

No 1

# Easily Red.

December 2016

*Newsletter of the North East Hampshire Constituency Labour Party.*



## Christmas Greetings from the Constituency Labour Party!

And welcome to the first issue of our new internet newsletter for the North East Hampshire Constituency Labour Party (CLP).

For those of you who don't already know us, this is a

publicity shot of the team which stood for Labour in each of the constituency wards during the elections in May 2016.

We hope you'll learn more about us, and about other members working hard in the constituency, in coming months. For now, let's just identify a few of our officials: the Chair of the local party is John Gawthorpe, who lives in Pondtail, Fleet (4th from left, back row); the Secretary is Joyce Still, from Yateley (2nd from left, front row); and Verd Nabbs, who lives in Hook, is the Membership Secretary (far left, back row).



*Easily Red (No 1)* is the introductory issue of what we hope will become a bimonthly internet newsletter, with the first full issue to appear at the end of January 2017, thereafter at the end of March, May and so on. There may be a supplement from time to time, midway between scheduled issues, if events are moving fast!

'*Easily Red*' is a working title only. We've had suggestions for a permanent title, but we'd welcome any more ideas before we make a final choice. Please think about what you would like our newsletter to be, to do and to stand for, and let us know your ideas.

Email [nehclp16@gmail.com](mailto:nehclp16@gmail.com). (Please note that all links are cut and paste only, for now.)

Our first few editions will be experimental. We have to explore, to find a style, layout, typeface, print size and format (probably .pdf) which work for all of you, so please let us know what you think - and any suggestions you have. The more people who get involved, the better it will be.

(Most immediately, you might let me know if either (or both) of the font sizes used in this issue are too large or too small for the device which you're using to read it. The font in the paragraph above was size 14; this is size 12. Ed.)

**The plan is that there will be regular items** in the newsletter.

We'll see what sort of items people want, but they might include:

Political Focus - we hope this will develop organically!

Local political news and issues;

Reports - such as Council meetings and activities.

Holding our MP to account.

Election and canvassing news.

Forthcoming events and other diary dates;

Reports on recent events;

Fundraising news;

"Public Service" material, such as registration drives;

Member contributions - "Why I joined the Labour Party."

Film and Book discussion - "How I was affected by..."



## *Letter from the Editor.*

**When I joined Labour**, I joined a party full of fire and passion. I joined it precisely because it's full of such fire and passion - fortified, I believe, by a generosity of spirit which our Tory opponents have never understood.

For the last 18 months, we in Labour may have thought we were paying a price for our passion. We have debated, argued, and disputed the profoundest questions about the nature of our party and, during 2016, even about the nature and future of our country. Our opponents have cast themselves in the role of circling sharks, confidently predicting that they would be present at our end. It is your editor's opinion that they have wholly misread us.

We have endured, as well, a period in which a triumphalist Right may at times have seemed unstoppable. Your editor's opinion is that the Tories, in trying to control those even further to the Right, have become them. And that far from being strong, the Tories are so strategically weakened by this that it may be them, and not the Labour Party, who find themselves out of power for a generation.

You may feel that I am too optimistic. I hope that as *Easily Red* takes wing and develops, it will record the course of these events and, perhaps sooner rather than later, prove me right.

In more immediately practical terms, I hope you'll be interested to see how your newsletter shapes up. That will be in large part up to you. So, letters, articles, news reports, anything which you think might be of interest - please kick-start us!

There'll be items of particular importance in these pages from time to time, and we're hitting the ground running in this issue. You may know that the Boundary Commissioners have been at work this year, and that they've made changes to our constituency which are perhaps not in the interests either of our CLP or of the constituency. We can have a say in this - the **deadline is Monday 5th December** - so please read John Gawthorpe's article on the next page and, if you have time **this weekend**, add your voice to ours.

