

HAVERING **FABIAN** SOCIETY

HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 57 August 2024

**Havering
Fabian Society**
Covering the
meetings with
Havering's
Labour
candidates,
Andrew Harrop,
Obituaries, Boys
from the Black-
stuff, The General
Election and
David Eldridge
meeting details

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Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. We have delayed publication to cover the General Election. The return of a Labour Government is welcome, and it is good to see a number of our former speakers elected for the first time (full list below). Former Hornchurch MP John Cryer will move to the House of Lords. More on John below.

Locally, Labour is no longer part of the administration in Havering. The defection of Councillors to and from the Residents Association without a byelection does nothing to increase trust in politics. An increased Labour presence in 2026 is needed to address this.

This edition includes a review of the General election, our meetings with Fabian General Secretary Andrew Harrop and the Havering Election candidates, and details for our September meeting with David Eldridge. I have also written a review of the excellent National Theatre performance of Boys from the Blackstuff,

Sadly, we have lost two more of our regular attenders, Terry Matthews, and Ed Glasson, and we send best wishes to their friends and families. Barking and Dagenham Councillor Lee Waker has also died, and we have included brief obituaries of all three.

We now have 1,402 followers on X (previously twitter). Keep up to date at our X site @haveringsfabians for the latest news. We have a blog now as well as our website <https://haveringsfabians.org/posts/> You will need to follow us to get updates. **We have recently added an Instagram account so follow us on there as well!**

We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties and will do all we can to support their campaigns. As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote

political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement are welcome.

Having Fabian Speakers at the General Election

These are Labour MPs who have spoken at Having Fabians. Of these, six are newly elected, starred in the list below.

Seat	Candidate
Elected	
Dagenham and Rainham	Margaret Mullane *
Ilford South	Jas Athwal*
Ilford North	Wes Streeting
East Ham	Stephen Timms
Eltham and Chislehurst	Clive Efford
Felton and Heston	Seema Malhotra
Reading and West Berkshire	Olivia Bailey *
Harrow West	Gareth Thomas
Thanet North	Polly Billington *
Gillingham and Rainham	Naushabah Khan *
Thurrock	Jen Craft *
West Lancashire	Ashley Dalton
Leeds South	Hilary Benn
Unsuccessful candidates	
Andrew Achilleos	Romford
Sunny Brar	Hornchurch and Upminster

There are departing MPs who have spoken to us as well.

Jon Cruddas	Dagenham and Rainham
Geraint Davies	Swansea West
Margaret Hodge	Barking
Alan Whitehead	Southampton Test



Our website address is <http://haveringfabians.org> As you are no doubt aware GDPR means we need to keep our mailing list up to date. If you are not on our mailing list (we use Mailchimp – please check your spam folders!) contact us via the website or email and we will add you in.

Terry Matthews and Ed Glasson RIP

Terry and Ed were regular attenders at our meetings, although less so since covid.



Figure 1 Terry (left) and Ed will be much missed.

Terry was a frequent contributor to local newspaper letter pages and made clear his police background. His contributions at meetings, while welcome, were often long and often original in outlook.

Politically Terry had been a candidate for the SDP and for a period was Hornchurch Labour Party Secretary. However, he was most at home within Hornchurch Residents Association. His first wife Pearl was a Councillor for St Andrews and, once widowed he married Barbara Reith, then the Leader of the RAs on the Council. Terry was committed to the area, and his death leaves Havering a duller place.

Ed Glasson had been a member of our Executive for several years and spoke in favour of Brexit at our meetings in 2016. Ed had been a member of his local Labour Party and was a sincere churchman. He had lived & worked in Hong Kong in his youth for nearly a decade and had made good friends there who, with some of his fellow Baptists, he would visit annually to help in a volunteer capacity with an international charity based in Hong Kong. Ed was renowned for his "conservative" tastes in food despite his spell in Hong Kong.

Councillor Lee Waker RIP

Lee Waker died shortly after the General Election. He had been ill for some time. Lee was Councillor for Village Ward in Dagenham and active in the Communication Workers' Union. He could talk for England and was famous for spending ages on the doors. He was part of the fightback against the BNP in 2006 and was one of the Councillors in Village who defeated a BNP candidate in that election. (The only ward where this happened from memory- troubled times).



Figure 2 Jon Cruddas presents Lee with an award in 2023.

