THE LATE EDITION

















Newsletter of the Greater London Retired Members Association

JANUARY 2023

ANOTHER DIFFICULT YEAR COMES TO AN END

Unite are taking positive steps to help retired members

First things first, and the January edition of this publication is the first opportunity for the Branch to wish all of our readers and their families a 'Happy New Year'

We managed to hold all three of our Branch meetings in 2022 and although Covid has not gone away, and we must all continue to be aware of the dangers it brings, thanks to advances made in medical research and our magnificent National Health Service, the threats have been minimised as long as we observe the necessary precautions.

Generally speaking, however, we continue to experience difficult times, manifested in the continued spiralling of the cost of living, something made even more difficult for retired members, as they have increased energy costs, as their way of life means they spend more time at home and the old age pension is one of the lowest in the western world.

Pressure from the likes of the Labour Party, the TUC, Age Concern and the NPC has maintained the triple lock, and I am confident that all of our readers will not be seduced by the government's attempt to gain the grey vote and that you will agree that what we really want is a change of government.

I am writing this at the end of November 2022, which makes it impossible to comment on the current political situation which has been more farcical than ever—three Prime Ministers in three months, minsters resigning/being sacked only to return a few weeks later and a former health secretary, who handled Covid disastrously, eating insects in the desert.

All we do know for certain is that Boris Johnson is to become a regular panelist on 'Would I lie to you?'

After many years of trying to convince Unite that retired members still have a part to play in the Trade Union Movement, I had a very encouraging conversation with Caren Evans, the newly appointed Unite national officer responsible for retired members, and she has agreed to be our guest speaker in April.

Unite has also appointed an officer responsible for campaigning on behalf of retired members, and he will also address the Branch at some point.

I was pleased to hear from Bruce Preston, a regular contributor to **The Late Edition** in the past, and delighted to report that he returns to these pages again. His recollections of the War, his school days and the start of his career in the Printing industry is an entertaining read.

Also received a fascinating piece from Richard Wale, who writes in particular about the 'E Section' and his fond memories of his working life, and includes a photograph of himself and his work mates which will remind us all of the fashions of the 1950s.

Such contributions are always welcome and are enjoyed by the readership, so please do not hesitate to add to this feast of nostalgia.

Other articles in this issue include John Johnston, on the difficulties of getting a doctor's appointment, and Ann Field on the Wapping Memorial.

There is also a piece on how the GPMU Charitable trust is here to help you in these days of extreme austerity, so please do not hesitate to ask for their help.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our meetings this year, full details of which appear on this page.

Mike Pike

MEMBERS MEETINGS 2023

John Marshall Hall, 27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NY

Wednesday April 5th 2023
Wednesday July 5th 2023
Wednesday December 13th 2023
Meetings start at 11 a.m.

Hopefully you will put these dates in your diary now and come along to reminisce with some old friends and colleagues

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Bruce Preston remembers The War, his school days, the start of his career in the printing industry and explains the importance of having a background

The blame for my departure from my first school, which was in Shepherd's Bush, lies firmly in the lap of Adolph Hitler. I was reminded of the demise of my school in the early 1960s when the man standing behind me in the canteen queue at 'The Daily Mail', where I was a camera operator, remembered me helping to carry the books from our school after it was hit by a bomb.

I recall carrying the books out of the school in the Askew Road. It does help to explain why Mum had us transferred to Hednesford! I was too young to realise the effect it had on my mother. My father, Claude, had been recalled to the Royal Marines. Almost at the end of its journey his ship hit a mine in Dunkirk harbour. Half the crew died and, tragically, my father was not saved.

I found my Mum crying sitting on the stairs of our flat in Brixton. She said she had a headache, but she had just received a telegram telling her that my father had been killed. Following his death my Mum moved to a pub called 'The Cock Tavern', run by her brother, Victor, in Kennington. This was during the worst of the blitz, and she would often have to walk to work on glass and debris because of the havoc created by the bombing.

As a widow with two children, she was given five shillings a week pension. She decided to move us somewhere safer, so we packed our bags and headed towards Hednesford, where I was enrolled at the Catholic school, a short walk away.

