

BATTLING FOR BOLTON

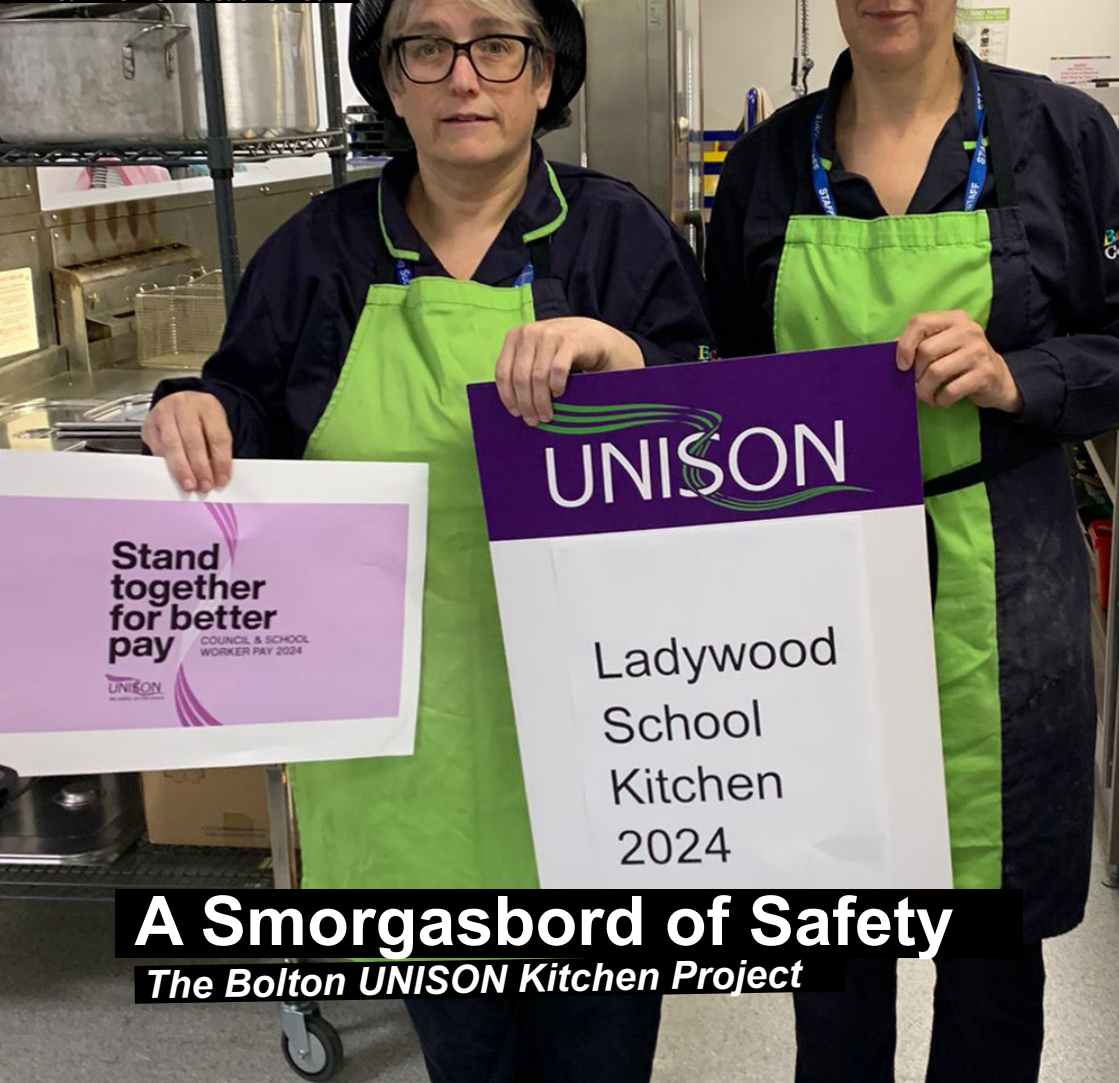


Summer 2024 Issue 28 Free

**New Labour Government
New Future?**

**Just Say 'No!'
Advice to staff from ex-branch sec**

**Bolton at Home Fury
Cuts to jobs and services**



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MARY BURNS



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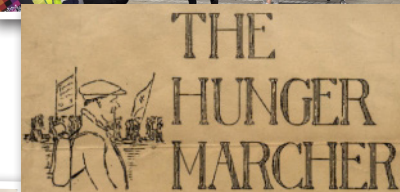
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IF OUR PAY DOESN'T RISE
WE WILL



Winning together
in UNISON

National Delegate Conference
18-21 June 2024 | The Brighton Centre
Celebrating 2024 - Year of LGBT+ workers



Intro...



Welcome to your summer Battling for Bolton. What a year so far! The Tories have been well and truly kicked out of government, and not before time. For fourteen years they have decimated education, the NHS and other public services. Vulnerable and marginalised people have been scapegoated whilst a privileged few have pocketed millions on the backs of others.

