

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

STANLEY DAVISON



Older people and our younger allies, who battle away year in year out to improve the lot of older people, will welcome the **Help the Aged - Spotlight Report**, launched last month. It has five themes: *combating poverty - reducing isolation - challenging neglect - defeating ageism* and importantly, *preventing future deprivation*. Reports that help us all to break out of our ageist culture are all commendable. This one is particularly so. It's easy to read, and its brevity and sense of purpose, mark it out as one for much campaigning reference. It is more than just "another" Report. It is a researcher's tool, an activist's ready reference source, and it draws a baseline to measure progress from. Above all it throws out, in a very deliberate manner, a three-pronged challenge by Help the Aged: To the Government: Calling on it to focus on 29 of the sharpest indicators (spelt out in the report), where it is crystal clear that despite strenuous

SPEAKING UP FOR OUR AGE



LINKING OLDER PEOPLES' GROUPS

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efforts, a great deal remains to be done before older people get a fair deal.

A challenge to society: Urging that we all act now to end the misery of the isolation and ageism that is so shamefully prevalent in our country. It is a challenge to Help the Aged as a charity: that its three work programmes – research, campaigning, providing services, are delivered with maximum impact and minimum waste.

Facts and figures will always speak for themselves. In this report a baseline is provided to work from. Subsequent reports, year on year, to measure progress, are promised. This is a key to effective monitoring, and to meeting the challenges. It is a duty that Government and authorities too often fall down on. For us to have such a resource to do it is invaluable. A good team from Help the Aged was led by Paul Cann, (Director of Policy, Research &



Paul Cann, Help the Aged, with Elsie Richardson, Elders Council of Newcastle

International), Steve Jones, (Director of Communications), and Phil Rossall, (Senior Information Officer), were its facilitators. There was a wide representation from many older people Forums. It was a pleasure to see members from Sutton,

Enfield, Cambridge and others much further afield. Ideas were knocked around and carefully noted as possible action initiatives. A useful event to launch a very useful report, one that is not likely to gather dust on bookshelves.

Stanley Davison, Chair, **Barnet Senior Citizens Forum**,
Tel: 0208 931 3795 email: davisonstanley@yahoo.com
See page 3 for further account.

LETTERS

The £25 winner for the best letter in Issue 29 is
Rosemary Holder, Scunthorpe & District Seniors Forum

To the Editor

In the previous issue of *Forum to Forum*, you said the reason that some Forums featured more regularly than others is that they contacted you more often. As a forum we have never contacted you before – so here goes! Readers might be interested to know about our most recent initiative. We teamed up with our local newspaper the *Dorset Echo*, and produced a survey, the first of its kind in our area. The aim was to find out about the quality of life of older people in south and west Dorset. The survey invited people, particularly those that are hard to reach, to respond to a range of issues including the type of services they use. It gave



Members of the Dorchester Forum 55 Forum committee: back from left, Tony Roach, John Sole, Yvonne Rossiter and John Weir, Front: Patricia Morpeth, Jackie Allen and Hilary Foggo.

us the opportunity to find out what it is that people really want or need, (as opposed to traditional assumptions), and what factors they thought were most important in their lives. This information will help formulate plans and policies. It was enlightening to learn that fear of crime caused more concern to the people that responded than anything else. This was followed closely by worries about money, legal matters, home maintenance and health. One very important result was that the police responded to the results by offering to work with our Forum to help allay people's fears. Copies of our survey are available with a SAE.

Yvonne Rossiter, Treasurer, **55 Forum (Dorchester & District)** c/o Age Concern, Rowan Cottage, 4 Prince of Wales Road, Dorchester DT1 1PW
Tel: 01258 837579 (Bettie Lewis, Secretary)

To the Editor

We, at **Watford Senior Citizens Forum**, try to make our criticisms of the Council constructive, and make the point that unless they know about the bad things - how can they put them right? I have had indications that they naturally do not like hearing about the bad things so

much, but love the good things. Our comments are always received in good heart. I think it is important to maintain a good relationship with the Council at all levels. For instance we do not "complain" to the Street Cleaning Department about rubbish dumped, but instead we 'are anxious to report it and hope they can do something about it'. We certainly follow it up until it is attended to though! *Len Tomlinson, Chair,*