By now Hitler's plan to demolish London, and everywhere else, was coming to an end so my Mum was able to collect us to return home. Terry, my brother, had been staying with the Baily family - Mr Baily invented the wartime 'Baily Bridge' and was knighted for his efforts.

I have no recall of the journey home except it must have been in early 1942 by now and my Mum had a flat in Adie Road, Hammersmith. Once again, the Nazis started bombing us. This time it was the flying bomb, first the V1, known to all as 'The Buzz Bomb.' At least we could see the V1 as it flew over and all we could hope for was that the rocket would keep firing so that it did not land on us. The V2 followed, which was much more frightening, for the first the victims knew that a V2 rocket had arrived was the explosion. Unsurprisingly my Mum was once again waving goodbye to us as the majority of the pupils at Brackenbury Road school, where I had been enrolled, were evacuated.

Most of us took coaches to Paddington Station with our parents having no idea where we were heading to. Their big fear was that they would never see their children again and we eventually arrived at Welshpool station. The whole train was buzzing for we assumed that we must be in Wales. We finally chugged into Glandifi station. Some of us were transferred to a coach, and we would have known what it was like being sold at a slave market, had we known about such things. We were lined up in the hall and local people selected

their new visitors. Eventually there were just two children left, my brother Terry and myself. We ended up living with Mr and Mrs Pugh and, although they were too old to have evacuees forced upon them, they offered us a home. They were a wonderful couple. A little dour at first but we were very fond of them. By the time the bombing stopped once again we were able to return home, this time with a Welsh accent, which was soon changed back in London. To Welsh children we were collectively known as 'Cockneys', and they were all 'Taffys' to us!

Our school was just across the road from us, just a curtain dividing the two classes. It was easy enough to eavesdrop on the other class behind the curtain but pointless as most of the classes were in Welsh! It was handy the school being so close except when the slaughterman dispatched our pig. The whole class and the teacher were silenced by the pigs' screams. It was over a day before I could eat pork again!



Bruce sets out on another adventure on his motorcycle in 1964

By now the arrival of the V1 and V2 had stopped and whilst Terry and myself had enjoyed our time in Wales, my Mum wanted us home, and we could not wait to leave but I also loved Taliesin and was sad, but we were both anxious to get back to London.

Now it was back to Brackenbury Road school. I did quite well, so well that the headmaster convinced my Mum that I was bright enough to win a grammar school place. True to form I managed to catch Yellow Jaundice just before the exam and missed taking it! Three weeks later I took the exam on my own. By now there were no grammar school places available nearby and Upper Latymer turned me down. Just as well really for my Mum could never have afforded all the sports gear that the grammar school required.

I was offered a place in West Kensington Secondary school, known to all as the 'Wonky Kids College.' I was not even put in the top class! I survived but never lived up to the headmaster's predictions!

I left school when I was fifteen, as did most of my class. Just before I left, I was interviewed by a teacher about my prospects. He asked me what I hoped to do. I said I wanted to become a photographer or a journalist. He laughed, saying that boys from my background did not get jobs like that. I didn't even know that I had a background! He said that a local photographic company wanted an office boy. I accepted and left school a few days later joining 'Fine Art Engravers' in Kensington. A little while later the owner was having one of his regular confrontations with the Chapel as he wanted an extra apprentice. He had his way, as he often did, and I happened to be filing proofs in the office. He looked at me and asked if I would like to become an apprentice camera operator. I said 'Yes' even though I hadn't the foggiest idea what a camera operator was. I was given an extra five shillings a week to help with my bus fare as the job was in Esher. The bus journey was a bore but as soon as I was sixteen years old I persuaded my Mum to lend the deposit to buy a motorcycle, a 125cc BSA Bantam. My journey time was halved but, most of all, I discovered a new life.

I remain an enthusiastic motorcyclist to this very day. I also found I could write and take photographs, and became a freelance journalist and photographer, road testing

motorcycles and later motor caravans, plus three books to my name were published. Since then, in spite of my background, I have had in the region of a million words published (most are filed in my loft if anyone wants to count them!) If only I had a background, I could have been a contender...