His capacity for hard work was legendary, and he was active in the recent campaign to get Margaret Mullane elected. He also made sure we use strips of plastic to deliver leaflets so as to not engage unexpectedly with the sizeable and lively local dog population. Health and safety as always, a great union man. One of many reasons to be grateful to Lee.

Condolences to friends and family of Terry, Ed, and Lee. RIP

May Meeting -Fabian General Secretary Andrew Harrop

Andrew visited us prior to the election being announced. This was his second visit, his first being around ten years ago.

The subject was the recent Fabian Society pamphlet “Plans for Power”¹ which Andrew had co-ordinated. This brought together Fabian policy publications over the last five years, and provided policies which could be included in the Labour Manifesto.



Figure 3 Andrew (left) and Keith Darvill pre meeting.

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[Plans for Power | Fabian Society](#)

Keir Starmer had announced the “First Steps”² approach in the preceding weeks, which set out a modest set of proposals likely to be the basis of the Labour manifesto.

The Fabian Society pamphlet set out ambitions, with the premise “where does the country want to be in ten years?” and what policies are needed to get there. It was appreciated that policies need to be affordable and prioritised, and the issues raised may be an issue for a second or third term Labour government.

The ambitions set out were broad based.

- Climate change
- Improving Prosperity in d ways. There were different approaches e, g raising living standards, reducing poverty, dealing with regional inequality (levelling up).
- Housing – Labour must address this.

There were also ambitions around social issues.

- Better Health – people are living longer but not healthier. Health Education can help address this. This is a ten-year project rather than five, and it is important to address this rather than kick the can further down the road, although there may be no immediate political benefit.

The first task for a Labour government will be to deal with the cuts included in the last conservative budget; further cut backs in public services and fresh austerity would be the worst outcome. Avoiding these needs creative policies without large spending commitments.

² [Labour's first steps for change – The Labour Party](#)



Figure 4 Andrew responds to a question.

There are twenty policies in the pamphlet.

These include.

- Improving bus networks, which are awful outside of London.
- House of Lords Reform
- School curriculum
- Dealing with Health inequality

Eventually, Labour will have to spend, and so economic policies are crucial.

Early Years policies are important and will be like the new Labour approach – (e.g. Sure Start centres).

Ensuring value for money from capital investment could achieve more from existing programmes. For example, NHS buildings and IT could be improved and a 10-year planning horizon adopted. Budgets could be pooled across services. The NHS and Councils have started this process, but more can be done.

Public service reform is needed. Removing the market doctrine would help, as would moving away from a top-down centralised approach. For example, academy schools should have a public sector ethos and collaborate with Councils.

Reform of Adult Social Care had been the subject of the largest piece of Fabian research, in conjunction with Wes Streeting and UNISON³.

This had set out parameters of a National Care Service. This will take a long time to arrive and requires cross party working to ensure whatever is proposed has the support to endure a future change of Government.

There will be issues around how to regulate services, national pay bargaining, whether terms and conditions will improve enough to attract employees. Sick pay is essential in the care industry, as going to work sick can have dire consequences.

The Department of Work and Pensions has a cradle to grave impact, so must run efficiently to deliver to citizens.

Consideration should be given to a Living Standards commission, set up on a similar basis to the Office for Budget Responsibility, with a requirement to assess, support and challenge the DWP and related policies.

There is a need to improve the Pensions system and encourage those in their twenties, thirties, and forties to increase savings, encouraging employer contributions.

Housing is a priority, particularly for the young. Dealing with the issues may not be popular – developments are often opposed locally and may put votes at risk.

Taxation is high, and understandably increasing this will not receive universal support. Nonetheless this is an option and there is scope to deal with some of the inefficiencies in the current regime, dealing with

³ [A National Care Service for all | Fabian Society](#)

inequalities between wealth and income, earned and unearned income, and dealing with how tax is collected.

Andrew then took a range of questions.

The water industry is failing and needs major investment. The Regulator is too close to the industry. Nationalisation may be an option, although doing so may mean taking on significant debt.

The policies highlighted make clear Labour has a long-term project ahead, and thinking needs to continue so Labour is ready for a second (even third) term.

There will be many unpopular things that need doing, and inevitably these will need to be done at the start of the administration.

This may require changing the fiscal rules to encourage expenditure on green issues and a larger housing programme.

Council Tax reform is overdue, with no significant reset since 1990. The difference between the lowest and highest rates is a factor of three which does not match the difference in property values; changing this will be very unpopular with those paying more.

