

HORNSEY PENSIONERS

www.hornseypag.org.uk

Hornsey Pensioners Action Group serves pensioners within Hornsey & Wood Green and other neighbouring parliamentary constituencies

November 2021 - Bulletin 11

Don't Be Scared of Scams, Just Learn to Be Aware with PC Upton

Time and Date: **WEDNESDAY November 17th 2021**
1.30pm Start

Venue: **Hornsey Parish Church Hall, Cranley Gardens,
N10 3AH**

Entrance on Cranley Gardens through car park. Doors open from 1pm
NB. Doors may be kept open so bring warm clothing.

December 15th is Booked for our December Festive Party

Thanks for those helping at the meetings and before
Please keep it up!

We are now grateful that we have a prospective treasurer but need someone to help set up and possibly store the audio visual equipment.

Scenes of the early Autumn Haringey pensioners picnic site on October 2nd with Gloria and Lauritz getting ready to brave the storm outside the café.



Muswell Hill Library's 90th Birthday Party, 15th October

It was a very jolly occasion, organised at short notice by the librarians and Friends of Muswell Hill Library (Life membership only £5). There were at least 5 of our members attending. There were many speeches from the library department and many councillors, even Adam Jogee, our Mayor (pictured right), attended and described how he was pushed in a pushchair as a toddler to the library from Bounds Green. The present day children seemed to be having their own party upstairs. Several times it was mentioned how public pressure ensured that no library was closed in Haringey, while Barnet has closed many. The speeches were followed by a guitarist performance but many had rushed for the excellent buffet provided by Crocodile Café. Notably, for the red velvet cake with individual clotted cream packets.

A young poet also gave an interesting performance of his work.



Alas, some of us did not dare drink tea as the requested improvements of toilet facilities have not yet arrived.

Hornsey Pensioners Action Group Public Meeting, 20th October 2021

Volunteers helping to protect Haringey's open spaces

Speaker Lucy Roots, Friends of Queen's Wood, Ecology Liaison.

Lucy began by explaining that Queen's Wood has no Park Keepers, only the Friends of Queen's Wood look after it. It is an important ancient woodland, which refers to the soils and plants, e.g. the wild service tree and jewel beetle. There are four ponds, twenty-three species of birds (including a goldcrest) and lots of fungi. The two main trees are Oaks and Hornbeams but there are also Hazel trees.

Some of the Oaks are between 200 and 300 years old. If the Hornbeams are coppiced, they can live to 400 – 500 years old. Many of the trees were originally introduced to be a cash crop for wood and charcoal. The Friends have recently installed a charcoal burner in the wood. Animals were also kept in the wood, especially deer. There are boundary banks around the wood which were built to keep people and predators of the deer out.



Since 2012/13 there has been a lot of coppicing at the Muswell Hill Road end of the wood, which is now lighter and good for oaks, birds, and insects. Wood anemones are amongst a range of plants found in the wood. The Friends pay for a regular survey of the wood to keep an official record of all within.

For more detail on the Friends group activities see www.fqw.org.uk or contact **Alison Watson** by text on **0753 0479 170** (see enclosed leaflet).

Finally, Lucy talked and answered questions about a flood management scheme, which Haringey Council have proposed for the wood. The Friends have major concerns about the scale and nature of this. They believe an Environmental Impact Plan should be carried out before this goes ahead.

Second Speaker: Mike Hakata, Deputy Leader of Haringey Council, with responsibility for the Environment.

Mike explained that he has only been in post for six months and his approach to his work is one of not just listening but also partnership and co-production. A co-production approach will involve a round table discussion of all parties to come to a consensus.

There is a restructure of the Parks Service taking place and they are creating two new posts, a Volunteer Officer and a Community and Engagement Officer.

He explained the competing needs of housing and green spaces – In the past, housing has taken priority but sometimes that led to sink estates. Finally, he explained how the Council has started a major study on how to increase the tree canopy in Haringey, which is now at 25%.

Sadly, Maureen O'Regan has told us that her husband and our active member for at least 20 years, Carol O'Regan, died in July this year. He was buried in Dungarven, Ireland.

See Carol standing next to Lynne Featherstone MP for Hornsey and Wood Green with other members of the Hornsey Pensioners Action Group October 2006.



Keeping in Touch – Information About National Pensioners Convention Campaigns

There are options even if you are not online. An individual membership to the **London Region NPC** costs £5 per year. Members not online receive bulletins by post.

To join, post to **Barry Todman, 15 Longlands Avenue, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 2QY**, with your full name, address and a cheque made out to **NPC Greater London Region** for £5 (or more, as are donations welcome).

If you are online and agree to receive bulletins online, also give your email address. Janet is another contact.

Public Toilets

An update from Member, John Miles, for the British Society of Gerontology



In July 2021, Raymond Martin, Managing Director of the British Toilet Association (BTA), described the shortage of public toilets in Britain as a crisis.

