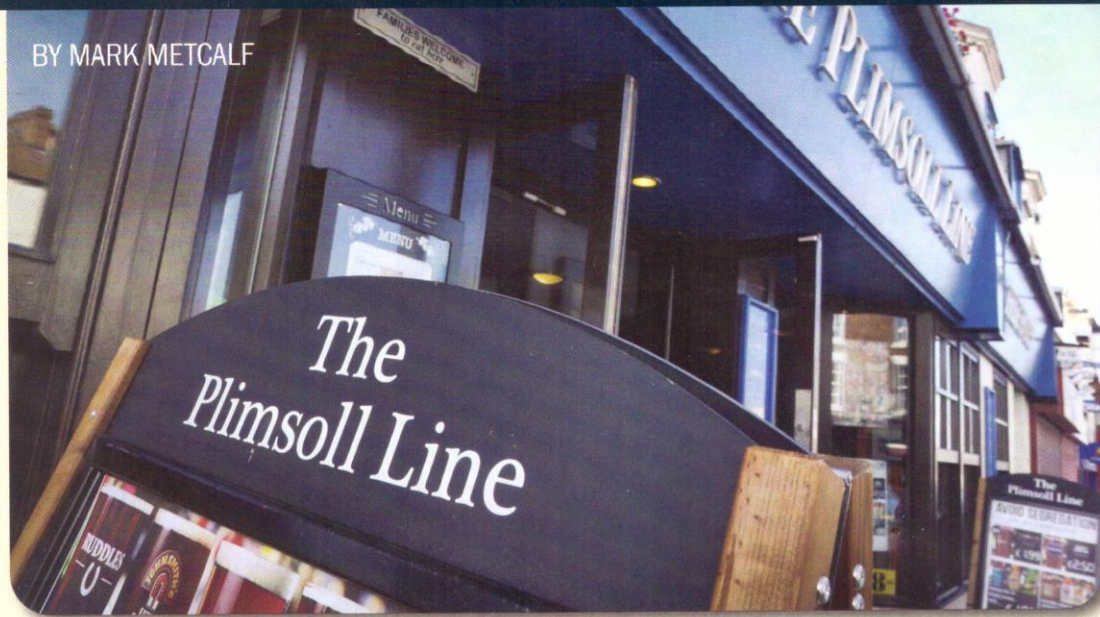


BY MARK METCALF



## The seafarers' champion

The Plimsoll Line  
Redcar

Trade unionists having a pint in the Plimsoll Line in Redcar on Teesside can rest content knowing that the man responsible for devising a load-line to prevent ships being overloaded is one of our own.

Samuel Plimsoll, born in 1824, was voyaging by sea from London to Redcar in 1864 when a severe storm delayed his arrival by several hours and wrecked four ships. He recognised that his vessel had been properly surveyed.

No such luck for the perished sailors, whose contracts meant that if they refused to sail on an unseaworthy vessel they could be, and were, imprisoned. It was clear that shipowners, which included numerous MPs, were content to send unseaworthy, overloaded and significantly, over-insured, boats to sea whatever the consequences for the crews.

Plimsoll, who had previously won the miners' approval for seeking methods to prevent colliery disasters by detecting fire damp, was determined to end the horrors of the 'coffin-ships.'

When he was elected as the Liberal MP for Derby in 1867 he vainly sought to have a bill passed introducing a safe load line in ships. When Plimsoll was told in 1875 by the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, that the Merchant Shipping Bill was being dropped by the government his angry response resulted in Plimsoll being suspended from the Commons.

Plimsoll though had the public with him as they knew that over a thousand merchant seamen were being drowned each year. In 1876 the Board of Trade was given inspection powers for ships and the Plimsoll line or mark was introduced.

Plimsoll's maiden Parliamentary speech in 1868 had put forward the case for a repeal of the criminal laws against trade unions. The 1871 Trades Union Act that followed legalised trade unions for the first time in the UK and meant members could not be liable for criminal prosecution for taking strike action.

After voluntarily leaving Parliament in 1880, Plimsoll became in 1887 the first president of the newly inaugurated National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU), where he drew attention to the horrific conditions of animals being transported under appalling, over-crowded conditions.

Plimsoll died in 1898. In 1929 the National Union of Seamen, the NSFU's successor, erected a memorial to Plimsoll on London's Embankment Gardens. There is also a Plimsoll Road in many towns and a Plimsoll Bar in Bristol.

The Plimsoll Line in Redcar is a Wetherspoon's pub on the High Street and where there is also a blue plaque erected by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council in honour of Samuel Plimsoll *The Sailors Friend*. There is also a plaque commemorating Plimsoll opposite his childhood home in Sheffield.

# HOW CORRUPT IS BRITAIN?



*Edited by David Whyte published by Pluto Press*

Bribery may not routinely happen in British police forces, public services or in government.

But, as a wide range of campaigners demonstrate in this book there is endemic institutional corruption and that Parliament, regulatory bodies and the police are so implicated in this they cannot hold others to account.

So successful has been the neoliberal project in establishing corporate control, even in liberal democracies, that when the banks collapsed because of their own dodgy, frequently illegal, practices in 2008 and Chancellor Alistair Darling stepped in with £500bn of public funding, he didn't even reference Parliament.

Instead he negotiated with a hand-picked group of elite bankers whilst eating a Balti take-away.

Five years later David Cameron flew 131 business leaders to China on a government trade mission. The delegation included companies involved in bribery allegations connected to Chinese officials

plus a broker fined for participating in the LIBOR rate-fixing scandal.

Cameron defended the participating firms because he knew that if he vetted them for their unethical practices then the trade delegation would have been much smaller.

The 'big four' accountancy firms – Deloitte & Touche, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), Ernst & Young and KPMG – assist many UK companies to avoid paying tax, including income tax on bonuses for an elite that includes corporate executives now earning 160 times the average UK worker's pay. This is 20 times the 18:1 ratio in 1980.

With its overseas territories and crown dependencies, Britain's role as the world's number one purveyor of financial secrecy ensures the City of London controls 25 per cent of the global market for offshore financial services. This helps conceal tax evasion and avoidance, estimated at £120bn in 2012/13.

In the US, the big four, who, of course, gave the UK banks a clean bill of health

when they audited them before the crash, have all been fined for corrupt practices. There has been no effective retribution here though.

What may have helped the four was donating £3.5m to the Tories before the 2010 General Election plus previous hefty donations to New Labour when it was in government.

There is also the 'revolving door', now common right across the state and corporate sector, whereby senior figures move from the private to public sectors, and vice-versa.

Former PwC staffer Mark Hoban became treasury minister responsible for oversight of tax laws between 2010-12. PwC partner Richard Abadie has been head of private finance policy at the Treasury.

What concerns the book's writers is that the public will regard corruption as unstoppable and something they can do nothing about. Unite remains committed to ensuring this will not be the case.



Mark Harvey

# Trespassers saluted

Access fighters Benny Rothman and friends remembered

A plaque commemorating the arrest of leading members of the 1932 Kinder Mass Trespass was unveiled at the fourth annual Spirit of Kinder Day held on April 23 at the Royal Hotel, Hayfield. The plaque will eventually be part of a Trespass Trail.

It is universally accepted that the trespass, which started and ended in Hayfield, by 400 mainly young people paved the way for the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Way Act and ultimately the *Right to Roam* Countryside and Rights of Way Act of 2000.

**Jan Gillett**, whose father, **Tona**, was one of the five trespassers imprisoned, and 86-year-old **Alan Edwards** of Stockport, who at aged two had been carried there by his elder sister, were helped to unveil the plaque by local children from Hayfield Primary School, who had earlier delighted the 100 plus crowd with their moving readings.

This followed a school walk on Kinder that had clearly left a deep impression on the children and an exhibition of their work was displayed at the Village Hall alongside some impressive paintings of Kinder by local artist **Sarah Morley**.

**Dave Toft** of the Kinder Visitor Centre Group, which jointly organised the event with the Kinder and High Peak Advisory Committee, noted that while Kinder Scout had helped establish that access to the moors was now a "birthright of all children...just 8.7 per cent of England has free access. As **Benny Rothman** would say, our work is not complete."

Rothman led the ramblers on that historic day. Rothman, who served five months in prison for his part in the trespass, features prominently in the history one of Unite's predecessor unions, the Amalgamated Engineering Union. (AEU)

**Benny Rothman** played a crucial leadership role in the successful struggle in the 1930s around Manchester against Mosley's fascist Blackshirts. He organised hundreds of youngsters, including many from the Jewish community he grew up in, to physically oppose Mosley's thugs whenever they appeared.

Rothman had previously joined the Communist Party of Great Britain and was convinced that a new system based on the common ownership of the means of production offered the working class the opportunity to rule and with it an end to exploitation.

I recalled how as an AEU steward Rothman represented nearly 2,000 workers on the Works Committee at 'Metro-Vicks' during the Second World War. He upped pay rates and successfully tackled incidents of racism and pay discrimination against women. He performed nearly every trade union role possible when he worked at Kearns-Richards from 1956 until he retired in 1976.

And even in retirement Benny Rothman was a pocket sized dynamo with his support for the Grunwick strikers and the miners in 1984/85.

# Workers forced to pick cotton against will

When the World Bank invested \$500m in Uzbekistan's agricultural sector it gained a commitment from the Uzbek government that there would no systematic use of forced labour during the harvesting of the cotton crop.

Yet a new report – *The cover up: Whitewashing Uzbekistan's white gold* – from the Uzbek-German Forum for Health Rights (UGF), a German based NGO, has revealed that over a million people were forced to pick cotton from fields that farmers were forced to grow the produce on. Farmers who failed to meet production targets had their land taken back by the government. Bailiffs and police were ordered to confiscate farmers' property.

To harvest cotton, students, teachers, doctors, nurses and government agency employees were commanded against their will and under the threat of losing their jobs to work shifts of between 15-40 days.

The climate of fear stopped people from using a complaint hot line and speaking

openly to the monitoring teams from the International Labour Organisation, who later concluded that forced labour remains a problem and reforms are required. Meanwhile there was a campaign of harassment and persecution against independent monitors.

The UGF has called for the World Bank to suspend payments to the Uzbek government until there is meaningful progress on stopping forced labour and it wants the European Union to exclude Uzbekistan from benefiting from trade preferences under the Generalised System of Preference. It wants companies that use cotton to pledge not to knowingly source Uzbek cotton for manufacturing.

The report was published in advance of a visit by Bournemouth East MP Tobias Ellwood to Uzbekistan. Ellwood is the Middle East Minister and his visit coincided with criticism of him by the Commons foreign affairs select committee for what it said was "plainly a perception" that human rights has been downgraded by the government when

dealing with Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Ellwood appeared to confirm his lack of concern for human rights when he failed to include anything about the subject on his twitter feed during his Uzbekistan visit and the subsequent press statement by the Uzbek government also made no reference to human rights.

Following criticism, a Foreign Office spokesperson later claimed though that Ellwood had "raised the issue at a senior level in a meeting... encouraging progress on human rights forms an important part of the UK's work in Uzbekistan."

However, a *Landworker* request to Ellwood asking if there is a paper trail to prove he really did raise human rights with the Uzbekistan government has remained unanswered. Ellwood also failed to respond to a series of questions relating to the UGF report and whether he was concerned enough about its contents to now raise it with the Uzbekistan government.

Working against their will – Uzbekistan's cotton pickers



BY MARK METCALF



Mark Harvey

## Raising the Standard

The Standard of Freedom, Skircoat Green, Halifax, West Yorks

The Standard of Freedom draws its name from former landlord **John Ashworth** (above) who said around 1856, "The people of Skircoat Green shall join in that march of freedom and I shall raise the Standard of Freedom at this Inn."

Ashworth was referring to Chartism, the first working-class movement. Chartism sought to end exploitation by ensuring working class representation in Parliament. With just 8 per cent of men possessing the vote these were radical demands.

1837 had heralded in the New Poor Law and over the next five years petitions and strikes continued as newly industrialised workers, including many children, continued to be killed in factories, mills and mines. Parliament remained indifferent.

Following the defeat of another petition, three million strong in early August 1842, miners walked-out in the Black Country, which led to lay-offs in the neighbouring Potteries.

Within days, workers in Lancashire were being laid-off and the Chartists incited more walk-outs. There were fatal consequences when workers and the military clashed at Preston and Blackburn.

The fight moved to Yorkshire when on August 15, 1842, thousands were at Skircoat Green on the outskirts of Halifax to greet the Lancashire marchers. The authorities had decided to meet force with force with 200 special constables sworn in to serve alongside 150 soldiers.

Yet with thousands arriving from across Yorkshire this was never

going to be sufficient to prevent the mills of Halifax from being stopped from working by the protestors, who entered and removed a few bolts or 'plugs' in the boilers to prevent steam from being raised.

Halifax was at a standstill and a large meeting was held on Skircoat Moor the following morning. As the crowd dispersed they became aware that those arrested the previous day would be escorted to nearby Elland railway station. Missiles were thrown at troops and, at least, three were badly injured in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to release those arrested.

Following the stoning a number of the crowd later re-entered Halifax town centre where the riot act was read and troops, still smarting from the humiliation that morning, fired into the crowd before attacking it with their sabres.

**Henry Walton**, from Skircoat Green, received a fatal sabre head cut. By the time the military had finished, hundreds had been injured and, at least, six were dead. Many protestors were arrested and some served terms of imprisonment that ultimately killed them. Such was the determination of those then in power to prevent working class people obtaining the vote.

**Malcolm Whittaker** (pictured), current landlord of the Standard of Freedom, likes to celebrate its history. "On August 16 I will again be stepping up on the pub roof to unfurl the Standard of Freedom Flag. I took over the pub with my wife Kath around 18 months ago and I have significantly refurbished it with pride of place being the Chartist Wall."

Middlewich today



## A rural revolution

*A Rural Revolution*, by David R Roberts

This highly readable book investigates the lives of one rural family to illustrate the radical impact of the industrial revolution on local communities that survived being devoured by the expanding urban areas.

Central to the changes were canal building, road improvements and the railways. The book starts in 1763 with the birth of **Job Sproston** in Middlewich, a Cheshire town surrounded by farm land.

Job became a boat builder as did his son, Thomas. Narrowboats were a new invention that were perfectly suited for cheaply transporting raw materials, such as coal and clay, and finished goods, including pottery, along artificial navigable canal waterways.

From the 1770s, canal building boomed as navigable rivers became interconnected. Inland areas were linked to coastal ports as Britain became an exporting nation. Farm workers and, later, many Scots and Irish, obtained employment as canal construction labourers.

Others found work transporting the goods. Canal boatmen rented their boats and the work, often involving the whole

family, was hazardous and low paid.

New roads slashed the travelling time from Edinburgh to London from two weeks in the 1700s to two days a century later – but required road repairers. Many were drawn from local communities. Maintenance delays could have catastrophic consequences.

In March 1896, **William**, Job's grandson, was killed when he failed to avoid a pile of stones in the road and lost control of his horse drawn vehicle. William hit a similar vehicle coming the other way in the Staffordshire village of Little Haywood.

William and his first wife, **Elizabeth**, had 17 children, including **Christopher**, born in 1863, who worked as a farm labourer before becoming a tenant farmer, one of 230,000 in England and Wales, in 1900. William rented his land from the Earl of Litchfield.

Christopher married domestic servant **Ellen Morris**. The couple had seven

children. A tenant farmer was better off than a farm labourer, of which there were 881,000 in 1881, as the latter would be solely dependent on their wage, which was generally paid by the day or even at piece rates.

It was the heyday of the railways. With a total permanent national rail workforce of 650,000 in 1914, the railways provided significant male employment opportunities for rural areas. Half a century later the destruction of the national rail network hurt many rural communities particularly hard. Some never recovered.

Similarly there are no Sprostons now living in Little Haywood. Patriotism encouraged three to enlist in World War I. **Jack Sproston** died in India in 1918.

As job prospects fell in places like Little Hayfield, young adults moved into towns such as Stafford and Lichfield and occasionally further afield. Ellen died in 1953 when the family home was sold.

Order a personally signed copy of *A Rural Revolution* direct from the author ([davidrobertsbooks.co.uk](http://davidrobertsbooks.co.uk)) for £13.95 (with free UK delivery). You can pay by credit or debit card or with your PayPal account.

# CLOSED OR FRANCHISED OUT

The future looks bleak for the rural post office

The future of six main Post Offices in rural areas has been cast into doubt after they were named in January on a list of 37 branches to be closed and franchised. All six in Petersfield, Diss, Redruth, Lancing, Camborne and Ulverston play a major role in their local communities.

Unite represents the interests of 730 managers in the Post Office. Along with their colleagues in the Communication Workers Union (CWU) they took part in a series of strikes late last year in protest at job losses, the closure of a final salary pension scheme and franchising, under which 'partners' within retail outlets such as WHSmith are found.

The action was taken at the same time as the Tory government, the ultimate owners of the Post Office, undertook a consultation on the future of the Post Office network and for which Unite – and many others – submitted a considered response.

Unite expressed concerns about the failure of the Post Office 'to deliver a clearly articulated sustainable business plan' in which 'the ongoing provision of quality, secure, well paid jobs, via an efficient, sustainable and sought after Post office Network, is an important component of the UK postal industry.'

Additionally, 'quality of services or access to all Post Office products was not being taken into account' such that 'the general public are not always aware of services available' such as banking and cash withdrawal. The impact of separating the Royal Mail in April 2012 from the Post Office has made the latter "an unsustainable business in its own right" and has resulted in a 25 per cent drop in annual income from the government from £164m to £128m in 2016.

Yet the ink was hardly dry when the news of further franchising was announced. No timetable to find partners has been established. The Ulverston branch in Cumbria has seven employees, including one member of Unite.

The local Barrow and Furness Labour MP **John Woodcock** has denounced the proposals and told Landworker, "The post office in Ulverston has stood for hundreds of years and if the local community were deprived of this vital asset it would be a disaster for the town.

"I have sought guarantees from management that the service would not be lost, and it is worrying that those assurances have not been forthcoming.

"There is clearly a strong feeling in the town that people want to post office to

stay, and I will continue to campaign alongside Unite and the CWU to defend services and jobs in the weeks ahead."

A petition drawn up by Woodcock had attracted over 5,000 by mid-March.

**Brian Scott** is the Unite officer for the Post Office. "We will fight to preserve decently paid jobs and an effective, quality Post Office network. But the negative changes going on across the Post Office, along with the government reluctance to fund Post Office services means the picture looks less than rosy, especially as state funding is set to end next year.

"There is evidence that the quality of services and reliability in offices that have been franchised is less than that from the original Crown Office. Why? It is clear that as well as looking to pay their workers less in wages than experienced in the Post Office, there are problems with recruitment, training and retention of workers.

"In small franchised sub-Post Offices there are now longer hours than before but the owners are experiencing no increase in postal related trade. For the Post Office Network to move forward it requires a clear strategy to be developed in which franchising is re-examined," concludes Brian.



## Tears for taken comrades

Unite delegates see Colombia for themselves

Unite's **Debi Bell's** participation in a Unite delegation to Colombia in June may have reduced her to tears – but it has also confirmed how vital international solidarity is to progressive forces there.

Debi (above left), who sits on the Unite national food drink and tobacco sector committee, is the union's East Midlands region rep within Sainsbury's, where she has worked for 24 years as a commercial assistant.

Along with eight other Unite activists, Debi travelled to Colombia to discover why it is the most dangerous place anywhere for trade unionists and human rights defenders and how Justice for Colombia is providing essential international support that has led to some improvements.

The trip coincided with the rural workers union, FENSUAGRO's, 11th annual conference in Bogota. FENSUAGRO has around 80,000 members, but has lost around 1,500 who have been murdered.

Unite vice-president **Huber Ballesteros** and over 100 other

members are in jail, often without any charges against them. The union helped lead the 2013 mass strike that mobilised over a million people in protests against the devastating impact of free-trade agreements, privatisation and inequality-driven poverty.

The Unite delegation listened to a young farmer who the paramilitaries had targeted for assassination after they told him, without any evidence, they considered him a member of the FARC rebels, who have been fighting the government for 50 years.

"His family had lived on the land he owned for generations and as he did not want to appear a coward he was staying put. I don't know if he remains alive," said Debi.

"He told his tale because he wants to alert people from abroad and believes that international pressure and solidarity is vital in creating the conditions for ending human rights abuses in Colombia.

"Paramilitaries gain financial rewards, including holidays, for killing peasant farmers and young Colombian males

they declare as terrorists. Foreign multinationals, particularly companies involved in oil exploration, benefit by being able to appropriate land that becomes vacant," she added.

Debi was part of the Unite delegation that met the British Ambassador in Bogota and then top level ministers from the Colombian government.

"We presented them with our findings. This included the desire for them to respond positively to any fresh FARC ceasefire, which has since been announced and welcomed by 29 British MPs from four different parties after the government said they would also be taking steps to de-escalate the armed conflict.

"I felt we were listened to. I certainly hope so and the Colombian ambassador has agreed to meet us in Britain and that will be an opportunity to see if progress is being made.

"But there is still plenty to do. I would appeal to all Unite branches to affiliate to Justice for Colombia, which is doing marvellous work," added Debi.

For more information go to:  
[www.justiceforcolombia.org](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org)

# Peace in Colombia?

## 'Grave situation' for fragile peace

Unite assistant general secretary **Gail Cartmail's** "great joy" at the January prison release of the Colombian trade union and peasant farmer leader **Huber Ballesteros** is being tempered by worrying levels of violence that may affect the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) guerrillas last year.

