

South West Retired Members Branch

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No.32 MayDay 2023

Are you getting all the info?

If UCU HO has your email you should also receive regular updates on campaigns from UCU head office as well as occasional branch emails. If this is not the case let us know and we can check with the H.O on your behalf.

All branch members can contact officers and reps by the emails listed in this newsletter; the general branch email address is ucu.swest@gmail.com and members are welcome to contact us anytime.

Tony Staunton chair SWRMB

1. Branch meetings.

We are following National Guidance that most UCU meetings and events are currently taking place online. See <https://www.ucu.org.uk/events>

A branch meeting is planned for Tuesday 6th June.

It is yet to be decided if this will be a zoom meeting. Papers will be distributed to members in time for the meeting.

We will continue with the minimum requirements in the guidelines by keeping in regular contact with our members by email.

2. Welcome to all members new to this branch since the previous newsletter.

Julie Wintrup transferred in from UCU Central. "I'm enjoying reading the newsletters and look forward to supporting the strikes in whatever way we can."

.....

Peter Hugh joined the branch having retired from teaching Mathematics at South Gloucestershire & Stroud College.

Only those wishing to appear in the list are included. If you have any suggestions for the newsletter we are happy to hear from you.

Newsletters: these newsletters are sent to all branch members for whom we have email addresses.

Email addresses: UCU encourages us to use our home email when we retire.

For more information please contact:

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or contact the officers below:

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3. National Pensioners Convention

The NPC website <https://www.npcuk.org/>



4. News from around the SW region.

Since I guess we have all arrived here, in SW RMB, via the route of FE and HE, I thought members might like to hear how our colleagues who are still working are faring, especially when it is good news.

In this edition I mention Bath and two in Bristol because that is the local news I get. I look forward to hearing from you about good news from your local colleges and universities for inclusion in the September and subsequent branch newsletters.

Congratulations to the staff of City of Bristol College who received (Jan 2023) a Good inspection rating. I read this in the local magazine, Bishopston Voice.
https://issuu.com/keynshamvoice/docs/bishopston_april_2023-2

The college was formed in 1996 when Brunel College merged with South Bristol College. It subsequently merged with Soundwell College and smaller establishments such as the College of Care and Early Years Education. Many of our branch members worked at these establishments.

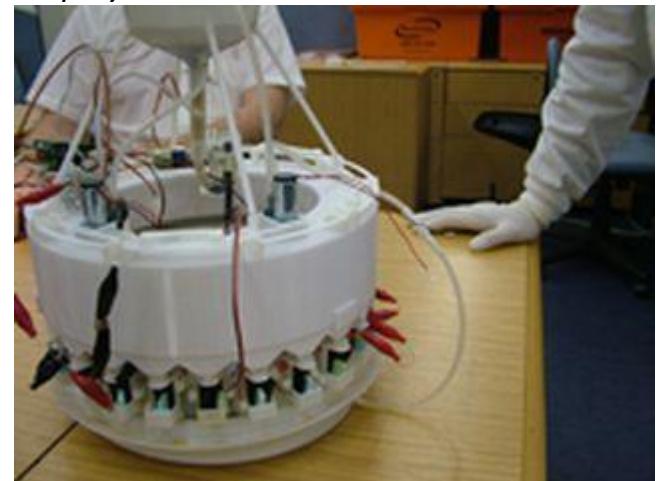


Ofsted praised the way that staff and students collectively create a culture where students and apprentices can be themselves. *"Teachers and other college staff foster mutual trust and respect. Students and apprentices are keen to learn and are supportive of each other in their learning. They enjoy their lessons and are motivated."*

The report said that teachers have extensive subject knowledge and experience and recognises the important role that the college plays in the city of Bristol and beyond.

The full report can be viewed on the Ofsted website
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/131094>

Congratulations to the staff of UWE Bristol whose degree apprenticeships programme was praised by Ofsted inspectors for its provision with 2,300 learners across 25 apprenticeship standards including advanced engineering, built environment, construction, health, applied science, protective services and business management. UWE has a long history of working with industries in the region. Steve West (VC) said *"it is a testament to the hard work of staff, partners and employers".*



We in this branch know who puts in the hardest work.