Watford Senior Citizen's Forum

Tel: 01923 249791 email: lv@toucansurf.co.uk

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To the Editor

Good to see the **Speaking Up for Our Age** Team at Blackpool this year. I saw the piece about Veteran's War Medals in *Forum to Forum* 28, and I would like to know when those who stayed behind to help fight World War 2 are going to be recognised. Hundreds of thousands of women, and those who were disabled, also did their bit. Landgirls, the WVS, driving ambulances and those working in munitions, also deserve public recognition of their unstinting service. I myself, a mother at the age of eighteen, put my baby daughter in a nursery and helped to make turrets for tanks and parts for the DeHavilland aircraft. Younger people, seeing us now, have no idea what energy, determination and sacrifice went towards winning that terrible war. Please remember us while we still live.

Rita Weiss, Chair, Southend Pensioner's Campaign,
Tel: 01702 348161 email:

Southendpensionerscampaign@blueyonder.co.uk

To the Editor

Blue Parking badges. I was surprised to be informed by Northamptonshire Carers about new laws concerning Blue Badges. The government have given new powers to various officials which allow them to ask Blue Badge holders to hand them over for inspection. These include, police officers, local authority parking attendants and civil enforcement officers. These new 'inspection powers' are to detect people misusing or using counterfeit or stolen badges. This seems reasonable. But why didn't the local authorities who issue the badges, write to tell us this was happening. While we would all wish to ensure badges are used properly, I can imagine that some older disabled people will feel quite intimidated, if, without warning they are asked to hand over their badges for inspection, especially if that person (although authorised) is not in

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We are ALL moving to Scotland!

With all the people soon to be moving from England to Scotland to enjoy **Free** prescriptions, **Free** nursing care, and in 2009, **Free** university education for our grandchildren, Britain will be top heavy. This will no doubt cause a shift in the tectonic plates running under our land. Our flood plains will disappear - becoming possibly the new Highlands, and perhaps one day, we shall 'list to the skirl of the pipes' on what will then be Exmoor Mountain,, There will be one benefit though... for the few of us who are staying and paying through the nose for everything - at least we will have dry feet!

Janet Morgan, **Chard, Ilminster and Crewkerne Pensioners' Forum**, 27 Holway House Park, Station Road, Ilminster TA1 9PP Tel: 01460 53102 email: janet.morgan1@virgin.net

TONY CARTER
81 - WINS THE
NIACE OLDER
LEARNER OF
THE YEAR
AWARD 2006
(SOUTH)



At a splendid ceremony held at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Tony, with his wife Barbara, was feted for his success. He obtained his MA in British History after attending the *Ransackers* programme at Ruskin College, Oxford. *If you would like a free residential term (and have had little previous higher education), for an introduction to study and research at Oxford, contact Liz Mathews Tel: 01865 517820. More details at www.ransackers.co.uk*

SPOTLIGHT CONSULTATION, another view from CAMBRIDGE OLDER PEOPLE'S ENTERPRISE (COPE)

We were delighted to be invited to celebrate the many successes of **Help the Aged** (HtA) and to focus on their new report - *Spotlight*. When discussing transport, COPE suggested that 'Smartcards' should be used to distribute funds to pensioners and disabled people in areas where no buses are available, to subsidise the use of alternative forms of transport, (Dial a Ride or taxis). Paul Cann, said that he would try to push this idea nationally. COPE is consulting all 1,625 members on a proposal by the Department of Transport for a national Smartcard for concessionary bus travel in England, which might be used as suggested above. Steve Jones (Director of Communications) asked how campaigning could be more effective in the future. Delegates agreed that distributing *press releases* to Forums ahead of national media wherever possible, would help Forums reinforce national coverage by contacting local media to increase national impact. So a closer relationship between the HtA press office and our Forums would be invaluable. Delegates found that the information contained in the *Spotlight* report