We now have a Labour Government elected with a huge majority. Keir Starmer's team has hit the ground running with numerous commitments including Labour's New Deal to boost workers' rights, but Labour must also rebuild public services, tackle poverty and address numerous other issues too. Our message to Keir Starmer is, *'We want Labour to succeed, but as trade unionists we will hold you to account!'*

The UNISON National Delegate Conference, attended by Bolton members, was one of the most uplifting and political conferences in years. We were inspired, not by politicians from Westminster, but by ordinary union members in dispute around the country. We saw the benefits of UNISON's *Organising to Win* strategy. This is a shift from union membership being seen simply as insurance against problems at work. The new emphasis, on actively involving members in tackling issues, is delivering results and record levels of recruitment.

Palestinian ambassador, Dr Husam Zomlot addressed a packed conference as delegates held up *Ceasefire Now* placards. Conference adopted a strong position on trans rights in the year of the LGBT+ worker. It was heartening to see such solidarity from



the UK's largest union, with 74% women membership, especially in a climate of hostility. It is worth saying that supporting trans rights is not about undermining or diminishing the rights of people from other oppressed groups.

Conference also agreed to change the union rulebook to remove gendered language and enable non-binary members to stand for regional seats which had previously been allocated to men - UNISON leading the way!

It's great as the Branch Secretary to see so many stories in Battling for Bolton, demonstrating the activity and strength of the membership. As always, your union is a place where you can become more active in a variety of ways, including through our self-organised groups. Check union noticeboards, and if they need updating, please ring the branch and let us know.

Finally, UNISON College offers training and learning opportunities for all members, so please visit the site to see what is available. <https://learning.unison.org.uk/>

Andrea Egan
Branch Secretary

IF OUR PAY DOESN'T RISE WE WILL

What Now On Pay Claim?

UNISON and Unite Reject Council and Schools Pay Offer

Earlier this year UNISON, Unite and GMB submitted a joint pay claim on behalf of 1.4million council schools staff across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since 2010, council staff have seen 25% wiped from the value of their pay. The unions argued for a significant pay boost in response to the cost of living crisis, and major recruitment/retention issues. The joint claim was for a wage rise of £3,000 (based on full-time pay) or 10%, whichever is the higher.

In May, an offer of £1,290, from the NJC (National Joint Council) employers fell well short of union expectations. All three unions have held consultative ballots to get the views of members and decide whether to move towards ballots for industrial action.

UNISON ballot closed on 28th June as 80.77% of members voted to reject the offer. Unite ballot closed on 10th July as 85% of members voted to reject, and the GMB ballot closed on 5th July with 53% of members voting to accept.

UNISON's pay ballot has produced different levels of response in different areas, and the union has been analysing the data, region by region, branch by branch and employer by employer, to help look at all options. Further discussions between the joint unions at a national level will consider how we move forward collectively. The final pay settlement will be backdated (effective from 1st April 2024).

All affected union members are asked to look out for further updates...

A Labour Landslide in Bolton



Bolton now has three Labour MPs in Westminster...

As a result of the General Election, Bolton has three Labour Party MPs, including new representatives in Bolton West and Bolton North East. Kirith Entwistle won the Bolton North East seat from Conservative, Adele Warren, and Phil Brickell won the Bolton West seat from Conservative, Chris Green. On the night, Labour's Yasmin Qureshi also held on to her Bolton South and Walkden seat.

After her victory, Kirith Entwistle echoed Keir Starmer's first speech as Prime Minister when she reiterated the importance of returning politics to public service... "I think that politics is about public service" she said. "Even if people didn't vote for me, I still owe them something. I want to be their representative and a voice for all."

Kirith is also the first female MP for Bolton North East, and added: "I think being the first female MP in Bolton North East is a really important milestone and I want to be a role model and inspiration for others to come forward."

With a clean sweep of Labour MPs in Bolton, a Labour led council and a Labour Government, the party now has more control over the town's future and a chance to address some of its problems, a point not lost on the new Bolton West MP, Phil Brickell...

"It is fantastic that for the first time in a number of years we have three Labour MPs and a Labour controlled council who can work hand in hand with a Labour Government" he said "So many people I have spoken to are worried about the cost of living crisis and I hope

to shine a light on that and help address the issues of deprivation and social mobility that are a problem in our town."

Retired UNISON member, Jim Haslam, was at Bolton Arena when the results were announced and was thrilled by what this might mean for the town. "I think it is a great result for Bolton" he said "It is a chance to start rebuilding Bolton as a town and start rebuilding our services"

Jim looked forward to seeing both services and workers being treated with more respect... "It will hopefully mean better work conditions for UNISON members and better funded services to work in, which will improve morale."

