

# Art of diploma – see?

Sheffield City Council's decision to pioneer diplomas linked directly to the world of work for 14-19 year olds could have important implications for the British economy and young people's employment prospects. But critics have questioned the future of the new scheme in the recession.

Last September the government introduced five diplomas that combine practical and academic learning. Sheffield was able to offer students four: creative and media; engineering; IT; and construction. Next month it will become one of only ten local authorities to offer ten diplomas, and there are plans to offer a further four next year.

The government initially envisaged that diplomas would be part of a new framework of qualifications to replace GCSEs and A-levels but was forced to back down because of political support for A-levels. Diplomas

***"There has been a historical prejudice against vocational training."***

now sit alongside GCSEs, A-levels and apprenticeships. The latter has been one of Labour's successes, with numbers rising above 250,000 from just 75,000 places in 1997.

Sheffield, a city proud of its industrial past, was one of the first authorities to get involved, bringing together educational establishments, training bodies and employers. The council helped fund four new centres for diploma study.

Nick Duggan of Sheffield Learning for Life Partnership said: "The new qualifications offer young people the opportunity to study something that can improve their lives, and is relevant to local employers. There has been a historical prejudice against vocational



Sheffield offers diplomas to young people in engineering

training. We have broken through this as we can show the young people can get good qualifications."

One of the first construction diploma students was 14-year-old Jamie Furness, a Newfield School pupil, who spends one day a week at a construction centre to gain the equivalent of five GCSEs. "I want to become an architect so I aim to go on to university before starting work. I have learnt about bricklaying, joinery and tiling. It has been good," he said.

Other students weren't so complimentary. Tom Lindley, 15, from Newfield, is studying the specialised construction diploma. He said: "Practically it has been good. However there has been more paperwork than I expected. I'd recommend it but young people must get accurate information before deciding to do diplomas."

One reason for introducing diplomas was to keep Britain's industries competitive. Despite the recession and the historical decline of manufacturing, many Sheffield engineering companies have healthy order books, according to Gary Drabble, engineering co-ordinator in Sheffield and Rotherham for Sheffield Council. That means future demand for more engineers.

Costing £600,000, the Engineering Centre opened six months ago. Each school is charged £20 a day per pupil.

Diploma students are out of school for up to one and a half days a week. The programmes also cost Sheffield City Council £1.5 million per annum, a figure matched by central government.

"We must strike a balance between the students' needs and employers looking to fill vacancies. It's not about churning out 300 kids a year to become engineers – it's about them knowing their options," said Drabble.

But critics are unconvinced. Ann Hodgson professor of education at the University of London, said: "There have been some successes at levels one and two which have broadened out the school curriculum. But the advanced diploma is struggling to establish itself against A levels. Some diplomas aren't as practical as students were led to believe."

Jim Fox, a teacher of 30 years experiences, was sceptical about employers being able to provide thousands of placements in the current economic climate.

He added: "I would be surprised if children from middle class backgrounds ended up doing the diplomas. In many inner city schools very few children do academic qualifications. We need to address why this is the case before going down a path which may lead to some pupils doing only vocational qualifications."

MARK METCALF

## VIEWSON GAMBLING?

Leeds City Council is seeking the views of residents and organisations working in the city on gambling. The council is revising its licensing policy for the Gambling Act 2005. The consultation period will run until 2 October and the revised policy document is viewable at [www.leeds.gov.uk/gpc](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/gpc). Comments can be made online at the above address, by email to [entertainment.licensing@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:entertainment.licensing@leeds.gov.uk) or in writing to Entertainment Licensing, Leeds City Council, Civic Hall, Leeds LS1 1RU.

## DEPRESSION DIAGNOSIS

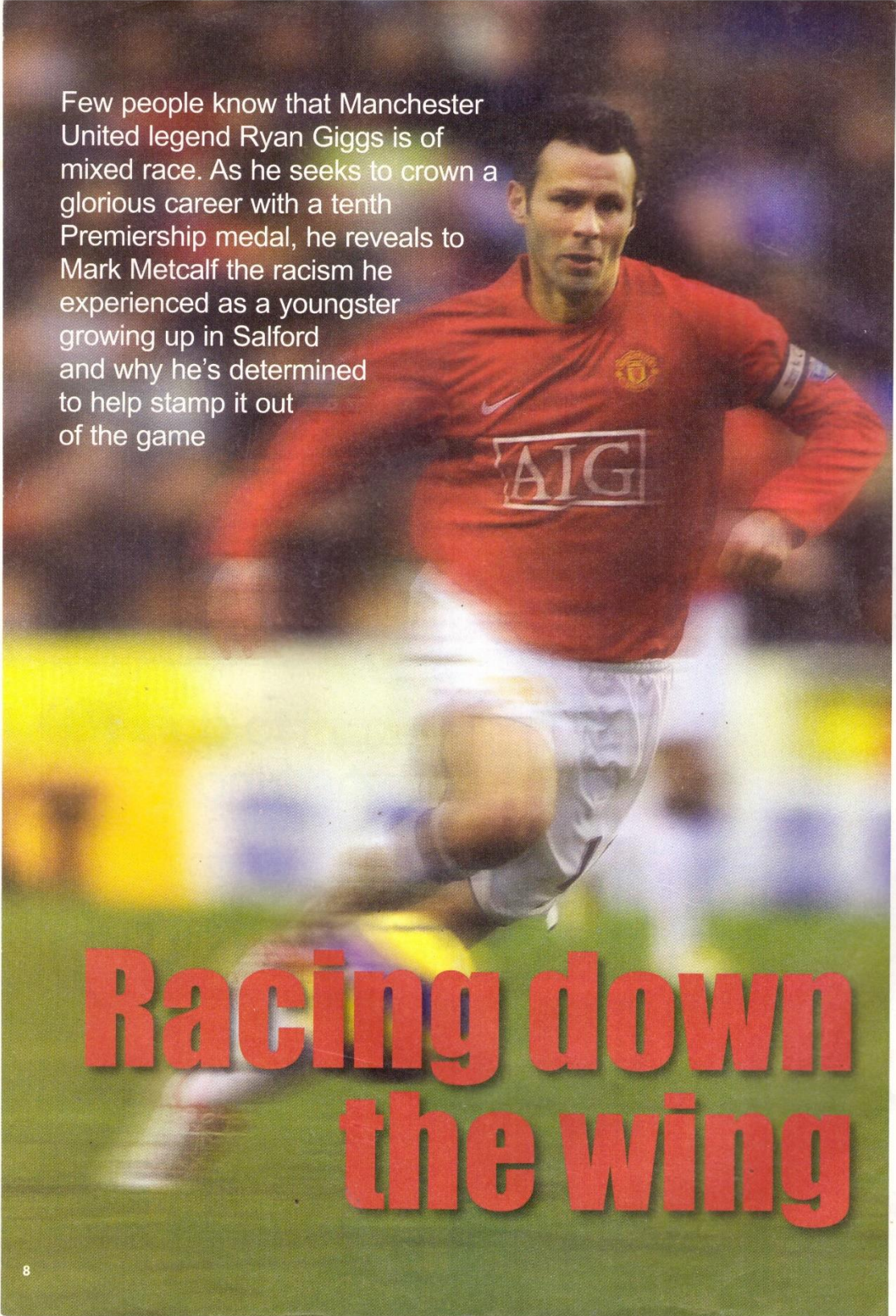
A Leicester University study has found GPs have difficulty in correctly separating patients with and without depression. The study pooled 41 trials and found GPs recognise only around half of patients with depression, while 80 per cent of healthy patients were correctly reassured. The researchers said: "Results should not be interpreted as a criticism of GPs for failing to diagnose depression but rather a call for better understanding of the problems that non-specialists face."

## COASTAL ACCESS

Almost 1,000 miles of England's coastline is either inaccessible or lacking legally secure access, according to a Natural England audit. It found inaccessible and unsecured access amounted to 34 per cent of the coast nationally. Regional director Liz Newton says the audit is the start of a ten year period improving access to the region's coastline.

## CARD SHARP

Shelter has launched a competition for budding artists to design a playing card as part of its House of Cards campaign, offering the winner's work a chance to be displayed alongside artists including Damien Hirst. The campaign highlights the fragility of the housing market and the extent of repossessions. Entries should be uploaded to [www.shelterhouseofcards.org.uk](http://www.shelterhouseofcards.org.uk) by 21 August.



Few people know that Manchester United legend Ryan Giggs is of mixed race. As he seeks to crown a glorious career with a tenth Premiership medal, he reveals to Mark Metcalf the racism he experienced as a youngster growing up in Salford and why he's determined to help stamp it out of the game

# Racing down the wing

Manchester United and Wales footballing legend Ryan Giggs's fair skin might have helped him escape the clutch of racist bullies as a youngster growing up in Salford in the 1980s if it hadn't been for the fact that his father, Danny Wilson, a black man, was a well known rugby league player for Swinton Lions.

Although the taunts he suffered clearly failed to prevent him going on to a sparkling career in top-flight football Giggs admits: "I would have done things differently if I could go back in time." And he has some well meaning words for any young person facing a similar situation today.

Giggs is set to win his tenth Premiership winners medal if his Red Devils side can overcome challenges from London clubs Arsenal and Chelsea in the next few weeks. And as he moves towards the twilight of his playing career, Giggs has become increasingly committed to the work of the anti-racist football campaign Show Racism the Red Card.

"My grandfather was from Sierra Leone," he says. "When I was growing up everyone knew who my dad was and as a result I used to get a little bit of racist stick at school. I don't want to go into exactly what happened but obviously it isn't very nice and, you know, I wouldn't wish it upon anyone. I'd like to see it eradicated and for everyone to be treated as equal."

Giggs, who was born in Cardiff in 1973 and moved to Salford in 1981, admits that by keeping the taunts of his youth to himself, he probably went about tackling racism the wrong way. A pupil at Moorside High School in Swinton from 1985 to 1990, he says: "At my school there wasn't that many pupils with different backgrounds and we didn't have many Chinese, Indian or black kids, so I mean it wasn't as if you could go and maybe talk to other youngsters who might be your mates."

"I was quite a quiet, shy person, but what I should have done is tell the teachers and tell my parents. I'd advise any young person suffering from racism to tell someone they know. Whether it is at school or whether it is at football, tell your coach or your teacher, or your parents."