Ground-breaking anti-casualisation agreement at the University of Bath

University of Bath UCU has signed an agreement on a range of anti-casualisation issues with their employer. The agreement will benefit 286 staff immediately with a further 181 gaining in the following two years. Here are just a couple of the highlights:

The agreement commits to offering all postgraduate researchers who teach (GTAs) at least 0.1 FTE, a fractional salaried post with a commitment to working towards extending this to those on less than 0.1 FTE



An approach that UCU have been campaigning for generally will be launched where all members of research groups will be moved onto open-ended contracts, with a timeline to see further roll-outs following evaluations of the initial pilots (one is already up and running). If the pilots are successful, the agreement commits to a roll-out of this approach in 2024/25. This would be a first in the higher education sector and its importance cannot be over-stated.

Congratulations to Bath UCU and to all those involved in the negotiations that secured this agreement, including the fantastic local team and UCU South West England regional support official, Catriona Scott.

Campaigns Team UCU.

5. Nurse and Midwife Education.

This is a contribution to our newsletter from a retired but still active member of Unison; Jackie writes a blog for Protect our NHS.

It is estimated that student nurses will leave university with a debt approaching £45,800. How did it come to this?

Grants and bursaries were once vital tools in encouraging students to train to become the future nurses and midwives. Along with thousands of other NHS nurses my training to be a nurse and midwife in

the 1980s was hospital-based and for me it was at Bristol Royal Infirmary. In those days you were paid a monthly wage and offered cheap subsidised accommodation as well.

After a variety of changes to the nurse training curriculum over the following decades by 2013 the government announced that all registered nurses were to be graduates to ‘deliver high quality health care in the transformed NHS’ (announced by Health Minister Ann Keen in 2009).



In 2015 George Osborne the then Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that grants for student midwives and nurses would be scrapped and replaced by loans. Osborne said that this would save around £800 million a year in government spending. Student nurses and midwives would have their tuition fees grants axed and replaced by loans and they would stop receiving bursaries.

The Royal College of Nursing (who are now leading a pay-starved profession in the first national nurses strike) said the move would place the NHS in a ‘precarious position’. The then RCN General Secretary, Janet Davies, said the scrapping of bursaries could deter potential students from taking up nursing.

Following a year on year drop in the number of student nurse applicants from

2016 onwards, the Tories rolled back on their austerity changes and reintroduced a £5000 per year maintenance grant (with another £3000 for those working in shortage areas such as mental health) but students would still have to take out a loan for tuition fees and who can possibly live on £5000 per year during a cost of living crisis? So yet more loans and debt. Prior to 2016 the bursary was worth up to £16,454 per annum and the government covered tuition fees.

Now cynics amongst us may wonder if the loading up of debt on student nurses and midwives happening side by side the ceaseless outsourcing of NHS services might all be connected? A government which has a limited commitment to an NHS free at the point of use, with a troubling attitude to private healthcare and with an inadequate workforce plan, may not see an immediate need to recruit and retain nurses. We currently have an estimated vacancy rate of over 47,000 nurses and midwives.

The two groups of would-be nurses and midwives hardest hit by these changes are mature students and students who are already graduates. These two groups are vital – mature students with rich life experience and in many cases actual frontline nursing experience as Health Care Assistants and postgraduate students bringing with them experience in other fields. Both are unwilling and unable to get into huge (often double) debt.

It is estimated that student nurses will leave university with a debt approaching £45,800. Figures have just been released which show that the number of applications to study nursing for the coming academic year have fallen by 20%. The nursing and midwifery drop-out rate

is one in three with the most cited reason debt and finances.

With the scandalous shortage of nurses and midwives who will give NHS patients the expert care they deserve? This government and the next government (whatever party is in power) must fix this unfair and dangerous system now and nurse and midwife education must be made free again with bursaries that people can actually live on.

This is the only way we can protect our NHS.

You can read more about this , fully referenced at

<https://protectournhs.wordpress.com/2023/02/15/nurse-and-midwife-education-must-be-made-free-again-with-bursaries-that-people-can-actually-live-on/>

Jackie Haskins
(on behalf of Protect Our NHS)

6. Betty Boothroyd obituary, Guardian some extracts.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/fb/27/lady-betty-boothroyd-obituary>

Betty Boothroyd, Lady Boothroyd, died in Feb. 2023 aged 93. She overturned more than 700 years of parliamentary tradition in 1992 when she became the first woman to be elected speaker of the House of Commons.