Council tax payers currently fund social care, and this makes no sense- property values and social care needs are unrelated and there is a case to fund via national taxation.

So, an interesting meeting, overtaken by events. Within a week an Election was called. After the Election, Andrew announced he would stand down post Labour conference after thirteen years as General Secretary. We wish him well in whatever he does next and thank him for his work over the last decade.

Meeting with the three Labour General Election candidates for Havering

We had hoped to have a meeting with the three selected candidates well before the election to avoid diverting resources from the campaign. The election being called in May meant that this was not possible. While Margaret had been selected in 2022, Romford and Hornchurch and Upminster had not got beyond the shortlisting stage when the election was called. This meant the selection process changed, and the candidates were appointed by the National Executive. Andrew Achilleos was appointed for Romford and Sunny Brar for Hornchurch and Upminster.

Not everyone was happy with the local Members having no say on candidate selection, particularly as the shortlisting process had been completed in late 2023 / early 2024. No doubt the Mayoral election will be cited as a reason and the campaign team's move on to winning the election.



Figure 5 left to Right Margaret Mullane, Andrew Achilleos Sunny Brar Keith Darvill

Margaret Mullane has spoken to us on several occasions and was the candidate for Romford in the 2005 General Election. She began by introducing herself. She had been a Councillor in Village Ward in Dagenham since 2014 and had been Cabinet member for Community Safety. She had worked in Jon Cruddas's office for 15 years and has a good understanding of the issues and workload. She is a campaigning candidate, particularly when defeating the BNP in 2010. She is not complacent and has worked with Hope not Hate to avoid the far-right re-emerging.

In Beam Park, Labour is pushing back in Havering, and won the Council seats. The hope is to build on this and get more Councillors elected. Margaret has a passion for affordable housing, (she has spoken to us previously on this issue – see Newsletters 43 and 52). She supported the landlord licencing scheme introduced by Barking and Dagenham Council. Rents are too high, and Labour should build more social housing.

Margaret champions building community-based politics. Communities on both sides of the constituency are concerned about crime and disorder. There had been a successful campaign for more Police on Dagenham Heathway. The shops in Elm Park had faced similar issues, and an increased police presence in the shopping centre had reduced crime.

Andrew Achilleos had been selected three weeks ago. He had worked for Jon Cruddas for twelve years in a variety of roles. He was imposed as candidate at the last minute and would have preferred to have been selected. Romford Labour Party was working well as a team. Labour needed to counter the Westminster bubble. Andrew is a working-class candidate, having begun work as a market trader in Walthamstow. Twelve years later he is standing for parliament. This is resonating in the campaign, showing what can be achieved. Aspiration matters, and there is a need to be socially mobile. The Tories have had 14 years in Government and the current MP has been in place for 23 years. If they were going to do anything to improve Romford they would have done so by now. The Town Centre is in decline and this needs to change. Romford needs substance rather than flag waving.

Childcare is particularly important. As the father of a young child, he is aware the level of support available is inadequate and not at the level

people need to make work pay. Changing this is a simple policy with big implications.

Sunny Brar had been a candidate for two weeks, again imposed and this was not ideal. He faced a 24,000 majority. The current MP has been in place for seven years and he had found minimal name recognition while canvassing. The Harold Hill Labour councillors had been supportive with his campaign.

His background is in healthcare technology and surgical robotics (an interesting subject we may invite Sunny back to talk on). There are eight million people on NHS waiting lists. Technology can offer innovation, link treatments and technology, and increase prevention via earlier identification and treatment. Wider access to new treatments should follow, the benefits are potentially substantial, and Sunny came in to politics to try and achieve this.

There is a need to avoid dividing communities while doing so (digital access being an issue). Community cohesion is important. Sunny had been elected to Redbridge Council in 2022. He sits on the Health and Care committee and Chairs the Pension committee.

The priorities in his campaign are Health care reform, and as with Margaret and Andrew, dealing with crime. Getting this right will make a substantial difference to people's lives.

The audience then asked a series of questions.

Despite the GLA elections being good for Labour across London, has the Conservative vote in Havering held firm?

Sunny (SB) replied first. There has been a move since the GLA elections; the recent betting scandal had begun to resonate, and the rise of Reform may be an increasing factor.

Andrew (AA) There was no Brexit Party candidate in 2019, and Labour can benefit if Reform reduce the Tory vote.

