



NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS

REDBRIDGE RETIRED MEMBERS

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2014



Redbridge Teachers Visit London Churches

Tucked in back streets and at times bordered by cobbled and uneven pavements are some of Christopher Wren's amazing masterpieces. As well as the well-known St Paul's Cathedral, Wren has left several rich works of grandeur and beauty, of which our nation should be justly proud.

This was the conclusion reached by a small group of retired teachers during their guided walk on April 3rd of this year. Led by one of our members, the knowledgeable Liz Dolan, we started at St Stephen Walbrook, often described as Wren's masterpiece, with the most perfectly proportioned interior in the world and a dome that was "a trial run" for St Paul's. In more recent years, the church has become known as the place where the Samaritans' organisation was founded by Chad Varah in 1953 and at the back of the church is the original telephone Varah used. Our group also visited the following churches:

- St Mary Abchurch is the least altered of Wren's surviving churches. Original poor boxes, a beadle seat and box pews are still fixed to the walls.
- St. Benet Paul's Wharf, a modest and still unspoilt gem in Wren's simplest style, and full of light.
- St Magnus the Martyr has a highly distinctive Wren steeple and a most impressive white and gold interior.
- St James Garlickhythe is also known as Wren's lantern on account of the light which floods in from the many windows. On either side of the altar are tables made from wood taken from the Marchioness pleasure-boat, which sank in the Thames in 1989 with the loss of many young lives.

There are several reasons as to why these historical gems should not simply be seen as mere monuments to a by-gone age and to the designer, Sir Christopher Wren. To begin with, there is a definite focus on worship and the presence of a Higher Power, for those who want to acknowledge this in their lives today. Secondly, the visitor is encouraged to light a candle and to offer prayers. Thirdly, different printed leaflets by the Diocese of London encourage the visitor/worshipper to think about the worldwide church. And, lastly, there is evidence of the churches being technologically up to date, having created the London Internet Church.

The interested visitor/worshipper will learn about the above and more from the dedicated team of Church Watchers, who are always on hand to offer a welcome. In addition, the booklet *A Short Guide to the CITY OF LONDON CHURCHES* lists forty churches that can be visited and five Suggested Walks. More information can be found at www.london-city-churches.org.uk; www.citydeanery.org.uk; www.cityevents.co.uk.

Lydia Kirby



Redbridge Teachers Go to Brighton: 2014 NUT Conference Report

This year's NUT National Conference was held in Brighton over the Easter weekend. The Redbridge delegation included many new and young faces. All enjoyed the Conference experience, including a variety of fringe events, and made good contributions to the event.

A Redbridge motion on Ofsted was voted into the agenda and Bhasker Bhadresha and Michael Dance made speeches proposing and seconding it. Brief points from the speeches include: the paperwork, the workload and bullying and the fact that Ofsted stops teachers teaching. The poor quality of inspections and inspectors was also highlighted. One inspector, for example, told a class he was inspecting that *The Death of a Salesman* was a 'weak' play. Another inspector, also the Head of a local school, gave the inspection school a grade 3 and then circulated the parents of his own school with a letter encouraging them to choose it! Both speeches were reported in *The Independent* and also in some Northern papers. The motion, with the amendments, was passed unanimously.

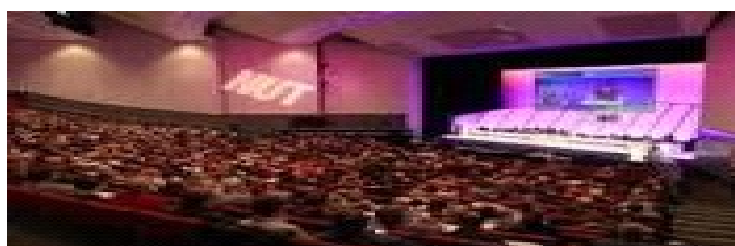
Nicholas Kasparis made a passionate speech about capability and how the procedure is being abused by headteachers to get rid of experienced teachers. His speech also contrasted teaching with other professions such as medicine and law in which experience is valued and not viewed as a liability. Examples were given of schools that were choosing inexperienced teachers to save money. Nick's speech was reported on BBC news and in the TES.

Some of the best and most moving speeches came on the last day when Equal Opportunities' issues were discussed. NUT members may remember Amanda Bentham, who was the previous RTA president. She gave two speeches - one a moving address on disability, in which she related personal experience to Government policy. Why are such topics always addressed on Tuesdays, when many delegates have gone home? In the future, can we have such debates earlier?

The debate on LGBT highlighted how much progress still needs to be made in that area. Transgender people form one of the most intelligent groups in society but 80% can't find a job after transitioning, which is why many end up as sex workers. We heard of a teacher and a head of science in their 50s who transitioned and were told by their headteacher that whilst they could stay on the same pay, they could no longer have contact with children. With LGBT month next year, perhaps Redbridge (maybe with other associations) could organise some events.

Several Redbridge delegates were due to make speeches but unfortunately missed the opportunity as the debates were cut short.

Bhasker Bhadresha





To Move or Not to Move? My Retirement Saga

My wife, Sue, a secondary SENCO, and I, a senior teacher, took early retirement from full time secondary teaching in 1998, whilst continuing to work part time. With the lump sum payments, our savings, and a small mortgage, we bought a house in Bournemouth, within walking distance of the seafront, intending eventually to retire to the coast. In 2008 we put our London house on the market and moved down to Bournemouth. We looked forward to exploring the Dorset coast and surrounding countryside, breathing the clear, clean, fresh air on our daily walks along the promenade to Hengistbury Head, Christchurch or Sandbanks. We anticipated expanding our social circle, having already made some friends during the school holidays, and entertaining family, friends and colleagues from Wanstead.