I hope that our newsletter will play a part in welcoming new members as well as keeping us in touch with each other. In this issue, however, we're saying Good Bye and Good Fortune to Ieuan Williams who, having been a good friend and hardworking comrade here in NE Hants, is moving to London - where he'll wow them as much as he's wowed us. We don't want to embarrass him; so there are just a few words, acknowledging our debt, below.

Welcome aboard and thanks for joining us! We hope you'll come to value and enjoy *Easily Red*.

The Editor.

## **'The Way Forward'**

*By John Gawthorpe, Chair, NEH CLP.*

**Our November CLP meeting** (for all members) provided an opportunity for greater participation as we broke into small groups to consider our 'Hopes and Fears', both local and national. Several common themes emerged, which are summarised below.

This being the Labour Party, the readers of this newsletter are bound to have many more strongly held convictions. If something below strikes a chord with you, please join in, either by responding on line or - better – by coming to a meeting in the New Year.

Locally, our fears reflected the difficulty of campaigning for Labour in a Tory stronghold. Maybe we have too many 'keyboard warriors', talking to the converted? Our membership has grown enormously in the last couple of years, yet we have had only limited success in engaging with them. We have yet to find the best way of engaging with younger voters. At the national level, unsurprisingly, issues of leadership and succession planning featured, as did fears of disunity. The UKIP threat and uncertainty about party policy on Brexit were highlighted.

Local hopes included us being able to target the electorate all year round, with a set of policies relevant to the local community. Setting up meetings with a well-known speaker was seen as a priority. Securing the election of a Labour councillor, at whichever level, was identified as a key aim and a great hope.

Nationally, our hopes knew no bounds. Repealing anti Trade Union legislation and re-nationalising the railways and public utilities came up in some groups, whereas the re-introduction of 'Clause 4' struck a chord elsewhere. A Labour Party focus on 'back to Labour basics' – Health, Education, Housing, Workplace fairness – was a key hope for some.

With an early election on the cards, are these the views you would wish to support or debate? Is Trident a key issue or an irrelevance? What are your views?

J.G.

## Make your voice heard this weekend!

*By John Gawthorpe, Chair, NEH CLP.*

The deadline for comments on **Boundary Commission** proposals is Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December.

**I have lived in the Fleet area** since 1974, and have moved house four times. One move was from Fleet to Church Crookham, ten years later I moved back. While each community had its individual characteristics, I have to say that - to me - the similarities hugely outweighed the differences. However during my time in Church Crookham I did not feel, nor did I see, any particular affinity with Aldershot.

Yet the Boundary Commissioners, perhaps seduced by the convenient barrier of the Basingstoke Canal, have chosen in their wisdom to place Church Crookham in a new Aldershot constituency. This after a previous change moved Church Crookham from distant Petersfield to its current position alongside Fleet. If you feel the current proposals are flawed, you have a right – I would say a duty - to say so.

Those in Fleet are faced with a similarly perplexing change: to compensate for the loss of Church Crookham, the link is now to be with Alton. Hardly the closest of neighbours. This new constituency would run from Heckfield to Hawley and from Brown Candover to Crondall: quite a challenge for any MP to represent effectively. (And I had to look up Brown Candover on the map.)

Others in the Labour Party have challenged the basis upon which the Commissioners were tasked to undertake a review, and it does seem '*politically convenient*' that a seemingly obvious move to create constituencies with a similar number of electors will tend to favour the government not the opposition.

It is heartening to see some cross party support in the Commons for a challenge to these proposals, but the epitaph to that move may well be 'it ran out of parliamentary time'.

So that leaves us to respond, with an imperative to act **this weekend**. The website is [www.bce.2018.org.uk](http://www.bce.2018.org.uk) and the process is simple: enter your post code and the new proposals will appear in red. Click on the link to see the current boundaries in blue. The changes for the North East Hampshire constituency seem to me geographically convenient but democratically deficient.

The green '*Have your say*' tab will convey **your** views.

J.G

Editor's note: since John wrote this, people have commented that there are particularly close links to Fleet for families in Church Crookham with younger children, whose schools would now be in a different constituency (remaining in Hart); while business and shopping connections are much closer with Fleet than with Aldershot. For maps, please see the next page.