"So like I say, if I could go back in time I would have done things differently. I would have told the teachers or my mum and dad."

Giggs has made over 500 domestic league and cup appearances for Manchester United, not to mention close to 150 European appearances, and is just a handful of games short of breaking Sir Bobby Charlton's record of 759 appearances for the club. He also played 64 times for his country before he retired from international football in May 2007. He is full of admiration for those pioneers of football, the first black players and especially those who resisted attempts by organised racists, often from the National Front, to hound them from the national game in the 1970s and 1980s.

"Players like the then Nottingham Forest full-back Viv Anderson, who was the first black player to play for England, and Paul Ince, who became the first black man to captain England, are role models for today's generation of black footballers. So too is John Barnes. I can recall where he had bananas thrown at him when playing for Liverpool in a match against



Giggs with David Foster of Show Racism the Red Card, the NUT's Steve Sinnott, Gordon Taylor of the Professional Footballers Association and Helen Walsh of Show Racism the Red Card.

Everton. These are all players and individuals who have made the Premiership, made English football what it is today.

"But the fans have also benefited, because the Premiership is just so cosmopolitan. Every country, every religion, every background is more or less in the Premiership. You see all these different players, so people get to accept others for what they are."

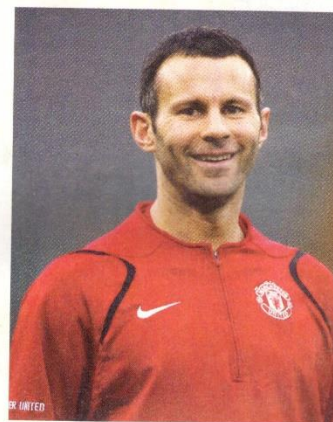
"Personally I've never had any racism toward me during my football career but I've witnessed it. When we travel and go to different places overseas I've noticed other black players getting some stick. But hopefully the anti-racist message is getting through and these countries and cultures that aren't used to seeing different races and people from different backgrounds are getting the message."

"Hopefully we can educate them so things like when England Under 21 players were abused when playing in Serbia don't happen in the future. I hope in ten years' time we're hardly ever talking about racism."

Giggs, a happily married man with two children, made his debut for Manchester United in 1991 when he came on as a substitute in a match at Old Trafford against Everton. Manager Sir Alex Ferguson had persuaded him to join United rather than local rivals Manchester City when he was 14.

As a left-winger he has worn the number 11 shirt for Manchester United for over 15 years. In 1999 he was part of the United side that won the European Champions League Trophy in thrilling fashion in Barcelona when they scored twice in the last five minutes to topple German giants Bayern Munich.

But in more recent times he has also played as a second striker where he has used his electrifying pace and superb ball control to destroy some of the best defences in the



world. In addition to his nine Premier League winners' medals, he has four FA Cup and two League Cup winner's medals.

On six occasions he has been selected by his peers in the Professional Footballers

Association in their team of the year. And United supporters voted his goal against Arsenal at Villa Park during an FA Cup semi-final replay in 1999 as the greatest ever scored by a United player.

He remains today a vital part of the exciting squad that Ferguson has assembled. Paddy Crerand, a European Cup winner himself back in 1968, says: "Everybody who has seen him play knows how important he has been. He's been a fantastic ambassador for the club and also for himself – he's been the perfect professional."

None of his honours however would have been possible if he hadn't found it within himself to resist the cruel racism he experienced as a youngster. By speaking out he's determined to ensure that today's young black people don't have to suffer in silence. *Giggs appears in a new magazine due out shortly from Show Racism the Red Card. Ring 0191 257 8519 for a free copy.*

**"He's been a fantastic ambassador for the club and for himself. He's the perfect professional."**

# MPs: rail safety fears

**The company responsible for the running of Britain's rail infrastructure, Network Rail, has denied claims by more than 60 MPs that planned reductions in track renewals work will "significantly raise safety risks to passengers and workers".**

The MPs have signed an early day motion (EDM) after Network Rail said it was re-phasing its five year £4 billion track renewal programme. This means 28 per cent of this year's work, such as track and signals replacements, will be carried out in later years.

A company spokesperson said: "This will allow time for new, more efficient ways of working to take effect, delivering the value for money needed to meet tough Office of Rail Regulation output targets as well as being less disruptive to passengers and freight users. No

safety will be compromised. Travelling by rail is the safest it has ever been and there is no safer way to travel in Britain."

The EDM signatories are appalled that a company reliant on government subsidies should be reducing its track renewals expenditure. They say this would undermine the government's intention to use infrastructure projects to boost employment and significantly raise safety risks. The MPs want the government to ensure renewal work is not deferred.

Among the 60 signatories are many northern MPs, including Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) and Ann Cryer (Keighley), who said she hoped the EDM would persuade transport secretary Geoff Hoon to "halt any further cutbacks".

MARK METCALF

Farnley Hall Park following a £130,000 project carried out by Leeds City Council. The playground, including a multi-climbing unit, climbing wall, superswings, seesaw, slide, roundabout and three-seat rocker, was created by the council after consultation with local schoolchildren. With picnic tables and seating, it will be open to the public every day of the year during daylight hours.

## SOUND OF LEEDS

**Expo, the national festival from Sound and Music celebrating the medium of sonic art, is coming live from Leeds on 24-29 September and is calling for creative practitioners to submit work for inclusion in the programme. Submissions are being sought for all kinds of work that incorporate the experimental use of sound as a key element. Artists are also invited to apply for a one-off commission for the creation of a new work for the festival, worth £4,000. See [www.expofestival.org](http://www.expofestival.org).**

## Barrow's academic argument

Cumbria County Council's decision to give the go-ahead to an academy school in Barrow has been criticised by a local organisation that captured four seats on Barrow Borough Council in May last year.

Our Schools Are Not for Sale (OSANFS) also believes it may be able to legally challenge the decision, under which it is proposed to base the academy at the existing Parkview and Thorncliffe school sites that, along with the Alfred Barrow School, will close later this year. New buildings are due to open in 2010.

The county council's decision to push ahead comes just as the Carlisle Richard Rose Central Academy has been placed in special measures after Ofsted inspectors graded it as inadequate. Richard Rose's chief executive and another director have now left the school.

Academies replace schools said to be failing. Their private-sector sponsors have a say over their curriculum and the recruitment of staff. The government is committed to opening many more.

Barrow councillor Lisa Hammond of OSANFS, a local parent who represents the Parkside ward, said: "Our group feels that owing to the rushing through of the process that the turmoil at Carlisle will be repeated in Barrow."

"Even though the academy is due to open in little more than six months we still have no information on the catchment areas, admission policies or the curriculum. There's not even a head teacher in place."

Finding a head teacher has not proved easy. The county council advertised the job with a salary of £100,000 in November but decided not to



**Knight (left) says EU competition rules don't apply to academies. Hammond (right) disagrees**



interview any of the applicants for the post and has just re-advertised it at £135,000 a year.

"We are currently waiting to see what the High Court decides on Camden parents' objections to the way sponsors were chosen in their London borough," said Hammond.

"We believe like them that European competition rules have been broken and sponsorship should have been put out to tender."

Schools minister Jim Knight

has said he does not believe European procurement law is applicable to the selection of sponsors and a decision is pending.

"We are also questioning the legality of the county council's cabinet decision on 6 January," added Hammond. "The rules state they need half of the ten members to form a quorum, but there was only four and only three voted."

**"We say no academy in 2009, slow down, take stock and, if it has to be done, do it properly."**

Hammond's views are at odds with the leader of the borough council, Conservative councillor Jack Richardson, who said: "The Conservative and Lib Dem groups had walked away from the meeting leaving a five member Labour-run cabinet."

"The county council monitoring officer, who is a fully qualified solicitor, was at the meeting and if there was a problem she would have picked it up at that point."

But Hammond and OSANFS remain opposed to the academy plans.

"We say no academy in 2009, slow down, take stock and if it has to be done do it properly," she said.

"Let's have all these things in place before we go ahead and end up in a situation like Carlisle."

"Also we have the county council elections coming up in May, so we can test the views of local people on this issue then as we hope to put up 12 candidates."

MARK METCALF

## First price rise in two years

**The price of The Big Issue in the North will rise next week from £1.50 to £2.00.**

The increase, the first for two years, is to cover the company's year-on-year increase in costs.

Vendors of the magazine will also benefit from the price rise. They will buy the magazine for £1 and make a profit of £1 themselves.

Until now, they have bought the magazine for 70p and made a profit of 80p.

Keith Smith, regional sales manager at *The Big Issue in the North*, said: "We appreciate that members of the public may see this as a significant increase. However, we have not increased the price of the magazine since February 2007."

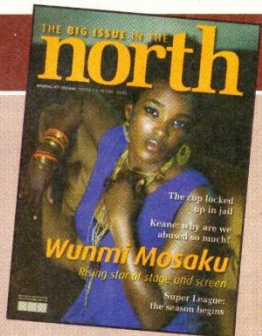
"During that period we have also made significant improvements to the magazine - we've refreshed our

editorial outlook and had a redesign to keep the magazine vibrant and current."

The price increase is also designed to make the transaction easy for vendors and the public on the street, using £1 or £2 coins.

Smith added: "The vendors will purchase the magazine for £1 and sell it for £2, so they will make a profit of £1 for themselves. This is so important for vendors as they are working to improve their lives."

"In effect, vendors operate as a business on a small scale and so are self-employed. Selling the magazine helps develop skills in budgeting and time management. In addition, when vendors sign up to sell the magazine, we help them to find the services that they need to improve their lives - such as registering with a GP or finding accommodation."



**Vendors will now make a profit of £1 for each magazine they sell**

"People can be confident when buying *The Big Issue in the North* that they are getting a great magazine with the broad mix of news, features and reviews that they would expect to see in any other quality publication."

# news

## Red carpet treatment for young film makers

Films from across the region are among the finalists at the 2009 First Light Movie Awards for young film makers.

The winners of the awards at Leicester Square Odeon on 17 March will be chosen by a panel that includes Daniel Craig, Sienna Miller, Joseph Fiennes, Josh Hartnett, Orlando Bloom and Kate Beckinsale.

*What's in Store*, an animated film about objects found in a school caretaker's room, made by 30 children from St Helen's Catholic Primary School, Hoyland near Barnsley, faces competition from children in Brighton and Cardiff to win the prize of best film made by under-12s.