In 2013, Ballesteros, vice-president of the 80,000 strong agricultural workers' union FENSUAGRO, 1,500 of whom have been murdered, mainly by paramilitary groups, was arrested on trumped-up rebellion and financing terrorism charges.

"Clearly arresting him – and many other activists before and since – was aimed at disrupting Huber's work and intimidating others looking to get involved," said Gail.

"My impression following his rightful release is that Huber has not been deterred by going to prison and remains up for the struggle to make his country a peaceful, democratic one.

"It is great news for him personally and everyone who cares about a better world," said Gail, who saw for herself

the extreme disparities in wealth between rich and poor in Colombia when she visited in 2009.

The British trade union movement – and Unite in particular – played a prominent role in exerting pressure on the government here and in Colombia to secure Ballesteros' release.

Much of this was co-ordinated by Justice for Colombia (JFC), a British NGO established by the trade union movement here 15 years ago. "The support was brilliant," states **Hasan Dodwell** of JFC.

JFC, which sought peace as part of a path towards social advance and greater equality, organised a letter that was signed by hundreds of politicians from Ireland, Britain and the USA backing the peace process. JFC also worked with Colombian civil society groups to ensure their voice was heard throughout the process.

The agreement was subsequently debated by Colombian Congress members, some of whom attempted to obstruct it and succeeded in March in making many changes to the original text aimed at setting an 'Integral System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and non-

Repetition.' Two changes stood out. The newly formed peace courts will not now examine the financing of paramilitary groups while possible sanctions may limit the right of FARC members to take part in the political system.

The debates took place against a background of intensified murderous attacks on civil society leaders and FARC members. One hundred and seventeen social leaders and human rights defenders were killed in 2016.

"These are extremely worrying developments" states Hasan bluntly. "There appears to be an intensification of violence by paramilitary groups, some of whom are reported to be moving into rural communities where they have previously had no presence.

"The Colombian government has been denying the political nature of the killings and this is casting doubt on their willingness under the peace agreement to protect community activists by tackling the paramilitaries.

"This is a grave situation and protection has to be ensured by the Colombian government for all those that are politically active."



For more visit [www.justiceforcolombia.org/](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org/)



## ***Bitter sweet – a taste of food to come?***

*Land, labour and food after Brexit, by Charlie Clutterbuck*

Unite member **Charlie Clutterbuck's** book, which in the light of Brexit, seeks converts for a radical new vision for food and farming.

Soil scientist Charlie has spent his whole working life in food and farming. He served for many years on the union's agricultural workers' national sector committee as well as representing the union on numerous bodies including the HSE.

Charlie's main concern has always been for workers' rights and protecting the soil so everyone can feed themselves. Since 1975, the percentage of the food and feed which comes from abroad has almost doubled from 25 to 50 per cent.

The NFU estimates by the mid-2040s the UK will only be able to produce enough food to feed 53 per cent of its population.

As Brexit nears, Charlie fears the Tory government's aim to boost food exports by up to £1bn annually may come up against two major problems.

He says, "The EU places a 18-20 per cent tariff on food from beyond its borders and so our products will be less competitive in our nearest market. Less will be sold. Entering new markets may not be easy as the US and China are significant players in many food markets."

Charlie is also dismissive of the £1bn target itself – which is to be made up mainly of beer, cider and whisky – and believes that post-Brexit more needs to be done to grow our own food. "The sum is just 1/66th of what we import. We can easily find ways of growing much more food here."

***Bitter sweet Brexit*** explains how this is possible – only if there are radical changes.

"Currently £3bn in subsidies goes to UK large landowners who receive £100 for each acre they own even if they leave it unused. I want this subsidy switched to labour. This will allow farmers to employ and train young people on multi-skill apprenticeships that include running a business, perhaps even co-operatively with others. It would also help if in advance

more was done in schools to educate children about the growing and cooking of food.

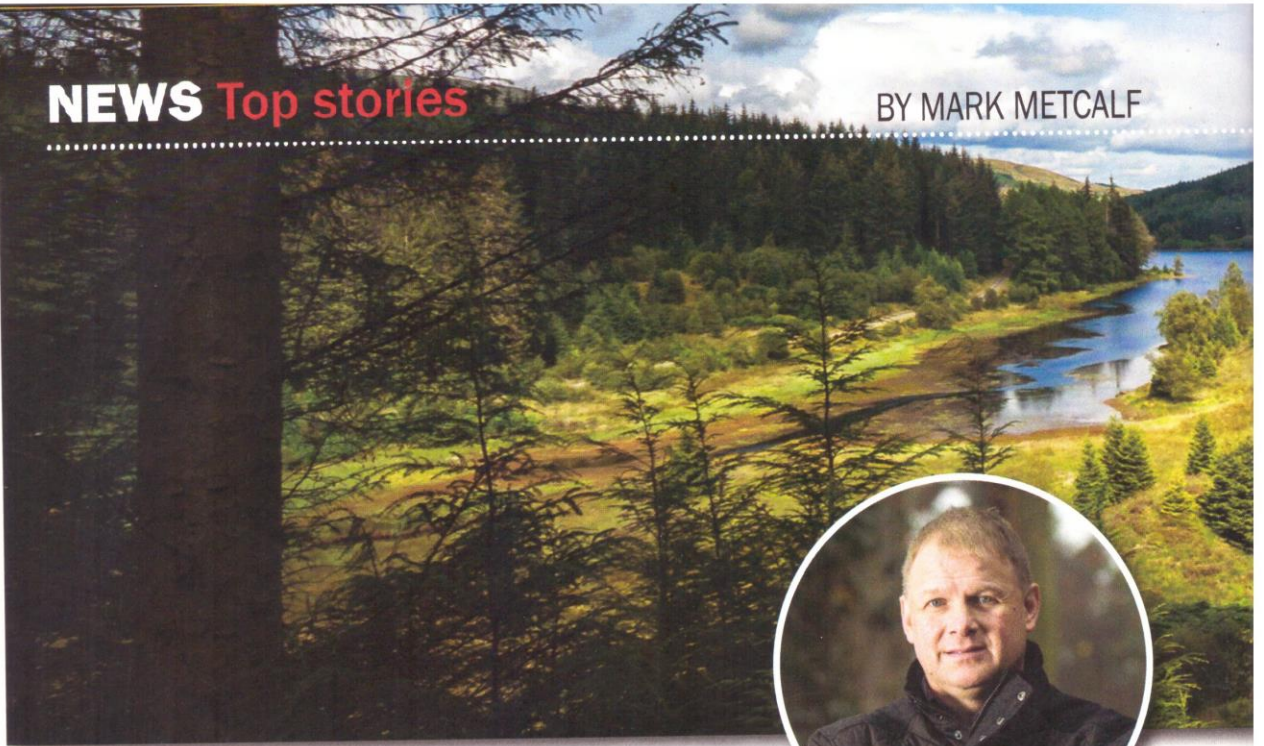
"The aim is to make farming and agriculture jobs much more attractive to young people. We have an ever-ageing farming workforce in Britain, especially in the West, and they need replacing pretty quickly," explains Charlie.

Following its publication by Unite Education in July, ***Bitter sweet*** has a regularly updated website – [www.bittersweetbrexit.co.uk](http://www.bittersweetbrexit.co.uk)

"I want the book to encourage a debate. There is rightly plenty of discussion on what next for the car or finance industries, but food and farming is being ignored.

"Big farmers, landowners and the supermarkets will hope to ensure that a system that benefits them handsomely remains the same after Brexit but the labour movement can't afford to allow this opportunity to pass us by," concludes Charlie.

*See pages 10, 26, 31*



Neil Grieve

# Forestry Commission to split

## Future of UK forests under threat?

Neil Grieve, the Unite lead rep at the Forestry Commission, has expressed his disappointment after the decision to split the Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) from its English counterpart (FCE) from April 2019 onwards was taken by the Scottish Parliament.

This follows the transfer of the FC in Wales to a new body – Natural Resource Wales – in 2013. Since when Wales has been trialing block contracts to private forestry companies. These have been doing some of the harvesting, road repairs and replanting, which threatens to reduce the direct workforce.

Responsibility for FCS was assumed by the Scottish Government under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill. This was amended prior before it was passed when Labour objected to plans by the SNP to abolish the commission by bringing woodland management under the direct control of a Scottish Government department.

Labour's successful amendments maintained FCS as a single new agency after the environment spokesperson, Claudia Beamish, claimed the plans would have left the FCS "operating under the shadow of the changeable whim" of the SNP, who back in 2009 had planned to lease off 25 per cent of forestry land to private companies for 75 years.

"I would have preferred to see us stick together as a single body representing workers in Scotland, Wales and England. But Unite and the FCTU will continue to do our best for our members in every country, even if we are no longer all working for the same organisation."

"There is going to be significant change for our Scottish members. We are pleased to have been reassured by Fergus Ewing (Scottish rural economy secretary) that he sees staff as absolutely key to the future of forestry. We look forward to positive engagement with

the minister and the Scottish Government," Neil commented. He has previously expressed concerns about the future of the FCE if the Tories remain in power.

This is because back in the 80s the Thatcher government argument that the FC was uneconomic was used to sell off many forests. Now with most of the FC's income coming from the sale of wood from trees grown in Scotland then Neil fears the Tories might consider using similar arguments once FCS splits from FCE in April 2019.

Meanwhile, Neil has repeated his appeal to any Unite members considering becoming a workplace rep to get in touch with him on 07881 518539. "I have managed since 2014 to increase the number of reps but there's still room for improvement. The union provides training courses and reps get good support."

# THE LONGEST STRIKE

Shaun Jeffery's new book tells the full story of the Higdon's and the Burston Strike School

Unite activist **Shaun Jeffery** has written a definitive account of Annie and Tom Higdon, the teachers who inspired the 1914 to 1939 Burston School Strike – the longest in history.

How the Higdon's ended up in the small South Norfolk village of Burston is a fascinating story charting the economic, political and social changes that changed Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

**Tom Higdon** was born in 1869 in an agricultural dwelling in Huxham, Somerset. **Annie Schollick**, born 1864, was from Cheshire. Her grandfather and father were carpenters.

Her uncle **Edward** entered domestic service. When Edward's employer died he was made the benefactor of his estate. Edward shared his fortune with his family including Annie paying for her private tuition. She became an unqualified governess before undertaking formal training as an elementary teacher in a Sussex Church of England school.

The 1870 Education Act, introduced in an attempt to keep Britain internationally competitive at a time of rapid industrialisation, enshrined universal education in law. Tom Higdon received what the Education Act intended; a school place, in a new building, with a certified head teacher. At harvest time, Tom joined other children in helping gather in the crops, alongside their parents. Tom later became a farm labourer like his dad.

In 1892, Annie Schollick successfully applied for the post of headmistress at East Lydford, just four miles from Huxham. Four years later Annie married Tom, who signed the marriage certificate stating he too was a teacher.

After a spell as headmistress and assistant master at a Church of England school in the poor quarter of Soho, the couple returned to a rural setting in 1902, in Wood Dalling. They found that the schoolhouse urgently needed repair. They soon discovered that local farmers would remove pupils from school to work for them. When the Higdon's raised these issues with the School Board it caused problems with the authorities and farmers.

But the new teachers became popular with the children and parents who appreciated their hard work, their generosity in spending their own money on boots and clothing for any pupils whose parents could not afford them and the general desire to improve the education and outlook of those under their charge.

In early 1906 the labourers across Norfolk were to assert their own increased spirit of independence. Led by **George Edwards** they formed the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union. Early in 1907 a meeting was held in Wood Dalling and Tom became branch secretary of the new branch. He then set off by bicycle to establish other branches across South Norfolk.

Tom's union work continued and in March 1910 he organised local labourers to win seats on the Parish Council at the expense of local farmers. After an inquiry the couple were dismissed. Protest letters were sent from the parish council and from the local branch of the Agricultural Labourers' Union.

While these efforts failed to get the Higdon's reinstated it did lead to the Education Committee agreeing to offer them new posts. On December 31, 1911 the couple entered the small village of Burston to start work at the local school the following morning.

The Higdon's found that the school was in a dire state. The newly arrived rector, the Reverend Charles Tucker Elland, was an arrogant man whose appointment as chairman of the school management board meant conflict was certain. Tucker demanded deference of his right to lead the community.

In a desire to restore old footpaths, repair bridges and make improvements to housing, Tom and other agricultural labourers stood against and beat Elland and local farmers at the 1913 parish council election.

But Elland and his supporters remained in control of the school management board. Annie was falsely accused of many things including lighting without permission a fire – used to dry children's wet clothes – and beating two Barnardo girls, despite her well-established pacifist principles.



Justice fight – Burston school children demand the re-instatement of the Higdens. Below – Today's Burston school kids re-enact the protest.

These two charges were disproved at the inquiry held by the Norfolk Education Authority but the Higdens were given three months' notice after an accusation of discourtesy to the managers was accepted.

But the school pupils and their parents were not content to let the Higdens go. On April 1, 1914, 66 of the 72 pupils had gone on strike. Lessons restarted on the village green.

An old workshop was found, so no matter what the weather lessons could continue. Attempts to intimidate parents into sending their children to the official school flopped as their court fines were paid by donations and they had a legal right to send their children to a school of their choice.

Once WWI began local farmers could not, thanks to a labour shortage, afford to dismiss farm labourers who sent their children to the new school, which few disputed was a good one.

As news spread the labour movement – particularly the National Union of Railwaymen, the Miners and the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) rallied to support the new school. Donations made it possible to pay the Higdens and build a new school with facilities better than the old one.

Officially opened on May 13, 1917 by Violet Potter, organiser of the original demonstration on April Fool's Day 1914, the school lasted till 1939 when Tom died and Annie, who died in 1946, was too old to continue on her own. They are buried alongside each other in Burston churchyard.

The NUAW established the Strike School as a registered educational charity in 1949.



Peter Everard Smith

In the early 80s when the NUAW merged with the TGWU the school became a museum. An annual rally on the first Sunday in September was initiated in 1984 which in recent years has attracted crowds of over 3,000 people.

*The village in revolt – the story of the longest strike in history* by Shaun Jeffery will be available for £14.99 from June. For more details contact Shaun at [burstonstrikeschool1917@gmail.com](mailto:burstonstrikeschool1917@gmail.com) or visit <https://burstonstrikeschool.co.uk>

# RESPECT PEACE PLEA

Are elections the end of Colombia's political violence?

Justice for Colombia (JFC) has welcomed the participation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the recent elections, urging all political parties to respect the peace agreement and calling on the next Colombian government to prioritise the ending of political violence.

This call by JFC, which was central to creating the conditions for a Peace Deal that was signed in November 2016 and which has led to the former FARC left-wing guerrillas becoming a political party, came after conservative parties, which oppose the peace deal, won most votes in the country's March elections. The Democratic Centre party of former president Alvaro Uribe won most seats but gained only 19 of the 102 in the Senate. Conservative parties as a whole won 50.

Colombians have also selected the two main presidential candidates, Ivan Duque, who is Uribe's protege, and Gustavo Petro, an ex-member of the M-19 guerrilla group and a left-wing former mayor of Bogota, Colombia's capital city. A number of other

candidates are also expected to participate in the June election.

The victor will replace President Juan Manuel Santos, whose role in the peace agreement was recognised when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016. Mr Duque has said he would seek to bar some FARC members from politics and has threatened to send some to prison. This would contravene the peace agreement.

Now Nick MacWilliam, trade union officer for JFC, is calling upon "all political parties to respect the terms of the peace agreement and ensure its full implementation as stipulated" whoever becomes president.

Over five decades of war between FARC and the Colombian state killed over 200,000 people. FARC's electoral participation was in itself a significant moment and one the JFC is convinced can be part of a path towards social advance and greater equality in Colombia. FARC obtained just 53,000 votes for the senate, 0.34 per cent of the total. Under the peace agreement they are guaranteed five seats. FARC

will not be participating in the presidential election as its leader Rodrigo London is unwell.

During the election campaign FARC was forced to suspend campaigning following threats to candidates and attacks on its public meetings. Since 2016, over 225 social leaders and 38 demobilised FARC members have been murdered, many by paramilitary organisations tied to official politics. Human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups have a long history in Colombia and particularly during the period when Alvaro Uribe was president between 2002 and 2010.

The JFC is clear that the path to establishing a genuine stable and lasting peace in Colombia must remain open. MacWilliam states this must mean, "The next Colombian government, supported by the international community, must prioritise ending political violence against trade unionists, community leaders, human rights defenders, environmental activists and other social groups."



For more information see [www.justiceforcolombia.org](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org) or call 0207 324 2490

# Mining for the past

## Durham Mining Museum, Spennymoor, Co Durham

Collieries and pit heaps once dominated North East England and there is evidence that the Romans excavated and burnt coal in the region.

Durham Mining Museum (DMM) at Spennymoor Town Hall, hosts an art gallery showing Spennymoor's great heritage of mining art, with a large, permanent collection of works of art by Norman Cornish, known as the *Pitmen Painter*.

Retired Unite member **Andrew Smith** (pictured), a former miner who later became convenor at Rothmans cigarette factory, says, "This is a town and county built on coal and so everyone backed the plan to have the museum here."

The DMM in Spennymoor was opened six years ago and is packed with artefacts, books, badges, memorabilia, photographs, original posters, accident reports, lamps and helmets as well as a small mock underground mine.

The information on display is dwarfed by the online DMM and which contains a list

of mines in the north of England taken from official publications, the names of all those killed, accident reports, company records, prosecution lists, numerous photographs of mining communities, ordnance survey maps of collieries as well as accounts of important events such as strikes and major demonstrations.

There are visitors from far and wide. According to Andrew many have become aware that one of their descendants was killed working as a miner and they now want to find out more about the background to the tragedy – like retired Unite member **Alan Lorrimer-Riley** and his brother **John**.

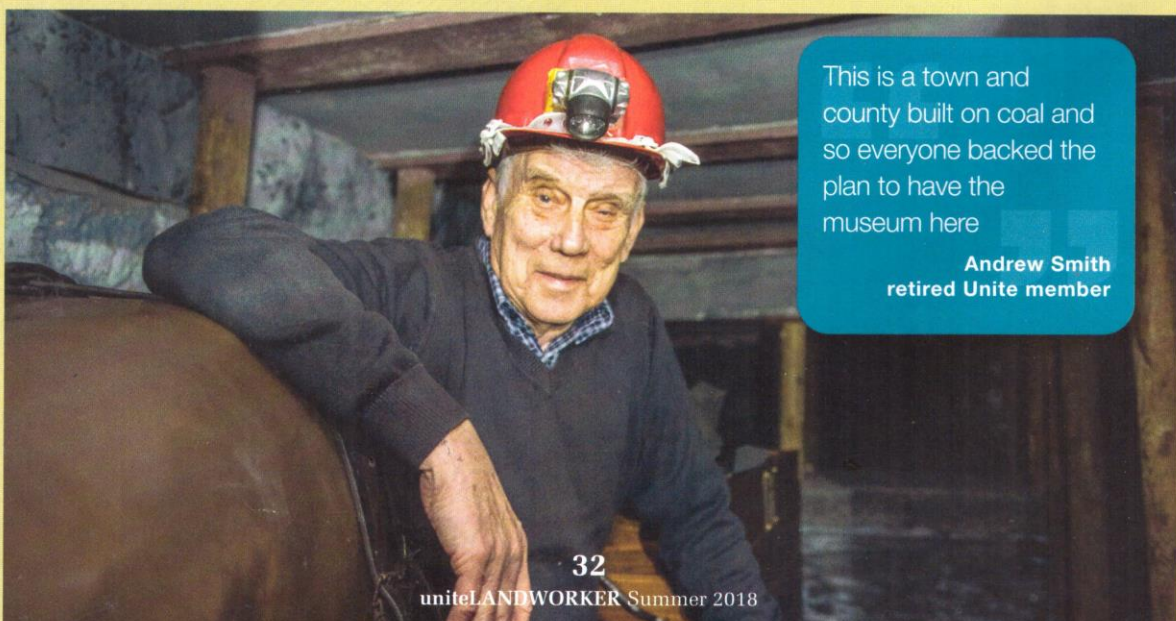
Alan said, "We knew about my dad's family and he himself worked as a blacksmith at Eppleton Colliery, Hetton. My great grandad came to the North East after evictions in Ireland. His desperate plight was exploited when he was offered work in the Durham coalfields during a time when miners were on strike by refusing to sign the Annual Bond that determined their wages for the next year."

John added, "We believe that my mam's dad suffered a serious injury, perhaps even a fractured skull. You can understand why the miners' combined to try and improve pay and conditions.

"The photographs show how hard work was for miners – especially before larger tunnels could be constructed and coal extracted using machinery – and you get a greater awareness by speaking to a former miner."

The former miner was **Frank Nutter**, now 86. Frank tells me, "Part of the mock mine includes a stable to show that horses also worked underground and this fascinates young people. In talking of the past I always mention that I was a member of the National Union of Mineworkers and that people should be in a trade union today to protect themselves from being exploited."

Durham Mining Museum,  
Spennymoor Town Hall, Spennymoor,  
Co Durham DL16 6DG  
07577 012882 or see [www.dmm.org.uk](http://www.dmm.org.uk)  
Trade union donations welcome.