## The Boundary Commissions recommendations for the Fleet/Church Crookham area.

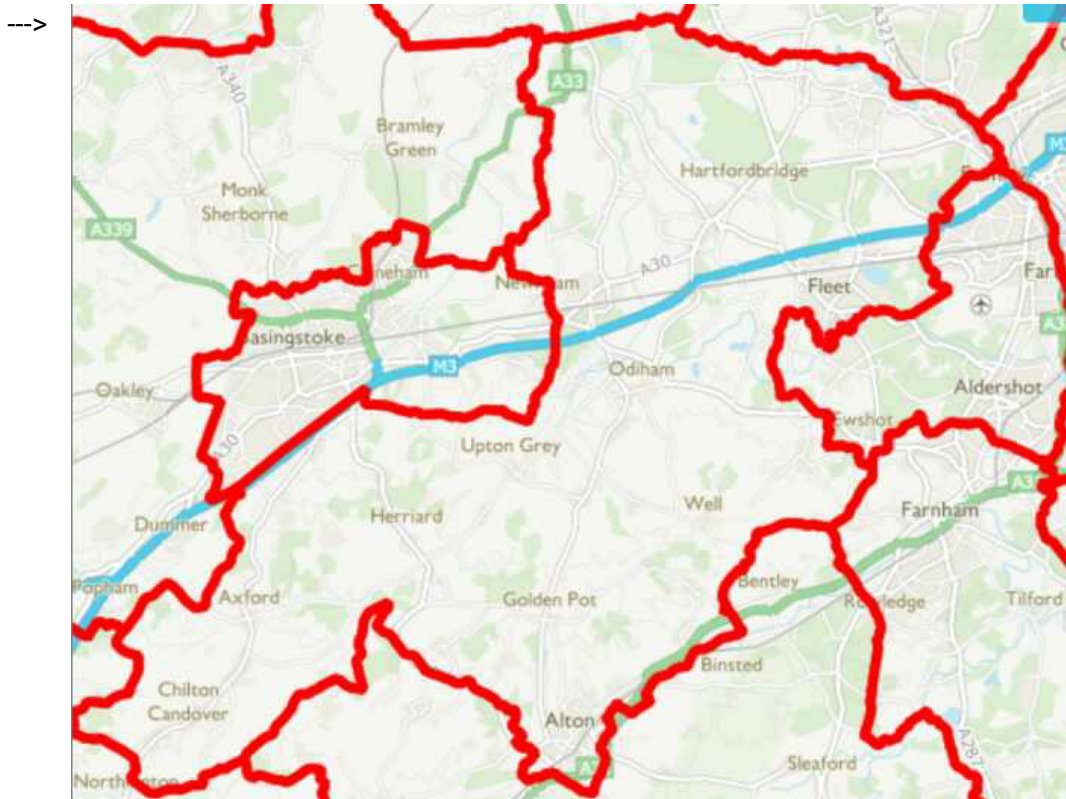
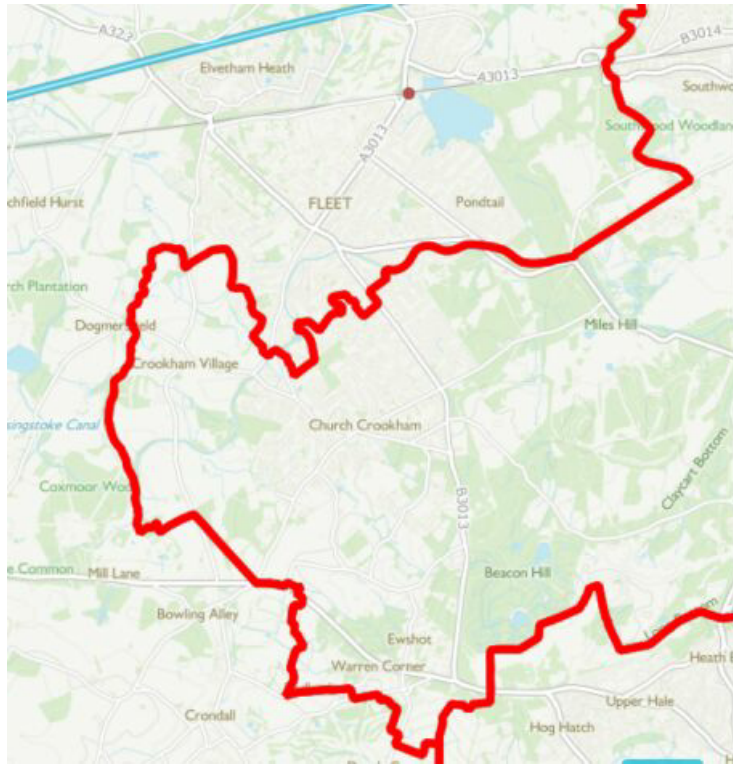
I hope that these maps of the *proposed* new boundaries in the Church Crookham area are self-explanatory.

