

# Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party  
Issue 49 March 2020

In this edition we meet our new Campaigns and Media Officer, celebrate the lives of women who have made their mark on history, and consider some key feminist matters.

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*Rosie MacGregor*  
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## A sad goodbye to Neil -

Former National Officer, Neil Duncan Jordan was invited back to National Council on Monday January 20th and presented with a gift for all the work he had done for NPC. Dot Gibson said we had "a good bargain when we employed Neil".

Neil said he missed NPC and the most important aspect of his work had been the people he met, including giants like Jack Jones and Rodney Bickerstaffe.

Now working for UNISON, a trade union with a large membership including over 1 million women members, he said he is "adjusting from being a large cog in a small machine to being a very small cog in a massive machine".



We are thrilled to introduce and welcome Beverley Morrison as our new Campaign & Media Officer. Not only does she have exemplary skills in campaigning but, stating the obvious, she's a woman!

## and welcome to Beverley

Bev is an experienced communications professional with a background at senior level in print, digital and broadcast journalism as well as Public relations (PR) and events management. She joins the NPC from London marketing and events company 'White Label Creative' where she was PR & Communications Editor, responsible for a wide range of business and third sector projects. Bev spent almost 20 years as a producer at Scottish TV in Glasgow prior to moving to London to work in independent television production.

Bev told us that she "is proud to join the NPC to champion the issues that are as important to her as they are to our membership, and is looking forward to meeting everyone at this year's National Pensioners Annual Convention in Southport".

*Rosie MacGregor*

## The NPC Annual Convention 2020 Tuesday 2nd—Thursday 4th June

The Annual Convention will be held at The Waterfront -Southport Theatre & Convention Centre, The Promenade, Southport PR9 0DZ . Contact the NPC Office to book.

## The Equal Pay struggle continues

On May 29th this year it will be the 50th anniversary of the passage of the equal pay Act 1970 and still women are paid less than men for doing the same work or work of equal value.

We pay tribute to Joyce Shore Butler (nee Wells), born 1910 in Birmingham one of a family of eight. Joyce did not initially take an interest in politics; a school trip to the League of Nations Geneva and then joining the Labour Party when she was 20 began her political career. The Left Book Club alerted her to social conditions in the 1930's. Then during the war she met and married Vic Butler in Birmingham. Vic worked for the Co-operative movement and they moved to London.

In 1947 Joyce became a councillor in Wood Green, and became interested in Housing & Town Planning. In 1955 she was elected to Parliament, but continued as a councillor becoming the new leader of Haringey Council.

After 24 years as an MP, in 1975, Joyce succeeded in getting her 'Sex Discrimination Bill' passed. This was after four attempts using the Ten-Minute Rule. We recognise this as admirable perseverance, still necessary for us today.

We must explore the mechanisms that lead to an undervaluing of women at work. examine the systems and demand changes. A useful tool is the Equality Trust's 'lifetime loss calculator'. This allows women to estimate the lifetime cost of gender pay disparity to themselves based on their salary and their employer. <https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/news/calling-all-women-calculate-your-potential...>

Sources

Marion Wilson from Ella Baker [info@ellabakerorganising.org.uk](mailto:info@ellabakerorganising.org.uk)  
Janet Shapiro from Haringey People, *Equalities Edition History page*

## United Nations led Resolutions for Action

The Lancet, January 2020, declares 2020 to be an important year for reflection. The full paper can be accessed using the link below. Note that the UN sets Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) that affect both developed and under-developed nations; 2020 is set to be a year of milestones for women, gender equity, and health. 2020 is:

- 5 years into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- 10 years since the establishment of UN Women,
- 20 years since the landmark UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security,
- 25 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

The article indicates poor progress in the areas of social justice and health that affect women.

Under current projections the global gender pay gap will take 99.5 years to close and although most of the world's workforce is female, CEOs are invariably male. Improvements in health screening and early detection of disease, particularly cervical cancer, is called for. More action is needed to tackle gender based violence and mal-treatment of young people. The February 2019 issue focussed on advancing women in Science, medicine and Global Health.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33170-8/fulltext?  
dgcid=raven\\_jbs\\_etoc\\_email](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33170-8/fulltext?dgcid=raven_jbs_etoc_email)

Janet Shapiro

## Matchgirl Sarah Chapman not forgotten

It was young women that took up collective action to defend their working conditions in the Matchgirls' Strike in 1888, yet there is no memorial or statue commemorating their bravery.