Bruce Preston



Bruce today - his love of motor-cycles has not diminished

THE GPMU TRUST IS HERE TO HELP YOU

Make sure you use it if needs be

In every issue of **The Late Edition** we promote the work of the GPM Charitable Trust and emphasise the fact that it is "here to help you."

Keith Keys, who is the primary contact, has also been a guest speaker at one of our Branch meetings and he can be contacted for further information on 07733 262991 or via email gpmcharitabletrust82@gmail.com

Application forms are also available from the trust's website **gpmtrust.org** and you will also be able to see a copy of the trust's privacy notice.

However, the take up has not been great, particularly from Scotland and London, despite the fact that London is where the majority of our branch members live.

The Trust can help you if you or your dependents are in need, in hardship or distress or who are sick, convalescent, disabled or infirm and who are, or have been, employed in the graphical paper and media trades.

The trustees may relieve those eligible for assistance by:

- a) making grants of money.
- b) providing or paying for goods, services, or facilities.
- c) making grants of money to other persons or bodies who provide goods services or facilities to those eligible for assistance. The Trust does not give grants for building work or building repairs.

Recently awards include grants to replace a lap-top and a washing machine.

Because of the current dramatic increase in fuel costs, the trustees have agreed to help those struggling in this way to a certain extent. Applications are means tested and those with significant savings will not be helped, but there are many who will qualify, so please do not hesitate to apply if you think the Trust can help and you meet the requisite criteria.

More details appear elsewhere in this newsletter, whilst members are reminded that the Printing Charity can also help in a similar way.

THOSE NO LONGER WITH US

It is with regret that we have to inform you of the deaths of the following members since our last edition:

G. Anderson Jim Brady Stanley Charles John Coles D. Hinds P. Hoare Albert Hollis Ernest 'Terry' Kirby Terrence Leferve R. Lewis Albert Manley Mrs J. Martin P. Moore Brian Nokes B.W Sansom William de Silva John Smith Frederick Alan Snowden Alan Stevens Leonard Edwin Trangmar Victor Williams

Our thoughts and condolences go out to all those who have been left behind.

E SECTION - THE CINDERELLA OF THE TRADE

Richard Wale recalls his early years in the industry and the battle for equality

Spring Term ends 1952. Time for me to leave John Harvard School for Boys in Southwark and earn my own living. Both of my grandfathers were newspaper men and were long standing members of the London Central Branch.

Grandfather Wale had worked on 'The News Chronicle' since 1919 and when he was demobbed from the army after the great War.

Grandfather Marsh had worked on 'The Evening Standard' even longer – pre World War 1, and I had been told that my name had been lodged at the Union House and that I would be offered a job in 'The Printing Industry', but at the time of leaving school, no offer had been received.

I walked home from school and passed a firm called 'Rollco Papers Ltd' and sensing it was 'in the print' entered on impulse and inquired: "Do you have a job for a boy 15 years old?"

I was told to return on Monday morning, and, on doing so, and after a brief interview, was offered a job at the princely wage of £2 - 10/- a week, Monday to Friday 8-00 am to 5-00 pm and Saturday 8-00 am to 1-00 pm. I accepted the offer.

My tasks started immediately. I had to polish the brass plaque on the Firm's front door, moving stacks of paper all round the building, getting errands for the staff in the local shops and even going to WH Smiths at London Bridge to get 'The Financial Times' every morning.

However, the worst task was in the baling room, baling the



An E-section get together at the Institute of Journalists, Tudor Street, in 1957. Right to left, Ron Blundel, 'Evening News', Richard Wale, 'The Star', Roy Maskey 'The Star', Connie Cooper 'The Star' - the two chaps on the far left are unknown.

waste paper - the machine was hand operated and was nonstop strenuous work, but the biggest indignity was that 'Rollco' was an open house and not an organised Union shop.

Word finally came from the House. I was to go to Commercial Wharf and present myself to a Mr Jacobs, who was the chief inspector of 'Round Boys' on 'The Star' evening newspaper and was asked if I could ride a Trade's bike. "Yes", I replied.

