

Obituary: Bill Kerr

We have to report the death of Bill Kerr at the age of 85. Bill joined the West Ham Branch in January 1941, and immediately busied himself attending lectures and after a few weeks joined a Speakers class. Opportunities for speaking outdoors at that time were somewhat limited owing to war-time conditions, although he did manage to get the opportunity to open up on a few occasions at Hyde Park.

However he and his brother George felt the need for propaganda in their own area. The Branch members agreed to give it a try and they opened up at an old venue, the 'Cock Hotel' which was just off High Street North, East Ham. The meetings at the "Cock" were an immediate success and this inspired us to extend further and we settled finally for Station Road, Ilford.

These venues were run very successfully in both attendances and literature sales. However all this came to an end towards the end of the 1950s. Outdoor meetings became impossible except in places like Hyde Park owing to the tremendous growth of motor traffic.

In that period of time from early 1940s to 1955/6 the branch membership had increased from about 30 members to about 70. Bill was elected onto the EC about this time and sat for three years or so.

In the 1950 General Election, the Party fought the East Ham South constituency. It was an excellent effort by the Party with much help from outside. Bill gave all he had in speaking and canvassing most evenings during the preceding weeks.

Bill had the misfortune to severely injure himself when he was blown off the platform at Hyde Park in a gale-force wind and fractured his skull. However he recovered in about a month although his hearing was permanently impaired.

After undergoing major surgery for lung cancer in 1958. Bill transferred his membership to Central Branch. He gave an occasional lecture around the London Branches. From the mid-1970s, apart from an occasional visit to a branch, he was not in evidence, although he kept a keen interest in the Party to the end.

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