Boothroyd was an early political activist. Her parents, Archibald and Mary, were members of the Labour party and the Textile Workers' Union on which they relied for the protection of their jobs in the heavy woollen industry in the old West Riding. They did not always have

work, although Mary, a weaver, was more often employed than her husband – because her wages, as a woman, were less.

After her election as an MP, Boothroyd made a feisty maiden speech, ignoring what had previously been the convention to avoid controversy when first contributing to a parliamentary debate.



She claimed to be able to speak for “ordinary working people” and attacked the then Conservative government for its failure to alleviate the injustice of the two-tier society that existed in the UK.

7. The history of May Day trade union marches in Britain.

This article has been produced using ChatGPT which was developed by Open AI and released in November 2022. ChatGPT is a member of the generative pre-trained transformer (GPT) family of language models. It is currently made available to anyone to use, so I asked it “What is the history of May Day trade union marches in Britain?”

May Day has long been associated with the labour movement and workers' rights in Britain. The history of May Day trade union marches dates back to the late 19th century, when the holiday was established as an international workers' day.

The first May Day march in Britain took place in 1890, when tens of thousands of workers across the country took to the streets to demand an eight-hour workday.

The march was organized by the Social Democratic Federation and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and was held in Hyde Park, London. Similar marches were held in other cities across the country.

In the following years, May Day became an important annual event for the labour movement in Britain, with trade unions organizing large marches and rallies to demand better working conditions, higher wages, and other rights for workers.

May Day marches were also an opportunity for workers to show solidarity with their counterparts in other countries. For example, during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, May Day marches in Britain often included calls for support for the Spanish Republic.

In the post-World War II era, May Day became less of a focus for trade union activity in Britain, as the Labour Party became the dominant force in British politics and workers' rights were enshrined in law. However, May Day marches continue to be held in some cities in the UK, often with a focus on international solidarity and the struggle for workers' rights around the world.

CHATGPT April 2023.

Caveat lector. The article has been generated by a computer so whatever it produces cannot be taken at face value as it is not ‘refereed’. But you can check it out for accuracy by listening to [this talk by Bristol Radical History Group](#) from 2012 on the history of May Day.



Getting ready for MayDay march in Bristol 2016

Jo Corke SW RMB

8. From The Archives.

Sometimes, surfing the internet to find things of interest to share with you, I see a name I recognise; or in this case two names; Bevis Miller and Ron Press.

Bevis Miller is a member of our branch and gave us a presentation at a branch meeting in June 2017, “The case against Trident”.

I worked at UWE for many years and Ron Press was always at our NATFHE (as was) branch meetings. From Ron I heard about the importance of the Bristol Trades Union Council and the Bristol Anti-Apartheid Movement.

The West Country has a strong connection to the struggle against Apartheid, through the story of the “London Recruits”, who smuggled “leaflet bombs” into South Africa, which harmlessly exploded in built-up cities to distribute propaganda giving hope to the locals that the African National Congress (ANC) were still active and influential, even with their leadership forced into exile.

Ron Press, one of the exiled South Africans, and lifetime member of Bristol

Trades Union Council and secretary of the Bristol Anti-Apartheid Movement, designed, built and tested these devices in the West Country, even writing of an earlier test of rocket-propelled leaflet distribution, scattering papers over the Ashley Down Allotments.

Ken Keable, and Bevis Miller, at the University of Bristol and member of the Bristol, Bath & Gloucester Branch of the Party, were two of the “respectable” looking white youngsters living in London at the time who were sent to deploy the devices so as to avoid suspicion.

Ron, Bevis and many more colleagues appear in Red Lives, 2020 by Manifesto Press Cooperative Limited in cooperation with the Communist Party of Britain.

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Jo Corke SW membership

9. Campaigning for outstanding bus services.

**Saturday 17 June 2023,
11am – 4pm
In person in York and on Zoom.**

Our privatised bus services are failing us:

Unreliable and infrequent services, high fares, even more cuts threatened.

This conference will discuss how we can build effective campaigns locally and nationally by sharing experiences from around the UK.

The opening plenary session with national speakers will be followed by workshops to develop future activities.

To register for the event please go to our website:
yhpctransportaction.wordpress.com
Or email: yandhpc@gmail.com
Or phone: 07837 996 888

Liz Lawrence York & Humberside RMB

My Pension Online is the Teachers' Pension online portal designed to help you manage your pension more efficiently.

<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/faqs/my-pension-online/my-pension-online.aspx>

11. Editor's Note.

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

Jo Corke SW RMB



END