I was then told to go to New Cross railway station and report to a Mr Wally Marshall, 'The Star's' depot man for the New Cross and Deptford area. So I had been employed by 'The 'Star' and, when I became 16.5 years old, I joined 'E Section membership.'

E Section members did not attain full card status until a vacancy occurred in the paper you worked for, when the vacancy was filled by a E Section member on a strict seniority basis

This also applied in 'The Evening News' and 'Evening Standard.' I had worked on 'The Star' for seven years until, on a black day in 1960, 'The Star', which had been losing circulation and revenue, was taken over by 'The Evening News' and almost all of the E-section members were made redundant.

Tom Smith, the then Branch Secretary, stated that all E members over the age of 21 were to serve a further two years temporary card before getting full card status.

Jack Bright, the E section FOC, contested this ruling and, after many meetings and discussions, the Branch finally agreed that when E members accepted a job offer from the Branch, they would be granted full card status

I was lucky and was offered a job at 'IPC Bear Alley', Farringdon Street, and remained with the company for 26 years

During my time with IPC we were merged with Odhams and George Rownes, the warehouse was relocated twice, once to Camden Town, where the firm rented rooms in the ABC Bread Company building, then to Spa Road Bermondsey before, in the aftermath of Murdoch's Wapping dispute, the IPC management decided to reorganise their distribution and, in September 1988, Spa Road Warehouse was closed and we were all made redundant.

I still think of the days when I worked on the London 'Star', although it is 70 years ago, but I made lifetime friends along the way.

Richard Wale

If you have a contribution that you would like included in the next edition please contact the editor.

By telephone: 020 8659 6443 By email: owmikepike@yahoo.co.uk

By post: Mike Pike, Secretary, RMA, 68a Knighton Park Road, Sydenham, London SE26 5RL

GP OR NO GP, THAT IS THE QUESTION

John Johnstone on the difficulties of getting a doctor's appointment

As the local GP service, pre Covid, had been becoming more and more remote, I was interested to find what state it was now in, so, with hesitation, I phoned the surgery to book an appointment and listened to a message telling me that appointments to talk to a doctor could be done on line, the same form needs to be filled in by the receptionist, or I could wait to speak to someone.

I decided to wait and, after the four people who were in front of me had finished their calls, the receptionist repeated the same message I had already heard — i.e. that I could do everything on line. I said that I don't do on line, and she then asked me what was wrong with me, so I explained.

She said that the information would go before a committee to decide who would see me, after which I would be contacted. The next day the receptionist phoned to say that a doctor would give me a morning call in two days time. The doctor did 'phone and, after a short conversation, he decided to see me at the surgery in seven days.

After a total of ten days I actually saw a GP, albeit not my own

- not sure if they still exist! What I find worrying is that I went through a process of speaking twice to a receptionist and once to a doctor before getting an appointment.

This is not only inefficient and costly to the NHS, but I also find it strange that I had to disclose my medical problems to the receptionist. But what is more worrying is that the doctors call without giving specific times, which might be convenient for the doctor, but not for the patient. I could envisage a situation where a patient could be dining in a restaurant when a doctor rings to discuss their bowel movements.

There could also be many other embarrassing situations. The patient should have some control over telephone appointment times. The doctor's surgery is the first port of call, and patients should have easy access to them. I think the British public deserve better and should be able to demand to see a named doctor within forty-eight hours, just as you could ten years ago.

Let's build back better!

John Johnston

A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO BANKS

Laurie Pocock explains how Credit Unions work

People often ask me "What is a Credit Union?"

The clue is in the name for they, like banks, can make loans, set up accounts and give other financial services. The big difference to retail banks is that they are member owned, non-profit organisations. As a co-operative institution, a Credit Union is managed by a volunteer elected board (I am a director of the Croydon Plus Credit union).

The aim is to return any profits back to members in the form of reduced fees, higher savings rates and lower loan rates.

One of the main aims of a Credit Union is to encourage saving. Individual Credit Unions set their own rates and set up a pool of money which can then be used to give loans at cheap rates.

The first Credit Union in the UK opened in 1964.