This is a town and county built on coal and so everyone backed the plan to have the museum here

**Andrew Smith**  
retired Unite member

## The struggle goes on – inspired by this year's Tolpuddle festival

A stage a few hundred yards from where the Tolpuddle Martyrs met under a tree to form a trade union in 1834 was the ideal setting for Jeremy Corbyn to announce that a future Labour government would re-introduce the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all, of course, still have AWBs.

The Labour leader backed up this specific promise by outlining how his other proposed policies would benefit rural communities. The 7,000 plus crowd responded with cheers.

Tolpuddle in Dorset is a beautiful, quiet village that every July proudly hosts a festival to remember six poverty stricken agricultural labourers who swore a secret oath as members of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers.

Led by **George Loveless** these brave men aimed to bargain for better pay and conditions for all agricultural labourers. Similar outbreaks of dissent were increasing nationally. Scared by the possible emergence of organised labour, the landowners and government moved quickly. The six were arrested and convicted under the 1797 Mutiny Act. Sentenced to seven years they were transported to Botany Bay, Australia.

What happened next was, "that political action and campaigning helped ensure the Martyrs got their pardons three years later... and this success laid the basis for the foundation of trade unions and also so much else that we have later secured such as social equality, the NHS and even democracy itself," said **Andrew Murray**, Unite chief of staff.

**James Hammett** was the only Martyr to return to settle in Tolpuddle. On Sunday July 22, wreaths on behalf of all six men were laid by Unite and other trade union members, together with those of the descendants of the Martyrs, at Hammett's grave in St John's Church.

A colourful, highly musical and noisy procession through Tolpuddle followed. Banners were paraded by members of the local and national trade union and labour movement, some of whom had camped for the whole weekend and had enjoyed music, poetry, political debates, each other's company, food and drink.

**Agnes Hilditch**, a Unite workplace rep at the white goods and dry laundry Whirlpool factory in Yate, attends the Festival every year. "It brings together all the unions. The Martyrs fought for better pay. That is similar to today with the companies who are trying to cut wages and conditions. So the unions must fight to defend and improve the living standards of everyone. If we don't do it then no-one else will. In addition to being good fun – and who doesn't need to sing and dance? – this Festival highlights the struggles being undertaken in our own workplaces are mirrored elsewhere and that improves everyone's confidence immeasurably."

Southampton City Council refuse collector and Unite rep **Simon Cotton** said, "Tolpuddle represents everything I believe in such as standing together as a family. We all join a union, it does the same thing it says on the tin no matter what one we belong to. More people need to join a union to fight for their rights. I am also looking forward to the speeches and especially Jeremy Corbyn's as we want to know how a future Labour government would improve things for the many not the few."

### End vicious laws

TUC general secretary **Frances O'Grady** drew applause when she told the crowd. "We need a Labour government to lift the NHS, bring essential services back into public, stop the benefit cuts that have left a million more children in poverty since 2010, ban zero hours contracts and introduce a £10 an hour minimum wage that everyone deserves. We need to see the end of vicious trade union laws that restrict the freedom to organise workers."

**Jeremy Corbyn** has attended many Tolpuddle Martyrs Festivals. "It is a wonderful event that is getting bigger."

Corbyn explained how he wants schoolchildren to learn about the Tolpuddle Martyrs. "They risked their lives for our future liberties. They are part of our national story and 34 years later in 1868 the Trades Union Congress was formed and then later the Labour Party was formed by trade unions, without which there would be the only the unchallenged power of an employer." The Islington MP has since 1983

attacked the Tories for privatising the NHS. "They came together in places such as Tredegar and set up a health fund. Our NHS is basically writ large based on that one."

He promised that a future Labour government would properly fund the NHS, social and care services and mental health.

With many rural communities struggling, Jeremy Corbyn outlined his plans for the future if he enters 10 Downing Street after the next election.

"The AWB set wages and conditions amongst English farmworkers, it helped develop skills and assisted with negotiations for better wages in food processing industries. Labour will reinstate the English AWB that was abolished under the Tory and Lib Dem coalition. There will be an hourly £10 minimum wage. Everyone will have full employment rights on day one, including the right to join a trade union. Zero hours contracts will be outlawed. Apprentices will be paid properly. Local council underfunding will end.

"We will establish a national investment bank combined with regional investment banks that will invest in small rural businesses. There will be a housebuilding programme, additional funding for education and a public run bus service that links up communities.

"Taxes for the biggest corporations and the very rich will increase. I want a government that addresses the imbalance between the many and the few by investing in society and establishing the social justice that the Tolpuddle Martyrs wanted."

It brings together all the unions – who doesn't need to sing and dance? It highlights the struggles in our own workplaces are mirrored elsewhere and that improves everyone's confidence immeasurably

**Agnes Hilditch**  
Unite rep, Whirlpool, Yate

# 'Learning about the struggle to vote'

## Unite inspires young minds at this year's Great Yorkshire Show

There were prizes galore at the annual three-day Great Yorkshire Agricultural Show in July. Livestock was judged, farmers and rural workers celebrate their achievements and enjoy a short break from the daily battle to produce food for the nation's tables.

Sadly, there is though no award for the best and most interesting stall or exhibit, as Unite would surely have a great chance of scooping top prize.

In 1951 Unite's heritage union, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, mounted a permanent stall at the Great Yorkshire Show (GYS) Showground in Harrogate. The union aimed to reach out to local communities and encourage new membership.

This year, Unite's exhibition *What made Britain Great!* celebrated the last 150 years and some of the individuals that have contributed so much to making our collective history. The TUC was formed 150 years ago and the organisation has proven essential in changing the world of work for good.

The drive to get people to enter the exhibition started early. As teachers and schoolchildren arrived in buses they were approached by someone from Unite telling them about what they can expect if they visit the Unite exhibition, outside of which is a Unite Legal Services stall with leaflets galore explaining that free legal advice and representation is provided for Unite members and their families.

On entering the exhibition, visitors were immediately engaged by Unite staff members, who had volunteered to help, who explained the significance of the

various display boards and posters – some of which go back decades – drawings and photographs.

The lengthy struggle for the right of women to vote was highlighted throughout with **Darcey Crewe**, aged 13, again prominent in engaging children over the issue. Darcey has been one of the stars of the GYS in the last four years and she will be sadly missed next year when her exams mean she won't be able to attend.

Staff from the National Emergency Services Museum in Sheffield highlighted the role of the emergency services while *Up An' At 'Em! History*, which provides bespoke history sessions and events nationally, engaged children through a professional actor dressed as a Bevin Boy, who were members of the public who volunteered to work underground as a coal miner during WWII.

### Professional

According to **Andy Pearson**, Unite regional education officer and key to the union's GYS presence, said the employment of *Up An' At 'Em!* "creates an all-round professional approach by those staff and volunteers who are brave enough to get dressed up in period costume." One person who did just that was experienced care worker **Alison Godden**, who took three days annual leave from her job with Hull City Council, who was dressed as a nurse.

"I am a Unite workplace rep who loves telling the story of the union to all ages, especially the young as they don't learn it at school how important being in a union is if you want good working conditions and pay when you start work.

"I'm also very passionate about the NHS.

I fear some politicians want to scale it back and move health into the private sector. I'm explaining how much basic treatments cost such as repairing a broken limb at £500, the birth of a baby at £10,000 and a hip replacement at £1,000. Stories that some doctors' surgeries would like to charge a fee of £5 are suggesting this is a small sum but not if you have to visit the doctor regularly because of a chronic illness. The plans could backfire as people would abandon seeing a doctor until they were seriously unwell," said Alison.

One of the largest groups of visitors was 30 children aged 7 and 8 from Hill Top Church of England School in Bradford. Milly Grace said she had enjoyed her visit and had "learned about the struggle of women to vote" and Sienna, Grace Mya and George Kizintas all agreed with her. Their teacher, Des Martin, who had been slightly surprised to discover a trade union exhibition at the GYS, said, "Most of them have enjoyed the interactive elements and it is the first time any of them would have heard of a trade union. I would recommend to other schools the Unite exhibition."

All of which was good news for former health visitor **Karen Reay**, Unite regional secretary for the North East Yorkshire and Humberside. "Every year at the GYS we are getting more people engaged with the union and by making these initial, early years' contacts with schoolchildren we are making them aware of our presence and alerting them to how important we are in the world of work."

A record 3,300 people of all ages and backgrounds visited the exhibition this year. Congratulations to everyone involved and best wishes to Darcey in the future.

# 100 PER CENT UNITE

Unite super-rep **John Burbidge** may be retiring soon – but that won't stop him fighting on

Dorset general farm worker John Burbidge has followed in the footsteps of the Tolpuddle Martyrs by seeking to unionise agricultural workers in order to win better terms and conditions. John, who chairs Tolpuddle Unite Food, Drink, Agriculture and Transport branch, covering all Dorset, is approaching retirement – but that's doesn't mean he won't be working for Unite.

John left school at 15 and joined the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers in 1968 when he started at the Dorset Farm Institute on day release.

“My parents were tenant farmers, who in 1960 took out a mortgage to buy a 50 acre dairy farm in Yetminster, near Sherborne. I worked part-time at my father's and my uncle's much larger dairy farm.”

John later worked at a Yeovil tannery, becoming a stewards' convenor. Sacked for trade union activities at a tannery, as an AUEW steward he got involved in campaigning, including saving Crewkerne NHS Hospital and fighting for pay and conditions.

After his marriage John, who has two daughters and five grandchildren, returned to farming and run the family sheep and cow suckler farm in Yetminster. For almost three decades he also worked on nearby farms, doing general farm work and milking cows.

He joined Unite over a decade ago. “I was a disempowered NFU member,” he says – adding some farmers opposed the Agricultural Wages Board abolition. “Many NFU members are part-time farm workers, with most of their income coming from working on other farms or in other industries.

“I'm a Unite trade union rep and a political activist because people need justice and socialism. We will only achieve these when we unite and oppose oppression of all kinds, here and in all countries.”

John has served on the Unite SW regional committee and on the regional and national industrial sector committee for food drink and agriculture. He is a Unite member of the HSE agricultural advisory committee.

John still works part-time as a self-employed general farm worker – mainly doing fencing and hedging. Over the next 15 months he'll be stepping down from some of his Unite positions. Thankfully, his experiences won't be lost to the labour movement.

“I've lived in West Dorset virtually all my life. I know many local people. I intend training as a Unite Companion – an experienced workplace rep prepared to assist the union in representing individual members in unorganised workplaces.

“The paradox for many farm workers always has been the problem of blacklisting and so many activists have been people who are older. Because of the scourge of blacklisting in farming, many NUAAW branch secretaries were teachers, such as the Higdon's at Burston, posties and railway workers.

“Workers in food, drink and agriculture need a strong union, now more than ever. That union is Unite.”

I'm a Unite rep because people need justice and socialism. We'll only achieve these when we unite and oppose oppression of all kinds, here and in all countries

**John Burbidge**  
Unite Tolpuddle branch



Mark Thoamas

# Fears for peace in Colombia

## New president in contravention of deal

Justice for Colombia (JFC) fears the recent election result may undermine the 2016 Peace Deal. JFC has also issued a continuing plea to British trade unionists to support their Colombian colleagues who are being assassinated and are under attack from multinational companies.

Ivan Duque of the right-wing Democratic Centre (CD) party became President after defeating Gustavo Petro in the June run-off between the top two candidates. Duque will serve a four year term.

In direct contravention of the peace deal, which JFC was central to creating the conditions for, Duque has promised to prevent FARC members from participating politically and to send some to prison.

According to Nick MacWilliam, JFC trade union officer, "Changes made in the special court designed to establish truth and justice for conflict victims have been orchestrated by CD congress members. Some of the worst perpetrators of human rights abuses – many connected to the CD – could evade justice. Uribe is under investigation and is alleged to have

collaborated with paramilitary groups which committed massive human rights violations during the conflict. Duque's election is a major concern for the peace process."

The Colombian state is not tackling paramilitaries and other armed groups. These are terrorising civil society, especially in rural communities, many of which were previously under FARC administration. Around 60 former FARC guerrillas have been assassinated.

"This new wave of political violence appears designed to de-stabilise the peace process and impede steps towards the social reforms that so many people desire and need. This obviously is hugely alarming. Colombia cannot afford for the peace agreement to collapse. JFC continues to work closely with our Colombian colleagues to highlight the issue and lobby the British and Irish parliaments and other international bodies to pressure the Colombian government to address the crisis," said MacWilliam.

In May and June, Gilberto Espinosa, Cristian Andres Lozano and Luis

Eduardo Dominguez, all unionised Nestle workers, were murdered close to the company plant where they worked. They had been named on a list delivered to their union (Sinaltrainal) headquarters. Authorities who were alerted to these serious threats failed to provide security. 25 Sinaltrainal members have been slaughtered since 2005.

Unite acting national officer Joe Clarke said, "the continual murders of trade unionists within Nestle Colombia is completely unacceptable when they are merely exercising a fundamental human right and Unite calls upon Nestle to act immediately to use its considerable influence globally to prevent these occurrences forthwith as an absolute priority."

According to MacWilliam, "Unite members can support their Colombian colleagues by pressuring through their branches to investigate the roles of Colombian multinationals. They can send letters to their MPs, back submitted motions at conference and join Unite members who already actively support JFC's work."



# The workers' library

## Working Class Movement Library, Salford

**Tony Benn**, the late radical Labour MP, called the Working Class Movement Library (WCML) in Salford, "One of the greatest educational institutions." It is internationally recognised for containing one of Britain's most important collections of working class history as embodied in the trade unions, the co-operative movement, organisations of the oppressed and the political parties and campaigns of the left.

The library was established by and built on the personal collection of **Ruth and Eddie Frow**, who coming from rural Lincolnshire was always delighted to find an item or book on agriculture at the numerous fairs and bookshops that he visited with his wife.

Consequently, the WCML contains a great collection of materials relating to rural social conditions through the ages and particularly since the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.

The official reports include the 1843 one by the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture nationally and which examined wages, working and living conditions and revealed widespread poverty and abuse. The pamphlets include ones by the Socialist Countryside Group, established after a fringe meeting at the 1981 Labour Party conference, examining rural housing, countryside access, national parks and low pay in agriculture.

Periodicals include *Landworker* magazines going back to the 1930s. The WCML shelves contain numerous academic books on farming, agriculture, rural industries and communities by University lecturers and professors. There are also lots of

biographies and autobiographies, often written by politicians who have represented rural communities, including **Joseph Arch's**, written in 1898. Additionally there are poems and songbooks and posters.

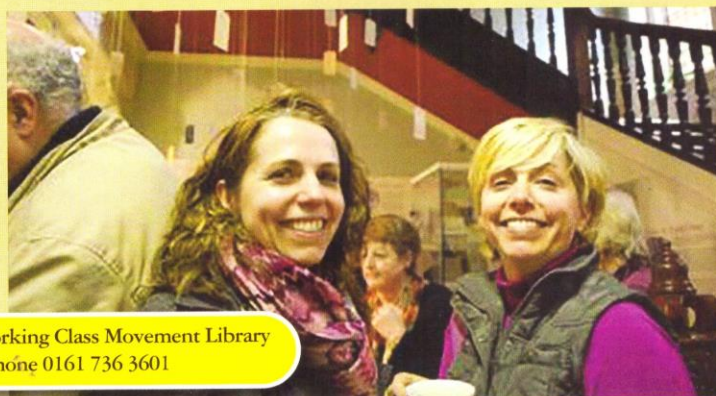
The collection demonstrates how British rural life and working conditions has economically, socially and culturally changed, often beyond recognition and not always for the best.

The agricultural collection is a very small part of the huge archive held by the WCML, which includes many newspapers, photographs, artefacts, banners and the personal papers of past labour movement heroes such as **Benny Rothman**.

Anyone wanting to study in the library should search through its online catalogue as you need to ring in advance so that staff can ensure all relevant materials are available when you visit.

The WCML has library exhibition space which hosts public information displays. There are regular talks, lectures and guided tours. A range of pamphlets are published annually and there is a library e-newsletter.

WCML only receives a small sum of public money. As an independent charity it largely relies on donations from individuals and trade unions with occasional trust grants. Please get your branch to affiliate as the WCML urgently needs financial support.



For more see <http://www.wcml.org.uk> Working Class Movement Library is at 51 The Crescent, Salford M5 4WX. Phone 0161 736 3601

BY RYAN FLETCHER



## Dastardly dealings, civil war plots and hidden skulls Ye Old White Harte, Hull

The **Ye Old White Harte** in Hull's historic old town is a great place to sup an ale, which is why it's never empty.

In fact, the pub has had a near continuous succession of drinkers for hundreds of years and some believe that when the bell for last orders tolls the spirits of long deceased patrons still haunt the bar.

Entry to the Ye Old White Harte, which is hidden in the centre of a block of much larger buildings, is through one of two narrow alleyways that lead to an unexpectedly leafy courtyard that now serves as an attractive beer garden.

Amid the greenery sits the pub itself, which was built in 1550 and was once home to the governors of Kingston upon Hull before being turned into a watering hole sometime in the 1700s.

Inside the Grade Two listed building are oak panelled walls, tiled inglenook fireplaces and, crucially, two bars which serve proper ales and Hull's biggest selection of single malts.

Stepping into the bar is stepping into the past and the pub's proliferation of cosy recesses and concealed corners have for generations been ideal spots for old friends wishing to catch up, as well as for those with more clandestine, or even dastardly, dealings in mind.

In what is now known as the "Plotting Parlour" on the first floor, legend has it that the decision was taken to refuse King Charles 1

entry into Hull when he arrived in 1642, sparking a siege of the town and triggering the English Civil War.

Adding to the intrigue is the purported picture evidence – snapped during one of the pub's clairvoyant evenings – of the ghost of a long haired and moustached Cavalier soldier loyal to Charles 1, who was said to be earwigging on the plotters.

Yet the pub holds darker secrets than the apparition of dead soldiers. In 1937 builders who were renovating Ye Olde White Harte's roof discovered a youth's skull and other human remains hidden behind a wall.

The skull, nicknamed Alice, has for decades been a bar side companion to the pub's many drinkers. A yellow fracture runs along the top of the cranium, suggesting the unfortunate owner died in violent circumstances.

One theory is that the skull belonged to a boy who was struck down by an enraged sea captain drunk on brandy, while another is that the victim was a poor serving girl who was murdered by the pub's landlord to keep their illicit affair quiet.

Despite, or because of, its' spooky past, the Ye Olde White Harte remains a firm favourite with Hull's locals and visitors alike.

The Ye Old White Harte is located at 25 Silver Street in Hull City Centre.



# All about land workers

*Working the Land*, by Dr Nicola Verdon

This work is the most comprehensive account to date of the history of agricultural workers since the 1850s, when farmworkers, at the height of the industrial revolution, were still numerically the biggest group of workers in England. Today, with under 100,000, farmworkers account for under 1 per cent of total employment in England.

An economic explanation of the forces shaping the countryside is combined by Verdon in *Working the Land* with the history of rural labour markets, employment patterns, the farm workforce and rural households and daily family life.

Getting farmworkers to speak openly is difficult and Verdon has found it especially hard to contact migrant workers, the most exploited section of farmworkers today. And so Verdon has for two decades ploughed through official and Parliamentary papers seeking to capture the thoughts of farmworkers on their work.

Much in the book would shock the public, which surveys show have little understanding about how food is produced on a farm – and like the high skill levels

of many farmworkers since 1850 onwards. “Many people believe farmworkers have and are badly paid because they are not skilled. That is not the case,” said Verdon.

The relatively high numbers of female workers is also revealed in Verdon’s book. “There is a misconception that agriculture is only masculine,” said Verdon, who also explained that it was a popular myth that the Women’s Land Army had been significant in improving farming outputs during WWI. “It was those that always worked on farms, combined with an input from local men and women, that mainly ensured our survival.”

There was a genuine optimism things would change for the better after the 1917 Corn Production Act introduced the first minimum wage for agricultural workers. The returning Tory government knocked it out of existence. But once the first ever Labour government re-introduced it in 1922 it was here to stay until the more modern Tories and their Lib Dem friends scrapped it in England on June 25, 2013.

“The ending of the AWB under the basis that farmworkers are covered under minimum wage legislation is viewed by

many of them with disquiet. They understand the legislation provided a framework for all round better conditions. They fear there will be, like after WWI, wage deflation amongst groups of highly skilled farmworkers,” believes Verdon.

### Make this book accessible fight

Sadly, Nicola’s book is £66.99 to buy. See [www.amazon.co.uk/Working-Land-History-Farmworker-England](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Working-Land-History-Farmworker-England)

Nicola is keen to be contacted by readers to speak at trade union meetings about the book and is trying to get the cost reduced and issued in paperback. You can help by sending your views to [www.palgrave.com/gp/help/contact](http://www.palgrave.com/gp/help/contact)

Contact Nicola on 07402 867472 or [n.verdon@shu.ac.uk](mailto:n.verdon@shu.ac.uk)

# Labour is the party of food and farming says Sue Hayman MP

Workington MP **Sue Hayman** was appointed to the post of shadow environment, food and rural affairs secretary last February.

Nearly a year on she now harbours hopes of emulating Fred Peart, the long serving MP in her Cumbrian constituency between 1945 and 1976, who was the rural minister from 1964 to 1968 and from 1974 to 1976. His tenure saw agricultural workers pay advanced. Peart was later leader of the Labour peers in the Lords.

