jones 2 who gave a lack lustre talk on priorities for pensions. No doubt he was hampered by the fact that he was not the author of the material.

There were no surprises with the motions. David Jolly successfully deleting an unfair rule from the SW TUC Pensioners constitution. Roberto Franceschini had his motion which sought to increase the number of motions tabled at this conference increased and improve motion progress reporting procedures was remitted to the new committee.

"Oh, what a mine of mischief is a Statesman"

By Angela Harrington and Rosie Macgregor

2020 marks the 200 year anniversary of the Cato Street Conspiracy which involved one of the "baddies" from the Peterloo massacre in 1819, namely Lord Sidmouth commemorated by a fountain in Devizes Market Place.

The conspirators sought to assassinate the government believing in the redistribution of wealth following the hardship in the years after the end of Napoleonic Wars. As with Peterloo, their intentions were betrayed by Government spies and two Bow Street Runners killed during their arrest. During the trial, the jury were reluctant to convict the conspirators on a charge of Treason which was passed in the reign of Edward III.

Five conspirators were publicly hanged but not before their defence counsel asked each of the men for their autographs. "Oh, what a mine of mischief is a Statesman" was aimed at Sidmouth and William Davidson, a Jamaican-born black immigrant wrote "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger in a strange land". A blue plaque has been erected to mark the hayloft where the conspirators were discovered. Another Mike Leigh film beckons

Peterloo Massacre

Lord Sidmouth, as Angela states, is commemorated with a fountain in Devizes but no such memorial exists in the town to Henry Hunt.

Those of you who have seen the splendid and thought provoking Mike Leigh film Peterloo will be familiar with the name of Henry 'Orator' Hunt a gentleman farmer turned radical politician and advocate for working class rights who was born in Widdington Farm, Upavon near Devizes in 1773. He was unfairly convicted for his part in Peterloo and sentenced to two years imprisonment.

Following his release, he published his memoirs and continued the fight for equality, universal suffrage and parliamentary reform and an end to child labour. He was noted for his rousing speeches and was elected to Parliament in 1830 to serve the people of Preston in Lancashire and served them for three years when he lost his seat. He retired to Hampshire until his untimely death in 1835. It's about time that the people of Devizes recognised his importance as a son of Wiltshire who fought for the rights of ordinary people.

**Another Successful Pensioners' Parliament
In Blackpool
11 – 13 June 2019**

By Rosie Macgregor

The BBC had just announced that the free TV licence for the over 75s would be means tested.

We heard that we only have 12 years to take drastic measures to prevent catastrophic climate change.

The country is woefully underprepared for an ageing population.

Poorly insulated homes and fuel poverty are killers, loneliness is compounded by lack of accessible transport, social care is in crisis and pensioner poverty is on the increase.

We must keep up the fight!

Dates for your Diary

National Retired Members' Conference

1 and 2 October 2019
Southport

Our SW Regional Representative
is Angela Harrington

Derek Double is our representative on
Standing Orders Committee

Rosie MacGregor
Chair, National Retired Members' Committee

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 14 November 2019

SW Retired Members'
Annual Seminar and AGM
at the Friends Meeting House,
Bath Place, Taunton

10.30 – 3.00 pm with lunch provided
Seminar – Climate Change

Guest Speaker –
Professor Emeritus Geoff P Hammond,
University of Bath, *Founder Director of the
University's Institute for
Sustainable Energy & the Environment*

Look out for the papers
circulated to all branches in September!

**Who's
Who**

**SW Retired Members'
Committee**

Elected November 2018

Angela Harrington
Job Share Chair
Bath University Branch
akh22@bath.ac.uk

Steve Gazzard
Job Share Chair
SW Ambulance Branch
sgazzard49@gmail.com

Rosie Macgregor
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Derek Double
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Please do get in touch with any of
us if there's anything you would
like to raise.