The principle of a Credit Union is a common bond that can be working for a particular employer, which is how my Credit Union started, but, as it developed, it covered being a resident in one of three boroughs, Croydon, Sutton or Merton.

Credit Unions are a good option for people who may have difficulty opening traditional bank accounts, and may be prey to loan sharks and others, or who may prefer their money to be with a 'not for profit' organisation.

The larger Credit Unions can even offer credit cards and cheque books as well as pay direct debits etc for free. Credit checks are not required, as Credit Unions do not offer overdrafts.

The development of Credit Unions in Great Britain, surprisingly perhaps, has lagged behind some other countries. This may be because of some restrictions on them in the past.

Whatever the reason, it is the case that Credit Unions in Australia and the United States are far bigger than here, and over 217 million people belong to Credit Unions world wide.

Credit Unions are fully regulated by the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) and, at present, I am working on a plan to make our Credit Union compliant with the new Consumer Duty legislation.

I trust this gives you a basic insight into what Credit Unions are and their function.

Laurie Pocock

Thanks Laurie, and I'm sure no-one will argue with your conclusion as your explanation has been most insightful, and we hope to be able to invite a guest speaker on the subject to one of our meetings to enlighten us even further - ed



JANUARY 2023 5



THE GPM CHARITABLE TRUST FUND IS HERE TO HELP YOU

A reminder that the GPM Charitable trust is an independent Charity, administered by Keith Keys, aimed at employees and their families who are working or have been employed within the Graphical, Paper and Media industries, and is here to help you.

The object of the charity is to help those and their dependents who are in need, including in the following ways:

The purchasing of mobility aids

Help in financing home improvements to enable applicants to remain in their homes.

Make contributions towards the cost of a respite or a convalescent break.

For more details contact Keith Keys.
Telephone: 07733 262 991 or email: gpmcharitabletrust@tiscali.co.uk

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Tunes are open a suam - spm into - in Fig. 3 and the police to prevent traud. *25% off nome insurance offer is subject to our usual acceptance criferia and is only available when the reference Unite 113 is quoted. Certain poster estrictions apply. To be eligible for this offer a quote must be requested before 24.06.13. Offer only available to new customers. Unite is an Introducer Appointed Representative of UIA (Insurance) Ltd.



THE WAPPING STRUGGLE COMMEMORATED

Relief Sculpture by Ian Walters

'The Wapping Memorial Sculpture is "a lasting memory of the momentous struggle and as a statement of resistance for workers in the future". The "sculpture" was commissioned and dedicated at the South London Industrial Mission, Christchurch, London, which was a regular meeting place for the strikers.

The sculpture is also a tribute to those who died as a consequence of the dispute. The dedication to the Commemorative Relief Statue was made at the John Marshall Hall, South London Industrial Mission, Christchurch, Blackfriars, London, on Friday 23rd February 1990 before representatives of the strikers of all unions involved.

The Labour Party, the TUC, SLIM [South London Industrial Mission], members and officers of SOGAT, NGA, AEU, NUJ and labour movement friends were present.'

The hope is for the memorial to be on permanent display as part of the work of the Foundation commemorating and recording the development of the printing industry. The GPM&IT will fund the removal costs.

This process will take some time to complete and RMA members will have had a chance to look at this magnificent tribute at their recent branch meeting in December, whilst an update of the progress on the discussions for its removal will be given at future meetings and in editions of this publication.

Memorials to workers' struggles against poverty and injustice are few and far between. We must cherish those we have.

Ann Field and Mike Pike



The above statement is taken from the original souvenir leaflet of the installation ceremony in 1990 and every meeting of the RMA branch is held in the hall below this precious memorial, beautifully sculptured by Ian Walters.

Yet there has been growing concern that, as the years pass, steps should be taken to maintain it in good condition and to safeguard its future. This concern led to the recommendation that the memorial should be moved to a location with a continuing strong connection with the industry, namely St Bride's Foundation Library.

The GPM&IT sector of Unite (our union is a sector in Unite) has given its blessing to such a move and discussions have been opened with the RMA and St Bride's.