Unsure of exactly when Labour might get their chance to defeat the Tories at a general election and form the government, Hayman's current vision is heavily concentrated on one issue, "Brexit. We must hold the Tories to account as we leave the EU to ensure we get the best outcome for rural communities and the whole nation.

"The fisheries and agriculture bills that were announced in June are both incredibly complex and in the case of agriculture include replacing the common agricultural policy."

Other aspects of Brexit such as controlling migration, negotiating trade deals around the world and the Great Repeal Bill to shift, or possibly not, EU regulations into UK law will also be relevant to the environment, agriculture and rural communities in general.

"Brexit could affect agriculture badly. That would be disastrous for food stability and security, resulting in problems in ensuring farmers and agricultural workers can obtain decent financial rewards for their work.

"We know many EU migrant workers are stopping coming. That will impact on farming outputs if we can't find alternative labour sources. I worry that too much of our food is imported.

"I have studied how the 1945-1951 Labour government massively expanded domestic production. We must get the incentives right for food producers and tie it in with high environmental and animal

welfare standards that collectively improve productivity all round," said Hayman, who is vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on rural business.

"My role will be to lead Labour's scrutiny during the passage of the two bills," states Hayman, who was elected as the first female MP in Workington in 2015, and leads a small departmental team that includes Halifax MP **Holly Lynch**, shadow floods minister, and **David Dew**, MP for the market town of Stroud, the shadow farming minister.

"We are examining how the £3bn currently spent under the CAP in Britain might possibly be redirected away from land. That is why I welcome the arguments in the book *Bittersweet Brexit* by **Charlie Clutterbuck**.

"This urges a switch in CAP funds, particularly towards labour and young people, so as to encourage more home-produced food," said Hayman, who expressed serious concerns that Liam Fox, the Brexit trade minister, would be happy to sign a trade deal with the US that would cut the current high animal welfare and environmental standards that Britain has adopted as a result of EU membership.

## Safety reps

Hayman also expressed an interest in roving safety representatives that would promote health and safety in non-union workplaces including agricultural establishments. Although a pilot project under the previous Labour government successfully raised awareness and reduced injuries and deaths, roving safety reps regulations were not introduced.

"I know about the high number of farming fatalities. A farmer was killed in the next village to where we live. Anything that can reduce deaths and injuries would be welcome. People must be encouraged not to take short, dangerous cuts. There needs to be proper training and machinery needs to be maintained.

"We should restore the cuts made to the health and safety executive under the unnecessary austerity programme of the

Liberals and Tories since 2010.

"Funds need finding to ensure that the gangmasters and labour abuse authority has the resources to prevent ongoing exploitation in sectors such as agriculture. The authority has had successes. It now requires more staff to tackle abuse such as forced labour and which drags down everyone's wages."

Labour is committed to pushing up wages. "Our manifesto was very clear. We would restore the agricultural wages board in England, thus ensuring English workers have the same rights as those in the other parts of the UK.

"I have also been studying Lantra's role and how it might be made more effective in encouraging young people to consider the farming sector as a career as long as they receive proper training to do so."

Looking at why the number of UK agricultural research stations, which at one point did practical research in conjunction with local farmers, has fallen from 31 to just eight since 1990 is also on Hayman's study list in what is certain to be a busy period for her over the next few years.

"I like a challenge and I am enjoying doing the post. I have got a good team to work with.

"Together we can pressurise the Tories and demonstrate that Labour is the party with the policies that we need on food and farming. This should help us win more rural constituencies at the next election, whenever it is, ensuring we become the next government," said Hayman.





## All about land workers

*Working the Land*, by Dr Nicola Verdon

This work is the most comprehensive account to date of the history of agricultural workers since the 1850s, when farmworkers, at the height of the industrial revolution, were still numerically the biggest group of workers in England. Today, with under 100,000, farmworkers account for under 1 per cent of total employment in England.

An economic explanation of the forces shaping the countryside is combined by Verdon in *Working the Land* with the history of rural labour markets, employment patterns, the farm workforce and rural households and daily family life.

Getting farmworkers to speak openly is difficult and Verdon has found it especially hard to contact migrant workers, the most exploited section of farmworkers today. And so Verdon has for two decades ploughed through official and Parliamentary papers seeking to capture the thoughts of farmworkers on their work.

Much in the book would shock the public, which surveys show have little understanding about how food is produced on a farm – and like the high skill levels

of many farmworkers since 1850 onwards. “Many people believe farmworkers have and are badly paid because they are not skilled. That is not the case,” said Verdon.

The relatively high numbers of female workers is also revealed in Verdon’s book. “There is a misconception that agriculture is only masculine,” said Verdon, who also explained that it was a popular myth that the Women’s Land Army had been significant in improving farming outputs during WWI. “It was those that always worked on farms, combined with an input from local men and women, that mainly ensured our survival.”

There was a genuine optimism things would change for the better after the 1917 Corn Production Act introduced the first minimum wage for agricultural workers. The returning Tory government knocked it out of existence. But once the first ever Labour government re-introduced it in 1922 it was here to stay until the more modern Tories and their Lib Dem friends scrapped it in England on June 25, 2013.

“The ending of the AWB under the basis that farmworkers are covered under minimum wage legislation is viewed by

many of them with disquiet. They understand the legislation provided a framework for all round better conditions. They fear there will be, like after WWI, wage deflation amongst groups of highly skilled farmworkers,” believes Verdon.

### Make this book accessible fight

Sadly, Nicola’s book is £66.99 to buy. See [www.amazon.co.uk/Working-Land-History-Farmworker-England](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Working-Land-History-Farmworker-England)

Nicola is keen to be contacted by readers to speak at trade union meetings about the book and is trying to get the cost reduced and issued in paperback. You can help by sending your views to [www.palgrave.com/gp/help/contact](http://www.palgrave.com/gp/help/contact)

Contact Nicola on 07402 867472 or [n.verdon@shu.ac.uk](mailto:n.verdon@shu.ac.uk)



# WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

Unite tells the story of women at work to local school kids at the Great Yorkshire Show

In 1951 when the annual three-day Great Yorkshire Show (GYS) made its home at the Showground in Harrogate, Unite heritage union, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, mounted a permanent stall there.

The aim was to reach out to the local community and this practice continues today with Unite, for the third year running,

mounting possibly the brightest, most interesting stall at the GYS held last July.

The free *Northern Lasses: Women in Industry* exhibition, stretching over 200 square metres, is a fascinating, highly visual creation. It allows visitors, particularly children and young people, to explore the birth and subsequent development of women as industrial workers. One of the

main aims is to highlight historical issues that are not taught in school.

The exhibition starts with a photograph of the names of 17 young women listed on a memorial in Colne Bridge near Huddersfield. They were killed when a fire broke out and an inferno swept through Mr Atkinson's cotton mill factory on St Valentine's Day 1818.



The display – which contained some superb historical photographs, banners and images – moves on to the birth at the turn of the twentieth century of health visitors and school nurses, then later the need for women nationally to become paid munition workers and also part of the Land Army when WWI began and men went off to die in the trenches.

The numbers of women working in industry during the war jumped from 3.2m to 4.8m. This resulted in many women beginning to join trade unions for the first time. The female membership of the United Garment Workers Union leapt and many women joined the National Union of Railwaymen.

Sadly, once the war ended many women who might have preferred to remain employed lost their jobs due to a restoration of pre-war practices. In many cases it wasn't until WWII that many women were again welcomed back into the workplace.

This time when the military conflict ended in 1945, women were not content to go back to their homes and they began the fight for true equality that resulted in the passing of the Equal Pay Act 1970.

This came after a highly successful strike by women sewing machinists within the TGWU, which later became Unite, at Ford Dagenham in 1968.

Women also began a successful fight in the 1960s for better safety conditions on the Hull fishing trawlers that their partners and sons worked on. Safety remains a constant concern for women workers as between 1994 and 2014 there was a 270 per cent increase in mesothelioma deaths amongst women.

Back to the Show and a stall inside the exhibition was packed with leaflets for prospective members to take away about how Unite can help make workplaces safer. There was also a Unite Legal Services stall with numerous leaflets advertising that Unite members – and their families – get free legal advice and representation.

The role of women as workers in all the emergency services was highlighted by the National Emergency Services Museum (NESM) from Sheffield who had brought with them 2 historic ambulances. “The ambulance service is the only emergency service to have more women than men

workers and that should be celebrated” said retired police officer **John Stewart**, a museum trustee.

Little wonder then that despite the heavy rain throughout Tuesday there was a constant stream of visitors to the exhibition. Schoolchildren and members of the public were welcomed by Unite activists and employees along with staff and volunteers from Leeds Industrial Museum, NESM and *Up and At 'Em*, many of whom were wearing period dress.

They helped to animate the exhibition stories and engaged the children with a number of interactive exercises such as making badges and gas mask boxes.

Retired health visitor **Carol Bushnaq** (main pic) was appropriately dressed as a nurse. “I am telling the story of how health visitors, midwives and school nurses started and why they remain important to public health and thus need protecting.”

The youngest actor was **Darcey Crewe**, aged 12, who performed the role of Elizabeth Ely, aged 13, who died at the fire in Colne Bridge. “That was nearly 200 years ago and shows that women have been working for a long time and have contributed a lot to this country. Yet only 15 per cent of memorials are to women. The history of women should be better known.”

The deaths of those at Colne Bridge was the first thing that **Kizzy Nelson**, aged 8, from Woodfield Primary School remarked upon when interviewed afterwards. “They had no chance of getting out. That was wrong. I have made some badges and found out much more about women workers than I knew before. It has been good and I look forward to finding out more later.”

Kizzy's teacher, **Mrs Peacock**, was also full of praise stating “we got a flyer as we got off our coach and so were intent on visiting

“I am glad we did so. We had studied the Victorian era before and we examined the spinning mules and what it was like for children then working in industry.

“This exhibition and the interactive exercises add to the children's studies. I will try and get them to reflect on what they have seen when we get back into the classroom but my initial impression is that they've learnt quite a bit. I hope many other schools come on a visit.”



Mark Thomas



# GO BANANAS!

## Banana Link shows solidarity works

International solidarity is essential in the battle to create a just world – a point proved by Banana Link.

Banana Link (BL) is a not-for-profit co-operative based in Norwich, Norfolk's agricultural heart. Since its formation in 1996, BL has inspired trade unionists to back them in advising and supporting Latin American, African and Caribbean plantation workers and small producers who are faced by poor living and working conditions. BL's activities include training workers to become union representatives.

BL's work has helped make tropical fruit export production more ethical and sustainable. One of the problems facing growers is the price paid by British supermarkets for bananas, which can often be sold at a loss. This impacts on wages and conditions on the plantations.

By petitioning and highlighting their concerns, BL pushed Tesco, using the Fairtrade (FT) Minimum as a guide, to commit to paying a price that covers the costs of Sustainable Production for bananas, ensuring that living wages

are paid across all of Tesco's dedicated supply chains.

"Trade unionists can demonstrate international solidarity by buying FT label bananas as this indicates they are traded differently from conventional fruit. I regularly visit Cameroon, where trade unionists face difficult working conditions and they are inspired by knowing that British trade unionists back them by buying FT bananas," said BL national coordinator **Jacqui Mackay**.

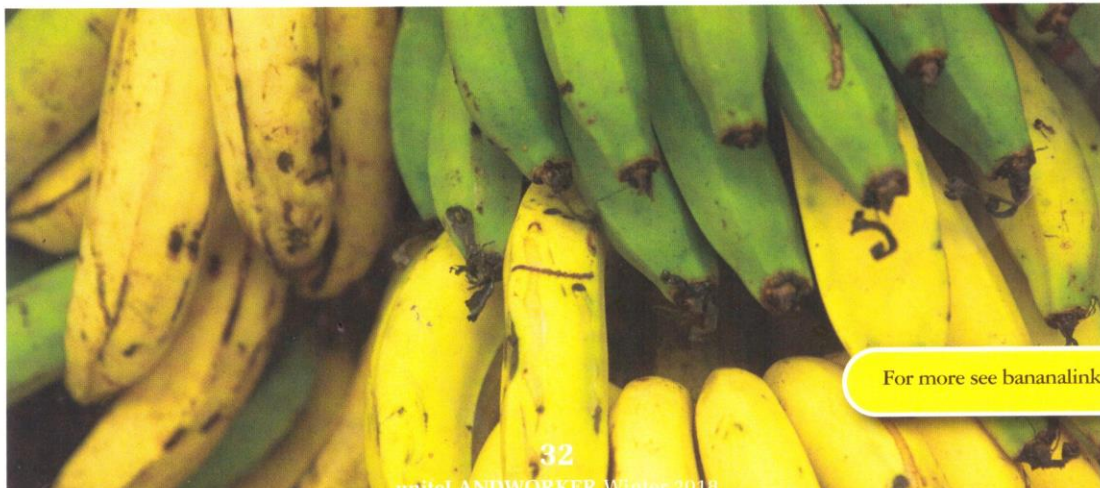
BL has organised global meetings of women leaders, thus improving women's economic engagement in the banana industry. Further successes include the establishment of a living wage in the world's largest banana grower, Ecuador, where BL's Latin American coordinator is based. Meanwhile thousands of people have been persuaded to lobby Fyfes over its poor employment practices. This has pushed the company into meeting the senior leadership of the IUF (the international food workers union) to discuss improvements.

In 2009, BL's trade union and small

farmer partner organisations created the World Banana Forum (WBF), which brings together everyone, including the major supermarket and fruit companies. The Third International WBF will take place in Geneva in November. BL aims to secure funding, including from commercial operators, to transport approximately 40 global trade union reps to Switzerland.

"This would ensure their voices get heard in any debate about the best way to make the industry environmentally, socially and economically sustainable," said Jacqui.

Unite members and branches not already involved with BL are urged to make contact. Speakers are available for branch meetings. "Bananas are a fun-based great education tool. The supply chain is understandable, making it easy to see how everyone can make an important contribution. Branch affiliation costs £50 minimum and we will keep members regularly updated so that know how their support aids our overseas trade union partners to improve the living conditions for banana workers internationally," concluded Jacqui.



For more see [bananalink.org.uk](http://bananalink.org.uk)

# A warm welcome

## Clarion House, Nelson-on-Colne, Lancs

Set amid some spectacular countryside, the Clarion House at Nelson-on-Colne is a real gem that any trade union or labour movement visitor would enjoy.

Clarion House is the only clubhouse remaining from what was once a large network of similar countryside buildings.

In Victorian England, working conditions across East Lancashire were atrocious, especially for children. The atmosphere was putrid from the cotton in the air and the soot and smog created by mill chimneys. Nelson socialists set up societies, such as rambling, camping holidays and cycling clubs, aimed at improving the health and well-being of the working class.

**Andrew Smith** was a Nelson Independent Labour Party (ILP) member who believed people should be able to engage their physical training in the open unpolluted countryside. Nelson ILP rented properties from 1899 onwards. As membership levels rose steadily from around fifty towards a thousand the ILP set up a land society and purchased in June 1912 land 'near New Church in Pendle.' Clarion House cost £350 to build and since when the day to day running and maintenance has been carried out by volunteers.

"There are always people here. Most come of their own steam and you get many ramblers and cyclists. We enjoy sitting in the garden and the view is outstanding. I doubt there are many better anywhere in England," said **Sarah Jane Grey** from Barrowford.

The Clarion House building itself is basically one large room of benches and chairs, an attached porch, toilets and a large kitchen serving refreshments and a great cup of tea. Along with colourful banners, the walls are decorated with local and national historical figures associated with the clubhouse.

"We largely exist on the money we make from our sales. I enjoy helping as I see this as socialism in action. We work together co-operatively. Visitors get a cup of tea and can sit down and, if they want, chat and exchange ideas about how to improve things for working people. You can also just sit outside and relax. We'd be delighted to welcome Unite members," explained retired postal worker **Sue Nike** (pictured), who first volunteered at Clarion House around 35 years ago.

Clarion House can be reached by easy or moderate walks from the surrounding towns of Nelson, Colne, Burnley and

Clitheroe. It is open every Sunday from 10.30am to 4.00pm as well as some bank holidays. On other days, visitors are welcome to sit and relax outside. There is plenty of space for children to safely run around in. There is an outside toilet.

All visitors get a warm welcome.

*ILP Clarion House, Jinney Lane, Newchurch-in-Pendle, Lancashire NN12 9LL. Donations from trade union branches would be welcomed.*

*See also a recent released video on Clarion House. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsQznVb3biM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsQznVb3biM)*



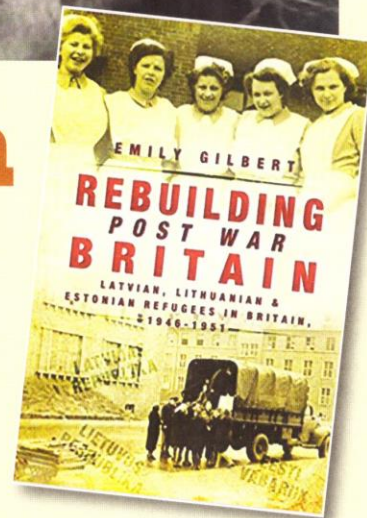
Mark Harvey



Pauline Szelewski/mediadrumworld.com

# From Latvia with love

*Rebuilding post-war Britain: Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian refugees in Britain, 1946-1951*, by Emily Gilbert, Pen and Sword, £12.99



The arrival at the end of WWII of 25,000 Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian (LLE) refugees – Displaced Persons (DP) as they were officially known, was essential to the rebuilding of a war torn Britain.

The refugees had fled when the Soviet Union re-occupied their countries in 1944, sparking genuine fears that the brutal oppression experienced under Stalin's rule between 1939 and 1941 would resume.

After 1945, large number of refugees of all nationalities found themselves marooned in camps in Germany and Austria. There were 650,000 in the British Zone.

In 1947, Britain had a labour shortage of over 600,000 in key industries such as coal mining, brick making, domestic work in hospitals and agriculture, which had relied heavily during the war on females that now intended staying at home to look after returning husbands and the family.

The Attlee Labour government was to eventually recruit a total of 80,000 DP as workers. The decision to do so was not

without controversy but was made easier by many genuine attempts, often undertaken by the local WRVS, to integrate the newcomers into society. Arrivals were given work passes in specific jobs for one year and after which many swapped jobs. DP were housed in camps, some in remote rural communities. Facilities could be sparse.

Many from the three Baltic countries, which were still to be industrialised, came from tight-knit rural communities. The skills they had acquired on farmsteads were now needed as agriculture here faced a severe manpower shortage. While the government began investing in modern farming machinery in order to increase home production, 5,000 DP worked in agriculture where low wages and long hours put off potential British recruits.

LLE refugees hoped that the post war agreement would see their countries again become independent. When it became apparent that was not going to be the case they refused to entertain going home whilst the Soviet Union occupied their

countries. Some were allowed to emigrate, Canada proving popular.

Others, realising they were not going home turned their thoughts to long term career aspirations. By 1949, a significant movement into private accommodation had started. Agricultural recruits left farming after seeing the dilapidated equipment they were expected to work with. Many got jobs in the under-staffed textile and brick making industries and became part of emigre communities in places like Bradford, Leeds, Bedford and Corby.

Over the following decades the refugees made their homes in Britain and opened community facilities where they could continue to socialise with each other. When in 1991 Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia again became independent there was great joy but most survivors were by then too old to return as Britain had become their home. This is a very interesting and enjoyable book.

Unite is a smash hit at this year's Great Yorkshire Show

# FLOCKING TO THE STALL

"If you build it, they will come" may have worked for Kevin Costner's character in *Field of Dreams*, but rarely is the initial vision likely to be a success unless those involved ask themselves, "who are we building this product for? What information supports our theory?"

So it is smashing to report that the decision four years ago by Unite's North East Yorkshire and Humberside (NEY&H) region to radically change its programme for the three-day Great Yorkshire Show (GYS) has been a great success with visitor numbers to the union's exhibits leaping from 1,000 in 2015 to 3,300 in 2018 and 4,526 this July.

In 1951 Unite's heritage union, the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, first mounted a permanent stall at GYS. The aim was to reach out to local communities and encourage new membership. The number of regular agricultural workers in England was then 543,788, 84,971 of whom were under 21.

By 2010 agricultural numbers had tumbled to just 74,759 regular workers with another 42,228 casual employees. Numbers across NEYH were 9,853 and 3,329 respectively. Attendance at the stall had naturally fallen dramatically and while Unite's presence at the GYS was welcomed by retired members the union was failing to engage with the vast majority of visitors, many of them schoolchildren.

There then followed extensive discussions. "We had an audience of zero understanding of trade unionism as it's not taught in schools. It is a case of igniting

that initial spark that trade unions are here and doing things for working class people at work and within society generally.

To attract schoolchildren we needed educational content as otherwise schools would not return the following years. We also needed volunteers as they increase the opportunities for visitors to ask questions and can speak about how important a trade union can be in people's lives," explains **Andy Pearson**, the NEY&H regional education officer and the coordinator of Unite's work at the GYS, England's largest annual agricultural show.

Since 2015 Unite has reached out by mounting colourful exhibitions combining information boards with actors in period dress which helped bring to life the historic struggles of working people.

This year's exhibition sought to highlight the launch of the state pension 110 years ago and draw attention, especially to young female visitors, about the increasing number of exiting career opportunities in the science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) sector that currently has over 173,000 vacancies which require training in.