Please contact me if you need further clarification, or if you want to ask about other boundary changes affecting the constituency. I will answer as best I can, or possibly put you through to somebody who knows better!

([nehclp16@gmail.com](mailto:nehclp16@gmail.com))

1. Church Crookham / Fleet --->

2. Aldershot, Hart and Basingstoke area boundaries.



## Our best wishes to leuan Williams.

**leuan Williams** joined the Labour Party, and our CLP, in April 2015. He's a Parliamentary Assistant for Albert Owen MP, and he's just moved to London where he'll be able to work with Albert in Westminster. Since he will no longer be on the electoral register in Hart, he has to resign his membership here and join his local CLP in London.



leuan is 25 years old and, while he won't (yet) commit himself to a career in politics (his calling is as a musician), we who've come to know him believe that his energy, dedication and understanding would make for an outstanding future MP. He's already an asset to the Party and one which our CLP is sorry to lose.

leuan has been a supporter of the Labour Party for several years. He says that to become an active member was a serious decision which he didn't want to rush: we saw that once he did join the Party, however, it was as a firm commitment - and he hasn't looked back. He stood as Labour candidate for the ward of Hartley Wintney during the May 2016 elections.

To say he's had an impact on those of us in the CLP who worked with him would be a serious understatement. Canvassing with him during this year's campaigning was an experience to be savoured, especially as he selected his targets: sometimes he was a spear fisherman, impaling his Tory prey, sometimes a fly fisherman drawing his prey in almost unawares. Either way it was in cheerful spirit and with great good humour. When we weren't canvassing, he was equally willing to get on with routine constituency work that needed doing. Your editor was particularly worried by leuan's departure because he was the one with the IT skills, although fortunately a worthy successor (Emma Archer) has stepped forward.

leuan Williams moves to London with our best wishes for his future there and with instructions to sort out those Tories and put a stop to all this privatisation nonsense.

**[How to find out more about your local party:](#)**

**Visit our Facebook page:** <https://m.facebook.com/NEHantsLabour/>

**Or to join in:** <http://www.nehantslabour.co.uk/>

**or any CLP link on the next page.**

### Forthcoming Events:

9 Dec 2016: **Christmas Meal**, 'Prince of Wales', Fleet.

19 Jan 2017: **New Members Night** at The Tythings, Yateley GU46 7RP.  
Everyone invited - come and meet other members and CLP officers.  
Drinks, nibbles, raffle! (Further details to follow in the New Year.)

23 Feb 2017: **All Members' CLP Meeting** at The Tythings, 7.30pm.

3 March 2017: **Film Night** - "Made in Dagenham". Tickets on sale in Jan.

6 April 2017: **All Members' CLP Meeting** at The Tythings, 7.30pm.

The 2017 AGM and Election of Officers will be held in June 2017.