Pupils Harry Moore and Ellie Claydon, both 11, will represent the school and walk the red carpet at the awards.

"Making the film involved taking thousands of photographs," said Claydon. "One of us would move an



Young film makers at St Helen's School on location in the caretaker's room. Now they are up for a prize for best film by under-12 children

object ever so slightly and we'd photograph that, making sure we didn't include the person in the photograph. Then we put them all together and edited the film on the computer, putting our own recorded music to it. It was hard work and we learnt many things, including that trying to rush doesn't mean you get things done quicker."

Moore added: "We did have

some knowledge of how to make a film as we had previously made *A Caterpillar's Wedding*, in which we used what is called stop frame animation. We knew that making a film takes time and with *What's In Store* we worked for five days together as a group."

The children were helped to produce the film by C Media Productions, the South

Yorkshire company that has helped previous competition entrants, and by their teaching assistant, Melanie Fisher.

She now specialises in information technology and media after being trained and helps run week-long classroom projects on newspaper production, film making and photography.

"This film is about the children using their imagination," said Fisher. "They all want to be involved straight

**"Children are interested in technology even before they come to school."**

away. Children are interested in technology even before they come to school – just look at how babies pick up the remote control."

Other northern finalists in the awards are young people from the National Media Museum in Bradford, Arts About Manchester, and Eek Films and the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, both in Liverpool.

MARK METCALF

## Rich list member's poor show

Over 200 small and medium sized companies are facing financial ruin after a construction company owned by one of West Yorkshire's richest men went into administration.

Creditors, who are owed close to £2.5 million by the Leeds-based company Pullan Construction Limited (PCL), are especially angry that they were not informed much earlier that the company was facing financial trouble. Some have now formed a committee to legally pursue their case.

PCL, incorporated in 2003, is a subsidiary of J Pullan and

Sons Limited (JPS). They share common directors in John Dawson, Alistair Pullan and 76-year-old Neil Edward Pullan, who in 1995-96 served as the West Yorkshire High Sheriff, the duties of which include attendance at royal visits to the county and the wellbeing and protection of High Court judges.

In 2008 *The Sunday Times* ranked Neil Pullan and family at number 1,572 in its UK rich list, estimated to be worth £48 million.

One creditor, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "We are owed a considerable sum of money. But with other contracts

hopefully I won't have to make redundancies."

He added: "Some small one or two man bands that bought materials to do work for PCL won't be so lucky – they're not getting paid and they owe other companies for the products they've bought."

"People are angry because we feel PCL knew before they went into administration that they were unlikely to recover. Yet even in October they were still getting people to take on work for them."

"They had no forward basis on which to continue trading. We are looking to see if the

company was trading fraudulently at that time.

"Many of us have worked for Pullan's for a number of years – you work on the basis of trust, you do the work and you get paid. Many creditors feel that Mr Pullan has a moral obligation to do the decent thing and pay us as there appears to be plenty of money in other sister companies."

The latest figures for JPS – which was formed in 1885 by Joseph Pullan – show that equity shareholders' funds at the bank were £43,264,918.

"What is owed therefore doesn't even come to 6 per cent of that figure," said the creditor. No one from JPS was willing to respond to questions.

MAR

# Liverpool laughs

Mark Metcalfe talks to police officer turned producer Kevin McMahon about his new comedy project

Dean Sullivan  
stars in *Terry  
Across the  
Mersey*



"It's been too long since we had a good comedy series from the city on national television. I want to change that – Liverpool is a place of unique talent and humour." **Liverpool film producer and former Special Branch officer Kevin McMahon is keen to reinvigorate the Liverpool film scene and is unafraid to take on this challenge.**

McMahon spent time working as an actor once leaving the police almost 20 years ago, before forming his production company, Naked Poets, in 2006. "I wanted more control over the filmmaking process, and intended to give myself some decent roles. It hasn't quite worked out that way because I am producing and most times also directing, so to take on a major role would be stretching it – but I do give myself a Hitchcock moment by appearing somewhere in most of my films!"

Within months of setting up the company, McMahon won the liverpool48.com award for his short film, *Run For Your Life*, that was made in just 48 hours.

McMahon's latest venture sees him bringing together over 50 local TV and film professionals to make a comedy trailer for a proposed new comedy, *Terry Cross the Mersey*, designed to showcase Naked Poets' work and the city of Liverpool. All this despite a lack of support from the Culture Company, responsible for coordinating events in Liverpool during the city's stint as European Capital of Culture. "I did make applications for earlier projects but I was disappointed with the responses I got from the Culture Company. Many people are less than happy with the lack of involvement and investment in local creative talent," he says.

*Terry Cross The Mersey* stars former Brookside actors Dean Sullivan and Louis Emerick, as well as Pauline Fleming who played Penny King, the wife of *Coronation Street*'s legendary factory owner, Mike Baldwin. "Dean plays Terry Valentine," says McMahon. "He's a chancer who has two lives with two homes and two wives. In one he lives in Seacombe, on the Wirral side of the Mersey where money is tight. When he crosses the Mersey he lives in a luxury apartment with his

wealthy socialite wife. Making a bigamist likable won't be easy, but Dean is a very versatile actor with great acting skills. He is very personable and loves Liverpool, all of which will combine to bring the character of Terry Valentine to life."

McMahon describes the film as a "quirky comedy drama" but is keen to emphasise its social import. "The Capital of Culture has brought a lot of money into the area, and there are many apartments which now cost a million or more. But there are still plenty of deprived areas, and Terry steps between that lifestyle gap. This premise allows the writer social comment on that situation."

McMahon has also recently produced three short films of ten minutes each for Dove Tales, a community project drawing its name from its base in the Dovecot district of the city. "All of the writers came from

**Making a bigamist likable won't be easy, but Dean is a very versatile actor**

the community, but we then assisted them by getting professional scriptwriters to help turn their work into scripts for the films. Professional actors worked alongside people who'd never acted before and the result is that we got real community involvement and a really professional film," says McMahon.

One of the shorts, *Choices*, is a drama capturing some of the realities about domestic violence. It features *Coronation Street* actor Gary Cargill, local theatre performer Leanne Best, and Suzanne Collins from *Brookside*, and was written by Patsy Murphy, a woman in her 70s who also went on to act in another of the films despite never having acted before. The premiere at the Playhouse Theatre attracted a capacity audience of over 400. All three films have been accepted into many film festivals across the world.

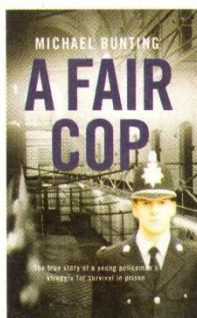
If *Terry Cross the Mersey* does hit our TV screens, it will be a welcome return for the tradition of Merseyside-based comedies, including *The Liver Birds* (1969-1976, then again in 1996), *Bread* (1986-1991) and the very brief *Luv* (1993-1994). The last great TV drama with strong social commentary, Alan Bleasdale's *The Boys From The Blackstuff*, was first broadcast in 1982.

By merging these two genres, McMahon has the potential to bring his show across the Mersey, and into the living rooms of audiences across the country.



# Hard cell

As a police officer, Michael Bunting didn't believe much in miscarriages of justice. But after he was locked up, terrified, in a violent prison for an offence he says he didn't commit, his views about wrongful convictions have changed considerably. By **Mark Metcalf**



**Michael Bunting has turned the most terrifying experience of his life into a dramatic new book.**

*A Fair Cop* deals with his time in prison following a conviction for common assault that he strenuously denies committing and is appealing to have overturned.

Not exactly the sort of thing that you'd imagine people beating down doors to buy but you'd be wrong as the books are flying off the shelf.

The reason is simple – Bunting was a police officer when he was imprisoned. In his book he recalls being beaten up and left fearing for his life by violent prisoners intent on getting their revenge for the police's role in their own convictions.

Forced to lie about his occupation to other prisoners who befriended him, Bunting reached the point where only the thought of breaking his loving parents' hearts brought him back from the brink of suicide.

Yet despite being forced to endure such a horrendous time he appears to have left prison a more rounded individual. He is prepared to concede that miscarriage of justice cases do occur, that some prisoners need help to prevent them re-offending and that the adversarial nature of court cases means in some situations convicting someone is regarded as more important by the police than making sure they've got the person responsible.

Following in his father's footsteps, Bunting joined West Yorkshire Police in 1993. In 1997 he was briefly in the news when he and another Leeds-based officer, PC Dave Braddock, were involved in the arrest and conviction of then Leeds United and England midfielder player Carlton Palmer for disorderly conduct. This moment of fame aside, Bunting was content to work hard in a job that he loved but which was not without difficulties.

This included often being asked to work difficult streets with a skeleton staff. The night of Sunday 24 August 1997 appears to have been one of them and prior to being sent out with just four other officers to police a busy city centre Bunting claims that he raised this as a safety issue.

"My sergeant looked at me and seemed surprised, even annoyed. I hadn't intended to provoke him. I decided not to pursue it. I wish I had stood my ground. Instead within half an hour I was out on mobile patrol with PC Amanda Williams and we received a call graded 'immediate response' that we raced to," says Bunting.

Exactly what happened next is the subject of his appeal but some facts can be established with certainty about that night in Burley when Bunting arrested a man who had a record of petty crime.



Bunting had an unblemished police record prior to the event that led to his conviction

***Only the thought of breaking his loving parents' hearts brought Bunting back from the brink of suicide***

Making the arrest, Bunting was repeatedly punched, suffering injuries to his face and head, followed by five weeks off work with severe migraines. Later he was awarded £1,000 in compensation after his attacker pleaded guilty to assaulting him and was sentenced to 120 hours community service. Bunting's chief superintendent commended him for acting with severe restraint.

The police officer was therefore as surprised as anyone to find he was himself placed under suspicion after his assailant alleged it had in fact been Bunting who'd assaulted him by kicking him four times in the head. Bunting denied it – he still does – but admitted kicking the man once in his chest, saying he feared for his life. He expected the matter to be quickly dealt with and dropped. But it wasn't and things turned worse for him when it became apparent that his partner that night was prepared to give evidence against him.

"I still can't explain why she did this. I still can't explain why I was prosecuted. I have all sorts of theories but none I can prove," says Bunting.