A tribute to one of the Matchgirls, Sarah Chapman, by Samantha Johnson was printed in Exchange 46 March 2019. Samantha was Sarah's great grand child and she is now Trustee and Company Secretary of The Matchgirls Memorial: Matchgirls 1888 [matchgirls1888statue@gmail.com](mailto:matchgirls1888statue@gmail.com).

Samantha wrote to us on January 12th 2020 to tell us that Sarah Chapman was to be featured in a TV programme, episode 2 of Tony Robinson's History of Britain due to be broadcast that night.

Samantha writes: *'Since discovering my Great Grandmother, Sarah Chapman, was a Strike Leader of the victorious 1888 Matchgirls Strike at the Bryant and May factory in Bow, life has been a bit of a whirlwind.'*

Sam informs us that *"we now have a charitable organisation, 'The Matchgirls Memorial', which has aims to raise awareness of the Strike and to get a lasting memorial to the Matchgirls. I must tell you that The Matchgirls will feature in tonight's episode of 'Tony Robinson's History of Britain Episode 2: The Victorians' at 8PM on Channel 5 (Tony-Robinsons-History-of-Britain). Alternatively you can watch on Channel 5's catch up service."*

For those of you not able to view this episode, Tony Robinson gave shocking accounts of Victorian working life. One was Sarah Chapman, a 13-year-old match girl in London's East End. She worked a 14 hour shift in a Bryant & May factory and risked "phossy jaw" (a horrible disfigurement caused by phosphorus) for her weekly pay of five shillings.

*Samantha Johnson  
Meg McDonald & Janet Shapiro*

## Waterloo Bridge – The Ladies Bridge

Each time I attend an NPC meeting in London I arrive from the south-west at Waterloo Station and cross Waterloo Bridge either on foot or by bus. I'd often used to wonder why it's sometimes known as the Ladies' Bridge.

The current bridge was not completed until 1945. In 1944 there were more than 25,000 women working as labourers in the building industry, undertaking the work of the men who went to war. Women played a significant role in the construction of the Waterloo Bridge we see today but like so many women their story has been lost to history.

There are few photographs, but those that exist show women welders on the bridge and most of the records have been lost. Yet we know from word of mouth that they worked alongside men and were probably paid a fraction of the men's wages and when the men returned from war they

resumed their lives as housewives and mothers.

There is a campaign for a blue plaque to be placed on the bridge to honour these women and the work they carried out but as yet no plaque has been installed. Just another instance of women who are unsung heroes of the Second World War and the workplace.

The bridge is listed Grade II\* in the national heritage list which means that it is a particularly important structure and whilst Historic England has updated the list description to reflect the latest research that women were employed in its construction, some tangible commemorative plaque on the bridge remains to be achieved.

You can find out more and sign the petition at <https://www.theladiesbridge.co.uk>

*Rosie MacGregor*

## Looking ahead to Artemisia

The National Gallery launches an exhibition in the Sainsbury wing devoted to Artemisia Gentileschi on 4th April 2020.

In 17th-century Europe, at a time when women artists were not easily accepted, Artemisia was exceptional. She challenged conventions and defied expectations to become a successful artist and one of the greatest storytellers of her time. The exhibition includes monumental canvases, recently-discovered paintings and personal letters from her journey across Europe. An exhibition not to be missed.

*Janet Shapiro*

## Housing - a feminist issue

Gender inequality has a massive impact on society in general, which combined with the housing crisis, also impacts on our ability to live in affordable, secure and accessible homes.

It is often the most vulnerable women in society who are the most disadvantaged and most likely to find themselves living in substandard and expensive private rented homes, or at worst homeless. Many of the community support networks available to women are not open to those forced from one place to the next.

Gender discrimination in the past still harms women today, such as women without adequate pensions or those unable to obtain mortgages in their own right. Divorcees, women who have been abused, single women, single parents, LGBT+, those with caring needs, and migrant workers—all have more limited housing options.

Women's life expectancy, because we live longer than men also has its impact, as does low pay, zero

hour contracts and the gender pay gap we still face today.

The obstacles for many disabled women attempting to find homes adapted to their needs are even more difficult to overcome.