This skills shortage costs the UK economy around £1.5bn annually and Unite and sector employers are combining to encourage young people to consider a STEM career. "I am doing a stand on STEMs with some basic aero dynamic displays showing how table tennis balls balance on hot air. I am a third year apprentice at BAE systems in Brough

and I have had lots of opportunities to study technical engineering and the theory behind aerodynamics.

"We are pretty much guaranteed a job at the conclusion of our four year apprenticeship training but the skills are also transferable if there is a need to find work elsewhere. I can speak very positively about my experiences," said **Aidan Blockley**, who also praised Unite for its general support in negotiating an annual pay rise and providing free legal advice.

Many women visited the stall for women in science and engineering, (WISE) – a network of companies and organisations that are taking action to increase the number of women in STEM. "There has historically been a reluctance, often from around aged 16, by girls to consider the STEM sector. They miss out on good job opportunities in construction and engineering.

When we visit schools girls often say they want to be a teacher or doctor. They have seen women doing these jobs but they have not seen women engineers. We want to harness home grown talent. Unite is a WISE member and so we are delighted to be here supporting the union at the GYS," explained **Shagufta Sharif**, WISE development manager.

The national emergencies museum stall also proved popular with many young visitors working at a crime scene to take fingerprints. "We have a hands-on approach to show there are many STEM jobs in the emergency services," said **Matt Wakefield**.



I'm heartened we've reached out to a record number of visitors. Hopefully everyone will know Unite is on their side and become members

**Andy Pearson**  
Unite education

Visitors flocked to the stall for Unite's period dignity campaign, aimed at removing the taxes on sanitary products and for workplaces and schools to give free access to tampons. "Adults appear to be impressed by our work and as most are not in a union then hopefully they will later consider joining Unite," said **Anna Lavery**, Unite young members' national committee chair.

Other Unite stalls were designed to explain how the union is working with members to tackle the threat to jobs from automation, the importance of jointly working with employers to provide lifelong learning at work and how shop stewards can be assisted to work out a comprehensive pay claim using a specially designed pay claim generator.

"I am, heartened that we have reached out to a record number of visitors. Many are children from schools that also visited the exhibition last year but there also many

working adults who are not in a trade union. Hopefully everyone will go away knowing that Unite is on their side and would welcome them becoming members. Next year's theme will be the food, drink and agricultural sector," said a smiling **Andy Pearson** (pictured).



Mark Harvey

# Receding hopes

Unite's **Philippa Marsden** is fearful for the future of peace in Colombia

**Philippa Marsden** (pictured inset), Unite executive council member for education, formed part of a 12-strong **Justice for Colombia (JFC)** Peace delegation in May that also included **Dan Carden MP**, shadow international development secretary, to the South American Republic.

Hopes are receding that the 2016 peace agreement between the state and FARC armed rebels that ended five decades of conflict in which over 200,000 people were killed will lead to a permanent peace to allow for social reforms that Colombian people desire.

Last year 34 trade unionists, including 15 striking teachers, were murdered. Over 130 former FARC combatants have been slaughtered since 2016.

Unite's sister union, Fensuagro, which represents rural workers, saw 10 members killed in the first five months of 2019. On Sunday August 4, Enrique Guejia became the 33rd indigenous leader murdered in north Cauca so far this year.

Most killings are the work of paramilitaries connected to the state or by the security forces.

The delegation visited different regions including Cauca. In Bogota, Colombia's capital city, their series of high level meetings included the opposition parties whose own recent report accuses President Ivan Duque's government of failing to invest in civil society or provide security for its citizens. Few legislative reforms that support victims' and their families have been put into operation and less than 10 per cent of rural land that is

earmarked to be distributed to communities and victims has so far been formalised.

While welcoming Duque's expressions of commitment towards the peace deal, the JFC delegation declared "these commitments will need to be seen in practice if the implementation of the peace agreement is to be a success." The 12 visitors expressed their belief in the huge potential of the peace process.

The delegation's report will shortly appear on the regularly updated JFC website at [justiceforcolombia.org](http://justiceforcolombia.org)

If you haven't yet got your branch to affiliate to Justice for Colombia, which was key to the signing of the peace deal, please consider doing so. Speakers are available. Call 020 7324 2490.



# The lead miners' tales

## Killhope lead mining museum, Cowshill, Co Durham

Killhope is a multi-award winning lead museum located in County Durham amid an area of outstanding national beauty.

You travel across some stunning countryside to get there. It's a stark contrast to the working conditions of those who toiled underground in the nineteenth century. The museum skillfully brings to life their experiences with the highlight of any visit being the underground guided tour.

The search to unearth the galena, the principal ore of lead that was key to the industrial revolution with extensive use in construction, began at Killhope in 1853. The process was painstaking.

It took two decades of tunnelling before the first ore was extracted. For a short period the mine prospered but within another 25 years the once 150 strong workforce had dwindled to a handful.

By the end of WWI the mine, like many others previously operated across upper Weardale, was abandoned. Lead mining

that had first started across the wild and remote North Pennines under the ancient Romans thus finally ended. Lead's toxicity has meant that it has subsequently been phased out of many applications.

Whether by vehicle, bicycle or foot it is a fascinating journey to Killhope where - following its lease in 1968 by Durham County Council - minor repairs began the process of turning it into what is now an internationally recognised attraction.

An interpretation visitors centre, large wheel, restored former working buildings and the underground mine, reopened to visitors in 1996, are on the site along with an affordable cafe, bookshop and play area for younger children. The museum hosts many school visits.

Many lead miners, who were forced to work because their small farm holdings provided only a meagre income, lived too far away to go home each evening and so lived on the site. The conditions were appalling and the work incredibly hard, with few living beyond 50.

"Mining generally relies on brute force to bring down rocks. Galena is different as if it gets hammered it can turn into worthless dust," explains **Mary Driver**, museum duty manager. Extraction was a slow process, explosions being aimed at creating splits across the rock. Most faced a continuous battle against the conditions to earn a living.

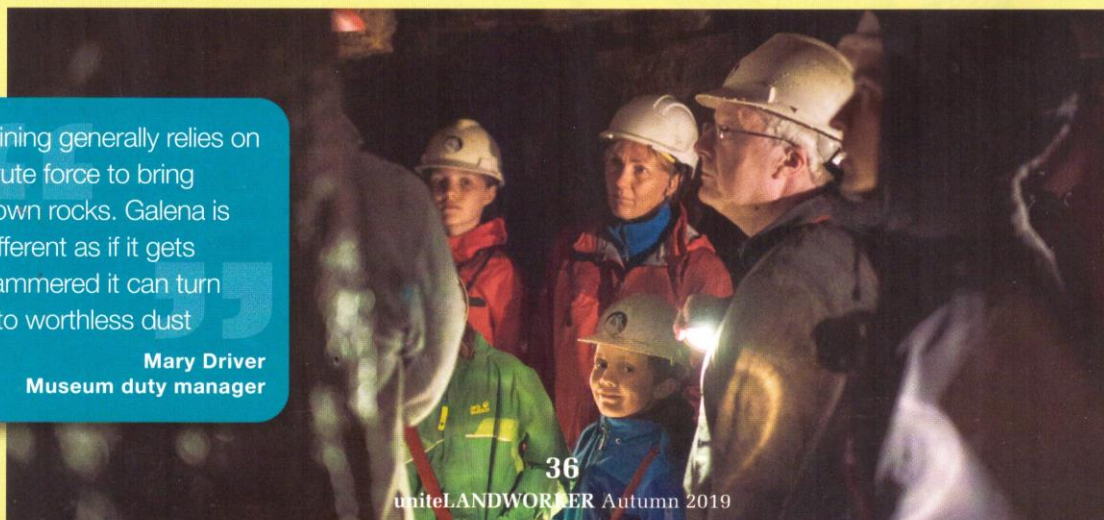
The underground tour lasts around an hour. The visitors centre includes some fascinating correspondence between two young local lead miners, Joseph Graham and John Peart, who emigrated to become farmers in the US, and their families and friends they left behind.

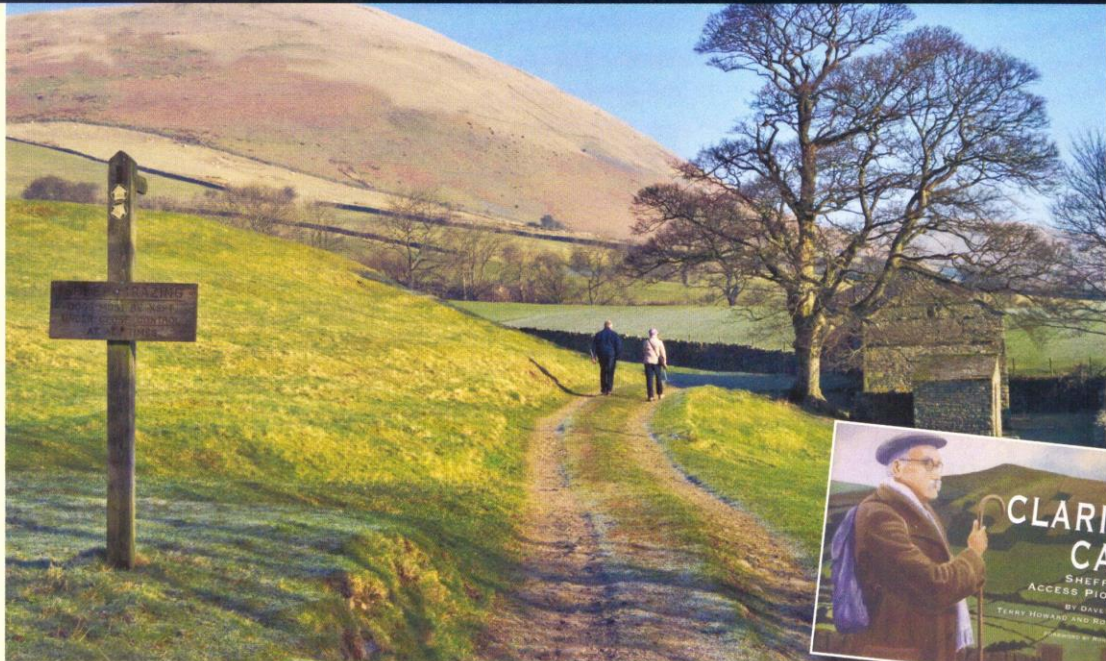
Packed with crystals and minerals found by lead miners working underground, the museum also contains a series of spar boxes, a local unique folk craft tradition that combines great beauty and craftsmanship.

Visiting Killhope costs £9.00 for an adult day pass and a family pass for 2 adults and 2 children is £25.00.

Mining generally relies on brute force to bring down rocks. Galena is different as if it gets hammered it can turn into worthless dust

**Mary Driver**  
Museum duty manager





# Access all areas

*Clarion call: Sheffield's Access Pioneers* by by Dave Sissons, Terry Howard and Roly Smith, Northend Creative, £7.99

His role in the famous 1932 Kinder Scout Trespass made **Benny Rothman** the best known rambler ever. Yet his actions were only one part of the struggle for the Right to Roam.

Which is why it is so great to be able to pick this book up, especially as it is crammed with some terrific black and white photographs. Clarion call celebrates the role played by the early members of Sheffield Clarion Ramblers' Group (SCRG), founded in 1900 and defunct since 2015, in the century-long successful battle for the creation of our national parks and moorland access.

Two men, like Rothman, both active trade unionists in unions that eventually became part of Unite, played particularly key roles in SCRAG, founder **GBH Ward** (1876-1957) and photographer **Herbert Harry Diver** (1869-1941).

Ward began work as an errand boy before serving an apprenticeship and qualifying

as an engineer fitter. In 1897 he joined the Sheffield No. 1 branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, holding various union posts. His main love was rambling: "some of us have found our Socialism in the picture of the countryside."

Ward organised the first Sheffield Clarion ramble, attended by 14 people, on September 2, 1900. He began publishing an annual *Clarion Ramblers Handbook* in 1901. They remain a treasure trove of local history and folklore.

Diver, a bricklayer who held numerous elected union posts, was the first official Labour candidate in Sheffield and almost elected in Darnall Ward. He was blacklisted because of his labour movement activities. Diver was a keen amateur photographer and his first photograph appears in the 1907 Handbook. The photographs, many published for the first time ever in this book, are particularly remarkable.

Some of the rambles involved breaking the trespass laws. The increasing popularity of rambling meant that by 1932 trespassing on Kinder Scout was not unusual.

Ward did not take part in the 1932 Mass Trespass. He had been issued in 1923 with a writ by an owner of part of Kinder Scout, barring him from going there. When Rothman and four other young men were sent to jail, Ward identified strongly with them.

Rothman later admitted it was a mistake not to have carried on with the access campaign that had to wait another 50 years to be restarted. And with the passing of the Countryside Rights of Way Act of 2000 access to open country was eventually achieved. It was a famous victory made possible thanks to the pioneering efforts of those early SCRAG members. Well done to Sissons, Howard and Smith from bringing them back to life in this marvellous publication.

# Cruel and u

Anti-hunt activists are still having to cry 'Hounds Off' our wildlife

While Scottish animal welfare campaigners are stepping up their efforts to block loopholes in fox hunting legislation their English and Welsh colleagues are reaching out to help farmers, landowners and rural residents being badly affected by hunt trespasses.

Foxhunting with dogs was outlawed by Scotland's parliament in 2002. Hundreds of hours of parliamentary debate took place before England and Wales followed suit in 2005 when the Labour government was forced to use the Parliament Act after Tory peers in the Lords repeatedly rejected the legislation.

In 2006, legal attempts by hunters to reverse the ban on grounds that it breached human rights were dismissed by the High Court. Hunters also predicted that the law would be unenforceable and threatened defiance.

There were few early prosecutions but the figures have steadily increased each year.

Nevertheless, animal welfare campaigners have assembled overwhelming evidence that hunts are exploiting legal loopholes to still hunt in a manner which is very similar to pre-ban traditional hunting. A person will be deemed to be hunting by participating in the pursuit of a wild mammal where one or more dogs are employed in that pursuit.

Hunts across the UK can though exploit an exemption called "flushing to guns" that means letting hounds chase foxes out from cover such as woods into the open, to be shot by a marksman.

The League Against Cruel Sports (LACs) monitors hunts. According to its Scottish Field Investigator "we have filmed hounds running across open countryside in pursuit of foxes, hunts entering their dogs into cover when there is clearly no intention to shoot any foxes that may be flushed..."

The Investigator said fox hunters were organising on a need to know basis, making it difficult to collect evidence that can stand up in court. LACs field research officers have been on the sharp end of considerable harassment and intimidation by those who engaging in a cruel and unnecessary practice that has little effect on reducing fox numbers.

LACs and other Scottish animal welfare activists have organised a high profile campaign to strengthen the law. After a lengthy process led by Lord Bonomy the SNP government promised a Bill to outline steps to close loopholes in the 2002 legislation.

Time limits for prosecutions were to be extended, a code of practice introduced and

independent hunt monitors were to be considered.

The SNP has now failed to keep its pledge by dropping the bill from its 2020 programme for government. A letter has since emerged from the SNP rural economy secretary Fergus Ewing to a hunt sympathiser. Ewing backs "current exemptions which have enabled pest control to be carried out using dogs." He states there was "no intention to ban that activity."

LACs Scottish director, **Robbie Marsland** has expressed his "deep disappointment" at the SNP's inaction. LACs will now support a fox and hare bill by the Scottish Green MSP Alison Johnstone "to close loopholes in the current legislation and really ban hunting in Scotland."

In England and Wales the voluntary group **Hounds Off (HO)**, established in 2010 after the then Conservative opposition leader David Cameron had promised if elected to repeal the Hunting Act, seeks to create hunt-free zones.

Cameron was unable to repeal the Act, which according to HO founder **Joe Hashman**, "HO seeks to complement by getting farmers, landowners and rural residents to declare their homesteads as hunt free zones. We want to unite a compassionate uprising in support of the Hunting Act and against killing for sport.

"We have built a nationwide network, including livestock farmers, tenants and estate managers, of people who are shocked and infuriated by the arrogance and lawfulness of hunts and their followers...who are fed up with disruption caused by dogs and hunters going wherever they like as it they own the place - which often they don't."



BY MARK METCALF

# unnecessary



Hounds off – hunt trespass must be stopped

The advice provided by HO has been drawn up by legal professionals. It includes getting to know your property rights, warning off the local hunt and erecting no hunting signs. The group, which also backs the work of organisations such as LACs, has helped many people prevent attacks on their animals, the killing of foxes on their land and general harassment by hunters.

JC, who lives in Kent, praised the “wonderful support and advice of Hounds Off. We repeatedly suffer from the arrogant and bullying behaviour of our local hunt. We plan to use all available means to put an end to this harassment.”

Whilst Hashman, who hopes a future Labour Government would strengthen the law on fox hunting, is “buoyed by these successes” he

also wants to develop new forms of hunting that do not involve killing wild animals. He cites drag hunting and Dry Booting that involves using “a small pack of bloodhounds to hunt human runners by their scent along..... which if developed could create a whole gamut of rural recreational possibilities and business opportunities.”

Hounds Off has no regular income and so the group seeks to raise its profile message via social media and word of mouth. Hashman, who is a regular annual visitor to the Toldpuddle Martyrs Festival, would welcome trade union support. He is especially keen to see trade unionists in the railway sector speak out as “hunt trespass is a common occurrence and it’s a danger to railway workers and passengers. It needs to be stopped.”



For more on Hounds Off visit [www.houndsoff.co.uk](http://www.houndsoff.co.uk)

# Solidarity results

In this issue we look at two of our international campaigns



## Gaspar freed

Turkmen journalist Gaspar Matalaev (pictured) has been released after three years of wrongful imprisonment for having exposed forced labour conditions in the cotton fields of Turkmenistan, a Central Asian Republic (CAR) where trade unions are not allowed to function freely.

Turkmenistan is a former Soviet bloc country ruled by the Democratic Party (DP), which simply changed its name from the Communist Party in the 1990s. At the Presidential election in Turkmenistan in 2016, DP leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow was re-elected with a claimed 98 per cent of the vote.

By shining a light on the forced labour problem in Turkmenistan, Gaspar sought to bring the practice to an end and create a momentum towards free trade unions with the right to bargain collectively.

The campaign to force his freedom resulted in over 100,000 people globally

adding their names to a petition calling on the government of Turkmenistan to release him.

Thanks to this campaign, in which the International Federation of Journalists and the International Union of Food, Farm and Hotel Workers (IUF) were prominent, Gaspar knew he was never alone. His first message upon his release from prison on

September 6, 2019 was a big thank you to everyone who has supported him over the past three years.

Nevertheless the torture he received and the terrible prison conditions he was forced to endure have left him badly affected. Unite members who can help aid Gaspar's recovery can donate at:- <https://gaspar.funraise.org>



## Justice fight for Reni

The International Union of Food, Farm and Hotel Workers at [www.iuf.org/w/](http://www.iuf.org/w/) is a world-wide federation of trade unions, including Unite, which represents workers in hotels, hospitality, catering and associated fields.

It organises numerous international support campaigns, one of which was supporting **Reni Desmiria**, secretary of the SPBMI

union of workers at seafood processor Bumi Menara Internusa (BMI) in Lampung, Indonesia. BMI wanted to have her imprisoned for 6 years on the grounds that she had obtained 8 years ago a job as a casual worker with a false high school certificate. Proceedings were instigated after Reni recruited union members for a mandatory employee health insurance scheme.

# 'Old stuff will outlast the new'

## Threlkeld Quarry and Mining Museum, Threlkeld

"We keep alive the dark side of the Lake District," explains assistant engineer **Dicken Chaplin-Brice** (pictured). "Without heavy industry, mines and quarries there would have been no local railway network that subsequently helped develop the tourism industry such that today millions visit the area to witness its natural beauty."

Run by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers, Threlkeld Quarry and Mining Museum lies five miles east of Keswick, the major centre for tourism in the northern Lake District. The Museum is home to the Vintage Excavator Trust, whose 200-strong membership chairman is quarry owner **Ian Hartland**, which closed in 1982.

"It was a shame as I knew a lot of people who remembered it pre-war. There were numerous stories connected to the place. I did not want them to be forgotten as they are just as important as the tales of how beautiful the Lake District is."

Having bought other quarries, Hartland, purchased Threlkeld as he wanted to "keep bits of things going. Old stuff will outlast the new. You can't beat something that the driver is in charge of. We must preserve historical skills as it means we can mend things."

A Trust was established in 1992 to develop an onsite museum and its members worked hard repairing buildings and reconstructing the site. The railway was brought back to life. It's one of Chaplin-Brice's many tasks to keep it functioning. "I enjoy very much working in the original locomotive shed," he said.

In 1995 the Trust was wound up with the Museum handed over to the Museum Company, which now runs the site and had in July over 2,000 visitors.

Callers can enjoy the two substantial indoor display rooms that highlight the links between geology, quarrying and the 400 year history of local metal ore,

including lead mining. The displays feature many photographs of quarrymen. "We get many school children visiting as learning about rocks is part of the school curriculum. We also run a special minerals panning stream that is very popular with younger people," said educational co-ordinator **Jane Dickens**.