Margaret (MM) – while the anti ULEZ campaign had an element of racism, this was not as much of an issue post the May election. The noise this issue generated squeezed out discussions on Launders Lane and the Belvedere incinerator which are critical issues. The Reform vote is creeping up.

Labour needs to build up resources and communications to get the messages across. Locally the demographics are changing, and this will impact over time.

Voter registration is low, and some people do not vote. With first past the post, a vote does not count. Would Proportional Representation address this?⁴

AA – Agree that there are issues with registration and voter apathy. The “all the same” argument is common.

Politics can be unrelatable, people have switched off.

AA is in two minds re PR – in favour in that it is potentially good for the democratic process. Against this, under first past the post a government can get its policies through whereas PR may block policies it wants to introduce.

MM – Registering to vote is important. She has had a postal vote since 2017. It is hard and expensive to run to become an MP (which can put people off). PR lets in the extremes such as Farage, so she is not keen. Compulsory political education is needed – the understanding is often lacking.⁵ It is common to get local Council related issues on the door and there can be low levels of passion for politics from the voting public.

Sunny (SB) echoed the need for political education. He had been introduced by one member of the public as Chancellor, which would indeed be a rapid and unexpected promotion! The House of Lords would need to be part of any voting reform and PR can mean more elections (which people are not in favour of).

⁴ See Graham Lane article newsletter 36

⁵ Anecdote – on three occasions during this election I have been told “I have already voted” – this was before postal votes were sent out and those involved had voted at the GLA election in May. On another occasion a voter asked who Labour’s candidate for Prime Minister was.

The questioner had moved back to Havering from Walthamstow. There was a palpable community spirit not always seen in Havering – when he asked for a pothole to be dealt with it was mended in days. Is there a culture difference?

MM Waltham Forest has more money. Being the London Borough of culture does help as it assists community politics. Having more funding allows them to do more. Havering Council has issued a Section 114 notice and is struggling financially.

Be First, the Council housing company, has had to deal with higher interest rates and will be reducing its building programme. Higher interest rates following high inflation has impacted on wages and as Barking and Dagenham has the lowest average wages in London this does not help. Tough times are ahead, and popular summer festivals are at risk. Voluntary groups may step in – is this right?

SB – Council funding formulas are outdated. High streets are dying bringing a circle of decline, and communities are suffering as a result.

AA – Local Authorities are struggling to deal with community cohesion. The Tories voted down Fair Funding. Responsibility for Social Care has financially broken Councils and makes up 80% of Council budgets. A comment from the floor was that teaching citizenship is compulsory, but teachers are constrained. Proper Local Government has been gutted; for example, the growth of academies meant Councils no longer had control of Education.

SB – look at class sizes; devolution to enable local decision making would improve things.

AA – Agreed with this. There is a need to recreate the National Curriculum and avoid teaching to exams and narrowing opportunities.

MM – Agree citizenship is important. Mayoral and Cabinet models of local government disempower councillors. Too often decision makers get bogged down in day to day and funding issues, so strategic vision can be

lacking, and there is a need to work with other East London and outer London Boroughs to address common issues.

Keith Darvill pointed out that Labour had begun a review of local government eighteen months ago and the issue has been recognised, but the conclusion is still awaited.

A question was asked specifically to Sunny on his view on Assisted Dying.

Sunny personally not in favour. However, he appreciates that this is not a decision he can take for others who take a different view, and he would not vote to stop it.

Other candidates not asked to give a view - in discussions afterwards Andrew suggested there had been a significant level of correspondence on this issue.

The next question was on Havering lacking an identity to rally around – such as Romford football club.

AA agreed, a shared local cultural heritage is lacking. While Romford FC is a good example of what can happen⁶, there is a need for political leadership to work with local organisations to take this forward. Romford market is vital to the area and a key place for the local community. The Havering Changing campaigns deal with the issues but on a small scale.

The local Muslim community undertake significant outreach work. A recent event at the Havering Islamic centre had 3,000 people attend. There are old people who are not seeing anyone. This was managed during covid and needs to continue.

MM -Litter picks have proved to be helpful in building community cohesion, albeit on a small scale. The borough has a brand to rally around.

⁶ Romford FC had just won the FA Vase at Wembley Stadium.

The next question was on voter identity and whether the identity requirements would limit the Labour vote.

AA – Locally Labour are not overconcerned with this as an issue, although the means of identification disadvantage the young. The task for Labour is to give them every incentive to register by the policies it adopts.

