



Newsletter

South West Retired Members Branch

No.36 September 2024

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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.

1. Branch meetings.

A branch meeting is planned for Tuesday 8th October 2024.

It is hoped that this will be a hybrid meeting at an **EXETER** venue; the zoom link and papers will be distributed to members in time for the meeting.

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

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

New members are asked if they would like to introduce themselves.

Helen Davies joins us from The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama. School. "I'd like to join the next meeting hopefully in person and, if not, Zoom."

Jeanette Thomas joins us from the City of Bristol College. "I do hope to attend future meetings."

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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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and Mike Farmer

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3. **Catriona Scott**

It was with great sadness that we heard that Catriona Scott, our colleague at UCU Exeter, passed away unexpectedly in April 2024.



A celebration for Catriona, in Exeter on July 6th 2024, was attended by over 50 people and many spoke of the wonderful comrade, friend and colleague we have all lost so cruelly.

Nick, Morin, Alison, Rob and Becca.
SW Regional Office

4. Cheltenham hosted the “Protect the Right to Strike”

A march and rally through Cheltenham was held on the 40th anniversary of the union ban at GCHQ, on 27th January 2024.



Photo credits @JessHurd TUC
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/protectrighttostrike>

Update: 14.8.24. Last week, the government committed to formally repealing the [Minimum Service Levels \(Strikes\) Act](#).

This is an important milestone in the campaign to protect the right to strike.

Hundreds of thousands signed petitions, lobbied MPs and protested. Frontline workers sent letters to peers in the House of Lords which helped delay the bill in Parliament.

When the law was passed July last year, it was made clear to the Conservatives and employers that the entire trade union movement would rally behind any worker sacked for exercising their fundamental right to strike.

It says a lot that since the law passed, not a single employer has not used this unworkable anti-strikes legislation.

The newly elected Labour government has told all public sector employers to

ignore the Minimum Service Levels Act and they have committed to repealing the legislation through the Employment Rights Bill, which will be tabled in parliament within the Government's first 100 days.

This was made possible by many who contributed in helping to secure this repeal.

Tanbir Siddique
Secretary
Cheltenham and District Trades Union
Council

5. Protecting Our Pensions.

Mike Farmer, our branch secretary wrote (1st July 2024) to Max Wilkinson who was subsequently (2024) elected Liberal Democrat MP for Cheltenham,

I am secretary of the UCU Retired Members' Branch for the whole of the South West. You may also be aware that I worked for the University of Gloucestershire and its predecessor institutions for 38 years, until my retirement in 2006. I was also a Governor of the national Further Education Staff College at Coombe Lodge in the 1980s (until it was closed by the Thatcher government), and a governor of Stroud College for 10 years 2002-2012, including being Chair for four years. So I think I can claim to know something about governance in further and higher education.

You will recall at the Trades Council hustings that I asked a question about your views about the establishment of a Subsidiary Company (SubCo) by UoG, called the University of Gloucestershire Professional Services

Litd (UoGPSL) and in particular its purpose of taking Professional Services staff out of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

You can see more information about UoGPSL at the University's website here <https://www.glos.ac.uk/governance-and-structure/university-of-gloucestershire-professional-services-limited/>

You made the point at the hustings that it is possible for Local Authorities to set up SubCos and for their staff to remain in the LGPS (I assume you may have been thinking of UBICO in this context). However, as these documents make clear, this is not the policy adopted by the University of Gloucestershire.

We are all aware of the funding crisis in higher education, and pressures on Universities to save money. However, in the case of the SubCo established by the University of Gloucestershire, 246 staff are paying for these savings by a deterioration in the pension arrangements, which will impact on their future pensions for the rest of their lives. Since these are non-teaching staff they will include staff on the lowest grades and pay rates at the University. They may well also be predominately female.

The only other University in the South West that has contemplated setting up a SubCo was Falmouth University, which it did for teaching staff.

However, in 2023, following the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor, the University had second thoughts and transferred all staff back on to the appropriate nation pension scheme (Teachers Pension Scheme or TPS).

Here is the UCU Press Release announcing the ending of the dispute with Falmouth

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13014/Falmouth-University-staff-brought-in-house-and-onto-Teachers-Pension-Scheme>

As I am sure you are aware, there has been a vogue for NHS trusts to set up SubCos, for similar reasons, including the Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust. Many of these Trusts are now reviewing their decisions and are coming to the conclusion that they do not work. It is a pity that the University of Gloucestershire did not talk to the Trust before going down the SubCo route.