Isobel Speed

Bolton General Election Results

Bolton West

Phil Brickell, Labour Party 17,363
Chris Green, Conservative Party 12,418
Dylan Evans, Reform UK 8,517
Vicki Attenborough, Green Party 4,132
Donald McIntosh, Liberal Democrats 1,966
Patrick McGrath, English Democrats 202

Bolton North East

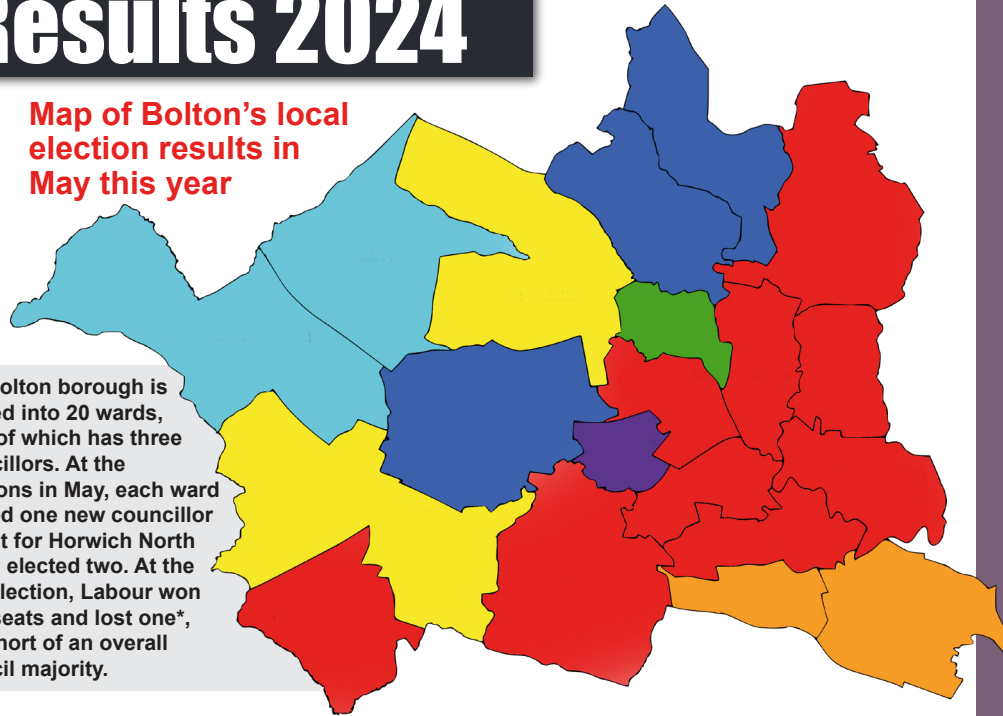
Kirith Entwistle, Labour Party 16,166
Adele Warren, Conservative Party 9,513
Trevor Jones, Reform UK 9,428
Hanif Alli, Green Party 4,683
Rebecca Forrest, Liberal Democrats 1,507
Syeda Kazmi, Workers Party of Britain 1,463
Kevin Allsop, Independent 345
John Partington, Independent 254

Bolton South and Walkden

Yasmin Qureshi, Labour Party 15,093
Julie Pattison, Reform UK 8,350
Jack Khan, Workers Party of Britain 4,673
Mohammed Afzal, Conservative Party 4,170
Philip Kochitty, Green Party 2,827
Gemma-Jane Bowker, Liberal Democrats 1,384
Don Prof Reis Abraham Halliwell Prf, Independent 433

Bolton Council Election Results 2024

Map of Bolton's local election results in May this year



The Bolton borough is divided into 20 wards, each of which has three councillors. At the elections in May, each ward elected one new councillor except for Horwich North which elected two. At the May election, Labour won nine seats and lost one*, five short of an overall council majority.

Following the local elections on May 2nd, the political make-up of Bolton Council is as follows:

- Labour - 26
- Conservative - 15
- Horwich and Blackrod First Independents - 6
- Liberal Democrats - 6
- Farnworth and Kearsley First - 5
- Green - 1
- Independent - 1

***Every vote counts...**

Bolton UNISON member, Kate Taylor, who works for Bolton at Home, lost out in the local elections by just one vote. She was defeated by the Conservative candidate in Astley Bridge.

Andy Burnham Re-elected as Greater Manchester Mayor

Despite, some mixed fortunes for Labour candidates in the May local elections, Labour's Andy Burnham won the Greater Manchester Mayoral Elections convincingly. He came top in every ward across Bolton Metropolitan Borough.



UNISON Defeats Former Government On Strikes



In an historic Supreme Court ruling people now can't be punished for going on strike...

Employers must not discipline their staff for taking part in legal strike action, according to a landmark Supreme Court ruling in April. UNISON's legal team fought the case on behalf of North West care worker, Fiona Mercer, following disciplinary action by her former employer, Alternative Futures Group (AFG), during a dispute over sleep-in payments.

Although UK law prevents employers from sacking employees taking lawful strike action prior to this ruling, the law offered no protection for employees being picked on and ill-treated in other ways.

Fiona had originally taken a case against AFG, a North West charity, to an employment tribunal in 2020. Her employer singled her out, suspended her and barred her from going into work or contacting colleagues during the action. In 2021 an Employment

Appeals Tribunal (EAT) found in her favour and said that UK law must protect her from being victimised for going on strike. The former Business Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, intervened and took the case to the Court of Appeal, which then reversed the EAT decision in March 2022. UNISON on behalf of Fiona, then took the case to the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court.

"I'm delighted at the outcome" says Fiona "Although it won't change the way I was treated, it means that irresponsible employers will now think twice before behaving badly towards their unhappy staff. If they single out employees for ill treatment, they'll now be breaking the law."

