

Proud to be first Labour councillors in more than 30 years in Teignmouth

I'M Jackie Jackson, and, I, and my friend and Labour colleague, Lillian Chasteau, are both new councillors on Teignmouth Town Council, me in West Teignmouth, and Lily in East.

We are proud to be the first Labour councillors in Teignmouth for over 30 years since the much loved Mary Kennedy was mayor, known for her Labour values and care of her constituents in Teignmouth.

Lily speaks for us both: 'As a councillor I am looking forward to having an honest dialogue with residents, and working towards resolutions where the parish council has jurisdiction, or pushing for change in higher levels of government.'

'With my Labour fellow councillor, I look forward to bringing our new voices to the Town Council, for social equity, and wider access to necessary services – my personal goal as a councillor is not just to focus on the big issues of the day, but to work towards making those smaller changes which improve daily life in the town for everyone.'

Being elected to Teignmouth Town Council has been the result of five years of work in our community, and we are glad to have reached a place where we are able to affect real change for our friends and neighbours.

Part of that work was and is with the Teignmouth Community Larder, which I organise, and of which Lily is a trustee. We see the problems people face, in this shifting economic situation, in our seaside town, with its seasonal jobs, and zero hours contracts.

We understand how it doesn't take much to go wrong, for people to need food support. It's part of why we wanted to be councillors,



● Cllr Jackie Jackson.



● Cllr Lillian Chasteau.

and why we want to 'change the world'.

After the first excitement, pleasure and honour you feel that people have trusted you enough to vote for you, there follows a huge learning curve! How does everything work...how do you get things done!

In the first few weeks of being elected, Lily and I have been asked to do something about flower beds, weeds on footpaths, rubbish bins, dumped motor scooters, speed limits, bus shelters, graffiti, potholes, dog poo, a local charity with a lease problem, maintenance on social housing, and toilets!

We are beginning to know who to approach for advice and help in the many layers of local government: a councillor from the County or District Council or District, Teignmouth Chamber of Trade, the Police, Teign Housing, TeignAid, Citizen's Advice – many other organisations. It's our job to know or find out about them, ask questions, write letters, find infor-

mation and give support, time and understanding to our constituents.

We also need to understand that we can't do anything to change the world by ourselves, and as Jo Cox said, 'We have more in common than that which divides us!'

So it is good to see that most councillors at Town level are prepared to work together. We are all holding surgeries, discussing solutions and ideas together.

'It is only when national politics comes in alongside personal egos, that things become difficult and frustrating. So, wish us luck in our journey towards becoming good councillors, changing the world millimetre by millimetre, and hopefully, making our wonderful Teignmouth even better, as a place to live.

Please contact us

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Positive Mental Health

● A few words of inspiration from psychotherapist and life coach Jody Merelle, based in Dawlish.

Tuning into your creative side

DO you consider yourself to be a creative person? You might be someone who regularly enjoys getting involved in crafts.

You might enjoy writing poetry or music, knitting, drawing or making things out of clay. Or you might not do any of these things. Chances are though that you are still creative in one way or another.

Whether or not creativity and crafting are familiar concepts to you, you might like to think about how you could start to pay more attention to the natural creativity within you.

It can be a very therapeutic thing to concentrate on making or drawing something.

Doing something creative with our hands also stimulates different parts of the brain from the ones we use to think logically and solve problems.

This can mean that by tuning into our creative sides we can also find alternative ways to process and resolve those things that might be bothering us.

Last weekend I was on a trip to North Devon with a group from our church.

Throughout the weekend a table piled high with different crafting materials was made available to everyone there. You could go and sit there at any time and use the resources in any way you chose. Small pieces of calico had been cut out and we were encouraged to decorate them in such a way that they could be displayed later.

Some people were skilled at needlework and some were try-



ing embroidery for the first time.

Others chose to paint, draw or stick things on to the calico squares. Interestingly, no matter how much or little crafting experience people had – they unanimously rated time at the table as one of the highlights of the weekend.

In my view there were a few reasons for this. One was that by concentrating on a crafting activity it required us to stop and take a real pause from life and from any kind of screen time.

Another was the chance to find a channel for self expression which many of us were not familiar with.

Sitting round a table in the way we did also meant that there was time and space to talk to each other. We talked about all kinds of things including relationships, who we would most like to meet (alive or dead), holidays we had (or had not) enjoyed and even what we would do if we were suddenly to become invisible!

The topics didn't even really matter – it was just a chance to connect with each other in a way for which there normally isn't enough time.

Another sense I got from that

session was of being completely unrushed – in total contrast to my normal working week. There was also a sense of being accepted and not judged.

Everyone's efforts at crafting were equally valued and appreciated no matter how much skill or expertise they showed.