Photograph shows Anne Baker, Chair of South Norfolk Forum, Robert and Rhona Boorman of COPE and David Dombey Chair of Sutton Seniors Forum

regarding the current state of older people's conditions would be a essential source of campaigning material for the future. Communication through our own monthly newsletter is one of the ways COPE has managed to expand, that, plus a constant flow of articles and letters to the local paper. We do not want to be just token older people (to tick a box), but as true participants in consultations with service providers. Strength is in our numbers, and it was good to meet with old friends, all dedicated Forum people! **Rhona Boorman**, Secretary, **Cambridge Older People's Enterprise**, 40 Stretton Avenue, Cambridge CB4 3EP Tel: 01223 364303 email: cambridgecope@hotmail.co.uk

MAINTAINING INDEPENDENT LIVING

ANNE BAKER

The *Maintaining Independent Living Conference* run by **South Norfolk Older People's Forum** in Norwich earlier this year, discussed "At Home Not Alone", run by the Partnership of Older People's Projects (POPPS). Its aim is to increase the confidence of older people and their carers to remain at home, improve quality of life, and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

All 6 components of the service have now being extended from May this year to all parts of the County and 1500 people have received help. These include: 24 hour unplanned urgent need - Home Security - Falls Follow Up, - Assistive Technology including 24 hour Dementia Support - Teleclub and Teleshopping. The agencies involved have developed closer relationships as a result and workers have had to become multiskilled with aspects of social care, minor nursing and small practical jobs such as changing a light bulb.

Some of us have been involved in the County Council Older People's Strategy from the outset and following on from that we were invited to be representatives on groups in the POPPS projects.

We have had our own presentations at Forum from the POPPS Manager, who has heard the concerns of members at question time and we have had group sessions to look at posters and leaflets for comments before publication. Hopefully, our presence is seen as positive. It has been important for us to feel that we are being listened to. The most interesting times for me was being asked to participate in interviewing candidates for positions. It was really worthwhile, and a chance to reuse skills learnt in a long working life. Both times I was heartened to see such good candidates applying for very new and experimental posts which may not even exist after the two year project funding ends. As someone on the sideline, so to speak, at times I became frustrated by how long decisions and recruiting took but with the patience of those in charge, things are now happening. Some questions remain: are there enough people willing and who will have the training and time available to do the things clients require and need for a successful outcome?

Anne Baker, Chair, South Norfolk Older People's Forum Tel: 01508 481819
email: annebaker7@btinternet.com

ENFIELD BOROUGH OVER 50s FORUM

TONY WATTS



Congratulations to our Chair, Monty, for his well deserved award of an MBE in the June Queens Birthday Honours list, in June. Forum members know of the huge contribution Monty has made to the community in Enfield

through his leadership of our Forum. He has kept issues of importance for older people high on the local agenda in front of the movers and shakers in the Borough. I know you will all agree that this award is appropriate for the efforts he has made on our behalf. I am sure that when Monty troops to the Palace in his top hat and tails he will not miss the opportunity of giving the Queen our latest newsletter and perhaps even signing her up as the 1500th member of the Forum. *Fuller information about the Forum and a press release for Monty's honour can be seen on our website*

www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk Tony Watts, Secretary, **Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum**, tony_watts@blueyonder.co.uk or call Olivia on 020 8447 8841 email: olivia.g@virgin.net

Monty, typically modest, contacted Forum to say 'Don't go overboard about the MBE - its for the work of all the Forum Members' - Ed



Roddy Beare, Carol Ricketts, Peter Smith, Monty Meth (Chair), Olivia Goodflow, Don Smith, Bill Thear, Roy Barrows, Irene Richards, Madge Jones, Liz Henthorn, Mary Stone, Tony Watts

A LATTER DAY TOLPUDDLE

HILARY FOGGO

Senior forums across Dorset provided the evidence on 5 issues for the 'trial' at Dorchester's Old Crown Court on the 14th June, *general transport, care, affordable housing, health transport and loss of facilities such as toilets, libraries and post offices*. Members of the jury, witnesses and guests who filled the public gallery, dressed in 19th century style clothes reflected the spirit of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, whose trial was held in the historic court in 1834. A procession to the court from Age Concern Dorchester preceded the event, carrying cardboard heads representing each of the issues which were subsequently put in the dock on arrival at the court. Margaret Watts, a member of **Weymouth Area Senior Forum** said "The Tolpuddle Martyrs fought their corner and eventually this paid off and thousands benefited from their stand. We may not be 'martyrs' but we have a cause – to improve the quality of life for older people in Dorset."