Mike Farmer SW RMB

6. Branch delegates needed.

The Branch has a number of vacancies following our AGM. We would welcome any volunteers to fill these roles.

Trades Council delegates:

Exeter Trades Council

https://www.facebook.com/ExeterTradesCouncil/?locale=en_GB

Bridgwater Trades Council

<http://www.bwdtuc.org.uk/node/1>

Torbay & S Devon Trades Council

<https://www.facebook.com/torbaytuc/>

N Devon & Torridge Trades Council (this is a new Trades Council)

<https://www.facebook.com/IlfacombeandDistrictTUC/>

National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) delegate(s) for Devon NPC

<https://www.npcuk.org/regions>

Mike Farmer SWRMB

7. General Election and Equality hopes.

Rachel Reeves 5.7.24 chancellor.

It is also a huge privilege to be the first ever female chancellor of the exchequer.

So every young woman and girl watching this: Let today show that there should be no ceilings on your ambitions, your hopes, or your dreams.

But there is a deeper responsibility too: to women whose work is too often undervalued, who have borne the brunt of inequality, and whose lives and interests are too often excluded from economic policymaking.

Together, we are going to change that.

Rachel Reeves MP
Leeds West and Pudsey

8. From the Archives

Something I learned recently.

On 1 April 1914 teachers Tom and Annie Higdon were dismissed from their posts in the rural village of Burston and with it began the 'longest strike in history'. On that day the children marched around the village with cards hanging from their necks demanding 'we want our teachers back'. Sixty-six of the local children had gone out on strike in support of their teachers, and the boycott of the local authority school lasted for the next twenty-five years. (**Yes that's 1914 to 1939.**)



Photo Wikipedia.

The annual Burston strike school rally is held on the first Sunday in September in Burston, Norfolk. It is a day when regional trade unions take over the village green with stalls, guest speakers, live music with a licensed bar and food outlets.

<https://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/article/31315/The-Burston-Strike-School>

Jo Corke SW RMB

9. Mendip TUC honours Chris Dando, Terry Reakes, AJ Cook and the Tolpuddle Martyrs!

18 trades unionists, delegates and supporters of Mendip TUC, attended our special meeting in Radstock last night to honour Chris Dando's long and distinguished contribution to the trade union and Labour movement in the South West.

Labour Councillors Robin Moss, **Eleanor Jackson (SWRMB)** and Lesley Mansell were there to join in the celebrations.



Alex Smeele: A photo of one of the Durham Miners' Associations' banners which features Michael Watt in recognition of his support of the Durham Miners' Gala. CC.

The meeting also welcomed veteran Radstock socialist Terry Reakes, whom Chris described as his mentor.

Chris Dando's father Rex was a Somerset colliery electrician and militant socialist, who would have grown up with stories of Arthur Cook, the latter having a place on Mendip TUC's marvellous hand-painted new banner.

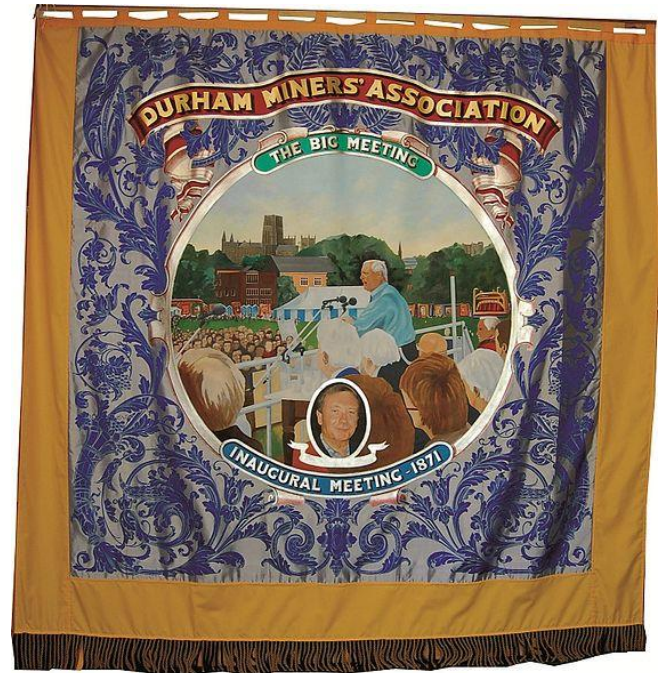
AJ Cook, (1883 – 1931) not for the first time, came to Somerset in 1926 to persuade miners at Dunkerton Colliery just North of Peasedown, not to scab and return to work without a national agreement.