Did he perhaps have a previous list of complaints against him? "No, far from it. I had an unblemished personal and professional record. I had also acted as a witness to a violent assault by another police officer on a prisoner that culminated in his dismissal from the force as I believe the police should act with the highest professional standards at all times," says Bunting.

When Bunting was eventually convicted and sentenced to four months for common assault in September 1999, his troubles were only just starting. Going to prison must rank amongst most people's worst nightmares but for a police officer it can be a life or death situation. It didn't take long for the other prisoners at one of Britain's roughest institutions, Armley Prison, to get to know exactly who he was. Bunting was forced to remain within his cell and listen to their threats. His food was tampered with and he was spat on. He only pulled back from suicide at the last moment.

Even a transfer to an open prison in Kent didn't bring immediate relief as he was forced to lie to other prisoners, who like himself suffered assaults on them by the more violent inmates.

Some sort of salvation came in the form of a pen

and paper, even toilet paper. With these he began to scribble down his experiences and nine years later he has turned these jottings into *A Fair Cop*.

Released from prison, Bunting was sacked by the police, appears to have been badly informed on his rights of appeal and had to begin the long road back into employment. This started with him stacking shelves at the local Asda, and in 2001 getting a job as a fitness manager at a health clinic. Outside work he continued to write his book, partly, he admits, as therapy.

Now he has just started as the manager of a new restorative justice project in Huddersfield set up by Kirklees Council.

"My goal is to reduce crime. It's not about catch and convict but getting people who commit crimes to consider their actions and the damage they are doing to their victims and themselves. I know how difficult it is to find work once you've got a criminal conviction. But one of the aims with the project is that anyone who's got them, but who wants to change, will get help with job applications, benefit claims and practical encouragement. In prison I met people who I feel wouldn't have been there if such support had been available where they lived."

Since his own release from prison the ex-police officer has also become concerned that some people have been wrongly locked up. This was not a view he held before 1999.

"I generally didn't believe in such things as a miscarriage of justice. But you look at the cases of Barry George and Colin Stagg, for example, which are horrendous examples of police persecution and of arrogance by a small number of officers. It's categorically wrong that some officers look to get a conviction rather than making sure they've got the persons who did a crime. I'd rather ten guilty men go free than one innocent man go to jail."

Bunting's struggle to clear his name has just been given a boost when he received the backing of the Police Federation.

"Writing the book and finding a publisher is my greatest achievement in life so far, but having my conviction overturned would beat it. My legal team and I are confident that my appeal will be successful," he says. ■

## "Poison" claim backed up by science

A possible link between the use of pesticides and ill health among farmers has been confirmed by researchers.

Scientists funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have found evidence that even low levels of exposure to organophosphate (OP) – a group of chemicals used to produce some pesticides – can be lead to a range of problems.

Dr Sarah Mackenzie-Ross, of the University College London, spent four years studying the effects of the neurotoxin within the farming community and found higher rates of illness than among a control group not using OPs.

### Controversial chemical

She said: "While there is still a lot of controversy about OPs, there is general acceptance that high level exposure will make you ill. There is much less



Mackenzie-Ross: 20-year interest

agreement about the low-level exposure.

"We couldn't prove causation but our analysis allowed us to conclude that there was a possible association between

exposure and the farmers' ill health. This has been accepted by Defra, who've put our paper on their website."

### Expert witness

Mackenzie-Ross first learned of the chemical 20 years ago when she served as a medical expert for solicitors representing Gulf War veterans and farmers convinced their illnesses were OP-related. Troops may come into contact with the chemical through insecticides sprayed on tents and vehicles.

Littleborough sheep farmer Brenda Sutcliffe – who became seriously ill after government regulations compelled her family to use OP sheep dip – welcomed the report.

### Shepherd suicides

She has campaigned since 1992 to highlight what she believes are links between the chemical and the high suicide rate among shepherds, 1,000 of whom killed themselves between 1996 and 2005.

"Anyone going to the doctor can now say here is a scientist that has produced a report funded by Defra that shows low level exposure is dangerous – I very much welcome that," she said.

### Forgotten report

But Sutcliffe questions why investigations are only being carried out now. In 1951 a team led by Professor Solly Zuckerman discovered OP exposure could produce a range of symptoms including memory loss, depression and schizophrenia. It recommended OP products be labelled 'deadly poisons.' That report lay hidden in the House of Commons Library until Sutcliffe discovered it two years ago.

### Alarming message

"Paice has bowed to the needs of the shooting industry. That's bad enough, but this retrograde step also sends out an alarming message about what we can expect in the future from this new government on animal welfare."

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is to review the code in five years to assess its effectiveness.

In the meantime it has said it will seek to work with interested parties such as the RSPCA to ensure its implementation.

MARK METCALF

MARK METCALF

### READING TESTS

Minor problems with eye co-ordination are being missed in some children, leading to some being diagnosed with dyslexia. Experts at the University of Bradford say reading difficulties result in some children receiving the wrong diagnosis and management. Optometrist Caroline Wilson said: "Many children with reading difficulties have subtle muscle balance and focusing problems which may not be discovered during a routine sight test."

### HELP THE AGED

Needy pensioners can be offered free furniture after Manchester charity Mustard Tree won a £5,000 grant. Up to 100 over-65s will be offered items to the value of £50 over the next year, after the Nationwide Foundation stepped in with funds. The organisation has noticed a substantial increase in older people asking for help in recent years.

### FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Community groups and schools will be offered football tickets in a move to encourage engagement in sport. Under a sponsorship deal with Chester FC, which is now run by fans, Chester & District Housing Trust's tenants will also name a stand at the club's Deva stadium. Phil Jones, from the housing association, said: "We hope that long-term we can work with the club to promote engagement in sporting activities for residents and communities in Chester."

### CHARITY HIKE

A charity is looking for adventurers from West Yorkshire to join a sponsored hike. Marie Curie Cancer Care is holding a Snowdon challenge on 2 October. All funds raised will support its specialist nurses, who enable patients to die at home surrounded by family and friends. As well as giving care to cancer sufferers, the nurses also offer emotional support to relatives and friends. To sign up, call 0113 214 7905 or visit [www.mariecurie.org.uk](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk)

## bird welfare law

out the rain.

But pro-hunting groups welcomed the move, saying they were confident the revised code would "address welfare concerns without imposing unjustified restrictions on game farmers".

### Six-year battle

The charity Animal Aid spent six years campaigning for a total ban after first exposing the off-floor wire cages on national television.

Andrew Tyler, Animal Aid director, said: "The lives of breeding pheasants would have been improved by the code of practice that Labour introduced.

# MPs: rail safety fears

**The company responsible for the running of Britain's rail infrastructure, Network Rail, has denied claims by more than 60 MPs that planned reductions in track renewals work will "significantly raise safety risks to passengers and workers".**

The MPs have signed an early day motion (EDM) after Network Rail said it was re-phasing its five year £4 billion track renewal programme. This means 28 per cent of this year's work, such as track and signals replacements, will be carried out in later years.

A company spokesperson said: "This will allow time for new, more efficient ways of working to take effect, delivering the value for money needed to meet tough Office of Rail Regulation output targets as well as being less disruptive to passengers and freight users. No

safety will be compromised. Travelling by rail is the safest it has ever been and there is no safer way to travel in Britain."

The EDM signatories are appalled that a company reliant on government subsidies should be reducing its track renewals expenditure. They say this would undermine the government's intention to use infrastructure projects to boost employment and significantly raise safety risks. The MPs want the government to ensure renewal work is not deferred.

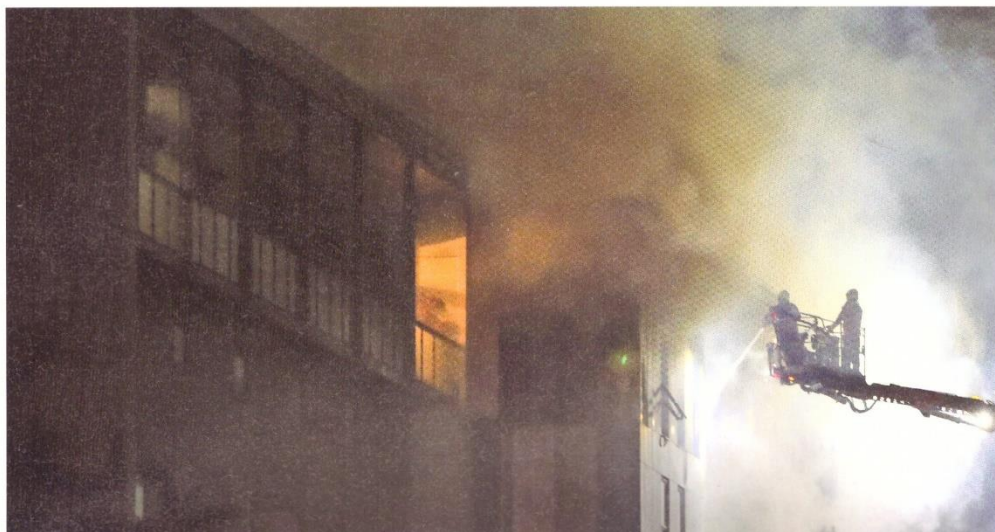
Among the 60 signatories are many northern MPs, including Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) and Ann Cryer (Keighley), who said she hoped the EDM would persuade transport secretary Geoff Hoon to "halt any further cutbacks".

MARK METCALF

Farnley Hall Park following a £130,000 project carried out by Leeds City Council. The playground, including a multi-climbing unit, climbing wall, superswings, seesaw, slide, roundabout and three-seat rocker, was created by the council after consultation with local schoolchildren. With picnic tables and seating, it will be open to the public every day of the year during daylight hours.

## SOUND OF LEEDS

**Expo, the national festival from Sound and Music celebrating the medium of sonic art, is coming live from Leeds on 24-29 September and is calling for creative practitioners to submit work for inclusion in the programme. Submissions are being sought for all kinds of work that incorporate the experimental use of sound as a key element. Artists are also invited to apply for a one-off commission for the creation of a new work for the festival, worth £4,000. See [www.expofestival.org](http://www.expofestival.org).**



Above: fire in Bolton last year at a student accommodation block (Photo: Alamy). Below: Abigail Tubis bought her flat for £164,000 in good faith

## LEEDS' GRENFELL-TYPE CLADDING

**Resident campaigns to remove the hazard**

**Fire Service doesn't have an at-risk list**

**A Leeds flat owner campaigning to remove Grenfell Tower-type cladding believes the government is "pretending to listen" to millions of people trapped in accommodation that is a fire risk.**

In 2017 account manager Abigail Tubis and her husband spent £164,000 on their two-bedroom city centre property, believing it would be a safe investment.