UNISON described the Supreme Court judges as "scathing" of the Tory Government's failure to provide legal protections for UK workers.

What Now For Bolton's Labour Controlled Council?

With a new Labour Government installed, Bolton Council leader, Nick Peel, outlines his hopes for the future...

Under the Conservative Government, Bolton Council has faced fourteen years of austerity, while public services have been decimated. Both service users and staff have been asking when, where and if it's all going to end. Now that a new shiny Labour Government is in place is there cause for optimism? Is everything going to be hunky dory?

"We're not going to see a Labour Government be an overnight panacea to all of our problems and nobody should assume that" says Nick Peel, Labour Leader of Bolton Council "But I think we'll see a change in attitude, a change in relationship from the very beginning."

He describes the relationship with the previous Tory Government as one of "unbelievable hostility". However, he is not expecting significant levels of investment in public services until the 'long term'... "It's all going to come down to the economy, and Keir Starmer has made it clear that you don't have any money to invest in public services if the economy is on its knees. Priority number one is growing the economy, then the government gets a lot more income because people are earning and spending a lot more."

This year has seen a further £8million cuts for Bolton Council, which the Leader describes as "relatively easy" compared to the past... "It's not as bad as we've had in previous years. For fourteen years we've been having massive amounts of cuts, and the ability to battle through and deliver good quality services is really quite astounding, and local government workers, as well as NHS staff, should be on a pedestal for doing what they do in the face of adversity."

So what is the greatest challenge for Labour Group? "We need more money" he responds, stating the obvious, before adding "The number one priority for this Council is regeneration, in particular Bolton town centre, and that's not just about tarding the place up as people wrongly will say; it's about economic growth, job creation and new housing, thus protecting the green belt. On a national scale and on a local scale unless we grow the economy we can't generate new and additional income, and if we can't do that public services cannot be funded to the level they need to be."

"Other than Church Wharf, where we have a new partner, there are three other regeneration schemes nearing completion – Moor Lane, Central Street



and Bark Street - hundreds of housing units going up" Nick Peel coos "It's housing led regeneration, that is, new people living in the town centre with money to spend in the town centre, thus boosting the local economy."

In the meantime, he wants to see the Labour Government continue the Tories' devolution to Greater Manchester, "and with that give additional responsibilities and funding to govern our own affairs at regional level as well as local level."

It's all a far cry from the far left agenda of Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto, to what's now known as 'sensible socialism', with the Bolton Leader acknowledging the role of both unions, which "always have something to bring to the table", and even opposition parties like Horwich & Blackrod First Independents,

helping Labour to govern Bolton, as it's five seats short of the 31 it needs for an overall majority following May's local election.

"Even if we had over 31 and didn't need them we would still have an open door policy" he insists "We will welcome them in terms of what they bring to benefit the lives of Bolton people."

Meanwhile, Nick Peel is adamant that, as the song goes, things can only get better under the new Labour Government... "I think there's definitely a mood for change in the country. I genuinely do believe that the Labour Party is always going to be the best party for investment in, and reform of, good quality public services. We created them, we believe in them and we want to protect them..."

Bolton UNISON Warns Labour Not To Backtrack On Workers' Rights!

 **UNIONS**
DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Will the Labour Government boost workers' rights as promised?

Trade unions have welcomed a commitment from Labour's Keir Starmer to boost worker's rights. However Bolton UNISON has warned that Keir Starmer must not water down its New Deal which aims to strengthen protections in the workplace.

Keir Starmer and Angela Raynor held lengthy talks with union leaders in May to discuss Labour's New Deal, which included the strengthening of rights in the workplace, increased family friendly working, tackling zero hours contracts and ending what is seen as a culture of 'fire and rehire' in many sectors. The talks followed intense speculation from leading trade union figures that Labour policies to protect workers' rights were at serious risk of being watered down.

Following the talks, a joint statement on behalf of Labour and trade union leaders read: "Together we have reiterated Labour's full commitment to the New Deal for Working People as agreed. We will continue to work together at pace on how a Labour Government would implement it in legislation."

Dave Ward, General Secretary of

the CWU (Communication Workers Union), said: "We have reached an agreement...in terms of how the full New Deal will be implemented as we agreed previously. Keir's made it very clear how transformational that will be for working people. We've got the position we all want. For working people, this will be the biggest difference in rights the country has seen in decades; it will be a flagship policy. We need to shift the balance of forces in the world of work, back towards working people, that's the only way you're going to grow the economy."

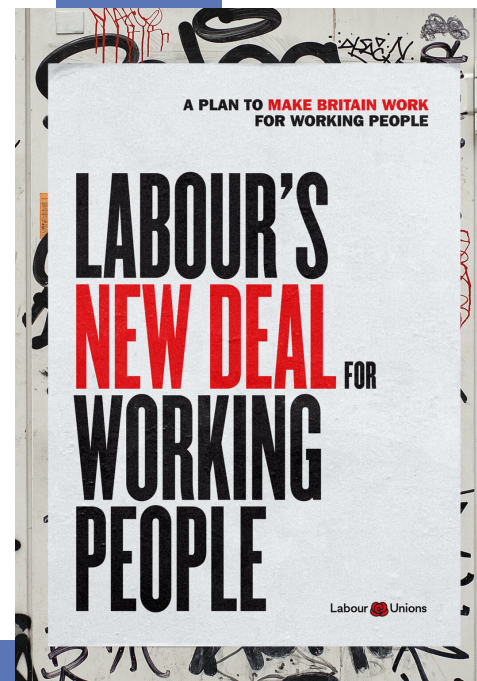
Sharon Graham, General Secretary of the UNITE union added: "Labour has recommitted to the New Deal and it's no longer a watered down 'unrecognisable' deal. I think that has changed...I think we've been listened to and the workers' voice heard."