High costs, substandard housing and lack of security create stress and are harmful to health.

We must recognise that it is women who are the most disadvantaged.

We must campaign for new local authority housing, an end to the Right to Buy, genuinely affordable housing, the introduction of rent caps, improvements to our national housing stock, improved security of tenure, plus an end to Universal Credit and the 'Bedroom Tax'.

The NPC publication "Home Sweet Home?" details our housing policy.

*Rosie MacGregor*

## Action for a greener, fairer energy future

As 2020 dawned, Australia was in the grip of fires destroying 10 million hectares of forest. With ever more emphatic warnings from scientists, the urgency of addressing climate change cannot be doubted.

**Fuel Poverty Action** campaigns for an energy system that doesn't fuel this world threatening problem, AND which provides for everyone's needs in a fair way.

Like climate change, fuel poverty is a life and death issue. On average, 9,700 people die in the UK each year due to cold homes. Women often bear the brunt, from mothers who sacrifice meals to pay for heating, to older women on pensions insufficient to keep them warm.

Fuel Poverty Action (FPA) supports people facing unaffordable bills, for instance through our 'Miniguide on customer rights'. And we fight for good, non-toxic, non-flammable insulation.

We also support residents on estates using District Heating. While this system for heating multiple homes has potential to reduce both carbon emissions and costs, bad financing, installation and management have left some people facing hugely

unreliable service and crippling bills. The way we all heat our homes must change now, but not at the expense of people who cannot afford to pay.

FPA is delving into how fairness can be achieved in a greener energy system. We've contributed to Labour Party and Green party discussions of housing, heating and pricing - including the possibility of a basic energy allowance, free for all. We're running workshops on these complex issues in settings from Extinction Rebellion gatherings to a trade union pensioners' conference on 7 April. (Find details at <https://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc-lease-advisory-sub-groups>.) We need energy solutions, and they have to be fair ones.

If you'd like to help or be in touch with Fuel Poverty Action, it's [fuelpovertyaction.org.uk](https://fuelpovertyaction.org.uk), [fuel-povertyaction@gmail.com](mailto:fuel-povertyaction@gmail.com).

*Frances Sleaf,  
Fuel Poverty Action*

## Yet another Woman Scientist buried from public view

Eunice Foote was an amateur scientist and the first person on record to link carbon dioxide to global warming  
Her paper was presented to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1856, but was read by the then President Joseph Henry.  
She had done practical experiments to compare the effect of sunlight on carbon dioxide and "common air"  
Her achievements went un-noticed because three years later John Tyndall made the same discovery, but he is the one credited, not Eunice  
So she suffered what has come to be called the

'**Matilda effect**', the trend of men getting credit for female scientists' achievements.  
She then went on to present her own paper to the AAAS in 1857 on "A New Source of Electrical Conductivity", showing she was both an accomplished and versatile scientist.

Eunice became a member of the first Women's Rights Convention in America in July 1848, which demanded full equality in social status, with legal, educational and economic rights.

Eunice earns a place alongside the suffragettes and our National Assembly for Women!

*Marion Wilson*

## Anne Lister – Gentleman Jack

I first heard of Anne Lister when folk singer friends, Belinda O'Hooley and Heidi Tidow, sang a song they had written about her called Gentleman Jack. This subsequently became one of the theme tunes for the recent BBC TV series about her.

Anne Lister (April 1791 – September 1840) from Shibden Hall near Halifax in West Yorkshire was a woman before her time. She inherited her family estate, her two brothers having died in childhood, and this provided her with the wealth and power to make her own way in life – something denied to most women of her generation. Wealthy, well-travelled, unafraid and determined to defy convention, not least by dressing all in black, and 'marrying' her lover Ann Walker.

History may well have forgotten her but for the 5 million word diaries she wrote, recorded in 26 leather bound volumes, cataloguing her life and

lesbian affairs. These were written in secret code and hidden behind panelling at Shibden Hall.

In addition there are 14 volumes of notes made on her travels throughout Europe. Once the diaries were found it was not until 1983 that they were fully deciphered by another local woman Helena Whitbread.

Anne is commemorated with a blue plaque, appropriately rainbow edged, at Holy Trinity Church in York which states "Anne Lister 1791–1840 of Shibden Hall, Halifax. Lesbian and Diarist; took sacrament here to seal her union with Ann Walker / Easter 1834".