During that evening I had the very strong wish that there were more moments like this in life – where people were able to make genuine and authentic connections with each other, feel accepted rather than judged, not be distracted by screen time and have the time to enjoy being creative for more than just a fleeting moment.

In this way, what was on the face of it a simply activity became a profound one.

As the evening drew to a close we resolved to set up more moments like these.

The ingredients would simply be a table, some crafting materials, good company and a little bit of time.

The outcome, however, at least on this occasion, was much more than the sum of its parts. Thank you to Lizzie and Chris who set up this opportunity for us in the first place.

Thank you also for reminding us all that often what is needed is not complicated at all – just a little bit of time and space to be creative, connect with others and tune out momentarily from the stresses and strains of everyday life.

OPINION

The hard life of a junior doctor in an NHS hospital

I CAN hear some people saying 'how terrible, junior doctors going on strike', with the seniors to follow later. But many others, the railway workers, nurses and the many others at the coal faces, understand why young people doing vital jobs in what is left of OUR NHS are joining picket lines this week in desperation. They will all say in unison that pay is a critical issue but conditions are central too. They will add that they can all see the services being torn apart, and the people they serve losing out badly.

As I have told you, and in quoting Ridley, Letwin and Redwood, that the NHS has been steadily dismantled over 40 years. I always look first to 'intention' when I see a process starting.

The intention was made absolutely plain and the evidence that OUR NHS has been largely destroyed is all about.

Each reader will have experience of delays when help in illness or emergency is needed, and often there will be wrong diagnosis or



unnecessary delay in investigation, diagnosis and the start of any treatment.

For instance, I have written often in this column, with others, of the deliberate closure of community hospital beds.

It was known that this would add pressure on the district general hospitals. That word 'pressure' is used constantly by ministers and hospital managers, and it is mostly the result of deliberate action by those with the levers of power.

Unlike my own medical education which was funded by a County Major Award, and also by the

NHS, the doctors qualifying for decades past have accumulated large debts or been helped by their families with university fees. An hourly rate of £14 per hour (?after deduction) will not allow a nibble at the debt.

But what is it like to be a junior doctor in the average DGH? He or she sees the ambulances stacked up by the A&E. The bleep goes - 'can the laparotomy done yesterday go to Newton Abbot Hospital where for once a bed is available immediately. There is a young male with peritonitis in A&E doctor.'

Then there is the operating list to arrange and write, all emergencies bar a few planned in advance. If the young doctor is a house physician the ward round is due. Almost all the patients are seriously ill – some dying, some waiting for urgent investigation.

The seniors will need to be brought up to the minute with the blood, X ray and other investigations. No time to stand in a queue in the refectory for a quiet meal

– so perhaps a sandwich from a machine.

The European Working Time Directive is still in operation (I believe) in spite of Brexit.

This shift system means that when on duty in the night hours, and when often sickness sharpens, the young doctor will be the first line of defence for many dozens of patients in this intentionally created pressure cooker.

All manner of things will press upon this doctor from prescription queries, drips stopping, to responding urgently when there is sudden and unexplained pain in a surgical patient post-operation.

The doctor will know that the chaos and pain he sees is wrong, and the edifice born of great hope and the best of intentions is crashing down.

Like the nurse who has no time to bed bath the very frail old lady, nor hold her hand for a while as she descends, nor comb her grey hair. The doctor knows what is needed - thought, calm, skill - and a place for the new patient to rest while a

careful history and examination takes place.

For a long time I used to say this at Torbay - 'it's all process and little thought'.

But this was not so at the Princess Elizabeth Hospital, Exeter, where I mostly trained and served as a consultant.

Being excellent in every way, it had to be bulldozed in 1996 with its 120 beds including a children's ward, so that the best care in orthopaedic surgery was made less accessible to the many needing its skills.

In being as one with my erstwhile younger colleagues, I think of Rose Polge. This petite and very caring young doctor, with medicine in her family, was in one of the pressure cookers and feeling that she was not up to the tasks demanded of her.

In this case it was Torbay Hospital, so it was Meadfoot Beach she chose.

On a cold February night in 2016 she swam away into oblivion, to be found with Lyme Bay currents on Portland in April. Rose is one of

many doctors whose spirit has been drowned because they cannot see a way up and away.

I recall being the seconder in a debate at Shaftesbury Grammar School – about 1955. I quoted John Donne, 17C bishop and poet.

'No man is an island, Entire of itself, Every man is a piece of the continent, A part of the main'

We are all here on this beautiful planet together, and we must pull together.

We have just returned from Trago Mills where Sue bought a good walking aid.

At least a third of the visitors were overweight and unfit. The population at large must care for their health, and for those who might be needed to care for them.

Finally, I ask that our local MPs give their honest view on how the Health Minister Barclay should respond to these doctors in OUR NHS.

They will need to justify the £400 billion spent around covid and how that has affected inflation and added to UK bankruptcy.