### Losing sleep

The couple watched with horror in June 2017 as 72 residents of Grenfell Tower (GFT) flats in North Kensington died when a blaze spread rapidly up its exterior cladding, bringing fire and smoke to all 24 storeys.

They were assured this could not happen to their flats by the property management company responsible for

overseeing their building. But they felt something was wrong when soon after the building's owner unsuccessfully tried to sell it.

In July 2019 the government announced that in addition to GFT-like cladding an extended combustible materials list was being compiled.

"Building owners were told to complete checks before removing anything listed. We did not know this. In October 2019 a letter arrived revealing the combustible material the building is wrapped in and making clear that removing it would be the leaseholder's responsibility," said Tubis, who is required to pay £30,000.

She contacted other building residents before establishing Leeds Cladding Scandal Campaign, which has linked up with similar organisations nationally, and believes up to three million people may live in properties at risk of fire.

Residents have drawn strength from campaigning but many have also developed mental health problems for

fear of a fire starting overnight, she believes. "People are spending hundreds on waking watches sitting outside their homes and deciding who will contact the fire brigade if there is a fire," she said.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) claims the government has committed £158 million to supporting communities so far, which includes health and wellbeing services. But David Williams, Fire Brigades Union Yorkshire and Humberside regional secretary, is concerned that the Fire Service does not have a list of flammable buildings. Until a decade ago it was traditional for the service to be asked by property owners about where to site fire hydrants when a new block of flats was being constructed. That is no longer the case.

"In addition we regularly find flats that previously had old heavy fire doors throughout have had them replaced by hollow plastic ones. It means a fire on the floor below can fill the one

above within 30 minutes, rather than an hour. It's not as safe for residents," said Williams.

He fears a repeat of what happened in November last year in Bolton where the six-storey Cube accommodation block for students went up in a frighteningly reminiscent manner to GFT.

Williams wants legislation requiring owners of all new buildings to work with the Fire Service to make them not only fire-safe but to ensure that in the event of a fire his members are familiar with the layout and construction materials.



Tubis believes where she lives "was never safe because building control was privatised by the government, allowing cheap materials to be used throughout. Fire breaks to stop fire spreading are missing. Many locations are the same. Properties were bought in good faith. They swiftly need making safe by the government before anyone else is killed and to prevent a further rise in mental health problems. The government should recoup the costs from the developers and construction companies."

#### **Footing the bill**

Tubis estimates the total remedial cost for the UK is around £30 billion. The government argues that blocks that remain unsafe failed to comply with regulations at the time of construction. Conversely, developers contend that building regulations were at fault. Tenants and leaseholders are left caught in the middle.

Even under proposed new legislation – which only initially covers blocks above 18 metres high – leaseholders and tenants rights will not be guaranteed, according to Tubis, and will need to be tested in court.

"The government has said that leaseholders should not pay for remedial work but I think this is them pretending to listen as the new building safety bill quashes leaseholders' rights," she said.

A Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson told *Big Issue North*: "We have allocated £1.6 billion to speed up remediation of unsafe cladding. In our draft Building Safety Bill, the new regulator will hold those who design, build, and manage high rise homes accountable for keeping residents and buildings safe.

"Owners are responsible for ensuring buildings and the people who live in them are safe. We expect them to meet remediation costs without passing them on to leaseholders."

MARK METCALF



Martin Fletcher, a survivor of the Bradford City fire, lost four family members in the blaze and investigated it himself. Photo: Linda Nylind/Guardian

## DECISION NEARS FOR FIRE VICTIM

### Inquiry of police role in Bradford fire looms

#### Victim's book raised issues with 1985 blaze

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) is close to deciding whether to investigate West Yorkshire Police's role in the Bradford City fire disaster of 1985 in which 56 fans died.

The IPCC became involved following the release of a book on the 30th anniversary of the disaster: *The Fifty-Six: The Story of the Bradford Fire* by Martin Fletcher, who survived the fire on 11 May but lost four of his relatives to it.

#### Police failures

There then followed a letter from Fletcher's legal representatives Leigh Day to the then home secretary, Theresa May, urging her to initiate an independent review of the evidence and arguing "police failures caused most loss of life".

These included an alleged delay of 195 seconds before evacuating fans on to the pitch and a failure by the commanding officer, Chief Inspector Charles Mawson, to investigate radio reports of a fire until his deputy forced him to do so.

The police control room in Bradford city centre is also alleged to have failed to respond quickly enough to three police radio requests for fire brigade assistance so that the brigade, stationed only three minutes away from the ground, arrived nine minutes after the fire started, by which time the all-wooden Main Stand was fully ablaze.

West Yorkshire Police subsequently referred itself in November 2015 to the IPCC. The police watchdog said it "would consider the referral before deciding whether to investigate".

The decision to self-refer does not mean the IPCC will investigate. In November 2012, South Yorkshire Police referred itself to the

organisation over its conduct at Orgreave during the Miners Strike of 1984-85. The IPCC then took until June 2015 to issue a report that cited the historic nature of events and its failure to obtain police operational orders as reasons not to proceed to a full investigation.

#### "Blame not apportioned"

Following the fire in 1985 a hastily arranged inquiry was held just 13 days after the forensic search of the site was completed. It lasted only five and a half days. It did not take witness statements from most survivors. All the families were represented by a barrister instructed by the Bradford Law Society.

The inquiry's judge, Lord Popplewell, had said beforehand "blame will not be apportioned". He concluded the fire's cause was the dropping of a lit match, cigarette or tobacco on to litter that had collected underneath the stand. Fletcher has cast doubts on this verdict.

When Fletcher began investigating events he unearthed flaws in the inquiry and inconsistencies between what Bradford City owner Stafford Heginbotham and the club told the press. Fletcher found that Heginbotham had a string of businesses where eight similar fires had broken out and which all followed a similar pattern of spreading quickly and catching the fire brigade unaware.

When West Yorkshire Police referred itself to the IPCC, Fletcher said he was "delighted", adding: "It is a proper testament to the open and transparent nature of modern policing."

Now an IPCC spokesperson has stated: "We are in the final stages of this matter and will look to announce a decision in due course."

In response Fletcher said: "It would be inappropriate to make any substantive public statements until the official decision is announced."

MARK METCALF

# Incinerator studies delayed

Research probes links with child mortality

The publication dates of two major studies into unexpected deaths in infancy remain unclear.

It is 14 years since Public Health England (PHE) first promised a study on the impact of municipal waste incinerators (MWI). Led by researchers at Imperial College London it eventually began in 2011. Preliminary results were envisaged in 2014 but in 2015 PHE announced they were likely to be released in early 2016. There was then a further delay.

MWIs burn municipal solid waste, including hazardous substances, to convert it into ash, flue gas and heat to be used to generate electricity. Incineration causes emissions that may pollute the air, water and soil and have harmful impacts on the environment and animal health.

The PHE study has

examined 22 MWIs, including those at Bolton, Grimsby and Kirklees – districts where infant mortality rates are higher than regional or national averages.

In the second study, the Lullaby Trust, which aims to prevent unexpected infant deaths, funded Birmingham University in 2012 to research the role of ambient air pollution in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) mortality. The study's initial findings in 2015 indicated "ambient air pollutants were associated with increased SIDS mortality".

## Air pollution

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has found that mortality rates are highest among groups in routine and manual occupations, indicating that deprivation is the main reason behind infant mortality. Other factors cited are poor parenting and cultural practices. But the results of both reports are eagerly awaited by Shrewsbury's Michael Ryan, who first became concerned about air pollution when he lost two of his children, one at 14 weeks, and considered their deaths could be related to having lived downwind of an incinerator.

When he examined London wards around MWIs he found that, even in affluent areas such as Chingford Green in Waltham Forest near the Edmonton incinerator, death rates were above average. In Bolton five of the top six wards with the highest infant mortality rates border the incinerator in Great Lever.

Ryan's research is supported by a study in Japan in 2004, which found "a decline in risk from distance from MWIs for infant deaths".

Ryan's research, reported by *Big Issue North*, was significant in forcing PHE into conducting its delayed study.

In an almost exact repeat of its statement from last year, Dr Ovnair Sepai from PHE's toxicology department

said: "The unanticipated complexity in gathering data has delayed the project. It means that papers from the work will be submitted by SAHSU to peer reviewed journals in spring 2017. It is likely to be a few months after submission for the papers to be published."

He stressed that the PHE continues to believe that MWIs are not a significant risk to public health.

## Local campaigns

Meanwhile, there has been no progress since last year when Lullaby Trust said its study has been submitted for publication to the Scientific Reports journal and if accepted "will be published online at some point this year".

A trust spokesperson said: "Once the research has been published we look forward to sharing it publicly."

The delay in the release of both reports comes when there are growing local campaigns against planned new incinerators. A public meeting in Sowerby Bridge last month, attended by both local MPs, drew a large crowd concerned about plans by Calder Valley Skip Hire to construct two incinerators.

On the same day around 1,000 people marched in Keighley to oppose plans for an incinerator at Marley. Sarah Nash from Aire Valley Against Incineration, said: "This plan is completely unnecessary, inappropriately sited and damaging to the environment, health and the local economy."

"There appears to be a complete lack of scrutiny. It seems that everything the developers present is accepted as fact whereas our well researched and evidenced arguments are dismissed as groundless. We are raising funds for a judicial review."

There is also cross-party support against a planned incinerator in Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire.

MARK METCALF

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

The government's recently announced industrial strategy could boost economic growth across the UK but will not tackle the north-south divide, says a report by Irwin Mitchell. The UK Powerhouse report predicts that not one city in the north or Midlands will be amongst the top 10 fastest growing cities in the next 10 years.

### END FOOD WASTE

A cooking course designed to tackle food poverty will take place in Manchester next month. CookBanks, by social enterprise Cracking Good Food, aims to teach people to cook unwanted food in large quantities, which can then be distributed in their communities. The two-day course will take place on 17-18 May. For more information visit [crackinggoodfood.org](http://crackinggoodfood.org)

### REUNITING REFUGEES

A new partnership between US charity Miles4Migrants and Manchester-based Together Now has reunited seven refugee families this year. Miles4Migrants takes pledges of air miles to book flights for refugees seeking to be reunited with their families. Amy Lythgoe from Together Now said: "We are excited about what this partnership will mean for families in the UK waiting to be reunited with loved ones."