Guy Patterson from **Help the Aged** commented "This is working from the bottom up, getting the issues discussed and priorities identified at grassroots level and only then deciding on a course of action – the campaign training programme, and the campaigns themselves that will emerge from this event will be grounded in the real life experience of older people in Dorset, endorsed by the Forums and, with all the publicity the event received, supported by the populace as a whole – a recipe for success!" Hilary Foggo, Forum Development Officer based at **Age Concern Dorchester** said "This was an entertainment with a serious purpose. Each issue is going to present a challenge to make progress but senior forums are now being represented on many key planning groups. The way forward is to keep raising these issues and maybe, bit by bit, we can get somewhere."

The Jury, made up of representatives from the senior forums, were tasked with finding three issues 'Guilty'. They listened intently to the witness statements, delivered by local actors on behalf of the senior forums. Evidence was scored on its content and the ability to deliver an effective campaign that would make a positive change to the lives of older people in Dorset. The passion with which the statements were



Yvonne Rossiter (55 Forum Dorchester & District), Margaret Watts (Weymouth Area Seniors Projects), 'Judge' Chisolm, Guy Patterson (Help the Aged), and Ken Quickfall (Weymouth Area Seniors Projects) lead the procession through Dorchester town centre

made, and the compelling arguments offered, meant it was a close run thing, with only 9 points dividing the five issues in the end. The Judge, Dorchester's Town Crier, Alistair Chisolm, dramatically pronounced the sentence, declaring that 'General Transport, Affordable Housing and Care, being found guilty, 'will be reformed!' Health transport and loss of facilities were "free to go, **for now**". The event was planned by **Senior Forum representatives, Help the Aged, Age Concern Dorchester and West Dorset District Council**. The planning group will now go on to deliver training that is focussed on delivering the campaigns for the three 'guilty' issues.

Hilary Foggo, Forum Development Officer, **Age Concern Dorset** Tel: 01305 269444



4th NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION BIENNIAL CONFERENCE (BDC)

Nottingham University - 26th & 27th June 2007.

JOHN CHERRETT

Due to the severe weather several delegates were delayed and those from the far North were unable to attend. An apology was received from Jack Jones. Frank Cooper opened the meeting.

He has visited several forums/groups over the past 2 years, and emphasised that we are the true voice of pensioners. The *Turner Report* was a bitter disappointment and that we should judge the government on issues such as carers and woman's pensions, all



pensioners should receive equal treatment. The **National Insurance Fund** (NIF) should be ring fenced for pensions and not used for other means, gilts, roads, swimming pools etc. **Joe Harris** said: We need a strong organisation to cultivate allies, we need to get the message to workers as they are the pensioners of tomorrow. The Trade Unions started the NPC, we need their support to approach today's workers.

Neil Duncan Jordan said: We have continued to develop the movement over the past 2 years, but need to keep moving forward. Our last lobby of parliament made headlines in the *Daily Telegraph* due to the "Skeletons of London" and we are vigorously alerting the media for this year's event on 24th October 2007. Our **Referendum** ballot had 80,000 responses which in anybody's book is huge. We must remind our new PM of the promises he made in 1997 in regards to pensions, means testing and pensioners sharing in the prosperity of the country. Unfortunately this government believes that once the pensions bill becomes law that the issue is over, it is not, we will continue the fight for an above poverty level pension for ALL pensioners.