Our Wanstead house had received only one viewing, the housing market was in severe recession, so reluctantly, to pay the mortgage, we rented the house to a stereotypical young, blond haired, blue eyed, clean cut Swedish husband and wife who worked in banking.

After one year of living in Bournemouth we accepted we had made a mistake. At first we had rejoiced at having escaped the hurly-burly of London, the traffic fumes and the polluted air of Wanstead but gradually, we began to be homesick. We missed the close proximity of family - Bournemouth is half an hour and thirty miles too far from London - and long established friends. We had not realised how deep our emotional and social roots in East London were. We missed the pace of life in London, but most of all the variety, quick wittedness, friendliness and banter of Londoners. Bournemouth's population is constantly shifting and established inhabitants have close knit circles of friends. It is a more relaxed, laid-back life style, but as such lacks any thrust or edge; it could almost be designated complacent and, after London's buzz, boring.

Yes, Poole has a theatre; Bournemouth has its Philharmonic Orchestra, its 'Senior Screen' (a highlight of Wednesday mornings was joining in the scramble for chocolate biscuits and indifferent coffee at the local Odeon), beautifully maintained gardens, a short pier, and a grandstand. But having visited St Petersburg, New York, Toronto, Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Oslo, Helsinki, Amsterdam - all wonderful cities - no other place equals the excitement, energy, architectural variety, cultural and artistic plenitude of the UK's capital - so easily and cheaply accessed with our freedom passes. Yes, wonderful walks along the coast, but walk almost anywhere in London, and round any corner there is something of historical or cultural interest. Our retirement days in Bournemouth were too predictable, too limited socially and culturally; and before you ask, yes, we did try to make it work. I took up supply teaching; Sue worked as a volunteer for Dorset Blind. But for us, the town was too parochial.

So, in 2009, our idyllic Swedish tenants, having separated and given notice to quit, we returned home to our clean Scandinavian house, to be welcomed back enthusiastically by our neighbours (who were glad to see the exit of our vociferous and loud tenants) and by our family and friends. We were fortunate that we still had a property to return to, otherwise we would have had to persevere in Bournemouth, in spite of our hearts being in London.

Although our experience of moving wasn't successful, we would always have wondered 'what if' had we not done it. Whilst recognizing that many retirees enjoy their new lives in a more relaxed environment, for us it was the right decision to return to London and the warmth, friendliness and culture of the capital.

Ron Oldham

SERTUC Pensioners' Network Annual Seminar

I attended the Pensioners' Seminar at Congress House (for the first time) on 16th April.

The Seminar did, in part, attempt to tackle the negative stereotypes of retired people. It also provided some arguments to refute the myth that the post-war generation is the cause of the present crisis.

The first speaker, Jerry Latter, was from IPSOS-MORI, which has conducted a lot of opinion surveys among the retired. The results were what would be expected - many people are worried about the cost of living and standards of care.

Neil Duncan-Jordan (National Pensioners Convention) emphasised that our pensions are being attacked, with Occupational pensions being whittled away. "Auto-enrolment" will do nothing for the 8 million low-paid workers and similarly, Osborne's budget, profitable for the private pensions industry, will do nothing for most people. The Government is making us work a lot longer, for less. We have to persuade young people that they will be affected by the raising of the retirement age to 68 (70 at some future date?) and many people will die before being allowed to retire.

Dick Muskett (UNITE) volunteers for SERTUC and suggested that there is a role for us in organising and educating. Unions have tended to marginalise retired members by changing the rules to make them stick to "pensioners" issues. But we can organise events for our working colleagues and offer advice on a range of issues.

Rodney Bickerstaffe (ex-President of NUPE/UNISON and NPC) gave a spirited defence of the right of all people to dignity, care and respect. People need to get angry about low pay, poor conditions and meagre pensions and organise.

There was some useful discussion and several practical suggestions were made - Redbridge NUT, for example, helps with newsletters, school visits and casework and RTUC has been involved in campaign to save a local hospital. Others raised the need for better representation within the Trade Unions and the TUC.

N. Norman (London Met UNISON, Retired Members)

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NUT CONTINUES FIGHT FOR EDUCATION



On March 20th. Redbridge members joined at least 11,000 other NUT members and supporters to march from BBC Headquarters to Westminster in support of the recent strike.

This was a tremendous turnout from the NUT, which shows how strongly members feel, even though we were NOT joined by NAS/UWT on this occasion.

The march was followed by a rally in Central Methodist Hall, with rousing contributions from two young teachers, a representative of the Fire Brigade Union and Jeremy Corbyn MP, as well as our own General Secretary, Christine Blower.

On the march I saw no hostility from the general public and much support. When the problems associated with Gove's policies are explained to parents they generally agree with us.

If more action is demanded we should expect support from other unions. What is happening to our State education system is a matter of serious concern. For example, the constraints on LEAs providing extra places in new schools, where they are needed, are doing great damage.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Labour Party appears to be calling for some local accountability for Academies and Free Schools, which is a modest improvement on the previous policy.

Bill Harrison

Please send all contributions to the Newsletter to mikepeters1@ntlworld.com