The next question was on candidates' views on Faith Schools.

Sunny - not a fan of faith schools and we should not have them. But why do people want them? There is not a knowledge of other faiths and this needs to be incorporated in to the school system.

Margaret - went to one (catholic), very much in favour but resents that not everyone has this view.

Andrew - has origins in three faiths - Greek Cypriot, Jewish and Church of England, although follows none of them. A set of values follows from the church and the issue of faith schools can be divisive. Religions have the same core communal values.

A question raised was the cost of repairs in the NHS with an example of a recent task of painting a ward and reinstalling lighting costing £45k.

AA – this is a significant sum of money, which would fund an annual salary for a nurse. Outsourcing in the NHS is often the cause of this.

A view from the floor was this is a wider public sector issue – for example academisation had led to waste and duplication of resources.

AA- agreed and PPE during covid was another area of waste. Public sector funding was often in the wrong place and lacked scrutiny.

MM added the elevated level of expenditure on Consultancy staff.

Provision of support for Special Needs had become concentrated in a handful of providers who were able to extort funding. Private equity firms were moving in to care homes. Care is inadequate in Havering. In Scotland care homes have been not for profit and there would be merit in replicating this across the UK.

The meeting ended just short of two hours. It was good to see unfamiliar faces and people from all three local CLPs. The earlier England Denmark game had reduced the attendance slightly, although we still had our best attendance this year.

Election 2024 -What happened?

The General Election saw the return of a Labour Government with a huge majority, just short of Tony Blair's in 1997. This was obtained with 33.8 per cent of the vote. Widespread tactical voting reduced the Conservatives to 121 MPs.

The Conservative vote share was as low as any in recent history and the extent of their defeat will take time to process. They had increased their vote in every election since 1997, and they lost six million votes from 2019.

Reform clearly captured a significant amount of these votes - a strict comparison with the Brexit vote in 2019 is difficult as they did not stand in every seat. They did stand in Dagenham and Rainham where their vote exceed the 293 Labour majority.

Locally while the vote shares changed significantly, no seats changed hands. I have used colour coding in the table below. Yellow the winner, grey second, brown third.⁷ There has been movement between elections in the placings.

⁷ Almost Gold silver and bronze

HORNCHURCH AND UPMINSTER

	Conservative		Labour		LibDem		UKIP\Brexit\Reform		Other	
	votes	share	votes	share	votes	share	votes	share	votes	share
2010	27,469	51.4	11,098	20.8	7,426	13.9	2,848	5.3	4,549	8.5
2015	27,051	49.0	11,103	20.1	1,501	2.7	13,977	25.3	1,604	2.9
2017	33,750	60.2	16,027	28.6	1,371	2.4	3,502	6.2	1,457	2.6
2019	35,495	65.8	12,187	22.6	3,862	7.2	0	0.0	2,430	4.5
2024	15,260	32.5	12,939	27.6	2,381	5.1	13,317	28.4	3,014	6.4

ROMFORD

2010	26,031	56	9,077	19.5	5,572	12	2,050	4.4	3751	8
2015	25,067	51	10,268	20.9	1413	2.9	11,208	22.8	1222	2.5
2017	29,671	59	15,893	31.8	1,215	2.4	2,350	4.7	815	1.7
2019	30,494	64.6	12,601	26.7	2,708	5.7	0	0	1,428	3
2024	15,339	34.8	13,876	31.5	1,895	4.3	9,624	21.8	3313	7.4

DAGENHAM AND RAINHAM

2010	15,183	34.3	17,813	40.3	3,806	8.6	1,569	3.5	5861	13.3
2015	10,492	24.4	17,830	41.4	717	1.7	12,850	29.8	1,161	2.7
2017	18,306	39.9	22,958	50.1	465	1	3,246	7.1	868	1.9
2019	19,175	43.8	19,468	44.5	1,182	2.7	2,887	6.6	1023	2.4
2024	6,926	17.8	16,571	42.6	1,033	2.7	9,398	24.2	4939	12.7

In Dagenham and Rainham canvassing over two years paid dividends and the Labour majority increased to over 7,000.

Analysis by the New Statesman showed Labour winning every ward, subject to the caveat these are modelled rather than real votes. This gives grounds for optimism in 2026.