Visiting for the first time, Jim Fox felt Threlkeld fulfilled an "important role as what is often forgotten is that this area was a working one long before it became a tourist region or a place where people buy second homes. Keeping the old machines running means that the workers' contributions to the development of the Lake District is recognised."

Hopefully more people will visit in 2020 when the museum, which is entirely self-supporting from the amount it collects through the door, will reopen at Easter time and run until the end of the October half term.



Mark Harvey

We get many school children visiting as learning about rocks is part of the school curriculum. We also run a special minerals panning stream that is very popular with younger people

**Jane Dickens**  
Museum educational  
co-ordinator

For more visit [threlkeldquarryandminingmuseum.co.uk](http://threlkeldquarryandminingmuseum.co.uk)



## **Trapped without trade unions**

*Manufacturing towns in China –The Governance of Rural Migrant Workers*

by Yue Gong, Palgrave Macmillan, £52.42

The numbers of Chinese rural workers migrating, for varying time periods, to work in urban areas is huge and consists of around 20 per cent of China's 1.38bn population. Most work in manufacturing, which absorbs three in 10 of the migrants with the construction industry employing one in five.

Migrants, who to obtain work must be young, healthy and passive, enter towns and cities seeking to improve their economic circumstances but are often restricted from receiving basic local welfare services such as public housing and education.

Although in recent years a number of migrant workers are able to obtain highly skilled jobs the majority remain lowly paid and must work long hours on low-skilled repetitive processes. Independent trade union organisation is not permitted by the ruling Chinese Communist Party and would not be welcomed anyway by the major multinational companies that form

the backbone of the manufacturing industry in the Chinese Republic. This has not stopped workers from taking strike action and engaging in riots on certain occasions such as in 2014 when thousands of workers at the Yue Yuen shoe factory in China, which supplies brands including Nike and Adidas, stopped work over social security payments.

Outside of work the authorities are also keen to retain control of migrants. The author lived alongside migrant workers, interviewing many of them while also observing their activities as they struggled to make sense and improve their dramatically new circumstances.

There is two main forces exerting governance over migrants outside the factory. These are the government and local landowners organised within village committees. The latter has been content to build specially constructed cheap housing for migrant workers that is gated well away from the much better living

quarters of the indigenous population. This and other constraints physically marginalise migrants and prevent them playing a role in local affairs.

Meanwhile in their desire to recruit rural migrants, who are unable to make a living at home and who are critically required by the manufacturing companies, there is the deliberate targeting of workers as soon as they enter the main street of the manufacturing town. These become labour markets and the newcomers are persuaded to undertake work at the earliest opportunity without necessarily understanding what they've signed up for or even meeting more experienced workers who might be able to offer valuable advice on pay and conditions across industries.

All of this helps to keep labour as cheap as possible as each worker sees themselves as individuals rather than part of a great body of workers who need to get collectively organised if they are to enjoy some of the fruits of their hard work.

# GROSS EXPLOITATION

## The Scottish govt's seasonal workers pilot scheme exposes a depressing picture

A report into the operations of the Scottish government's Seasonal Workers Pilot (SWP) scheme that brings temporary agricultural workers from outside the EU, exposes a depressing picture of gross exploitation.

The Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) and Fife Migrants Forum (FMF) report into the horticultural sector is the first ever independent evidence of worker experiences on seasonal agricultural workers schemes.

Between 1943 and 2014 the Home Office ran the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme. Throughout the 71-year period no independent reports based on interviews with participating workers were undertaken, a sure sign of how little successive governments cared about some of the most vulnerable workers in the country.

In the lead up to the UK's exit from the EU there were concerns that the agricultural sector was suffering a shortfall in workers, resulting in crops being left unharvested. To solve these problems the SWP was introduced. It began with an annual quota of 2,500

workers, increasing to 10,000 in 2020 and 30,000 this year – when it was opened to workers from EU countries. Ukrainians have by far made up the largest group of SWP workers.

Until May 2021, recruitment for the SWP jobs was undertaken by Concordia and Pro-Force Ltd. Migrant workers who are offered posts must fund their own travel costs plus a £244 visa fee. Costs average out at around £900 per worker. Many are forced to borrow this money from black market sources.

Many workers complained of discrepancies between the information they received before travelling and the nature of the work they were actually required to undertake on arrival. Documents are rarely translated into migrants' languages.

Unsafe caravan accommodation exempt from local authority licensing, must be paid for even if there is no work, together with the use of zero hours contracts combined with payment by piece rates, all paints a depressing picture

made worse by deportation threats by some employers and the impossibility of finding alternative employment.

The report authors state it 'identifies a serious risk that forced labour could take place on the SWP if action is not taken.'

They want the UK and Scottish Governments to consider a lengthy series of recommendations. These include removing the visa fee and ensuring workers get a guaranteed minimum weekly income of £332.50 for 35 hours a week.

Increasing resources to the Gangmasters and Labour Authority, which has just one staff member in Scotland, is required and there should be new regulations relating to piece rate calculations. An independent helpline with translation into workers' languages would allow them to raise potential labour abuse incidents.

The Scottish government is also asked to offer financial support to migrant community organisations and trade unions.



### FIND OUT MORE

Read the report at  
<https://labourexploitation.org>

# 'HANDS OFF OUR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' PAY'



## The Northern Ireland agricultural wages board is under threat

With agricultural workers, especially those under 22, across England continuing to be worse off than their UK counterparts it is vital that Unite defeats proposals by the Northern Ireland executive to abolish their own Agricultural Wages Board. (AWB) The England and Wales AWB was scrapped by the Con-Dem coalition government in 2013. Agricultural workers in England faced being paid less than those in Scotland and Northern Ireland, which have had their own AWBs, on which Unite represents agricultural workers, since 1949 and 1977 respectively.

The move left thousands of workers in Wales and England without union representation over wages and conditions and with no way of knowing when they might next receive a pay increase.

In Wales there was a devolved assembly Labour government which fought a successful legal battle that allowed it to establish a dedicated Wales AWB, (officially known as the

Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales) on which Unite sits, to protect 13,000 low paid agricultural workers.

On 1 April 2021, the minimum hourly rate for all Scottish agricultural workers, irrespective of age and duties became £8.91, which is the national minimum wage (NMW) rate across the UK for 23-year-olds. In Wales those aged 16 to 20 are paid £7.84 hourly and those aged 21-22 get £8.36. In Northern Ireland, a minimum hourly rate of £6.95 is paid for the first 40 weeks of employment which rises to a minimum of £7.49 an hour for workers aged under 23.

In comparison to these AWB negotiated rates, young agricultural workers in England are only covered by the NMW hourly rates of £4.62 for under 18s, £6.56 for 18- to 20-year-olds and £8.36 for those aged 21 and 22.

A 20-year-old in Scotland is thus guaranteed £356.40 for a 40-hour working week, in Northern Ireland it is

£299.60 and in Wales the figure is £313.60. The sum in England is £262.40, considerably less than elsewhere. The differences for a young person in England aged 18 or under is even greater. It is hardly surprising that young workers in England are not considering entering the agricultural sector.

AWBs also cover pay for workers or all ages in lieu of wages, sick pay, holiday pay, piece rates, overtime rates at 1.5 times the standard rate and it limits deductions for accommodation to a flat rate and which in Northern Ireland is £45 weekly.

The drop in living standards for agricultural workers in England is exactly what Unite predicted eight years ago.

A Unite survey in 2014 found that just 56 per cent of those previously covered by the AWB had had a pay rise. This was despite a third asking one. Those that did get a pay rise had received less than the whole econo



average. Eighty two per cent had any pay rise imposed by their employer, destroying the government and employers earlier claims that abolishing the AWB would free employees to conduct individual negotiations with their employer.

The survey also revealed that no sick pay was being paid by some employers, who had also added an extra hour to the working week before overtime was paid. The history of the AWB can be traced back to the radical, reforming Liberal government in the years leading up to WW1. In his role as Deputy Prime Minister from 2010 to 2015, the Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg propped up the austerity programme of David Cameron and George Osborne and helped to scrap a board that even Margaret Thatcher retained.

Clegg, who is now Vice President for Global Affairs and Communications at Facebook, was knighted for his services in the 2017 New Year Honours list – despite his attack on the wages and conditions of agricultural workers throughout England.

In Northern Ireland the AWB is the final collective bargaining mechanism with a responsibility for private sector workers. As the evidence from England since 2013 demonstrates its abolition will “open the door to a post-Brexit race-to-the-bottom on workers’ and farmers’ pay and conditions,” states Unite regional officer **Sean McKeever**.

In January, the Northern Ireland (NI) department of agriculture, environment and rural affairs minister Edward Poots of the Democratic Unionist Party announced his intention to end the NI AWB that covers over 11,000 agricultural sector employees. Poots is a member of the Ulster Farmers’ Union (UFU) which champions the interests of big ranchers and the agri-food bosses.

At the NI AWB meeting in March, Sean McKeever, unsuccessfully pressed UFU representatives to retain the AWB. “There is a particular need for a collective bargaining body covering agricultural field workers...the sector receives a huge amount of public funds...it is one which is inherently difficult to organise given the scattered distribution of workers and the prevalence of part-time working.

“The AWB is of vital importance in countering exploitation, which all too often includes the practice of trafficking and modern-day slavery – especially as many are migrant workers with little other protection.”

Abolishing the AWB in Northern Ireland will also offer further encouragement to the National Farmers’ Union in Scotland who are known to favour abolishing the board there. Unite is strongly opposing the proposals to scrap the NI AWB and is running a campaign – *Stormont, hands off our agricultural workers*. The union has written to the leaders of all political parties to oppose abolition.

#### FIND OUT MORE

For more on the campaign see [www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns](http://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns) If you live in Northern Ireland please send a message to your MLA demanding their party stands up for agricultural field and farm workers and use their ministerial veto, which is what former agricultural minister Michelle Gildernew did in 2007, when it was first proposed to scrap the AWB.

# STOP FUNDING COLOMBIA BRUTALITY CALL

## Unite urges MPs to back early day motion

Justice for Colombia wants Unite members to urge their MP to sign an early day motion (EDM) calling on the government to condemn the excessive use of force by the Colombian security forces and to review its training and funding of the police in the South American republic. As of June 28, 90 MPs had signed the EDM.

On April 28, trade unions, backed by peasant, indigenous and numerous social groups, organised a nationwide strike. The demand for the withdrawal of deeply repressive tax changes and a pro-privatisation health care bill was key.

But the protests also formed part of ongoing demands to tackle poverty levels, address the human rights crisis and ensure the implementation of the 2016 Havana peace agreement, which ended the long running war between the Colombian government and FARC-EP guerrillas. Justice for Colombia played a crucial role in building the peace deal. By April 30, 19 demonstrators had been killed and President Duque had been forced to abandon the tax reform. Decades of state assassinations of trade unionists, journalists, political and community leaders helped fuel massive protests when social media showed numerous attacks on demonstrators. Police stations were destroyed in the capital, Bogota.

Army battalions and police officers were deployed against peaceful protestors. Death squads, a key component of the Colombian state's weaponry against its citizens, attacked indigenous groups. Massive human rights violations,

especially by ESMAD, the riot police, were committed by state forces.

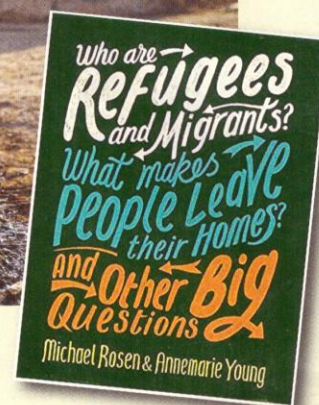
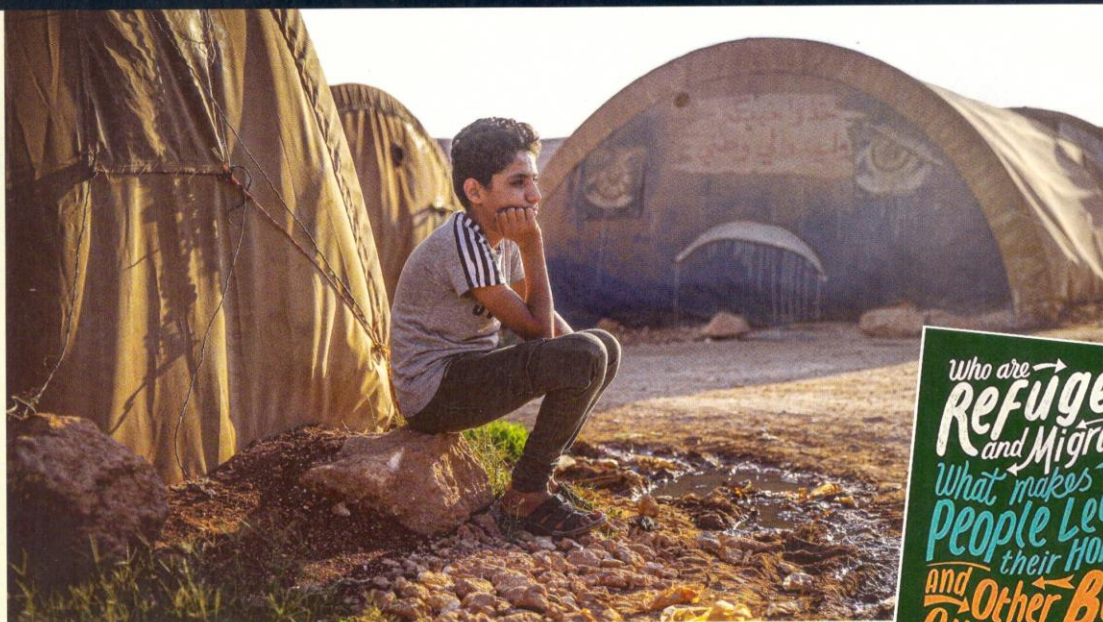
But the people would not submit and according to Justice for Colombia the demonstrations, intensified and were 'characterised by the mobilisation of young Colombians from poor neighbourhoods... who have become the so-called front line resisting ever-increasing levels of police brutality.'

On May 19 the health bill was abandoned but this success came at a cost as between April 28 and May 20 there were at least 43 deaths of Colombian citizens as well as thousands of arbitrary detentions. The killings have continued with ESMAD killing Jaime Alonso Fandino, aged 33, on June 21.

The UK government has refused to condemn the actions of the Duque administration and in a letter on May 27 to the Parliamentary Human Rights Group it continued to boast of the training that Police Scotland and the National Crime Agency have provided to the Colombian police and military.

The UK government is also allowing the sale of equipment to Colombia that could be used for human rights abuses. Justice for Colombia, formed in 2002 by British trade unions, promotes solidarity links to Colombia civil society. Many Unite branches are affiliated but if yours is not then consider doing so by visiting [www.justiceforcolombia.org](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org) To see if your MP has signed the EDM visit the Justice for Colombia site.





## HELPING THE YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND REFUGEES

*Who are Refugees and Migrants? What Makes People Leave their Homes? And Other Big Questions*, by Michael Rosen and Annemarie Young.

Published by Wayland Books. RRP £9.99

Growing disaffection with mainstream institutions and political parties, many of whom have embraced austerity has, encouraged the rise of anti-immigration movements and of the far right.

With the assistance of many newspapers this has strengthened the perception of immigration as being responsible for the social and economic problems faced by working-class communities. Anger, hostility and mistrust towards refugees, asylum-seekers and immigrants has thus jumped across society.

In turn this has diverted attention away from the ruling class that continues to increase its share of material wealth and which has the most widespread influence over political and economic decisions that affect all classes.

Of course, the ruling class, along with its wealth, has no problems moving freely across the globe. Is this fair treatment for all?

If young people are to help build a better world it is important that they are given opportunities to understand

migration and the movement of people in all its forms. This short, illustrated book, aimed at anyone from aged 10 upwards, does this.

Central to the book, which includes role-play exercises, are highly interesting testimonies from migrants, which have existed since time immemorial, refugees and asylum seekers. Many have made significant contributions to society.

"I hope people realise that asylum seekers want to be active, responsible and self-reliant members of society and demonisation is not helpful." Dr Mohammad Razai, from Afghanistan, now a doctor and medical researcher in the UK.

Readers are encouraged to walk in someone else's shoes before judging them. To imagine how they – and their loved ones – might act if they faced persecution, famine, abject poverty or were stuck in a war zone such as Syria or Libya with no hope of a better future. Where might they consider going to? How would they get there? Who can help?

In comparison, suppose the reader had power and influence? Refugees and migrants have rights with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drawn up after the horrors of WWII, agreeing a set of basic principles that include 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Are these rights being upheld?

The final part of the book asks what happens when society deliberately separates cultures and people and examines Nazi Germany, apartheid in South Africa and racial segregation in the USA.

Did you know that on November 14, 1960 in New Orleans six-year-old, Ruby Bridges was the first African American child to go to a school that had been until then all-white? Initially ostracised she was eventually successful when other African American children joined the school too and it became 'integrated.'

This positive example, one of many in the book, shows how it is possible to overcome prejudices and build a better world for all.

# UNITE SMASHES IT AT TOLPUDDLE

Unite, sunshine and socialism return to the fields of Tolpuddle

The Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival is back, and in the words of Sunday's opening act, The Leylines, "We are sat in a field drinking cider in the sun" for the first time since 2019. With an extreme weather warning over much of the UK, the temperature on the main stage was just as fiery.

**Tony Woodhouse**, chair of Unite's Executive Committee rallied the crowd saying that "members of all trade unions have simply had enough.

"Enough of bad bosses, enough of this Tory government, enough of low wages and enough of being treated with disrespect, and often as property, of the multi million pound businesses."

"We need to change the government as soon as possible. Boris Johnson may be gone but the nasty party is still here, we need radical change and we need hope."

Tony highlighted some of the current disputes Unite members are involved in, pointing out that in the 10 months since **Sharon Graham** became Unite general secretary the union had won over £50m in pay deals for its members.

Finishing to cheers and applause, Tony said, "I am very proud to be here today for Unite, sharing this

platform, being at this festival, with leaders and members of the great unions, currently in dispute such as RMT, ASLEF and all unions balloting for strike action."

He then left the stage to join with many of those leaders, and others, in walking to St John's Church in the village to lay a wreath on behalf of Unite members at the grave of Tolpuddle Martyr James Hammett.

The festival was a glorious return to the birthplace of rural trade unionism and packed with people keen to get back together, take part in debates, sing and dance to the music and generally have a great time.

Festival organisers pulled together a cracking musical line-up to welcome people back. This included many, such as **Cable Street Collective** and **Rhoda Dakar**, who had been waiting since 2019 to play the festival, but also gave a raft of new acts a chance, including **Theo Muzi** from Brazil and US protest singers **Carsie Blanton** and **Crys Matthews**, who flew over specially to play at Tolpuddle.

For TUC south west regional secretary and festival organiser **Nigel Costley** this was his last Tolpuddle in charge as he retires later this year – but it was a great way to finish.

Nigel said, "It's fantastic. We did keep it going online but it's nothing like being here in person. Lots of us are seeing each other for the first time in three years... it is amazing to be back.

"It's been such a lovely three days, and there have been so many magical moments, with some great speeches, really rallying the cause and bringing everyone together at such a crucial moment for unions."

Enough of bad bosses, enough of this Tory government, enough of low wages and enough of being treated with disrespect, and often as property, of the multi million pound businesses. Boris Johnson may be gone but the nasty party is still here, we need radical change and we need hope

**Tony Woodhouse**, chair, Unite executive council

# PLANT A TREE AND KILL UK FARMING?

The race to hit net zero by 2050 is big business – and could risk the future of UK food production

The rundown of rural economies that *Landworker* has continuously highlighted will proceed for the foreseeable future under the Tories.

The government is committed to transfer of land to wealthy companies. Land that should be used for food production and sustainable environmental job creating projects. Huge profits are there to be made from carbon trading plans based almost exclusively on planting swathes of trees.

Earlier this year, Unite member and soil scientist, **Dr Charlie Clutterbuck**, raised concerns that the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) introduced following Brexit to replace the former Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) farm subsidies would prove unpopular with farmers.

DEFRA claims the SFI is based around incentivising sustainable farming practices, profitable food production, improving air and water quality, protecting wildlife and boosting soil health. Clutterbuck though has multiple doubts including how soil quality will be assessed, payment mechanisms and a lack of sufficient scientists and research facilities to provide farmers with advice.

Government promises made in 2016 that the SFI would be the same as

CAP subsidies are now worthless. Farmers will lose half their former subsidies by 2025 and be forced to apply for funds under the SFI, with only one tenth of the previous subsidy accessible.

Many have had enough and even considering taking up the government offer to pay them three years' subsidies to leave farming altogether.

There is no mention of food production in any of the new subsidies. Many farmers fear new trade deals will lead to increased competition against cheap food from elsewhere grown under lower standards.

Under the **Woodland Carbon Guarantee Scheme**, allocated £50m in 2019, land managers in England can apply for funds to plant more trees and create new woodland in return for guaranteed payments as those trees grow and lock up and store carbon from the atmosphere. Similar schemes exist in Wales and Scotland.

Successful participants are to be offered options to sell Woodland Carbon Units to the government over 35 years at a guaranteed unit price per tonne set by auction. Each unit can be used to report against UK-based emissions or to use in claims of carbon neutrality or Net Zero emissions. The UK is committed to hitting net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

According to the independent think tank Green Alliance, 'carbon sequestration alone could be worth up to £1.7bn per year in UK' – roughly half the total value of public support payments for agriculture.