### Links: (Cut and paste only, for now - apologies for the inconvenience.)

Boundary Commission: [www.bce.2018.org.uk](http://www.bce.2018.org.uk)

An eye on our MP in Westminster: [theyworkforyou.com](http://theyworkforyou.com)

An eye on our MP here in Hart: [tellranil.com](http://tellranil.com) (Facebook)

[@tellranil](https://twitter.com/tellranil) (Twitter)

[Our MP is Ranil Jayawardena (Tory). He is to the right of his party.]

NE Hants CLP public Facebook page (that's us!):

<https://m.facebook.com/NEHantsLabour/>

CLP webpage

<http://www.nehantslabour.co.uk/>

*Easily Red*: [nehclp16@gmail.com](mailto:nehclp16@gmail.com)

Deadlines for material will normally be on the 15th day of the month of publication. Please Email letters, material etc to *Easily Red*.

*Easily Red (No 2)* will appear on or about: 31 January 2017.

Deadline for contributions: 15 January 2017.

Editor: Sam Butler.



**Thank you** for taking a look at our new initiative. You'll hear from us again at the end of January, but I hope we may meet in person before then. Please remember that a newsletter like this will only thrive with your engagement, so please send us your thoughts, opinions, hopes and suggestions.

**I leave you with...** two thoughts to ponder.

1. However much they may wish to, the Tories cannot tell the Boundary Commissioners where new constituency boundaries should go...

However...

While the maths is a bit lengthy to be laid out in this letter, I can assure that (with no fudging whatsoever) it shows this: the reduction in the number of seats in the House of Commons from 650 to 600 *of itself* favours the Tories, no great matter what boundary changes in detail may be made in the process.

The Tories are not gerrymandering.

They're just working the arithmetic!

2. During campaigning during 2016, our MP (Ranil Jayawardena) tended to canvass the authority of others rather than presenting his own considered arguments.

One of the authorities he quotes, alongside Boris Johnson, is the Breitbart News Network.

Breitbart 'aligned with the European populist right and American alt-right under the management of former executive chairman Steven K. Bannon's management, who declared the site "the platform for the alt-right" in 2016. The New York Times describes Breitbart News as an organization with "ideologically driven journalists", that is a source of controversy "over material that has been called misogynist, xenophobic and racist", and was a "potent voice" for Donald Trump's presidential campaign.' And 'In April 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center wrote that the "outlet has undergone a noticeable shift toward embracing ideas on the extremist fringe of the conservative right" and was using "racist," "anti-Muslim" and "anti-immigrant ideas."'

(Wikipedia: [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breitbart\\_News](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breitbart_News))

Easily  Red.

## **STOP PRESS.**

Literally minutes before this newsletter 'went to press', I received a thought piece from one of our CLP members.

It's about Fleet and Church Crookham, seen through the eyes of a comparatively new arrival - Emma Archer, who's lived here for four years, and about her response to the proposed boundary changes.

I've taken the liberty of including it, here, exactly as I received it. (Ed.)

### **Fleet, Church Crookham and the Boundary Changes.**

**Looking at the map** of proposed local boundary changes is very peculiar for me. I am not a Hampshire native; growing up under the relentless roar of the runways at Heathrow meant that when I moved here, almost four years ago now, it was something of an adjustment. The peace was welcome; the abundance of wildlife an especial joy. People stop to say hello; I've seen and participated in more over-gate neighbour-nattering here in four years, than I have in the previous three decades, and it's wonderful. Here, we are urban enough to enjoy the benefits of modernity, while retaining enough rural idyll to make us happy to see each other.