In September, he told the GLA Health Committee that Lord Greenhalgh, the Government Spokesperson on housing in the House of Lords, agreed with this judgement. The two-hour debate he took part in and the investigation simultaneously announced by the Greater London Authority indicate the issue is being taken seriously.

Anyone concerned for the health of our ailing democracy could take some encouragement from the deliberations of the five members of the Committee and their five invited guests. There was even a surprising level of cross-party consensus that fairness demands public toilet services be free.

Some improvements are likely to follow - whether the response will be adequate is another question.

You Might be Eligible for Pension Credit



Hundreds of thousands of pensioners are not claiming credit, when they could get the extra £64 per week. Plus it opens the door to many other benefits, like a free TV licence, reduced council tax, housing benefit, NHS dental treatment and the Warm House Discount (see below).

If your income is below £177.10 (for individuals) or £270.30 per week (for couples) you may be eligible. Pensioners on higher income levels with a disability, caring for someone or with particular housing costs may still be eligible.

Its worth a quick check on the Department for Work and Pension's Pension Credit calculator or telephone their **Freephone Claim Line** on **0800 991 234**.



Warm Homes Discount Scheme

This opened from 18th October 2021
Contact your supplier **as soon as possible** for this one-off discount on your electricity bill of £140 if you are on Pension Credit or on a low income and meet your supplier's criteria for the scheme.

It will not affect your Cold Weather or Winter Fuel Payments.

A Nursing Legend: Thora Silverthorne- by Member, Lucy Craig

My mother, Thora Silverthorne, was born in 1910 in Abertillery, Wales – the 5th of 7 children. Her mother, Sarah, died when Thora was 16. Her father, George, a miner, was a founding member of the Communist Party of GB and a leading member of the local NUM. After the 1926 General Strike, George was one of the first to fall victim to the widespread dismissals by the then private mine-owners and was forced to emigrate to Reading in order to find work to support his family. It was a very political family and Thora became an active member of the Communist League in Reading and a regular seller of the Daily Worker. At 18, she was accepted at the prestigious Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford to study nursing and eventually became an SRN and subsequently also qualified as a Theatre Sister.

When the Fascist General Franco attacked the army of the democratically elected Spanish Republican government in 1936, Thora immediately responded to the call for volunteer doctors and nurses to go to Spain to assist the hard-pressed Republicans. She was in fact the first British nurse to go out, in August 1936. She could recall the excitement and pleasure of the huge and emotional farewells from an estimated crowd of 10,000 at Victoria Station, followed by an inspiring rally at a stadium in Paris, whilst on their way through to Spain. Thora often referred to going to Spain as the most important decision of her life and it was, of course, a momentous and courageous decision for a young woman who had never been out of the UK and spoke no Spanish or even French.



Thora with the medical unit

A few months after their arrival, the small British medical unit was absorbed into the International Brigades and Thora was elected as Matron of her team, working most closely with a highly skilled Spanish surgeon, Dr. Moises Broggi. In spite of her lack of Spanish and his of English, they succeeded in collaborating successfully, occasionally doing all-night shifts, sometimes of more than 24 hours non-stop, to cope with the appalling flood of battle wounded. At one stage they treated 700 casualties over just 5 days.

An amusing anecdote my mother used to tell me concerned her name. Apparently, many of the Spaniards couldn't cope with the 'th' sound in 'Thora' and would call her 'Tora'. However, that made no sense to them since the similar word in Spanish was 'toro' ('bull' in English) which was obviously very masculine! To get round the problem, they called her "Toro - con leche"! (Bull – with milk!).

Thora spent about 15 months in Spain moving around and operating in a variety of conditions – bombed-out buildings, schools, even a cave, and so on – and was a Senior Nurse responsible for setting up the operating theatres and organising the medical supplies. These were very often inadequate, and she recalled having had to assist with very serious operations where the only anaesthetic was Spanish brandy. She returned home exhausted.



The next few years saw her working for the Civil Service Clerical Association as Principal Organiser for women. However, her main interest and concern remained in the field of nursing, where she had long felt there was a crying need for grass-roots Trade Union representation. The only existing body allegedly representing nurses' interests was the establishment-based Royal College of Nursing – which often seemed to be more concerned with the amount of starch in nurses' caps than with pay and conditions! So, in late 1942, Thora set about creating the Association of Nurses, which later became part of NUPE and eventually part of Unison. Later, during the war, she and others in the medical professions formed the Socialist Medical Association (later to become the Socialist Health Association) of which Thora became the first General Secretary.

In that role she led a delegation to see Clement Atlee and Aneurin Bevan in relation to the creation of the NHS.

At a Unison sponsored meeting in the House of Commons to celebrate her 85th birthday, Thora was credited with having changed nursing forever by transforming her early hopes of creating a genuine trade union for nurses into reality.

Edited by Janet Shapiro and Ann Anderson. Produced by Mia Anderson

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