The annual **Pensioners Parliament** is the jewel in the crown of the greater pensioners movement. We need a continuing mandate from the groups on the issues to be discussed. Finally we need more young pensioners to join us, because if we fail in our objectives now, the pensioner of tomorrow will have to start the fight all over again!
John Cherrett, Chair, Poole and District Pensioners Association, 6 Alder Heights, Poole, Dorset BH12 1QX Tel: 01202 749842
email: john.cherrett@ntlworld.com

Cruel Cuts

ANNE BELWORTHY

Kent County Council (KCC) is proposing to make drastic financial cuts to the services of older people in sheltered accommodation in East Kent. They are to cut the posts of resident scheme managers (wardens as we knew them), and replace them with floating managers contactable by phone. They also intend to charge for personal alarms – about £4 per week - far higher than our pension rise for this year. Sheltered accommodation will not be recognised in what they intend to run, with the burden of frail older people falling on the more fit within their housing. They are also going to increase the cost of help with washing, dressing, getting in and out of bed, and meals on wheels, to elderly people, disabled, and those with

chronic conditions. What a backward step for the most vulnerable people in our District. When you consider that the KCC have spent nearly £million on publicity telling us how good they are, the cost of cuts in older peoples' services would be a drop in the ocean compared with the money spent on some of their more self promoting ideas. Kevin Lynes, the cabinet member for *Older Peoples Services*, has sought to justify it, by writing to our Secretary, saying that many older people do not now need sheltered housing, and that many wardens spend their time on running bingo etc.! Naturally we shall fight these injustices with all our might. **Anne Belworthy, Chair, Canterbury & District Pensioners Forum**, 14 Essex Avenue, Herne Bay CT6 8AA.
Tel: 01227 366494 email: annebelworthy@talktalk.net
Anne is also Secretary of the recently formed East Kent Association of Senior Citizens Forums

YORK 50+ FESTIVAL 2007

Initiated by the York Older People's Assembly

SUE LISTER

Last year, for the second festival for the over 50s in York, 130 organisers from a wide variety of groups around the city created 70 events which were attended by over 7,300 people of all ages - a most successful continuation of a festival that we hope will grow over the years and spread to other cities, towns and villages in Yorkshire. It is a way of valuing older people as a community resource, stimulating local initiative and attracting visitors to a vibrant festival which will benefit the local economy. Now is the time to start thinking about how you would like to participate in the **50+ Festival 2007 which runs from 29 September - 7 October.**

Taster sessions are a key element. People already engaged in their own classes, arts, hobbies can offer a taster session to share their expertise and interests with newcomers. Others over 50 can create special events for festival week to share with families and people of all ages. *Sue Lister, Chair, York Older People's Assembly,* Room 5, Central Methodist Church, St Saviourgate, York, YO1 8NQ Tel 01904 634661 email: sueann@curlew.totalserve.co.uk www.yorkassembly.org.uk

Regional - Speaking Up For Our Age - Conferences

26th September – **Yorkshire & Humberside**

To be held at the Carraigeworks, Leeds

More information from Sue Mann

Help the Aged, Regional Development Officer

North Yorkshire, York, Bradford and Calderdale.

Tel: 01524 251408 email: sue.mann@hta.org.uk

5th October – **“More Clout than You’d Think” the influential voice of older people**

10.30 for 11.00am – 3 pm

To be held at The Venue: Gateway, Warrington

Lunch: provided, without charge

To reserve your place please contact:

Jean Winstanley, Help the Aged, 92 Lee Lane,

Horwich, Lancs BL6 7AE Tel: 01204 667267

email: jean.winstanley@hta.org.uk

Or John Cotcher, Regional Development Officer,

Help the Aged. Tel: 0151 644 6069 email:

john.cotcher@hta.org.uk

10th October - **South West Seniors Network, AGM and Conference**

Campaigning, Community, Consultation & Involvement
Venue to be advised.

More information from: John Ellis, 77 The Lynch,

Winscombe, North Somerset DS25 1AR.

email: johne.is@waitrose.com

ARE YOU LISTENING GORDON BROWN ???

ALBERT VENISON

On a recent BBC *Today* programme, you very patronizingly thanked me and hundreds of others like me, for going to France in June 1944 to help make this world a better place to live. I have subsequently written many letters to you in an effort to have an informed debate on why older people think you have no conception of what living on a pension really means, none of which have even been acknowledged. On **27th June**, you became Prime Minister. Your ambition has been realised and the financial rewards will flood in. However, I, and hundreds of thousand like me, am still struggling to understand why I have not yet reached my modest goal in life, and with little time left cannot see any hope of doing so.