Phil Chanin, Chairperson of Bolton UNISON, has also welcomed Labour's New Deal, but with a note of caution: "After fourteen years of the Conservatives and the disaster of austerity, people have had enough. People have

voted Labour to get rid of the Tories, but they also want to see positive change. We want this Labour Government to represent the interests of working people and their families. We want this Labour Government to work constructively with trade unions to resolve disputes rather than simply criticise unions and undermine them. I was really pleased to see Labour's commitment to the New Deal in order to boost workers' rights. We will be watching this closely with the expectation that Labour delivers on New Deal without delay and without it being watered down."

Keir Starmer and Angela Raynor have said they are committed to further discussions with trade unions to set out policies in greater detail. And Labour has pledged to bring forward New Deal legislation within 100 days of a Labour Government taking office...

For further details see <https://labourunions.org.uk/newdeal>



What Is Labour's New Deal?

Make Work Pay

- Raise the minimum wage so it's a genuine living wage you can actually live on.
- Strengthen sick pay and make it available to everyone.
- More say at work so unions can raise pay and improve conditions.

Security At Work

- Crack down on bad employers with tough enforcement of rights at work.
- Ban zero hours contracts and fire and rehire.
- Full employment rights from day one for all workers, including sick pay, parental leave and workplace protections.

Work Life Balance

- Paid family and carers' leave, review and improve maternity, paternity and shared parental leave.
- Flexible working and family-friendly hours as a right from day one at work.
- A new 'right to switch off' outside working hours so work stays at work.

Union Fury Over Cuts to Housing Services and Jobs

Bolton at Home

UNISON expresses anger and concern over job losses and cuts to services at Bolton at Home.

Bolton at Home, which employs around 1,000 staff and has 18,000 properties across the borough, recently announced plans to change its name to Be One Homes following a merger with its subsidiary, Arcon, a smaller housing provider based at Salford Quays. A further

merger is also on the cards.

"For some time we have been really concerned about the direction of housing in our town" says Janet Bryan, the convenor representing UNISON, the largest trade union with Bolton at Home "Recently we

have seen new layers of management including Assistant Directors recruited at significant cost when there were not enough people to answer the phones and deal with tenants' queries.

"Tenants will already be aware of the backlog of repairs; now we are seeing cuts to jobs and services that support some of our most vulnerable tenants" she adds "This includes cuts to customer engagement support, domestic violence support workers, mediation and the closure of UCAN centres. These local UCAN centres and outreach workers offer support to people in crisis, when the electricity is cut off or there are debt problems. They are a real lifeline to those who need it most.

"A secure and properly maintained home is a basic human right but so is the quiet enjoyment of it, and people deserve to feel safe at home" Janet explains "We are often being told that tenants should be right at the heart of strategic decision making, and we know there is a huge demand for more social housing."

The reliance on selling properties, cutting rank and file staffing costs and reducing frontline services has left staff concerned not just for their own futures but those of the communities they serve. The reality is that tenants and staff alike are seeing a real lack

of transparency when it comes to decision making, as boards become more remote and less accountable locally.

Despite big promises over recent years, there has been a lack of the investment needed to maintain properties to a decent standard across the country. Bolton at Home's management is committed to expanding the organisation, to see more decent, affordable social housing. However, that expansion should not be at the expense of support to vulnerable tenants or staff.

"Working with trade unions, Bolton at Home could be a model landlord and a decent employer" Janet reflects "Increasingly, however, staff are angry and concerned about the future of Bolton at Home and social housing in the town, fearing that the organisation is losing sight of its social purpose."

Consultations with trade unions regarding cuts to jobs and services are ongoing.

Janet Bryan has worked in housing for 35 years, initially with Bolton Council's housing department, then with Bolton at Home which was set up as an Arm's Length Management Company (ALMO) in 2004.

Bolton UNISON AGM



In March, Bolton UNISON held its packed Annual General Meeting, with its mix of stories, stalls, awards and attitude...

Post buffet, stall hopping and socialising, the AGM began with a minute's silence for fallen comrades, named members who had passed away during the previous twelve months. This was followed by official AGM business and a plea from Branch Secretary Andrea Egan for people to get involved in the union... "There is a place for everyone across the spectrum" she insisted, from branch officers to self-organised groups, to getting involved with national and international issues, and social activities.

Meanwhile, former Branch Secretary Bernie Gallagher gave an incredibly inspiring 'Just Say No' speech, and Andrew Thomas, Deputy Convenor for Children's Services, received the second annual Graham Walmsley Activist Award, given to stewards who have gone above

and beyond for their members and union.