Multinational companies have already secured over £1.3m of Welsh government funding to plant trees in Wales.

Needed are 180,000 hectares of new woodland in Wales by 2050. "The Welsh Affairs Committee is rightly raising its concerns that the consequence of major companies investing in farming land to offset emissions will price Welsh farmers out of the market and lead to even less food being produced," said Clutterbuck. According to Geraint Davies, MP for Swansea West, "carbon offsetting is destroying Welsh farming communities," he added.

Using land alone to remove the world's carbon emissions to achieve 'net zero' by 2050 would require at least 1.6bn hectares of new forests, equivalent to five times the size of India or more than all the farmland on the planet.

Scotland is now at the centre of a 'Net Zero land grab', with wealthy individuals – so-called Green Lairds – charities and large companies competing to profit from the commodification of climate change



Fire in the New Forest

The best way to address global warming is to invest to regenerate the land and rural economies here to allow for more food production

Dr Charlie Clutterbuck, Unite activist and soil scientist

and the growth of a global carbon offsetting market to create its "lost forest".

"Such ventures carry a veneer of environmental respectability. So too do the rewilding visions of the likes of Anders Povisen, the Danish tycoon and biggest private landowner in Scotland. But the Net Zero land grab is inflating the cost of estates and pricing out those local communities which were supposed to be at the heart of the Scottish government's approach to land reform. Land prices rose 31 per cent last year," explains Clutterbuck.

The NFU Scotland has reported, "On a weekly, if not daily basis, members are contacting us from all parts of the country about the loss of productive Scottish agricultural land to wholesale forestry."

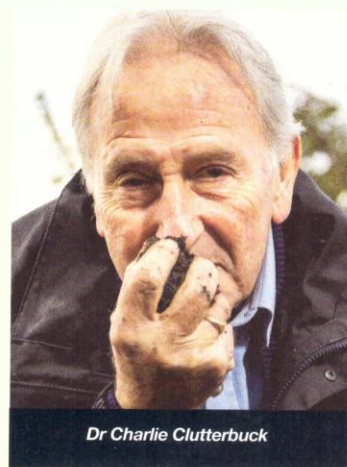
Clutterbuck points out, "One of the things that sets carbon sequestration aside from previous land grabs is its aura of respectability. When lairds were clearing estates for sheep, or industrialists were using them as a playground for their rich friends, there was no disguising the capitalist forces at play."

But there is big money across the UK behind all this. There is a plethora of new companies setting up claiming they have the credentials to trust with carbon trading. Then there are those doing the buying and they are a bit harder to find, but include Shell, Unilever, Google and Microsoft.

Currently various organisations are telling farmers not to sell. The Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) says, "Not only is the value of the carbon stored in farmers' soils and woodland likely to increase in coming years, signing up to selling it might unwittingly tie them into restrictive agreements."

Dr Clutterbuck has been taking a keen interest in evidence gathered by researchers at the University of California that forestry may not be as effective a carbon sink as pasture, especially when properly grazed. It may well be that carbon is stored deeply within the soil and as temperatures rise globally this will be a more secure location compared to forests that are vulnerable to fires. Clutterbuck is clear. "Life cannot be reduced to a single element, carbon.

"The best way to address global warming is to invest to regenerate the land and rural economies here to allow for more food production. This will allow overseas communities to use their land to produce food they need for themselves and by reducing the amount of imported food then the UK will cut down on its own massive carbon footprint."



Dr Charlie Clutterbuck

Mark Harvey

# REACHING NEW PEAKS

Plans are afoot to reopen the Peaks and Dales railway Line to revive local communities

When future England international Frank Swift debuted for Manchester City on Xmas Day 1933 at Derby County he joined his team mates on the direct train journey via Bakewell from Manchester to the east Midlands railway town.

It is not a trip possible today after parts of the rail track around Buxton and Matlock were removed in 1968, five years after the Beeching Report acted as the catalyst for the destruction of much of the railway network.

Now, Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP) has been formed with the aim of re-opening the line for passenger and freight traffic.

MEMRAP would welcome the backing of local trade unionists and longer term hopes that unions will join them in lobbying major politicians.

When I joined retired Chartered Accountant **Stephen Chaytow**, who inspired the setting up of MEMRAP after he moved four years ago from London, he was handing out leaflets to

visitors, the large majority of whom had arrived by car before going cycling or walking on the hillsides, at the former Millers Dale train station.

The response by the public to his "It will be a new trail, a new railway, you can leave your car at home and bikes go in a bike garage," was overwhelmingly positive.

#### **Why has MEMRAP been set up?**

"There is an ongoing economic decline in Derbyshire because of the absence of this key infrastructure," he explained. "There seems to be a culture that nothing can be done. That's not so and we need to offer a better economic and more sustainable future for the county and its residents.

"We are currently concentrating on leafleting to let people, and their elected representatives, know our aims. I think politicians are starting to be asked their views by electors. There is a well-worn trail of studies, public consultation and technical work to conclude before we can hope to get parliamentary blessing for a Transport and Works Act Order. It would cost

around a billion pounds as the work includes 13 miles of new track and 23 miles of upgraded track plus slightly moving the Monsal trail."

All of which will take, at least, a decade especially as reopening the railway line would involve reconstructing the Monsal Trail, which is a traffic free route for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair users through some of the Peak District's most spectacular limestone dales. The trail runs along the former Midland Railway line for 8.5 miles between Blackwell Mill, in Chee Dale and Coombs Road, at Bakewell.

#### **What similar campaigns have you drawn inspiration from?**

"The Borders Rail project has brought new connectivity to the declining areas of the Scottish Borders with the town centre of Galashiels prospering whilst a few miles down the road, Hawick, without rail connectivity, remains in decline," he said.

#### **How will local communities benefit?**

"Our canvassing has shown residents want to be able to travel for Manchester for jobs, family and social

Many travellers avoid rail when moving between the East Midlands and the North West. The proposed new stations through the National Park are tailored to the needs of a population that wants to make less use of cars but is denied

Stephen Chaytow  
MEMRAP



### FIND OUT MORE

For more on MEMRAP see [memrap.org/](http://memrap.org/)

events," reports Stephen. "It would take an hour by train. Locally, there are few big businesses and that's due, in part, to transport problems. A new road would not be tolerated and rail is the only option. It will level Derbyshire up to locations elsewhere, encourage businesses to move here and thus create more jobs.

"Meanwhile, visitor traffic clogs up National Park roads and rail will encourage people to make the journey by rail. We believe there can be a 40 per cent drop in road traffic. There are many trucks from working quarries and we believe their products could be transferred to the new rail track."

### And what benefits will there be for rail travellers?

"Many travellers avoid rail when moving between the East Midlands and the North West. The mix of proposed new stations (all with dedicated bike carriages) through the National Park, semi fast and fast train services is tailored to the needs of a population that wants to make less use of its cars but is denied today.

"The track will mean that trains can run from London St Pancras to Derby and on to Manchester and this in essence means the country will have a new mainline rail service at just a billion pounds."

### Can Landworker readers support the project?

"Yes and significant support from trade unions like Unite could be pivotal to influence politicians – and this is a cross party matter, something I have learned from Labour and Conservative alike, due to the long lived nature of such a project.

"Trade unionists can join MEMRAP, they can write to representatives from Stockport to Leicester, via Matlock and Derby and we would welcome union financial support as we are an unfunded group. We would be happy to speak at union events, take questions and get people's views," concluded Stephen.

Mark Harvey

# 'A THOUGHT PROVOKING MUSEUM'

The Ruskin Museum,  
Coniston, Cumbria

"I think it is a little gem because it covers so much from John Ruskin, Donald Campbell and the Bluebird, Arthur Ransome, plus the history of Coniston that includes the copper mines," said visitor **Margaret Davison** of Hexham.

Opened in Coniston Village by the friends of the writer, philosopher, art critic and social pundit **John Ruskin** a year after his death in 1900, the award-winning Ruskin Museum has been described as "the most thought-provoking in the Lakes" in *The Rough Guide to the Lake District*. High praise indeed for the local people who own and manage the museum that is heavily reliant for funds on visitor admissions plus support from volunteers.

"I am very proud of our self-sufficiency," explains Anne Hall OBE, who has chaired the museum's management committee for 15 years. The museum is built from traditional local slate but includes modern technology such as touch screens to tell some remarkable stories".

Ruskin's love of the Lake District landscape and communities drew him to spend the last 28 years of his life in Coniston. He was a gifted painter and the museum houses some of his beautiful watercolours and drawings plus geologically important minerals and crystals.

As art critic, Ruskin, who chose to be buried under the Yewdale Fells rather than in Westminster Abbey, believed in the idea of "truth to nature". He encouraged painters to closely observe the landscape so as to capture the natural world as truthfully as possible without romanticizing what they saw. He believed art could transform lives.

In the 1850s Ruskin began giving public lectures and after observing the malevolent impact of the Industrial Revolution on the atmosphere and the pollution of the environment and people's souls, he taught drawing at the Working Men's College in London.

He attacked the dehumanising power of capitalism for being based on "the negation of the soul" where human beings are turned into profit. He understood the Victorian desire to be rich was pursued to have power over others and contriving "that our neighbours have less". He rubbished **Adam Smith's** belief that self-interest ultimately benefits everyone. Ruskin's book *Unto the Last*, published 1862, continued to be well read into the 20th century and persuaded, amongst others, **Gandhi** to fight for social justice.

When he arrived in Coniston in 1872, Ruskin helped to further develop the Coniston Mechanics' Institute to provide education and amusement for working people.

He helped develop the Langdale linen industry viewing it amongst his finest achievements. Women with no previous experience of hand-spinning or weaving were taught both, proving that handmade linen could compete with mass-produced and that women could discover fulfilling and creative work roles.

The Museum houses numerous examples of hand-spun, hand-woven linen, including embroidered items from nature, and some great Ruskin Lace examples that are big favourites of the museum director **Tracey Hodson**.

In the 1870s he addressed letters to England's workmen urging them to

form their own movement to take control of their own destiny.

By 1889 the London Dockers were following in the footsteps of the Matchgirls the previous year by forming their own union to successfully win a famous strike that paved the way for trade unions to flourish.

"Ruskin was talking about things over 150 years ago that are so relevant today such as a working wage, the environment and green issues, he was a remarkable man," states Hall.

So too was **Donald Campbell**. And it was to discover more about the speed ace that **Keith Stevens** had persuaded his wife **Christine** (pictured) to visit the Ruskin Museum while holidaying locally from Norfolk.

Campbell broke four World Water Speed records on Coniston before tragically losing his life in a fifth attempt in January 1967. The Bluebird Wing that houses the engine from the boat in which Campbell died and which lay in the lake for 34 years is packed with memorabilia alongside the prototype **Bluebird JetStar** ski-boat that Campbell planned to manufacture.

What is missing is the iconic hydroplane **Bluebird K7** and wreckage. This has been restored by Tyneside engineer Bill Smith who has hung on to it in a drive to show it in action at public events.

However, Campbell's daughter **Gina** wants it restored to the scene of his death and housed at the Ruskin Museum, which was able to extend their premises by obtaining a national lottery grant on the basis this would happen. A Bring the Bluebird home campaign is currently seeking support.



One boat that is on display is the sailing dinghy *Mavis*, the inspiration of the fictional *Amazon* featured in the *Swallows and Amazons* series of children's adventure novels that were set in the Lake District by author **Arthur Ransome**, who was educated in Windermere and is buried in Cumbria.

**Alan Davison** read "Arthur Ransome as a kid and I knew there was an association with Coniston and the story about the doctor [Dr Ernest Altounyan bought two dinghies with Ransome so that the pair could teach their children to sail on Coniston Water – Ed] and his children and the boat was new to me. It was good."

The couple are keen museum visitors and were clearly impressed by the Ruskin Museum as Margaret attested to in our opening paragraph.

Christine Stevens from Norfolk also enjoyed her visit. "The museum is very nice. I prefer small museums as they have a more homely atmosphere," while Keith had discovered from the museum's displays that "as well as Campbell and Ruskin, Coniston has many other local heroes."

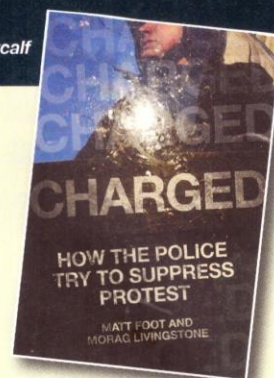


**FIND OUT MORE**  
Visit [ruskinmuseum.com](http://ruskinmuseum.com)  
for more details.

Pics by Mark Harvey

# REIGN OF TERROR

*Charged. How the Police Try to Suppress Protest.* by Matt Foot and Morag Livingston, published by Verso (£18.99 RRP)



This is a highly informative must-read investigation examining a series of protest events dating back over four decades, exposing gross state abuses by the police and legal system, government and politicians of all major parties.

It is essential reading because recently the government has given the police frightening new powers which it expects them to use against trade unionists and other progressive organisations fighting back. Ironically, it means the right to effectively protest will only be maintained by protesting. There is a long history here going back to 1968 when the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) was started within the Metropolitan Police (Met) to spy on tens of thousands of citizens.

But things began to get really nasty during the decade of Thatcher – the 1980s.

Following widespread rioting in 1981, Willie Whitelaw, Conservative Home Secretary, commissioned Lord Scarman to undertake an inquiry into the causes. Scarman was to recommend greater community policing and Whitelaw backed him. Secretly though, Thatcher's government were gearing up to import certain policing tactics, refined during Britain's many crowd control colonial experiences. What was happening was the most significant shift in policing strategy in over a century. Yet

it was never even debated in Parliament.

The new rules only came to light during the 1985 Orgreave trials of striking miners charged with riot when the defence's cross-examination of a senior police chief revealed them. But the police chief claimed the rules did not cover public disorder in an industrial dispute – and it wasn't until three decades later that the truth was revealed.

The new police 'rules' in the *Public Order Manual* were at the heart of police and state aggression towards those fighting to protect jobs and the right to be in a trade union, starting with the terrifying violence against National Graphical Association (NGA) members at the Stockport Messenger group in Warrington in 1983.

The book exposes the levels of violence against the 4,000 pickets, which included driving Range Rovers into the crowd at high speed and kicking those knocked down. The use of vehicles had been authorised in the *Public Order Manual*.

Further violence was experienced by striking print workers at Wapping, where the Met used violence against the pickets during the year-long dispute in 1986.

Over the years further outrages continued – including the notorious violence against Poll Tax protestors in

March 1991. Many attacks on protestors are examined in 'Charged' including the 'kettling' of anti-capitalist demonstrators in 2001 and at the G20 Protest in 2009.

Despite these attacks new movements have sprung up to defend the planet, protest against racism and sexism and the number of strikes has ballooned. But the state fear of protestors continues.

According to Livingston and Foot, "this state creep was followed by a move towards totalitarianism with the introduction in 2021 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, including sweeping provisions that can outlaw any assemblies and processions deemed 'noisy' or which might cause 'serious unease, alarm or distress'."

These draconian measures were introduced by home secretary Priti Patel, without consulting the Police Federation. Ignoring the rights to protest, in March 2021 the Met Police even went as far as to unceremoniously clear a peaceful vigil by hundreds of women who felt unsafe on their streets and were paying their respects to Sarah Everard, who was murdered by a serving Met police officer.

A day later the Police, Crime and Sentencing and Courts Bill was voted through becoming law on April 28 this year.



Getty Images

# GREAT RESULT FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND AWB

Unite shows an above inflation pay rise can be achieved\*

For the second time in two decades, Unite has led a successful defence of the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) in Northern Ireland (NI). It has also proved possible to negotiate an above inflation (at that time) pay increase for thousands of agricultural workers.

Plans to scrap the AWB were announced last year to the Northern Ireland Assembly by Rural Affairs Minister, Edwin Poots. They were immediately opposed by the union pointing out the need for a collective bargaining body to cover agricultural workers working in the private sector from being badly exploited.

The NI AWB secures workers' pay under the national minimum wage; sets enforcement standards for piece rates; provides enhanced levels of sick and holiday pay; guarantees overtime pay at 1.5 times the standard rate and provides protection for section 75 groups by

requiring public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity.

Many of the 11,000 agricultural sector employees covered by the NI AWB are migrant workers with little other protection.

Unite's campaign to retain the NIAWB won the backing of the entire trade union movement, the official rural community network of NI, rural councils and small farmer organisations such as Family Farmers for Action. While the Ulster Farmers' Union that represents larger farmers backed scrapping the AWB, the majority of respondents to the Department of Agriculture's public consultation wished to retain the AWB, which will be 75 years old next year.

It was confirmed by Poots' department that 'there was

insufficient time and capacity for the AWB proposal to be progressed [through the Assembly]. The matter will therefore remain on hold, subject to consideration by an incoming executive and Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister.'

The decision to put 'on hold' scrapping the AWB was "welcomed" by Unite's **Donal O'Cofaigh** who said that "without Unite's campaign the AWB would have been lost and it is the second time in two decades that the union has led a successful defence of the NIAWB."

The AWB reprieve meant that pay negotiations were able to proceed this year. The employers had begun by offering no increase at all but were forced "to concede an increase of 5 per cent from 1 April," states **Joanne McWilliams**, Unite regional officer.



"We also raised demands for extended bereavement leave rights – which go way beyond what is available under Stormont law for other workers – but vitally important to migrant agricultural workers – and there is a meeting due when the employers will respond to that. If we secure this additional right it will confirm the AWB delivers results outside general legislation. These results show the continued relevance of the AWB."

O'Cofaigh hopes that the Unite success in NI "will help re-invigorate the campaign of our comrades in England to re-establish the AWB there to the benefit of their agricultural workforce."

Following the scrapping of the AWB by the 2010 to 2015 Tory-Lib Democratic Coalition Government, agricultural workers in England are the only part of the UK not covered by a collective bargaining structure. Young workers in particular in England have lost out badly.

### Northern Ireland AWB pay rates

[from 1 April 2022]

- **Grade 1 - Minimum rate**  
Applicable for the first 40 weeks cumulative employment - £6.95 per hour
- **Grade 2 - Standard worker**  
£7.49 per hour
- **Grade 3 - Lead worker**  
£9.36 per hour
- **Grade 4 - Craft Grade**  
£10.06 per hour
- **Grade 5 - Supervisory Grade**  
£10.59 per hour
- **Grade 6 - Farm Management Grade**  
£11.50 per hour

Should the National Minimum Wage or the National Living Wage, as applicable, become higher than the hourly rates set out above then the hourly or other minimum rate will default to the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage, whichever applies.

For more info contact the Unite Belfast office on 02890 232381

\* At time of negotiation, January 2022 inflation was below 5 per cent.

Peter Everard Smith



# UKRANIAN WORKERS SOLIDARITY FLIES HIGH AT BURSTON

Pictured is the Ukrainian Flag flying high over the Burston Strike School, Burston, Norfolk. It's an appropriate place indeed as the Burston Strike School march and rally commemorates the longest strike in UK trade union history.

Sadly the festival wasn't able to take place during Covid – but it is back with a vengeance this year. The date for your diary for this year's **Burston Rally event is Sunday, September 7.**

According to local photographer **Peter Smith**, "Entertainers so far confirmed are *Atila the Stockbroker* and *The Dave Thomas Blues Band*." I'm sure more details, including that of the speakers, will emerge in due course.

# THE WAY OF THE ROMA

Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury Castle, Kidderminster

The Worcestershire County Museum (WCM) at Hartlebury Castle is looking to radically transform its visitor experiences of the beautiful Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) Vardo (the Romany word for a horse drawn gypsy caravan) collection.

The move follows the appointment as Vardo Project Officer of **Georgie Stevens** (pictured), part Romany herself, who by approaching the GRT community to record their distinctive lives intends to help WCM visitors and the general public understand how these ethnic groups have contributed to British society – and rural communities particularly – for centuries.

Most of the nine Vardos at Hartlebury were acquired in the 1960s for the transport section of the museum. Opened in 1950 the museum also hosts costumes, and toys and dolls displays.

According to Stevens, “In older days all the wood on a vardo was carved and the carvings express strong relationships with animals, especially horses, wildlife and birds. Sadly, as the skills died out it became too expensive to maintain the practice. Colours from

natural backgrounds were important as the community wanted to blend in and be part of the local landscape and so used green, browns and rich reds.”

There are six different vardo forms. The Burton would be used for specific purposes such as carrying goods to sell at showgrounds or fairs. The Bow Top would house whole families and faced with such a small living space inside the waggon, then naturally as much time as possible was spent outside around the campfire. Cooking was done on an open fire.

Cleanliness was maintained according to strict rules and traditionally gypsies would only wash themselves in running water as a bath involves sitting in dirty water. No animals were allowed inside a waggon.

Sleeping was done inside and outside the waggon. Adults slept on the top bunk and small children in the lower bunk. Other family members would sleep under a cover on the cart, beneath the wagon on warm nights, or in a bender tent constructed from willow or hazel with a tarpaulin over the top.

“According to my auntie, who is a

district nurse, it was the coldness of sleeping outside across Herefordshire that contributed to her adopting a more traditional life when she grew up. My dad, who became an agricultural contractor, made the same decision,” explains Georgie.

Her paternal grandparents bred horses. Gypsies, whose roots trace back to Northern India over 1,000 years ago and who arrived in Britain around 500 years ago, were important in breeding horses that were used to transport goods and materials during the early years of the industrial revolution.