### HUMAN RIGHTS CITY

York is to become the UK's "first human rights city". The self-proclaimed status means businesses, residents and organisations including the council and police refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in activities and policies. Lord Mayor of York Dave Taylor said it was important for the city's people to work towards "treating everyone equally, with fairness, dignity and respect".

Got an event, campaign or story from your area? Call 0161 831 5563 or email [news@bigissuenorth.co.uk](mailto:news@bigissuenorth.co.uk)

was a common theme, with support anchored in strong family community ties and notions of respect. For example, one man on being invited to a job interview took three other Roma with him.

"Their roots, instead of going downwards, spread horizontally across networks of friends and relatives, transmitting know-how, support and symbols of belonging."

"It came through quite strongly from the *Big Issue North* sellers we interviewed that they think people in Liverpool are really nice to them and that it's a good place to work."

"It was also evident that Alex was playing a vital role in helping the integration process, supporting people with a pragmatic voice. It's great that we have her in Liverpool."

CIARA LEEMING

PHE's toxicology department

by the TGWU, which merged with Amicus to become Unite in 2007. Its members come from sectors including construction, manufacturing, transport, and logistics.

Graham became head of Unite's organising department and built a large following, which later helped her defeat the strong favourite Steve Turner at last year's general secretary elections.

"I believed I was saying something very different to what had been said previously," she says. "We were talking the language of the workers and what they needed was for the union to refocus on jobs, pay and conditions, and by winning for workers this would give them confidence to ultimately change the political centre ground."

Earlier this month Unite secured a pay rise of 20 per cent over the next two years after 250 bus drivers went on strike for a month. Graham is especially pleased for the Hull workers, who she felt were being exploited for living in a low wage area. Unite, which has led a series of productive bus workers' disputes this year, successfully sought parity with terms and conditions elsewhere.

At Liverpool Docks nearly eight weeks of strike action has also won rises of 14-18 per cent for dockers there, depending on their grades.

Other ongoing disputes where pay is an issue include food manufacturer Quorn in Billingham, Co Durham, where Graham is set to attend the 24/7 picket line. "Nothing will ever be as powerful as workers withdrawing their labour and a properly organised picket line is key," says Graham, who contends that it is only when workers take action that it becomes clear to the public that they are essential to the functioning of the economy.

But won't pushing up wages lead to more pain in the future due to "wage-push inflation" – as the government has argued in its attempts to persuade workers not to take strike action – in which resulting price rises lead to ever more demands for higher pay? Not so, argues Graham.

"Our Unite investigative approach has shown that this second wave of inflationary pressures has been driven by excessive profits, not wage rises. All Unite members want is a fair share of what they have earned for their employers."

Meanwhile, Unite, in a strategy that breaks with tradition, has transferred some of its political funds away from the Labour Party into a new campaign that takes the union closer



to working with its grassroots members.

Some of Graham's predecessors played a major role in the Labour Party. Len McCluskey provided significant support for Jeremy Corbyn when he was elected leader in 2015. Millions were spent supporting Labour, which nevertheless lost badly at the 2019 general election. Graham does not want to play such a role in the party. This may give her a chance to be more critical of a future Keir Starmer government.

"We have launched Unite for a Workers' Economy, which seeks to use our power in workplaces whilst also organising in our communities to develop a workers' manifesto to drive the political agenda," says Graham.

To help do this Unite is looking to open community bases in Northern communities and is targeting Grimsby, Hull, Workington, Barrow in Furness, Leigh and Morecambe for special attention. It already has thousands of non-working members who pay a nominal fee to become community members.

"Politicians do not lead – they follow. In order to get a better deal for workers and communities we need to shift the centre ground to show what voters want. For example, pensioner poverty as a whole is linked to the demise of occupational pensions, which we are defending in workplaces and trying to reopen in others and which we want to see fought for more generally. We are not doing this through lobbies but by doing the five miles of organising."

On food poverty, Unite campaigning will highlight how it is linked to low wages, meaning many

people have to claim Universal Credit and use food banks.

"Why is it acceptable that a number of these people work for supermarkets that make massive profits and as such are being subsidised by the taxpayer?" asks Graham.

On the political front Graham has attacked the government for introducing the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Act, which makes it lawful for undercover police officers to spy on trade unionists if they believe they are engaging in actions that are "damaging the economic welfare of the country".

Clearly, taking industrial action is aimed at causing economic damage in order to force employers to negotiate a deal that is satisfactory to both parties.

"We know spy cops collected information on building workers that was used to blacklist them so that they had to move to other sectors of the economy," says Graham. "Good activists were victimised and while Unite has won many cases of compensation it was wrong and we need to stop it happening in the future so that workers can organise collectively to be properly rewarded for their work."

With the government seemingly intent on passing more anti-trade union laws, Graham, who believes she can't stop the legislation because Rishi Sunak's party has an 80-seat majority, is focused "on how we can overcome any hurdles parked in front of us, including if they attack strike pay, to put our members in the best position to win. We are the last line in the ground for many people." ■

**Previous page: Graham addressing a crowd in Parliament Square during a protest to demand a better deal against the rising cost of living. Photo: Tayfun Salci/Shutterstock**

# Spy base protester faces trial for holding upside down US flag

**A prominent peace activist faces prosecution for trespass after she was arrested at Menwith Hill intelligence station near Harrogate while protesting by carrying an upside-down US flag.**

The arrest of Lindis Percy took place on the day Barack Obama was re-inaugurated as US president on 21 January.

Percy had written the words "Now then... second and only chance Obama" on the flag. She wanted Obama to reduce American military involvement across the world and use the money saved to address poverty in his own country.

Under the 2005 Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) Percy's case is now in the hands of the Attorney General, Dominic Greaves, who must decide whether she will face charges.

The Crown Prosecution

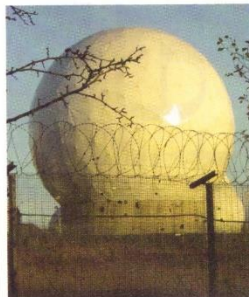
Service (CPS) has been asked to investigate.

If Percy is sent to trial this would be the second time she has faced a trespass prosecution under SOCPA. Two years ago she successfully defended herself after she had shown her driving licence to obtain entry to Mildenhall US Air Force in Suffolk.

## Arrested

After wandering around the base unchallenged for over an hour – without causing any criminal damage – she was arrested as she made her way to the exit. Despite the prosecution calling five base witnesses, a district judge dismissed the case and heavily criticised a security guard's evidence. CCTV coverage of the gate that Percy had used to enter the base had earlier gone missing.

Percy was also arrested in



Menwith Hill US spy base

2011 when she displayed outside the American Embassy in London an upside-down US flag bearing the words "Independence from America". She was threatened with arrest under SOCPA and then detained for an alleged breach of the peace.

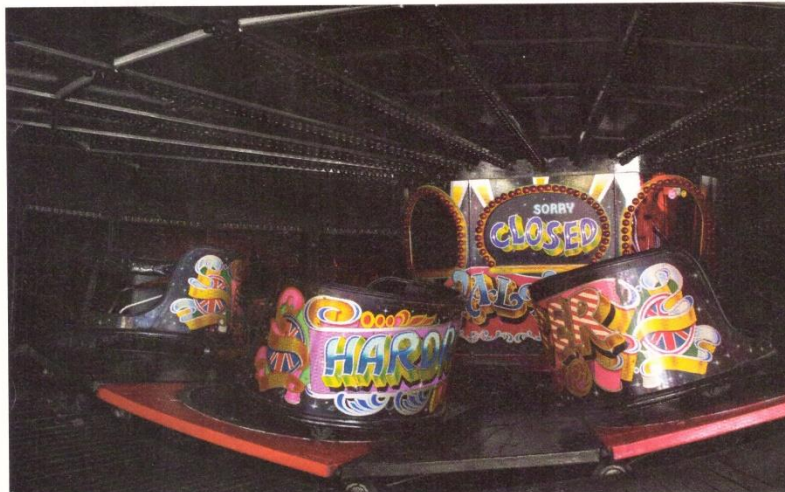
She was later released without charge and is now pursuing a civil case for damages.

Percy, a former nurse, also had charges of "wilfully obstructing three Ministry of Defence police officers in the execution of their duty" at Menwith Hill dismissed last year. District Judge Jane Goodwin criticised the arresting officers for failing to interview independent witnesses.

The Campaign for Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) holds a demonstration outside Menwith Hill every Tuesday evening.

The base opened in 1951 and is under the control of US forces.

The site is a communications intercept and missile warning base that, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, is becoming "increasingly vital to US intelligence".



Off season at the pier at Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, by OCA photographer Ashley Blair, reflecting the low incomes and lack of job opportunities in rural coastal towns as overheads rise.

The Open College for the Arts (OCA) is a thriving online community of more than 3,000 people studying creative arts subjects at higher level. An education charity, OCA offers BA honours degrees in photography, painting, creative writing, visual communications and textiles. Students

can also study fine art, music, drawing and sculpture. OCA has no minimum entry requirements and students can enrol when it suits them. From September 2012, fees to reach degree level are less than £8,000 in total.

## 'Blunt instrument'

Martin Schweiger, who regularly attends the CAAB pickets, said: "SOCPA legislation is a very blunt instrument that can suppress legitimate peaceful public protest. It has never been properly debated in Parliament and is implemented by police officers interpreting the framework given to them by ministers."

"Clearly there are problems with the legislation because the police have failed when challenged in court. Given the costs in time and money there will be good reason to question any decision to proceed in Lindis's case."

Neither the Attorney General nor the CPS would comment on an ongoing case.

Attempts to get statements from Fabian Hamilton, who is Percy's MP, and the shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry were also unsuccessful.