Ian Walters' magnificent memorial to those who perished during the Wapping dispute

Those who were lost during the dispute will always be in our hearts:

Sarah Johnson – age 3yrs Keith (Kim) Winfield – 28yrs Leslie Graham Hill – 30yrs Maureen Ellen Abel – 41yrs James G.A. Stuart – 48yrs Tony Smith – 47yrs William Storer – 64yrs Edmund J. Davey – 58yrs

James William Stanton – 41yrs

NEVER FORGOTTEN

JANUARY 2023 7

LETTERS & EMAILS TO THE EDITOR

You can contact the editor by telephone on **020 8659 6443**, by email **owmikepike@yahoo.co.uk** or by post **Mike Pike, Secretary, RMA, 68a Knighton Park Road, Sydenham, London SE26 5RL**

Dear Mike,

I am writing to inform you that my father, Ernest Terence Kirby, known by all as Terry, sadly passed away at the end of June, a week after his 86th Birthday.

Dad read and kept all of your newsletters up until his death, and hence, whilst going through his paperwork, I have found **The Late Edition**.

Terry started his career at 'McQuorkadale's' as an apprentice compositor in the early fifties, and by the time he finished his apprenticeship he would have learned the skills to also be a reader. He then went on to work for HMSO, or the stationery office in Harrow for many years, before moving on to 'The Sunday Times.'

He was caught up in the Wapping dispute like so many of his age group, and I can remember, at the age of 18, being dispatched to Wapping on a Saturday night by my Mum, with one of my rather large friends to 'mind' him after he came home with a cracked bonce from an indiscriminate truncheon!!!!

After the dispute he bounced around the papers before ending up at a graphics company, and then finally on the 'Daily Mirror & Sporting Life' as a reader for his remaining working life, and then retired to Christchurch in Dorset.

He always talked fondly of his time in 'hot metal' and, in clearing out his things, I have come across his 'composing sticks,' carefully wrapped up.

He was a member of the NGA all his working life and loathed 'Maggie & Rupert ' until he passed.

I read with interest the Obituary to Dick Collins in the latest edition and I was struck by a similar career path, and I suspect that they would have known of each other.

Please could you take Dad off of your mailing list, and pass our regards on to anyone who would have known him.

Kind regards, Rob Kirby (son)

Dear Mike,

I am writing to let you know that my father, John Coles, suddenly passed away on 20 March 2022 aged 89. Dad had worked in print since the age of 14, and for most of his working life was a compositor with 'The London Evening Standard' on Fleet Street until his early retirement in 1988.

He enjoyed the camaraderie at 'The Standard' and until only a few years ago he would regularly travel up to London to meet up with some of his former workmates for a pub lunch in Farringdon.

Dad enjoyed reading **The Late Edition** and I'd appreciate if you could include his obituary in the next edition.

Kind regards, Anne Bond (daughter)

SOME OTHER THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Alf Parish Memorial Darts match - Friday March 31st

The annual Alf Parish Memorial darts match, at which we remember our former Branch Secretary and great Trade Unionist, is scheduled for Friday March 31st at Selhurst Park.

The participating teams have been informed and many of our members invariably attend, so why not join them?

You do not need to be a darts player and we have never entered a team, but if the interest is there, then we will rectify that ommission.

Our first members' meeting of the year - April 5th

As already reported elsewhere, Caren Evans, Unite's National Officer responsible for retired members, will be our first guest speaker of 2023 and delighted to be able to inform you that

she will be joined by Josh Berlyne, a training organiser responsible for campaigning on behalf of retired members and also working on the 'Unite for a Workers' Economy campaign, and members can find out more at

https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/unite-for-a-workers-economy-campaign/

Despite the fact that Josh was only appointed in November, he has already:

Met with Unite's national retired members committee Launched a successful petition to help preserve the triple lock Committed himself to creating a website and producing a quarterly newsletter.

We look forward to seeing them on April 5th and hope for a good attendance so that members can learn what we can expect from them and, just as importantly, what we can offer them to improve the lot of retired members everywhere.

IF MEMBERS ADDRESS OR CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER, PLEASE KINDLY INFORM THE SECRETARY - DETAILS ABOVE,
IN ORDER THAT WE CAN UPDATE OUR RECORDS.