There were presentations and tributes to retiring popular long-term steward and activist, the late and loved Tony Cowell, who railed against 'clueless management', and UNISON North West Organiser, John Lewis, who told members that Bolton was his favourite branch and advised those paid officials who came after him not to forget where they came from. Sarah Trendall, Branch Office Manager, also received a presentation for her support to the branch in helping 'to pull things together'.

Finally, solidarity was sent from the meeting to members at Bolton College and Bolton at Home fighting devastating cuts...



Why Come to the AGM

Andrew Thomas, Deputy Convenor for Children's Services

It gives people a chance to find out what's going on in the union over the past 12 months and what we're looking to do in the next 12 months as well, and also find out about the issues that are important to the union and members overall in the national picture. It's not just about the local, it's about what's been agreed at national conference and brought into the local arena.



Anne Webster, retired member

I'm here because it's really important to attend the AGM – it's an opportunity for people to hear about branch activities during the year and to get more involved in the union. Everyone should be involved in the union. There's so much going on, we need to be supporting other unions as well, and people, particularly in work, need the strength of the union behind them.



Annette Hall, new steward

This is my first AGM and I think it's important to be here as a member, not only as a steward. It wasn't really brought to my attention previously and the one thing that I am learning is the collective approach and being together, approaching things as a group rather than as an individual. So I am quite eager to learn more about different areas and to be able to support them as well.



Stewart Newsham, first time attendee

I thought I'd just come along and see what goes on. I'm not a steward, just a member. It's my first AGM and I'm looking forward to it.

Karen Dalley, steward

I'm here because I feel that it's really important to be a member of UNISON which represents my interests, and I feel passionate that it's important to be an activist member as well. I'm here to support my members, my team.



Want Some Inspiration? Just Say 'No!'

At the AGM, retired former Bolton UNISON Branch Secretary, Bernie Gallagher, who was also an NEC member and Vice President of North West Region, gave an incredibly inspiring speech about workplace wiles. Here are some extracts...

“I’m not clever. I failed my 11+ and didn’t go to university but what I did have was a lot of tenacity, a lot of commitment, a lot of passion and a lot of dedication, and that sees you through. I’m still involved in campaigns and what we all want is a better world...and it’s deeds, not words, that make the difference.

There’s often one thing that deters people to fight for what they believe in, and that’s fear...Fear has been used in every single dispute I have been involved in. Fear has been used in every social justice campaign I’ve been involved in, going right back to the anti-apartheid movement and to the current problems in the Middle East.

Everyone in this room will have experienced some level of fear, whether it’s struggling to pay the rent or mortgage or if it’s going for that smear test or mammogram, or just trying to get your kids into a decent school. But today I would like you to think about how fear has been used in the workplace and what you can

do to overcome it. Because it will have been used. And at the end I want to focus on some campaigns over the years that have inspired us.

You might not immediately recognise it as fear, it’s a level of intimidation where you either feel uncomfortable or unable to function at the level you would, or it’s impacting on your family life.

We all go to work for a wage and we all want to do a good job and be happy in our work. We want a wage that fairly rewards us for the work we do. The employers do not altruistically give us a pay rise because they like us; every year a pay claim is made and every year the employers resist it. Sometimes pay negotiations result in a dispute, and as a union member you may be asked to take industrial action to support that claim. This is where fear often plays a part. For some people, loss of earnings can mean genuine hardship and that fear of hardship means they won’t vote for industrial action or take industrial action.

So how do we overcome fear in that situation?

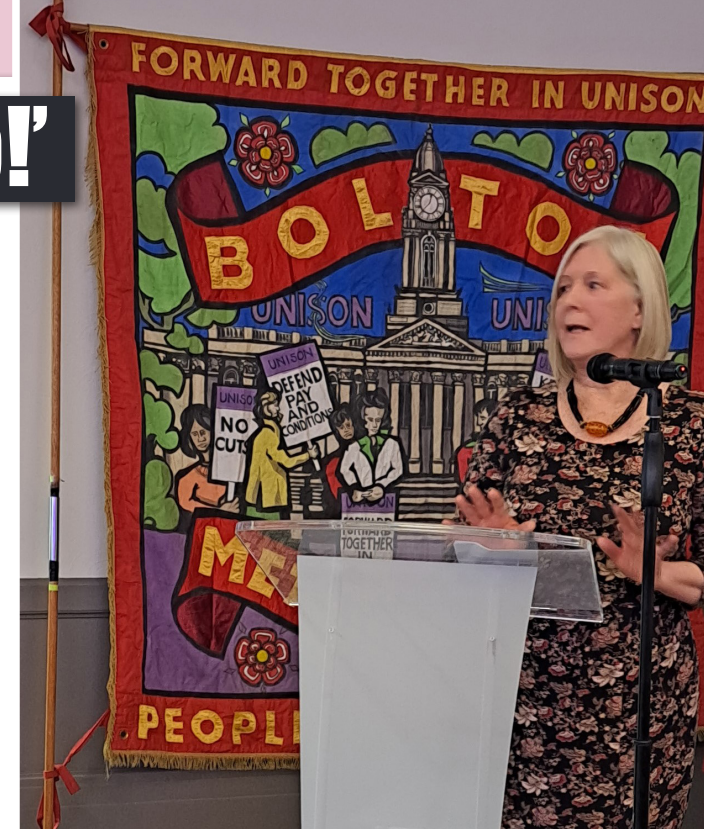
Solidarity. Solidarity is a word almost synonymous with the trade union movement. It’s that collectivism which is so important in overcoming the worst fears. We all pay our subs for a common cause. The worker who genuinely can’t afford to go on strike can be supported by the union’s welfare fund. The sense of solidarity in a dispute cannot in my view be matched in terms of the camaraderie it engenders. I don’t think I’ve ever seen an industrial dispute where members didn’t come out of it stronger and more confident.