MARK METCALF

# 'Without a proper inquiry there is no way of knowing how much damage Jenner caused'

He claimed to be Mark Cassidy when he worked at the Colin Roach Centre protest group in London in the 1990s – but earlier this month he was dramatically revealed to be undercover police spy Mark Jenner. **Mark Metcalf**, then an activist at the centre himself, began to have his suspicions about Jenner – but not before he had played a leading part in a number of campaigns

I now know the name of the Metropolitan Police officer who was employed to spy on the protest group in which I was one of the key organisers in the 1990s. Thanks to his former partner Alison (not her real name) and the *Guardian* it has been established that the man I knew during my time at the Colin Roach Centre (CRC) in Hackney as Mark Cassidy is Mark Jenner of the Met's special demonstration squad (SDS).

Jenner's name was revealed when Alison gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into undercover policing, his police role confirmed by the *Guardian* on 1 March. He is one of 11 undercover police officers publicly identified. Nine of them had sexual relations with activists mainly from environmental groups.

The officers' actions began unravelling in 2011 when the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) dropped criminal proceedings against six people facing charges related to a conspiracy to sabotage a coal-fired power station at Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Nottinghamshire. The convictions of another 20 activists were later quashed after it was revealed that long-term police spy PC Mark Kennedy had acted as an agent provocateur within the environmental movement. Further allegations of undercover police officers acting beyond their authorisation then surfaced and we

now know they were given the names of infants who had died many years previously.

The Metropolitan Police has now been ordered to investigate under Operation Herne how SDS officers created and maintained false identities while undercover.

After Kennedy became public knowledge I wrote a piece for *The Big Issue in the North* in January 2011 about the man I knew then as Cassidy. Although I had worked

Jenner out many years beforehand it was only after he had been active in high profile campaigns in which members of CRC were involved.

The centre was opened in 1993 and named after a young black man shot dead inside Stoke Newington Police Station in 1983. It combined a number of unfunded local groups, including the Hackney Community Defence Organisation (HCDA), which had uncovered serious corruption amongst the local police, with *Panorama* and *World in Action* undercover investigations confirming some officers were involved in drug dealing.

HCDA's work overturned many convictions and a database of police officers known to have

**The spies were given the names of infants who had died many years previously**

complaints or convictions against them was compiled. The Defendants Information Services (DIS) was registered despite objections from the Association of Chief Police Officers.

On 23 December 1994, a day when HCDA had organised a picket of Stoke Newington Police Station to demand action over the death of Oluwasijibomo Lapite in police custody, CRC was burgled, with equipment vandalised and a computer stolen. Cash was left undisturbed. An HCDA spokesperson told the *Hackney Gazette*: "It was the work of Special Branch, whose real target was a new database service." In fact DIS was run from a different location.

Early the following year a Liverpoolian who identified himself as Mark Cassidy came into the centre to say he had seen TV coverage of the annual commemoration event for those who had died at the hands of the local police. The 1995 guest speaker was civil rights lawyer Gareth Pierce.

"Cassidy" quickly became active in most of the centre's political life, including writing for our internal bulletin. When a magazine sold to the public was launched his suggestion to call it *RPM* – revolutions per minute – was agreed. He attended members' meetings and was privy to confidential information on hundreds of people's policing cases, including where police officers were charged

with unlawful imprisonment and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

Graham Smith, a Manchester University lecturer, consultant on police complaints to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and an international expert on police accountability, says: "I am concerned that undercover officer Mark Jenner participated in an organisation that supported law abiding citizens who were involved in legal proceedings against the Metropolitan Police."

CRC, with Jenner much involved, was also central to the campaign by businessman Malcolm Kennedy to prove he had not killed Patrick Quinn in 1990. Quinn had been battered to death – his injuries included 33 fractured ribs – in Hammersmith Police Station. Convicted of murder, Kennedy was released after his conviction was quashed when the *World in Action* programme, uncovered new witnesses in the police station, giving grounds for appeal.

At his retrial Kennedy was cleared of murder but convicted of manslaughter. After receiving the backing of 65 MPs when a

parliamentary motion supporting him was tabled he was granted further leave to appeal. Kennedy lost his appeal in 1996 but as a free man he has continued to campaign to have his conviction overturned. He alleges that as a result he has suffered constant harassment by the police, making it almost impossible for him to earn a living from his removals business.

Kennedy says: "I find it eerie that Jenner was involved at the CRC during the period of my 1996 appeal when he was privy to campaign strategies and confidential information. This may have perverted the course of justice. Without a proper investigation there is no way of knowing how much damage Jenner caused to me."

Claiming to be a building worker himself, Jenner supported others victimised by their construction industry employers. The Building Workers Group (BWG) had decided to put pickets on workplaces where deaths had occurred. Three people a week were being killed on UK building sites and the aim was to damage the employers' profits and force them to take action to prevent such tragedies. Where workers refused to cross a picket line it was maintained. However, where the majority went to work the others were persuaded to join them in order to prevent victimisation. The initiative was a direct challenge

**Cassidy was privy to confidential information on hundreds of policing cases**

## *Unwilling to challenge him directly, I shared my concerns with those closest to me and began to reduce his information-gathering opportunities*

to anti-trade union laws. Jenner attended picket lines, wrote for the BWG newspaper and came into contact with many union site representatives.

When UCATT officer Dominic Hehir sued BWG and union member Brian Higgins for libel over allegations he was failing to support members, a defence campaign was established – and Jenner became the chair. Although the campaign was successful the time taken up on Higgins' defence meant there was little in reserve to picket sites. Those involved felt it was a hollow victory.

Higgins, a blacklisted building worker, says: "I am appalled to discover 'Mark Cassidy' was actually an undercover police officer who used his cover as a building worker to infiltrate organisations the state does not like. It is like some Orwellian nightmare and it is surely time for decency, justice and democracy for blacklisted workers."

Higgins is one of 3,213 building workers' names on the Consulting Association (CA) database used by 44 building companies to vet potential new recruits over the last four decades. His file contained seven pages from *RPM*.

Many of those on the CA list were "not recommended for employment". Their details were revealed after the Information Commissioner's Office closed down CA and its owner, Ian Kerr, was found guilty in 2009 of breaching the Data Protection Act.

The Blacklist Support Group has established that some of the information supplied by CA came from the police or security services. They have lodged a formal complaint to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal – the security services watchdog – and want an investigation about the possible involvement of MI5 and

other sections of the security services in blacklisting.

Spokesperson Dave Smith says: "We now want to know why an undercover cop posing as a building worker turned up on picket lines and at campaign meetings, the details of which were discovered in the CA files. Were names of building workers or any information gathered by this police officer passed on to the CA blacklist? It sure as hell looks dodgy."

By the middle of 1997 I had become suspicious. Jenner had failed to recognise any Tranmere fans when I watched with him the games of what was supposedly his favourite football team. On a union delegation to Ireland he walked down the fiercely Protestant Shankhill Road even though he was a Catholic. He had volunteered to take his van to Ireland, despite knowing it would result in his details being recorded by the security services.

It was all a bit odd but, unwilling to challenge him directly, I shared my concerns with those closest to me and began to ensure his information-gathering opportunities were reduced. By the end of 1997 Jenner's involvement in the CRC had lessened. He still attended some events but mainly to report on his activities within Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), a militant group that had successfully physically confronted the BNP. AFA member Patrick Hayes had been convicted of causing two explosions in the South East on behalf of the IRA in 1993 and the state was certain to be interested in preventing any such actions in the future. Hayes was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment and later released under the Good Friday Agreement. It may be that AFA was always Jenner's main intended target.

CRC had closed by the time Jenner disappeared from his home with

Alison in April 2000. In the months beforehand he had acted suspiciously and had slept on the settee in his clothes. Alison had discovered a credit card in his real name, which he claimed to have bought for £50 to obtain petrol dishonestly.

A concerned Alison rang his workplace, only to discover he had departed a few years previously. Yet he had continued during this time to leave for work at 6.30am. Visits to a counsellor to discuss his reluctance to have children were abandoned without him mentioning his family. We now know Jenner was married.

When she discovered my reservations about Jenner, Alison contacted me in 2001 to reveal she had checked his claim that his father had been killed in a car accident in Birkenhead in 1975. The deaths register showed this tale was untrue – one more lie in a very long list.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has asked to be updated every three months on Operation Herne and Theresa May, the home secretary, has promised the Independent Police Complaints Commission will "investigate serious and sensitive allegations". This may include some from me as I am examining the possibility that a former girlfriend who I lived with may have been in the SDS.

Smith says: "In addition to an examination of past undercover policing arrangements it is important that an independent and impartial investigation is conducted into the purpose of undercover operations. If there is evidence that undercover police officers like Jenner and his superiors were engaged in a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, that evidence should be forwarded to the CPS, which will have to decide whether to bring criminal proceedings." ■





# HEARTHS AND HOMES

Legislation paving the way for mass council house building was passed exactly one hundred years ago.

**Mark Metcalf**, who grew up in a council house, looks back at the way they improved quality of life for millions – and asks whether the main parties would revive such large construction programmes after the general election



**"It was really wonderful in 1951 to get a well looked after council home that we could turn into a comfortable place to raise a family," says Bill May, aged 93.**

The Teessider had joined the Royal Navy in 1944 and saw action on the battleship HMS Nelson, the flagship in the British Far Eastern Fleet.

After leaving the navy in 1951, Bill and his wife Marjorie privately rented a wooden bungalow. But they, like millions, wanted somewhere better.

"We went to Hambleton Council offices and put our name on the housing list. Within weeks we received news that one of the houses newly built by the council was ours. We collected the keys and moved in. It had three bedrooms, a sitting room, radiators throughout, a kitchen and a garden. We were elated and felt very positive about the future as we now had a permanent place to call home," says a smiling Bill, who remained a council tenant with Marjorie until 1986 when they bought a Harrogate flat.

**Council flats on Woodlands Estate, Manchester, in 1948 and houses in York 1938. Photos: Doughty/Borthwick Institute/Getty Images**

Record numbers of council homes were built in the first half of the 1950s. The Conservative Party was in government but all parties were committed to a mass public housing building programme where, to quote Nye Bevan, the Labour minister of housing and health after the war, "the working man, the doctor and the clergyman will live in close proximity to one another".

It was amidst the carnage of the first World War and the 1917 Russian revolution, which appeared to put the working class in control, that all politicians were forced to guarantee that once the conflict ended there would be major social improvements. Liberal prime minister Lloyd George promised that returning soldiers would have "homes fit for heroes". Instead of overcrowded, insanitary accommodation there would be good quality homes that would form the cornerstone of a higher living standard for all. Meanwhile, changes to election law gave the vote to all men aged over 21 and women over 30 who met minimum property qualifications. Voters wanted radical change.