Shibden Hall is now open to the public and well worth a visit if you are in the Halifax area.

*Rosie MacGregor*

## Survey seeks digital gap stories

An NPC survey is being launched this month (March) to find out how many members are not online, their reasons, how they are disadvantaged or discriminated against and how they can be helped.

It has been drawn up by the NPC's Digital Inclusion/Exclusion Working Party following a national pilot study, and will be sent mainly to all NPC Regional Secretaries for their views. The deadline for responses is 31<sup>st</sup> March, and a report on the findings with recommendations for action available by the Pensioners Convention, Southport, in June.

In addition, the working party is appealing for stories from members about their own or others' experiences of digital exclusion, e.g. not being able to apply for a bus pass online or to access banking or public services.

Please email or write to: Digital Working Party, at the NPC office—address on page 6.

*Jenny Sims*



## Beware scams: whether by phone text or email

**ALERT!** There has recently been an increase in ever more sophisticated phone, text and email scams. Always report scams to Action Fraud either online at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or by phone on 0300 123 2040. You can also contact police directly on 101. Text scams can be forwarded to Ofcom on 7726 (free of charge)

*Verena Beane*

### Advice from the police.

Remember, Caller ID is NOT proof of identity. Criminals can spoof their number, i.e. they can change their number to be anything they like, such as the number on the back of your bank card. Criminals and fraudsters may know your basic details such as your name and address, they will use this information to convince you that they are someone they are not. Your bank, the police, tax office, or any other legitimate organisation will never ask you to attend your bank, withdraw, transfer or pay money over the phone or send couriers to collect your card or cash. Nor would they ask you to buy goods or vouchers. The tax office do not threaten arrest or summons over the phone. This is a scam. Whenever you get unsolicited contact from a business, take 5 minutes to verify their claims via a trusted method. Never use the number given in an email, text or call.

1. Hang up (Never give details or money following a cold call)
2. Take 5 (Seek a second opinion, tell someone what has happened)
3. Verify (if concerned, contact the company via a pre-confirmed method)

Please help us share this information, tell your family, friends and neighbours as people are still falling victim to these types of fraud.

All of our videos and electronic leaflets can be found on the following link; [www.met.police.uk/littlemedia](http://www.met.police.uk/littlemedia)

*Advice obtained by Meg McDonald from PC Tom Lee*

<https://www.met.police.uk/fraud>

[Thomas.lee2@met.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Thomas.lee2@met.pnn.police.uk) 020 7230 8893

**More Advice:** If you receive a phone call, you should not use the same phone to call your bank or other establishment. Scammers keep their end of the line open, so when you do pick up the phone they are there pretending to be whoever. So, if you take the call on your landline, use your mobile to make the call and vice-versa. For those without mobile phones, best to wait a while before using the phone again. Nothing will happen as long as you haven't given them any information. In our region we have a motto - tell them now!

*Jan Shortt*

## Don't Switch Us Off!

The message remains the same.

The NPC Annual Convention Campaign Special, February 2020 announces that every MP has been sent a personal plea to save the free TV licence for those over 75.

Also in the Daily Express on February 17th Jan Shortt, commented that veterans had tiny pensions, but they would lose the free licence having incomes just above the Pension Credit threshold.

It was wrong that the government forced the BBC to take on the cost of the concession, in effect making a substantial cut to its funding.

As a top brand in the world the BBC needs both secure funding and independence.

If guaranteed funding, such as the universal licence fee was removed, standards would fall. Yet the government may seek changes and the BBC is under attack from all sides.

BECTU (the Broadcasting Entertainment & Theatre Union) representing workers in the media, have started an on-line petition 'Love it or lose it: Save the BBC' <https://campaign.goingtowork.org.uk/petitions/love-it-or-lose-it-save-the-bbc>.

Many regard the BBC as a public communications service; the Group 'We Own It' <https://weownit.org.uk/> is committed to saving the BBC.

*Janet Shapiro*

## See you in Southport's Lord Street Town Trail, Wayfarers Arcade!



**Please tell your friends and neighbours about this newsletter. If you would like to receive the Exchange regularly by email, please contact the NPC office giving your email address.**

[info@npcuk.org](mailto:info@npcuk.org)

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