The second reason we come to work is to do a good job. Over the fourteen years of austerity which has seen council budgets slashed by 50% this is becoming increasingly hard. The euphemistically named ‘service reviews’, or ‘reforms to public services’, or ‘transformation’ are just another name for cuts. Do not be conned that they are anything other than cuts. That’s not to say there’s a panacea for dealing with those cuts which give you complete job satisfaction, but there are some overarching principles

which, if everyone follows, will help with anxiety and make coming into work bearable. We’re back again to solidarity.

First and foremost, everybody needs to be in a union, and if you’re a rep or just an ordinary member make sure new workers join a union; make the case to those who are not in the union that we are stronger together.

Management proposals for cuts to services will be determined by how much resistance they think they will get. It’s a simple as that. A divided workforce driven by individual goals will see harder cuts than a highly unionised group of workers. Margaret Thatcher said during the miner’s strike that ‘we must attack them when





they are at their weakest. Going into those reviews, united with a common purpose, do not be afraid to speak and do not be afraid to say 'No'. Do your homework, read between the lines, put forward arguments, anticipate arguments and be prepared for language to be used, the sole purpose of which is to create fear and grief in you. Be prepared to fight for your jobs and your service. Public opinion is on your side.

If you're sick of the Government and sick of having to pay more tax for your services, engage with the public and join forces with local campaigns where they are set up. We cannot rely on politicians to fight our cause. A Labour Government, no better than a Tory Government, is committed to the same fiscal rules, they are not our saviours. The union must defend its own,

working with anyone who supports us.

Service reviews and pay claims are generally annual events and don't all lead to disputes. It's the daily grind of work that can cause the greatest anxiety. Trying to reach unattainable targets, doing the work of two or three people, not having the tools to do the job or balancing work and home life. One of the simplest tactics to deal with workplace stress is just saying 'No... No, I can't stay ten minutes longer... No, I can't take another pay cut... No, I'm not working in the heat'.

When you've said 'No' once, you'll realise how empowering it is. Of course it's much better to say 'No' as part of a unionised group of workers, sticking together and all agreeing you're not taking on any more cases, so management has to think of alternative solutions. Don't give them the easy way out at the expense of your own health.

I'm not saying these things because I've read them in a text book. They are based on real life experience. I worked for 49 years, in a range of workplaces with all kinds of people. I doubt there's a workplace scenario I haven't experienced, witnessed or heard of where fear hasn't been used as a tactic. I've been disciplined by my union for standing up for my members, and I'm proud of it. I've been disciplined by my employer for standing up for my members, I'm proud of it. I've experienced actions and language which has been designed to bully and intimidate. Throughout those years and those experiences, I've always learnt something, something I would do different, but I've always come out stronger. But at the time you often don't think that's the case.

As a retired member I'm no longer in a workplace but continue to campaign for issues and causes I believe in. I'm saddened by the standard of politicians and political leadership – language used to be deliberately divisive and designed to intimidate. We should never be afraid to call out any form of racism, homophobia, sexism, bullying or any attack on our fellow human beings where the purpose is to belittle or undermine and instil fear.

There are thousands of people day in and day out fighting for justice. I would just like to end by paying tribute to a few campaigns that have relentlessly and without compromise fought for justice and exposed the truth... Maggie Oliver, the police woman who exposed the Rochdale child sexual exploitation scandal; Eileen Turnbull, who spent years campaigning to clear the name of the Shrewsbury 24 pickets; those who campaigned for justice for the Windrush victims, the Fujitsu whistleblower who helped bring justice to the sub-post masters; those victims and their brave families