[The ultimate 2024 General Election breakdown - State of the Nation \(newstatesman.com\)](https://www.newstatesman.com/elections/2024/05/ultimate-2024-general-election-breakdown-state-of-the-nation)

The Reform Party claimed second place, without a significant ground campaign. The Conservative vote dropped by 13,000 votes to 6,800. The energy drained from their campaign as the opinion polls showed a consistent Labour lead. The Green vote rose to almost 10 per cent - this was much more significant than at previous elections and in the other two Havering seats. While there was no obvious explanation, one is the lack of an independent candidate supporting Palestine, with the Greens benefiting from the dissatisfied Muslim voters.

In Romford, the Conservative vote collapsed. Andrew Rosindell held on by 1,463 votes. Andrew Achilleos was second for Labour, increasing the Labour vote on the back of an energetic campaign. The Green and Lib Dem votes were squeezed. More tactical voting could have seen Rosindell voted out. Reform came third, with no Brexit Party in 2019. The end of the non-aggression pact almost saw a Labour gain.

In Hornchurch and Upminster few people anticipated such a close result. Julia Lopez held on by 1,943 votes from Reform in second place, and by 2,321 from Sunny Brar in third place”.

The Conservative vote was down by 20,205.

Former Conservative Minister Eric Pickles made the point on social media that the Conservative Party needs to think why it lost and react accordingly. If not, there are Tory held marginal seats that could be targets next time. That group includes Hornchurch and Upminster and Romford.

In the 2017 election, Labour received more votes in Romford and Hornchurch and Upminster than the Conservatives received in 2024. So, the votes are there if they can be focused on the Labour candidate to win in 2028/29. Demographic change could further close the gap.

In Essex there were Labour gains including our former speaker Jen Craft in Thurrock. Harlow returned to Labour, and Labour was only twenty votes short in Basildon and Billericay, and ninety-eight behind in Basildon South and East Thurrock, (which was won by Reform after a recount).

Seats won in 1997 (Braintree, Castle Point, Clacton, and Harwich) were not won this time, but Colchester and both Southend seats were, reflecting changing demographics.

In Kent, seats won in the Blair era returned, plus Ashford (and Canterbury first won in 2017).

Election	Labour MPs in Essex	Labour MPs in Kent
1983	1	0
1987	0	0
1992	1	0
1997	7	8
2001	5	8
2005	3	7
2010	0	0
2015	0	0
2017	0	1
2019	0	1
2024	5	11

On the Essex border Hertford and Stortford was won by Labour, which was a surprise to most observers. This was one of seats Labour won for the first time including.

- Basingstoke
- Folkstone
- Banbury
- Bournemouth East and West
- Poole
- Isle of Wight West

- Leicester North West

This gave Labour seats in the South, the London commuter belt and around the coast. Nearly all seats in the Red Wall returned, although some with small majorities, which could be an issue next time if the Tories rally.

A revival in Scotland saw 37 Labour MPs elected, while Wales returned no Tory MPs.

The Lib Dems moved to seventy-one seats, almost all won from the Tories.

There were warning signs as independent candidates (mostly standing against the Labour position in respect of Gaza) gained four seats and were closer than expected in others.

Labour lost two Shadow cabinet members, Jonathan Ashworth to a combination of Gaza and Leicester politics and Thangam Debbonaire to the Greens in Bristol.

Jeremy Corbyn retained Islington North to no great surprise.

There is a threat longer term from the left and progressive Parties outside the Party and a need to consider how to bring those disaffected over the Gaza position can be brought back on board. This means rebuilding trust from a disaffected group.

While the Red Wall seats returned to Labour, there are reasons to think the long-term trend is unlikely to be reversed, and seats will be marginal in future.

In the review of the 2019 election (newsletter 39) Bishop Auckland and Mansfield were identified as seats where the Labour vote was in long term decline. Both were won this time and there are warning signs, particularly in Mansfield where a large Reform vote may give Labour problems in future.

Labour Majority in Bishop Auckland:

1997: 21,064
 2001: 13,926
 2005: 10,047
 2010: 5,218
 2015: 3,508
 2017: 502
 2019: Lost by 7,962
 2024 6,672

Labour Vote in Mansfield

Election	Labour vote	% of vote	Labour majority	Swing
1997	30,556	64.4	20,518.	+11
2001	21,050	57.1	11,036	-6.3
2005	18,400	48.1	11,365	-0.1
2010	18,573	38.7	6,012	-9.5
2015	18,603	39.4	5,315	-0.6
2017	22,235	44.5	Conservative 1,057	-6.7
2019	15,178	30.8	Conservative 16,306	-15
2023	16,048	39.1	3,485	+21.2

Boys from the Blackstuff

Boys from the Blackstuff is one of the great British TV programmes, capturing the Thatcher era and its impact in a dramatic and moving way.