After making good use of walk-time with the dogs, and a few visits to the local history section of the library, we slowly unfurled in our hearts a living map of this area, that pinpointed all the necessary and contemporary amenities of suburban living, but that also carried echoes of carriage-roads, ancient tobacco farms, ponderous trade along the canal, and the gradual growth of sleepy hamlet into upcoming parish into robust constituency. Although there is a mention of 'the fisheries of Flete Pond' in 1324, central Fleet itself is a relatively modern construction, dating properly from the mid 1800s, when the railway station of Fleet Pond was built to ferry daytrippers desiring a short break from the devouring smogs of industrialised London and Basingstoke. People came out for the beautiful surroundings and found that they would rather stay than leave, a steady relocation process that continues to this day. Previously, the area had looked to the clustered villages of Ewshot, Crookham, and Farnham for their centres of population; the creation of Fleet pulled the threads of these places together and wove them into a functional modern community.

A community is a difficult thing to create from scratch. When looking at the mere physical components necessary to ensure a community survives, the list is fairly intuitive: schools, doctors, dentists, groceries, places to congregate for events, worship, and entertainment, transportation links. Physical landmarks also play a part, natural and manmade: canals, rivers, motorways, hills and valleys. When looking at community layouts, it is important to think of the routes that people of all abilities will take to get from their home to their necessity: Will parents be able to walk along safe roads with their children to school? Will elderly people be able to use public transport to get to their doctor? When looking at where workers are clustered, how many ways can they access the railway stations and bus stops? All these day-to-day footprint trails of people, their families and co-workers and friends, must be taken into account when considering any adjustment to community planning.

The most successful communities follow the *dérive* of the people that live there. Along with the physical landscape of an area, we also have the psychogeography, the feel, of a place. As someone

coming from Outside and starting to find my feet, even I can sense that the areas of Crookham Village, Church Crookham, and Fleet, are inextricably knitted together. If you were in a wandering mood, you could weft from one end of the warp to the other with relative ease, weaving a trail that encircles parks and schools and purpose-built housing estates from the 1850s to the 1950s to the present day. Crookham and Ewshot may have been the founding settlements in the area, but the natural organic progression of human lives gave us mid-point Church Crookham, and then the nestling of Fleet to the north. It completed a close triangle of interaction; all three communities sustain each other.

Looking at the proposed changes, then, disheartens me. The incumbent boundary gently cups this triangle of steady settlement, acknowledging the current state of happy historical unification. Proposed instead is stark division: a thick dark line slices in half the natural routes of Reading Road South, Crookham Road, Hitches Lane and Crondall Road. Dogmersfield is slashed entirely in two.

If these changes go ahead without challenge, you will cross your constituency boundary simply by visiting your doctor's clinic for your flu jab, or nipping down the road for a loaf of bread. The heartbeat of the area, the High Street, will no longer thump for Crookham Village or Church Crookham - instead, the latter two are expected to hive far west, given over to Farnborough and Aldershot.

How does one dérive from Church Crookham's Verne all the way to Aldershot High Street? Physical barriers of vast military testing grounds and busy, belching motorways are surely insurmountable; the differences of small village life versus hurried urban bustle disrupt the psychogeography of the route. We are separated from Farnborough and Aldershot not just by distance, but by the cohesive internal sense of our area. I don't see that handing us to Farnborough and Aldershot will do much for the interests of our own specific neighbourhoods. The proposals would cut us off from Fleet entirely, and Church Crookham and Crookham Village would be made to shuffle sadly sideways and be swallowed up whole.

If you live in central Fleet, ask yourself to which you consider yourself closer: Alton? or Church Crookham? Minley? or Crookham Village? If you live in Dogmersfield, are you prepared to go to two separate constituency surgeries to petition for help? Communities aren't strict numerical exercises, nor should they be. They're founded along groupings of people who feel a connection to each other and an area, who naturally generate a common interest in the welfare of that area; the Boundary Review, by merely examining stark numbers, disregards the effect this pitiless separation will have on the hearts and minds of the people who consider the trifecta of Fleet, Church Crookham, and Crookham Village their home. I will be adding my voice to the chorus of those who ask the Review Board to reconfigure their proposals.

*Emma Archer.*

\* 'Easily Red' is produced on behalf of the North East Hampshire Constituency Labour Party. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of either the CLP or the National Party; however, we endeavour to conform to the values and to the social media policies of both.