ARE YOU LISTENING GORDON BROWN ???

As a result of **your actions** over the past ten years,

on that same day - **27th June**, I attended Honiton Magistrates' Court to answer a summons as to why I have not paid my council tax in full for 2006/7. Now 82 years old, I have paid my taxes and dues all my life, paid for a private pension, saved a few pounds, and was expecting to live a reasonable, untroubled life after retirement.

ARE YOU LISTENING GORDON BROWN ???

You reached your goal - whereas I am still struggling after some 17 years.

ARE YOU STILL LISTENING GORDON BROWN ???

Be a man and come down to Devon and explain to this poor old fellow where I went wrong all those years ago in helping put you where you wanted to be on 27th June. *Albert Venison, President,*

Devon Pensioners Action Forum,

6 St Mary's Close, Axminster EX13 5BW

Tel: 01297 32747 www.dpaf.isitfair.co.uk

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uniform. Blue badge holders should be informed if new laws are passed that affect them. *Jim O'Rourke, Thorplands Over 50's Forum, Northampton, 8 Pindar Rise, Thorplands Brook, Northampton, NN3 8YD Tel: 01604 493551*

To the Editor

For some time now, I have been campaigning (and lobbying Ken Livingstone) for a London Weighting for pensioners living in London. We may have the *Freedom Pass*, but our higher cost of living is immediately apparent when we visit other towns and cities. What do other Forums think about this?

Chris Wilson, Chair, Redbridge Pensioners Forum, 160 Havering Gardens, Chadwell Heath, Romford, RM6 5AL. Tel: 020 85972857

To the Editor

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), formerly the (DSS), refuses to change 0845 numbers for the Pension Service and the Winter Fuel Helpline to free 0800 lines. True it was embarrassed into changing some numbers to 0800 when it was revealed through the Freedom of Information Act, that it made a profit of £268,000 from around 2000 lines that use 0845 prefixes. The lines cost from 3.5p a minute and the DWP gets a share of the profits. Although some lines have been made free to young jobseekers, the DWP has confirmed it has no intention of changing the 0845 numbers used by the Pension Service, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and the Winter Fuel Helpline - so pensioners will still be subsidising this

agency. Your views please. *Maureen Jenner, Chair, Carmarthenshire Older People's Partnership (COPP), Nonam House, Ferryside, SA17 5AR Tel: 01267 267893 maureen.jenner@dragon-computers.com*

Looking for those vital extra funds?

If your scheme improves the lives of older people in your area you may fulfil the criteria - **Age Concern England** run a grants scheme and its well worth Forums asking the Grants Unit (Sean tel: 0208 8765 7738) for guidelines an application form and criteria. The application date is in September 2007. email: grants.unit@ace.org.uk

FROM THE EDITOR

We really want to welcome **new FORUMS** and also get well established groups to lend them a hand if necessary - please will all Forums formed within the past 2 years contact me - with a picture if possible - you are very important to us!

The deadline for *Forum to Forum* is 2nd Sept 2007, but sometimes this can be negotiated.

Enid Irving: 41 Canonbury Street, London N1 2TA. Tel: 020 7226 3476. email: enid.iring@onetel.net



CARMEL IS YOUR SPEAKING UP FOR OUR AGE WEBSITE CONTACT -
www.helptheaged.org.uk/forums email: carmel.davis@hta.org.uk

Have we got your contact details right - any changes - please contact the following people

England: Jean Winstanley, Help the Aged - Speaking Up for Our Age, 92 Lee Lane, Horwich, Lancs BL6 7AE
Tel: 01204 667267 email: jean.winstanley@hta.org.uk

Scotland: Helen Simpson, Help the Aged, Speaking Up for Our Age, 11 Granton Square, Edinburgh, EH5 1HX
Tel: 0131 551 6331 email: infoscot@helptheaged.org.uk

Wales: Kathy Lye, Help the Aged, Speaking Up for Our Age, 12 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ
Tel: 029 2034 6550 email: SUFOWales@helptheaged.org.uk Contact for the Wales section of the website is iwanroberts@helptheaged.org.uk

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