The production at the National opened just after Bernard Hill died - he played the programme's most memorable character Yosser Hughes.

The play follows the same plot as the TV programme, and there are echoes of issues with the Benefits system still present in the much later "I, Daniel Blake".

The acting is excellent with Barry Sloane as Yosser; however, the leading role was always Chrissy - memorably played in the original by Michael Angelis. Nathan McCullen plays this role in the play, while Lauren O'Neill takes the Julie Walters role as his wife.

The play captures the era well and pays homage to Graham Souness (for our younger readers he had a small role in the original, intimidated by Yosser in a nightclub). The issues with unemployment and deindustrialisation remain - "levelling up" was an attempt to redress the balance and that failed.

The play is an excellent reminder of the casualties of the Thatcher era, and the echo's that remain of deindustrialisation. Yosser's mental health issues are dealt with in a sympathetic way, and the character "shake hands" is still a threatening presence.

While the play is set in the 1980's there are lessons for the present.

The task for Labour is to make a real difference, both to employment opportunities and ensuring the benefit system is not dehumanising.

David Eldridge 19^h September 2024

Langton's Billet Lane Hornchurch 7.30PM

As part of our series on the arts and culture, we have invited David Eldridge to talk about the arts. David is a well-known figure with local contacts, and this should be an interesting meeting.

David is a British dramatist and screenwriter, born in Romford, Greater London, United Kingdom.[1][2][3] His plays have been produced in the West End and on Broadway. He has written for stage, screen, and radio.



Figure 6 Playwright David Eldridge

His plays have been performed at major new writing institutions in the UK, including The Royal Court Theatre, the Bush Theatre, the Finborough Theatre and the National Theatre. His stage adaptation of the film *Festen* transferred from the Almeida Theatre to the West End and Broadway.

His play *Market Boy*, informed by his childhood working on a stall at Romford Market, played at the National Theatre's largest space, the Olivier in June 2006. In July 2008 his play *Under the Blue Sky* was revived at the Duke of York Theatre starring Chris O'Dowd, Catherine Tate and Francesca Annis.

In March 2011 his play *The Knot of the Heart* played at the Almeida Theatre and starred Lisa Dillon, for whom the role of Lucy was written and in February 2012 his play *In Basildon*, played at the Royal Court Theatre directed by Dominic Cooke starring Linda Bassett and Ruth Sheen. Both plays opened to critical acclaim. *The Knot of the Heart* won the Off-West End Theatre Award for Best New Play and *In Basildon* was voted *The Guardian* Theatre Critics and Arts Writers No.1 Theatre of 2012. In April 2012 the Royal Exchange Theatre presented his new version of *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg, starring Maxine Peake.

In July 2014 his play *Holy Warriors* played at Shakespeare's Globe. David's screenplay for a ninety-minute single film, *The Scandalous Lady W*, based upon Hallie Rubenhold's book *Lady Worsley's Whim*, was broadcast on BBC2 in August 2015 starring Natalie Dormer and directed by Sheree Folkson.

In October 2017 The National Theatre presented the world premiere of his play *Beginning* in the Dorfman Theatre directed by Polly Findlay. *Beginning* transferred from The National Theatre to the Ambassadors Theatre in the West End, opening in January 2018 with both Sam Troughton and Justine Mitchell reprising their original roles. *Beginning* was revived for a tour starting at the Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch, Essex in 2021. It became the first in his trilogy of plays about love and relationships for the National Theatre to be premièred in its Dorfman Theatre. The second, *Middle*, had its first performances rescheduled to start in April 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Eldridge is currently lecturer in Creative Writing at Birkbeck, University of London. He also teaches screenwriting for the Arvon Foundation

Sourced from Wikipedia. So, we apologise for any errors!

Below is a link to an interview David had with the Guardian.