The GRT community sought employment while on the move and earned their living by various means – of which agricultural work was central. With its extensive orchards, hop fields and fruit farms, Herefordshire and Worcestershire were popular destinations to travel to.

“The rural landscapes of both counties would look very differently today if the GRT communities had not harvested the fruit and cut down and processed the hops,” says Georgie.

Other occupations undertaken by GRT



include door to door sales, the collecting of scrap and rags for recycling and metalwork; especially knife grinding, blade sharpening and the manufacturing of nails and pins.

According to **Helen Large**, museums audience manager for Museums Worcestershire, the Vardo Collection is the equivalent to a National Collection and, “we know a great deal about physical aspect of the caravans and some associated stories. But it got to a stage where we wanted to connect with all the communities that make up Worcestershire. We wanted to hear the words of the GRT community itself and were fortunate enough to begin work on this by getting funding from the John Ellerman Foundation to employ Georgie and despite Covid she has made brilliant progress since beginning work last year.”

Stevens has approached older members of GRT communities to interview them. Some are not too keen to get involved as they prefer stories to be passed on orally and they also feel undervalued as a community.

“I need them to know that is not the case and convince people that they have a really interesting story that also

dovetails with the histories of many other communities who have migrated to Britain from overseas, or who have moved from different regions of the UK and Ireland to find work”, says Stevens. She is aware that TV programmes like the *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* series reinforced certain prejudicial ideas about the GRT community.

Once the oral histories are collected, visitors – including school students – will be able to listen to them. Local schools have a relatively high intake of children from GRT backgrounds. Stevens wants these children to be proud of their identity. She wants to work with young members of the GRT community on art, music and drama projects and to build a vardo from scratch.

Stevens is also looking to redesign the vardo display area so that they are featured around a fire and intends to construct a bender tent which visitors can sit inside. There are longer term plans for incorporating interactive technologies.

The museum’s work is even more relevant now as the government has just passed legislation that – in light of

the fact there is a substantial shortage of approved sites – means Gypsies now have very few places they can legally stop.

*Landworker* readers should consider keeping up to date with developments as well as enjoying a visit to Hartlebury Castle Museum in the future.

Pics by Mark Harvey

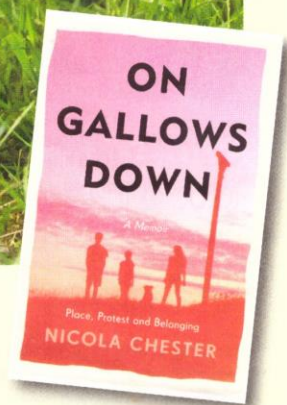


### FIND OUT MORE

Find out how to get to the Museum at  
[www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk/museums/county-museum-hartlebury/](http://www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk/museums/county-museum-hartlebury/)



Getty Images



## A LAND WORTH FIGHTING FOR

*On gallows down – Place, protest and belonging.* A memoir by Nicola Chester. Published by Chelsea Green Publishing UK. RRP £20 (although can be found for less).

Nicola Chester's highly descriptive book is packed with personal anecdotes and political observations about her local North Wessex Downs chalk landscape. Set in the backdrop of Highclere Castle, Inkpen Beacon with its gallows, Watership Down, Greenham Common and Newbury, where Chester moved to in her junior school years after her father, a firefighter, began work there.

What shines through is Chester's love for the countryside, the wildlife and ordinary people, many descended from families from generations ago. Chester grew up alongside Greenham Common's Women's Peace Camp, the women of which in the early 1980s, opposed the UK's agreement to house American nuclear weapons on the Common. Unlike many locals, she admired the women – and it's that spirit of protest that has never left her.

Chester's book highlights a rich seam of local resistance. She actively opposed the construction of the Newbury Road Bypass. The dissent, peaking in 1996, led to some of the

largest anti-road protests in European history in which over 800 people were arrested and nearly 10,000 mature trees were felled.

Chester highlights the subsequent massive loss of habitat and wildlife by charting the evocative singing of a nightingale but whose attempts to find a partner over four consecutive summers inevitably fail as by now the nearest nightingale colony is four miles away at Greenham Common. It is a tale of great sorrow consistent with many other locations internationally.

Chester beautifully describes local landscapes that she regularly walks. She constantly highlights the struggles of wildlife to survive when pitched against the needs of commerce – by 1970 pesticides had killed off 96 per cent of the otter population, which is thankfully now slowly recovering.

Chester is a tenant with her husband, a paramedic, on a large estate. It means if she hopes to preserve landscape practices suitable for wildlife, such as the badger cubs she gets remarkably

close to, then she must seek to persuade landowners to take up government stewardship projects and work with conservation groups.

It's a struggle with mixed results on a land whose roots lie in revolt. In 1830 local people unsuccessfully took part in the Captain Swing uprising by agricultural workers against harsh working conditions and rural poverty.

And it's a struggle that remains ongoing as in Chester's local schools today. Over a third of students' families are on benefits and free school meals, while a third of people live in rented, tied or council-owned homes.

These are squeezed in alongside private schools, second homes and big country estates on which food production is often set aside for high paying visitors to shoot animals for sport.

Clearly the fight to save the environment is intimately connected with the need to create a much more equal society.

# UNREST IN ARGENTINA

Return of the right wing causes problems for smallholders and unions

The election of Javier Milei, a right wing talk show host, last year as Argentina's President has seen him attack small farm holders, trade unions and workers. In response he has been met by strikes and protests across the second largest nation in South America.

Describing himself as an anarcho-capitalist, Milei, whose victory was the largest by the right since the end of military rule in 1983, is ripping apart the remnants of the welfare state and 'flogging off the family silver'.

In February 2024, less than a month after the three main trade union federations took strike action with a 12-hour general strike against labour law reforms and the lack of an economic plan, smallholders protested at the lack of government

support and funding for sustainable farming.

A fever linked with the damaging use of agrochemicals, hit food production. Citing 'cost-cutting,' Milei dismantled the National Institute of Family Farming while according to anti-poverty charity War on Want (WOW) kept "policies which benefit large commodity traders such as Dreyfus, biotech corporations such as Monsanto and the large plantation landowners and agricultural oligarchies."

Local farmers' problems have been further exacerbated by Milei, another populist leader whose pre-election rhetoric of attacking elites always turns out if elected to be substituted by attacks on the working class,

agreeing to facilitate the undermining of domestic food production by permitting the import of cheap imported basic foodstuffs.

The actions of Argentinian smallholders were mirrored globally and followed protests last year. Farmers in over 63 countries held national demos at the start of 2024. Indian farmers held marches in protest of a legal minimum support price guarantee for their crops. Protests across Europe have highlighted the lack of EU support for small farmers at the expense of large farmers and agribusinesses only too keen to drive them off the land.

According to a WOW spokesperson, "Argentina demonstrates how ultra-liberal governments in the Global South ally with foreign capital and large corporations, prioritising corporate profit and the extraction of natural resources over people's sovereignty. Milei...will exacerbate poverty and inequality...peasants and indigenous communities will bear the brunt of environmental and social destruction.

"Latin American peasant movements...have long advocated for an alternative vision... based on the principles of food sovereignty. Their lives and livelihoods must no longer be treated as expendable in the pursuit of corporate profit."

Of course, the linking of the struggles of the smallholders and trade unionists – 40 per cent of Argentina's 13m workers – will be essential in what could be a life-or-death struggle. Trade unionists can best support their comrades in Argentina through the ITUC, Uni Global Union, IndustriALL and the IUF.



Protest - trade unionists on the streets of Buenos Aires

# A WOMAN'S BREW?

*The Devil's in the Draught Lines, 1,000 years of women in Britain's Beer History*, by Dr Christina Wade, published by CAMRA Books. (RRP £16.99)

Men now dominate the beer industry with just 4 per cent of head brewers being women and even less being owners.

Beer historian **Christina Wade's** highly interesting book, combining throughout each chapter the medieval world with the 21st century, shows this imbalance, brought on by the Industrial Revolution, is relatively recent.

Even before hops were added, the primary producers of beer were women. In 1203, Maud, wife of Hugh, was fined for selling a false gallon of ale. Women dominated the brewing industry in the Middle Ages in England, Scotland and Wales. They brewed sporadically, often when they needed money.

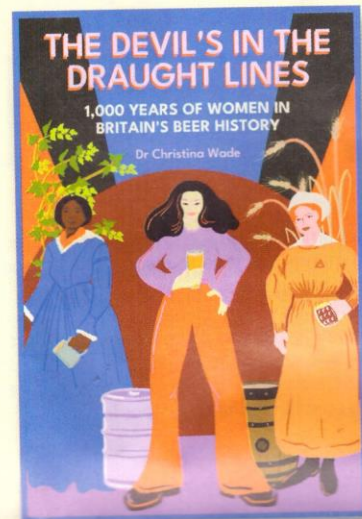
When the price of beer was frozen following the Black Death in the 1300s this proved unpopular among brewers in an era of rising wages that encouraged increasing alcoholic consumption, which in turn led to the early development of the public house.

In 1511 The Aberdeen Council Registers detailing the inner workings of the city reveals that 135 of the 136 of those who brewed beer for profit were women.

In Scotland many women were accused over many centuries of witchcraft. 205 were executed and the story that 'alewives' inspired the modern image of the witch has become common. Wade, who runs a popular blog, meticulously debunks these myths.

Simultaneously in a book packed with unknown gems she credits Jane Robinson with highlighting the importance of Mary Seacole's British Hotel behind enemy lines during the Crimean War. This served French beer and champagne to soldiers escaping, even briefly, the horrors of war.

Seacole, voted recently the greatest Black Briton, amongst whom today there includes a number of brewing owners such as Helena Adepipe of Peckham based Eko Brewery, also made a mean claret.



In the 19th century many women ran pubs and alehouses with 24,652 compared to 48,533 men serving as proprietors in 1851. This resulted in, at least, some men seeking to have women removed from the trade by contending it was improper for women to run public houses.

The situation facing barmaids, many of whom such as Charlotte Drake and Mary Elizabeth Phillips, were suffragettes, was also difficult. Low pay meant long hours. There was harassment.

The barmaids' cause was taken up Eliza Orme, a leading suffragette and she helped compile report a report on barmaids for the Royal Commission in Labour. Trade union organisation though, like today across the hospitality sector, was difficult due to the barmaids' isolation.

CAMRA has published Wade's book which I'd strongly recommended reading over a glass – or two – of your favourite tipple.



Alamy

# SOWING THE SEEDS FOR GREEN GROWTH

Real green jobs can make a major difference, says Unite's Charlie Clutterbuck

Unite's very own soil scientist **Dr Charlie Clutterbuck** is not only co-producing a **Grow to Eat** documentary film and completing a book he's dreamed about all his life on soil, but he is also asking why talk of green jobs never includes agriculture? He says, "We hear about green jobs in the energy sector when they are building massive windfarms in the middle of the countryside, while ignoring the potential to grow more food there."

"Meanwhile, we import about half our food while ignoring the disproportionate environmental impacts on the rest of the planet."

It means 70 per cent of the land needed to grow our food is abroad, mainly in South America, where 40 per cent of the population has experienced moderate or severe food insecurity.

"There is a similar proportion regarding greenhouse gases, and as for water to grow the stuff, this is hard to measure," says Charlie. "The late **Professor Tony Allen** coined the term 'virtual water' to describe the water used to grow our food. One estimate put that at 22 River Niles' worth in Africa to supply Europe with the fruit and vegetables we are actually good at growing ourselves."

Charlie, who half a century ago combined with colleagues to kick start the *Hazards* magazine, revolutionising the trade union health and safety approach away largely from compensation towards prevention, wants to sow the seed for a whole green economy.

Charlie's new short film, *Grow to Eat*, due out shortly, shows it's possible to grow food in the most difficult of places. Adopting such a programme nationally could bring substantial rewards in terms of countryside jobs and a revival of communities left behind.

"We could be sowing the seed for a whole green economy if we invested in real green jobs, mainly in the countryside. Also by encouraging the growth of healthy crops and animals we could save money on dealing with obesity, while eating into the £40bn more on imports we spend on food over export costs," states Charlie.

Following Brexit, Britain's exports sector has struggled. "Much of the push for Brexit came from the Eastern fields where plantation style farming encouraged the use of migrant workers. They soon departed.

"But British workers did not take their places as they soon realised the awful condition and poor wages, especially following the Coalition government's crashing of the agricultural wages board, which even Thatcher had left alone," explains Charlie.

Now instead of the original migrant workers from Romania and Poland, they are recruited from much further afield such as Asia or, South America. They are badly exploited.

There are also the environmental impacts of many thousands of acres in the east of the country being ploughed up – thus compacting the soil – by

massive foreign made tractors at over £500,000 each, that sow continual monocrops of grain and vegetables.

"We are annually losing 2m tons of valuable soil that needs much more tender care by people working on the land with more suitable equipment if we are to continue producing food in the future," explains Charlie.

"Then there is the amount of nitrogen fertilisers poured on soil. In terms of greenhouse gases (GHGs) they contribute according to my calculations, as no organisation appears to want to work this out, between 1 to 2 per cent of all UK GHGs."

Charlie laments the absence of talks about soil loss and there is no research along these lines. He wants to see re-opened the three-quarters of our land-based research centres that at

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**Dr Charlie Clutterbuck,**  
Unite activist and soil scientist



Real green jobs can happen – says Clutterbuck

We need real workers on decent green wages to grow in ways that regenerate the soil, establish links between town and country, help resist climate change and encourage a bigger rural economy

Dr Charlie Clutterbuck, Unite activist and soil scientist

one time worked closely with food growers. It would mean restoring highly skilled jobs.

“Also by protecting the soil it will help fend off flooding and drought. There should also be smaller plots with a much wider variety of plants, interspersed with trees to help hold water which helps cooling.

Smaller tractor machines would be needed – hence a unique new UK industry – with real green jobs that help the environment in lots of ways - rather than just counting carbon.”

On the western side of the country, Charlie wants to see more animals outdoors instead of them being locked up indoors and fed on soy from South America and maize from USA. Again, green jobs.

In turn moors could be transformed because as shown by the Todmorden-based hand-built **Incredible Farm**, established in 2012 and which annually produces over a ton of food while also teaching small scale market gardening and farming, even the roughest of terrain can be used to grow food.

Grouse shooting, which even the Moorland Association estimates only create 1,500 full-time jobs, isn't, it would appear at this moment, subsidised. Yet landowners with over 500 hectares can still obtain subsidies for rewilding and planting carbon offset trees.

Charlie argues instead that the £3bn that was once used largely by the EU to finance large landowners, who in many cases did not produce food, could instead be spent subsidising

hundreds of thousands of green jobs rurally.

As growing cannot be replaced by AI then, “we need real workers on decent green wages to grow in ways that regenerate the soil, establish links between town and country, help resist climate change and encourage a bigger rural economy with all the corresponding new houses and facilities,” concludes Charlie.

“And our union is the best situated to create and promote this collection of real green jobs.”

# GRAND DAY OUT AT THE MILL

Today's guests get a warmer welcome than 200 years ago...

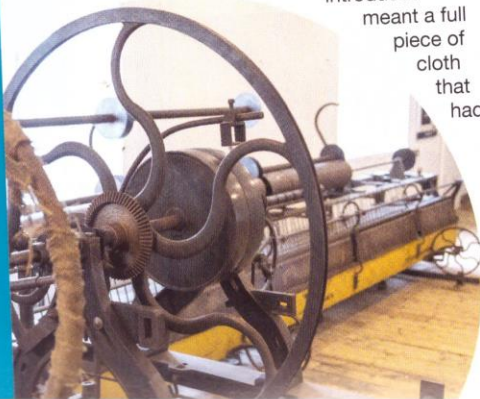
Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, Holcombe Road, Helmshore, Lancashire, BB4 4NP

Today **Helmshore Mills Textile Museum** (The Museum) is a far cry from the place of drudgery and horrors, experienced by thousands of workers, wrenched from their homes during the industrial revolution. It came about after new technology wiped out traditional handloom family weaving practices and left local people with no option except to enter these 'dark satanic mills'.

Fortunately, visitors today can enjoy a good day out while having an opportunity to learn more about how their descendants struggled to earn a decent living, even as recently as just 50 years back.

Lying 16 miles north of Manchester, Helmshore is a small rural village in the Lancashire Rossendale Valley. In 1789, the Turner family built two mills, parts of which are still working. By 1820 the power looms they and other manufacturers had

introduced meant a full piece of cloth that had



once earned a family 25p in the late 1700s was being manufactured at a fifth of that price.

Poverty levels multiplied. In April 1826 arose open revolt. Over 1,100 power looms across Pennine Lancashire were wrecked. Known today as the **Weavers Uprising** or, more tragically, the **Chatterton Massacre** it resulted in the authorities coming down brutally on protestors, killing as many as 10 people. More were imprisoned.

It is a tragedy set to be remembered on its bicentennial next year with diverse events being co-ordinated by seven prominent organisations including the museum – Unite members might consider participating in.

In a corner of the cotton mill, Preston's **Sir Richard Arkwright** can be viewed as he watches over the only remaining complete water-powered cotton spinning machine of his that he invented with clockmaker **John Kay** around 1750. This ended the need for skilled operators, resulting in women and, even for many decades, children becoming the main employees.

Visitors can learn more from the experienced tour guides. You can watch some of the noisy, non-stop machines being brought to life. Deafness was just one of many occupational hazards for workers.



Unite guide – Ann Butcher

Lung diseases from taking in fibres was another. Trade unions, at least, initially were non-existent.

Joining a large group of youngsters aged 8 to 17 years from **Woking United Reformed Church (WURC)**, on holiday locally for a week, it was interesting to witness how guides engaged them by employing textile terms. This included asking them where the phrases heirloom or tenterhooks or even taking the p\*\*s might have originated from. Do you know? Try our quiz opposite...

According to the WURC's **Phil Ray** the museum was, with the group on a tight budget, highly affordable. The visit had been chosen in part on the basis of its connection to local sheep farming, which resulted from the 12th to 14th century in wool exports being the largest source of England's income.

"The children and young people have been fascinated by the old equipment and the building, plus the phrases!"

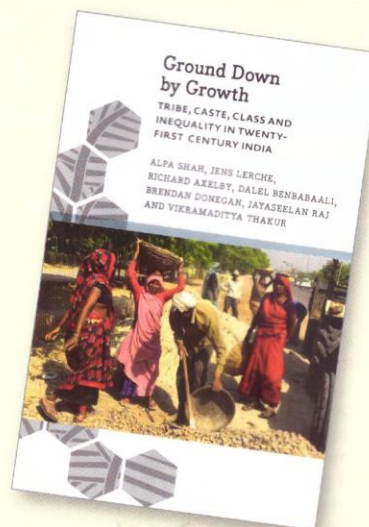
One of the guides was Unite member **Ann Butcher**. After years working with homeless people, Ann joined the museum, which is run by Lancashire County Council, three years ago and "loves it. You share information but you



# A WILLINGNESS TO STRUGGLE

**Ground down by growth – tribe, caste, class and inequality in 21st century India,**

by Alpa Shah et al, published by Pluto Press (RRP £16.99)



Based on in-depth field research, this work about the massed ranks of poverty witnessed across diverse Indian regions makes for deeply unpleasant reading.

That is particularly so for those stuck at base level who are descended from the country's lowest castes, the Adivasis and Dalits. These constitute 1 in 25 of the world's population. Less educated than other Indian social groups they were previously termed the 'Untouchables' and forced to live in segregated areas.

Indian independence and the expansion of capitalism was supposed to bring about economic growth and modernity to eliminate caste and tribes.

Yet despite the Indian economy being one of the fastest growing this century, the future is bleak.

Not only for the Adivasis and Dalits, but the majority in a country where agriculture employs half the workforce and where around 700m are affected by internal seasonal labour migration, which blocks many from accessing social welfare benefits.

Unless the masses organise effectively to oppose the predominant ethos of combining the privatisation of public services and reduced rights, workers will continue to lose out. The statistics in the book clearly demonstrate that reductions in poverty in an economy rising by 6 per cent annually between 1999 and 2010, were minuscule.

Meanwhile in the Western Ghats, on tea estates such as Hill Valley, Kerala, the plantation association was successful in increasing the plucking rate from 14kg to 21kg in 2011, and to 25kg in 2016.

Furthermore, the numbers employed permanently, bringing with it access to housing, medical care and sick leave, had declined from two-thirds to under a quarter.

Eventually, 800 tea workers, mainly women, took strike action in the Munnar tea belt. This inspired action elsewhere – including that of rubber plantation workers. All of which forced the corrupt trade union and political representatives into extending support.

The strikes, which were widely publicised including on the BBC, shamed the government into opening a substantial relief fund for improvements in the labour conditions of tea plantation workers. It was a wonderful victory.

More are needed, and the book shows a willingness to struggle exists. In the Bhadrachalam Scheduled Area, Telangana, in the villages surrounding the Indian Tobacco Company, workers have raised problems with their health, particularly lung concerns.

Other concerns came from those who had been working at a paper factory, built by a dominant farming caste group on Adivasi land that should have been legally protected from such developments.

Yet, as the final chapter *The Struggles Ahead* shows the most vulnerable and exploited of the Indian workforce amongst the Adivasis and Dalits face a bleak future as they have almost no protection or social security of any kind.



Alamy