Thanks to Unite delegate Fergus Brown, we were able to welcome those who wished to join on-line via Zoom link.

Dave Chapple Mendip TUC

10. Durham Miners' Gala, 13 July 2024.

In the fortieth anniversary year of the 1984-85 strike, on Saturday 13 July, more than 200,000 people packed the streets of Durham alongside more than 60 Durham Miners banners, more than 50 bands and over 100 trade union banners form across the country and beyond. This annual Gala is a source of strength and inspiration for us all. It raises our spirits and demonstrates our unity.



There was a Banner exhibition at Wakefield cathedral.

<https://experiencewakefield.co.uk/event/exhibition-of-trade-union-banners/>

There is also a Banner Exhibition at the Peoples History Museum in Manchester.

<https://phm.org.uk/peoples-history-museum-marks-the-40th-anniversary-of-the-miners-strike-1984-to-1985/>

The Miners' Strike (1984 to 1985) is represented in the **2024 Banner Exhibition** (until 30 December 2024), with banners being hugely significant to mining heritage as a visual symbol of strength and unity that would have been paraded in celebration by collieries and carried in solidarity by unions.

11. The State Pension.

Philip Burgess produces regular comments on the ONS Monthly Inflation data. These go to the UCU Retired Members Standing Committee. If you would like to get Philip's regular mailing, let us know and we'll arrange that for you. Below is an extract (dated 14.8.24) for our newsletter.

As you may have noticed (although it received very little press coverage) during the election campaign Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) observed that while politicians were keen to talk about how to index pensions to compensate for inflation, they were too cowardly (that's my word rather than his) to address the real issue, which was the appropriate level of the State Pension as a proportion of the average wage. They were happy to tinker around with indexation rates, but the various components of the Triple Lock only affected pensions after the manner of a "random walk". There was no consideration of where this walk was intended to finish up or how long it would take to get there. Regular recipients of my commentaries will notice that I have been boring away at this point for some time.

I take issue with Paul Johnson on a number of his arguments but I think that, in this case, he has hit a vital nail squarely on the head. In my opinion, we should take up this question with the new Government. They have disadvantaged many pensioners by failing to index tax thresholds and restricting the Winter Fuel Payment. The latter can be seen as a serious breach to the principle of universal benefits.

So, now is surely the time to redress the balance by facing up squarely to the issue of what should be the

appropriate level of the State Pension, and when the government plans to achieve it.

If we can induce the Government to address this crucial issue of principle, it would, in my opinion, do more to benefit current and future pensioners than any victories we might achieve on individual grievances, important though they would undoubtedly be. The young people of today (i.e. the pensioners of tomorrow) would, I hope, see the justice in our campaign. They would therefore not be side-tracked into believing that, for example, the Winter Fuel Payment is an unjustified inter-generational perk which benefits the old at the expense of the young. That is the dangerous and misleading narrative that we should try to avoid.

Philip Burgess
UCU RMSC

12. Dave and Glen's Invitation to a triple anniversary celebration at Bridgwater Arts Centre: Glen and Dave's 40th anniversary.

On Friday 1st November, from 6pm to midnight, Bridgwater Arts Centre will be hosting a triple anniversary celebrating:

1. The astonishing bravery and resilience of British mining communities, led by the National Union of Mineworkers, in sustaining a principled strike against pit closures for a whole year from March 1984.
2. The 50th anniversary of the UK's oldest radical theatre group, Banner Theatre, and its charismatic founder, Birmingham's Dave Rogers.
3. Glen Burrows and Dave Chapple first met at a Campaign for Nuclear

Disarmament/CND event in Bridgwater in 1983, and got together whilst campaigning for the NUM in Bridgwater in June 1984, so we'd like to celebrate, with all our friends, our 40 years together.

Hope you can join us!

Please let Dave know if you can come.

Dave Chapple
davidchapple2020@gmail.com
Mendip TC

13. Teachers' Pensions | For Members

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

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



14. Ukraine Independence Day 24th August.

“A referendum on the Act of Declaration of Independence was held in Ukraine on 1 December 1991. An overwhelming majority of 92.3% of voters approved the declaration of independence made by the Verkhovna Rada on 24 August 1991.”

Wikipedia.



Banksy Stamp; photo Copyright Jo Corke

15. Editor's Note.

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome. Jo Corke SW RMB

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