[Playwright David Eldridge: ‘What’s important to me is to move people’ | David Eldridge | The Guardian](#)

Havering Fabians 50th Anniversary

As far as we can tell, Havering Fabian Society was formed in 1974. This was a big year for politics with two General Elections in February and October, and the Council Election in May. Havering had three seats under the new boundaries, and Alan Lee Williams was comfortably elected for Hornchurch. Upminster would have gone Labour in October on the national swing, but the Conservatives held on. In the Council election, Labour lost all three seats in Harold Wood, and lost control of the Council.

The looming issue was Europe and the main motivation in forming the Society seemed to be bringing together those in the local Labour parties who supported EU membership. Alan Thake was the first of only three Secretaries (Graham Carr took over in 1998, David Marshall in 2001). The first Chair(man) was Basil Newton, who was later replaced by Keith Darvill the current Chair.

The biggest name speaker we never had was the late Tony Crossland, who was due to come when the 1974 election was called. The biggest attendance was for Bryan Gould after the 1992 General Election defeat, Other big names included Chris Smith MP, Hilary Benn MP, and economist Grace Blakely.

Others included Roy Hattersley (Deputy Leader), Tony Banks (Government Minister), Gwyneth Dunwoody (very long serving MP), Peter Shore (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry - an audience was boosted in Langton's Chamber by disgruntled holidaymakers following Court Line's collapse), John Smith (Party Leader)⁸ Shirley Williams, one of our best known politicians of her time and even Eric Moonman (when in Billericay Constituency) and Estelle Morris (Secretary of State for Education, who drew a large audience at Ford Sports & Social Club.

Regular speakers have included Jon Cruddas, Stephen Timms, John Cryer, Mike Gapes, Margaret Mullane, Unmesh Desai, and in the past Mike Gapes, Alan Lee Williams, Alan R Williams, Carole Tongue, and Eileen Gordon.

⁸ Before he was Leader....

There have been memorable moments.

In the 1970s– a meeting disrupted by the National Front (the national Society paid for the damage).

In the 1980s the never to be forgotten “Music for Radicals” at Romford Library – highlight (?) being “I have this record of Chinese folk music I have never played; I hope you enjoy it,”. I doubt you have ever heard any Chinese folk music. I know why.

Alan Thake taunting the local Conservatives by inviting Sir Anthony Meyer, who was the “stalking horse” candidate who stood against Margaret Thatcher for the Conservative Leadership in 1989.

In the 1990s – The Cuban Ambassador spoke on behalf of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. He did not speak English and Tessa Blazquez unexpectedly had to translate (we think she was excellent but as no one else spoke Spanish...)

In the 2000s A joint meeting with the CLPs with Labour General Secretary Iain McNicol at Havering Town Hall

In the 2010s Having a major on-line presence, which proved essential in keeping the society running during Covid.

Meetings at the House of Commons with Jon Cruddas and Margaret Hodge

A fund raiser in Romford with speaker Ray Harris – where we raised no funds.

Losing teams at the CLP quiz nights

In the 2020s the current series of articles on the Arts leading up to the September meeting with David Eldridge.

We look forward to the next 50 years.

There will be an event in October to mark the anniversary. The date and venue are still to be finalised and we hope former Hornchurch MP John Cryer will be the guest speaker.

Links

Blog	http://haveringfabians.wordpress.com/
Website	https://haveringfabians.org/
Twitter	https://twitter.com/HaveringFabians
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/havering.fabians
LinkedIn	https://uk.linkedin.com/in/havering-fabians

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Online payment

Details are included in the regular Havering Fabians email. Contact us for further details if you are not on the current mailing list. Membership is £5 waged, £10 unwaged.

National membership is also available via the link below.

[Join | Fabian Society](#)

National membership includes a regular quarterly magazine, regular email updates and invites to conferences. There are theme-based groups that develop policy in areas such as Housing, the economy and environmental issues.

Politics in Havering

You may already be aware of the excellent Politics in Havering Blog, which we repost via our twitter feed. This gives a regular update on politics within the borough – a link is below, please follow them (and our blog!) for regular updates!

<https://havering.blog/>

We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige. The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the borough; **if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues** we could use, contact David Marshall.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	Contact David Marshall
Membership Secretary Councillor Harriet Spoor		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Sanchia Alasia		
Treasurer Dave Baldock		
Committee Members Councillor Jane Keane Cecile Duerinckx		



Chair Keith Darvill reports ...

Future Editions

The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement. As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material which falls outside of this parameter. Our next edition will be in September or October 2024. – contributions welcome.

Havering Fabian Society is affiliated to.

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party

Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally; David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

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I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

.....

postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5