The newly elected Conservative government introduced the Addison Act



Aneurin Bevan opens the 500th permanent house built since the end of World War II by Elstree Rural Council 1949. Right: Margaret Thatcher visits the Parker family who were among the first to buy their terraced council house from Ealing Council in May 1978. Photos: JA Hampton/Getty Images

in 1919, paving the way for large-scale council house building. Under it, 213,000 of the originally promised half a million new homes were built. Dr Christopher Addison, like Bevan, held the joint role of housing and health minister as it was believed poor housing was largely responsible for poor health.

The 1924 Wheatley Act, under the first Labour government, was aimed at building more houses with indoor toilets, electricity and gardens. Thanks to subsidies from central government between the two wars local authorities built 1.1 million council homes, an average of 50,000 annually.

These figures were dwarfed after 1945, with an average of 110,000 new council houses constructed annually in the five years up to 1950. Almost double that yearly figure were built over the next five years, when soon after that my just married parents moved into a council house in Peterlee, one of a series of new towns with mixed housing that were specially built after the war. My father would regularly tell me how proud he was to collect the keys as it involved him and my mother both being able to move out of Easington Colliery, where many houses were in a poor state due to heavy pollution from the local mine.

My parents and other council tenants of their era generally had any repairs to their home carried out by their landlord. Having grown up with his five siblings in council housing on the Royds Hall estate in Huddersfield, mason bricklayer Terry Cunliffe later worked for the Huddersfield Corporation Direct Labour Organisation.

heating and shower facilities for the first time. Everyone – tenants, the council and Direct Labour Organisation workers – won out."

Like many people my parents remained council tenants until, also like millions of others they purchased their council property under Right to Buy.

## Politicians guaranteed that once the conflict ended there would be major social improvements

All property services and repairs were done in house rather than by private contractors.

"I knew from my own experiences of council housing, without which I doubt my mother as a single person could have kept all six of us together, how important they were to working-class people," says Cunliffe. "Direct Labour Organisation workers wanted to provide good, affordable homes. As trade unionists we managed to negotiate good bonus schemes in the voids [empty homes] section. We worked quickly to refurbish rundown houses as the council then obtained rents from tenants who were usually very pleased to move in and leave behind poor private housing. Some tenants had inside toilets, central

Right to Buy is best known as Margaret's Thatcher invention. In fact it was Edward Heath's government (1970-74) that first introduced the policy. Thatcher was though astute enough to expand it under the Housing Act 1980. It could be argued that on its own terms it is the most successful policy introduced by a government, as it undoubtedly changed the attitudes of many working class voters who would never have previously considered voting Conservative. Discounts were paid from the public purse.

Lifelong Labour voter Allyson Daykin worked for 40 years until 2008 at KP Foods in Rotherham, where she was active in the TGWU trade union. "I recall when Right to Buy was promoted by

Thatcher. Once one worker had bought their council house then everyone wanted to follow suit. You'd have people advising each other. Break times would be dominated by conversations of how much discount people were getting. People would be full of their own self-importance because they now owned some property."

Daykin pointed out to the union members she represented that there would be long-term problems ahead. "I understood that the numbers of newly built council properties was being dramatically reduced and ultimately younger people in the future would struggle to find places to live. I had no impact."

By the time Thatcher left office at the end of 1990 her government had sold off 1.5 million council houses. With both major parties now committed to Right to Buy sales have continued ever since. Meanwhile the numbers being built continued to tail off until they dropped to just 360 in 2009. In 2016 just 2,000 council homes were built.

Daykin's concerns have proven correct. Today we have a serious housing crisis. Homelessness is at record levels and house prices are unaffordable for many. Cunliffe's two children are both decently paid professional workers but neither can afford to buy a house. Private-sector rents are increasing and tenants have no security.

Sheffield housing campaigner Carrie Hedderwick has seen the impact of council house sales on local communities. She worked for Sheffield City Council as an enforcement officer between 2002 and 2014.

"Many private properties needed essential repairs," she says. "Landlords generally acted when placed under legal pressures. Tenants would plead with us to say their accommodation was unfit for human habitation as this would get them placed on the council housing waiting list."

"I have lived in Sheffield's East End for 35 years and with many people forced into renting privately then they don't feel part of the community as they might be evicted at any time. No one knows each other and communities are shattered by the whole housing policy framework."

Hedderwick was delighted when Sheffield City Council retook control of its 42,000-unit housing stock in March 2013. The council had previously transferred its properties into an arms length management organisation in 2004.

"The problem is that funds for repairs and to build new homes needs massively



increasing by the government," says Hedderwick.

Recently George Clarke, an ambassador for Shelter, who was brought up on a council estate in Washington new town in Wearside, produced the documentary *The Council House Scandal*. The architect and TV presenter backed housing campaigners' demand for 100,000 new council houses a year. Just two million homes remain under council control. Over a million people are on social housing waiting lists.

The current government appears unlikely to back such demands as between 2012 and 2018 it spent £3.5 billion of public money facilitating under Right to Buy the sale of 60,000 homes, at discounts averaging 43 per cent per property, which equates to £61,180 each. The Conservatives have also piloted schemes to allow housing associations to sell off their properties under Right to Buy, to which they remain committed, according to their manifesto. Despite ministers' promises that all the homes sold will be replaced, just one new property is being built for every five sold off.

Delegates at Labour's annual conference passed a resolution calling for 155,000 homes for social rent to be built annually under a Labour government. In the end,

its manifesto promises £75 billion will be earmarked over five years to build 100,000 council houses a year, and 50,000 social homes from housing associations. But there would undoubtedly be practical problems in implementing such policies as very few councils currently have the expertise to organise large house building programmes.

Labour's manifesto also promises an end to Right to Buy, but it does not commit to giving councils the ability to take over housing associations – which was a motion passed at its conference.

The Lib Dems have promised to build 100,000 homes for social rent, while the Conservatives have repeated a previous pledge to publish a social housing white paper. But it will not use public money to build houses, believing instead in stimulus for the private sector.

But Cunliffe, Daykin, Hedderwick and May remain united in wanting to see the end of Right to Buy and start a massive council house building programme. "The divide between people across society is growing worryingly large," says May. "We must address a situation where many people are unable to afford decent housing. Council housing provided for my generation the bedrock of a good upbringing and it can do so again in the future." ■

## Up on the farm

**A North Yorkshire farming dad and daughter's dedication to boosting wildlife has put them in line to win a prestigious national competition.**

The Nature of Farming Award, organised by the RSPB, Butterfly Conservation, *Countryfile* magazine and *Plantlife*, is open to commercial farms that also create wonderful wildlife habitats.

Following in his father's footsteps as a tenant farmer on 329 acres of the Settrington Estate, 68-year-old John Harrison and his daughter Ruth Russell run Duggleby High Barn near Duggleby, Malton, North Yorkshire.

As a keen wildlife enthusiast, Harrison, the owner of a farm machinery business for many years, was quick to get involved in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) when it was launched in the late 1990s. Under this farmers and land managers were paid to enhance and conserve landscapes and their wildlife, whilst also allowing members of the public to enjoy them.

Now Duggleby High Barn shows that commercial farming and wildlife conservation can be combined. Despite a chalk dale environment not noted for being their ideal location, lapwing numbers have leapt from 15 pairs to over 60, and there are now at least a dozen pairs of nesting grey partridges.



John Harrison and Ruth Russell. Below, lapwings thrive on the farm

Barn owls, killed off during the harsh 1960s winters, have returned. Marbled white butterflies are thriving and there is an abundance of wild flower species, including rockrose and the beautiful purple coloured bloody crane's bill throughout the farm.

Small flowered buttercups, not noted for venturing so far north, have recently been discovered. Deer and brown hares can also be seen.

"These wildlife improvements are due to a combination of changes introduced by my father," said Russell. "We combine a small herd of English longhorn cattle with arable farming to generate our main income, but our break crop is fallow stubble on which birds can feed."

"We also have six metre wildflower margins round the

fields and use beetle banks, which are perfect for the partridge and voles on which barn owls feed, to divide the larger fields."

The farm's biodiversity is studied by hundreds of A level school students from across the country. The farm also welcomes parties of visitors.

Chris Tomson, the RSPB's agricultural advisor for

### Lapwing numbers have leapt to over 60 pairs

Yorkshire and Humber, said: "Father and daughter have a good chance of taking first prize as they've created an attractive working farm where the wildlife is a sight to behold."

"The public has a fascination with barn owls and especially lapwings as their black and white appearance and distinctive flight pattern make them easy to spot. It's a good farm."

Nature of Farming entrants are whittled down to seven regional winners before the public is given the chance to vote. The other finalists are from Gloucestershire, Norfolk and Northern Ireland.

MARK METCALF



### LIFE'S NO BEACH

Only four of 37 bathing beaches tested in the North West have been recommended for excellent water quality by the Marine Conservation Society. Eleven on the Yorkshire and Humber coast achieved the same ranking. The Marine Conservation Society says the North West's poor water quality is likely to be a result of heavy rainfall creating sewer overflows of fertilisers, animal waste and farm refuse into the sea.

### LIVE AND DIRECT

Bradford-based Freedom Studios is looking for four directors at the start of their careers to direct eight new plays, which will be written by the emerging playwrights on the Street Voices 3 writer's course. The 20-minute plays will be performed in front of paying customers in November by a cast of 12 following a two-week rehearsal period. The directors will be supported by Freedom Studios artistic director Madani Younis. Apply to hello@freedomstudios.co.uk.

### GOING VIRAL

A scientist at Reading University is the first human being to be infected with a computer virus. Cybernetics expert Dr Mark Gasson had a computer chip implanted in his hand as part of research into human enhancement and the risks for implantable devices like heart pacemakers and hearing aids. He deliberately infected the chip with a computer virus, which then corrupted the lab security system used to communicate with it.

### MIGRANT SUPPORT

Innovative ideas to support migrants and integrate them into the local community can be funded by Cumbria County Council, which says they are essential to the economy. Organisations can apply for sums ranging from hundreds of pounds to more substantial amounts for projects ranging from language skills to community services. Contact Joel Rasbash, equality and cohesion manager, Cumbria County Council on 01228 226639, or [joel.rasbash@cumbriacc.gov.uk](mailto:joel.rasbash@cumbriacc.gov.uk).