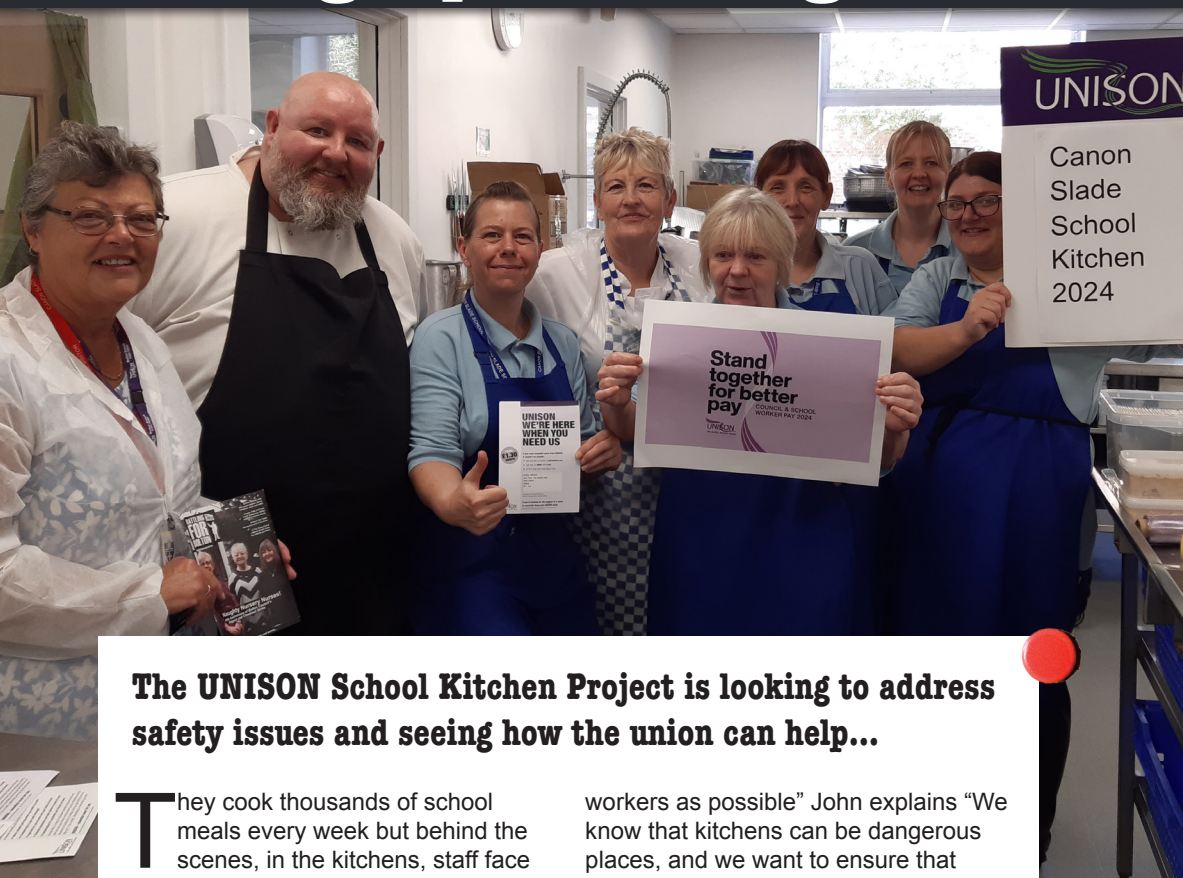
#Justice4Windrush



seeking justice for the infected blood scandal; those who gave evidence to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the Justice 4 Grenfell campaign, and the campaigners for the 97 men, women and children who lost their lives at Hillsborough on 15th April 1989.

What they all have in common is that they are all victims of cover ups, of the state closing ranks, of fear. Thank you all those people for your courage and tenacity pursuing what you knew to be the truth. Friends, colleagues and comrades, take inspiration from these amazing people and remember, do not be afraid..."

Serving Up A Smorgasbord of Safety



The UNISON School Kitchen Project is looking to address safety issues and seeing how the union can help...

They cook thousands of school meals every week but behind the scenes, in the kitchens, staff face a delicatessen of hazards, from fryers to boiling hot steam cleaners, to the sharpest knives and cramped conditions.

Recently, Bolton UNISON Convenor, John Pye, and Elaine Williams-Jones, a retired UNISON member with a lifetime's experience of catering, have been touring school kitchens; meeting staff, checking on their concerns and talking about how the union can sort working practices so they don't get embroiled in a dog's dinner of danger. "The idea was get out and meet as many kitchen

workers as possible" John explains "We know that kitchens can be dangerous places, and we want to ensure that employers are keeping staff safe at work."

Elaine was asked to help out because she knew exactly how kitchens work, having previously been Senior Catering Manager for Greater Manchester Police, and Kitchen Manager at Smithills School overseeing 17 staff and the creation of 1,100 meals a day.

"While John knew about health and safety around the Council, he wasn't au fait with kitchens and what goes on in

them, so we were a good combination" she says "We looked at things like signage and had a couple of kitchens where they were not listening to the staff.

"An important part of it was also giving people information about the union" adds Elaine who was a UNISON shop steward at Smithills "We told them that it's worth being in the union, apart from getting pay increases, because it is there to help you with everything from cheap panto tickets to debt management. We've had good feedback because we've been to see them and given them information...and lots of UNISON freebies! Now we need more stewards in the kitchens."

We spoke to some of those who met John and Elaine about UNISON's Kitchen Project. These women between them and their colleagues prepare over one thousand meals a day for schools...

Is it good that UNISON is having a health and safety drive in school kitchens?

"Yes, it was really good. They checked the kitchen, made sure it was safe for us and we discussed our wages. We're being taken over and going private in September." **Shirley Davison, has worked at All Saints CE Primary School for 25 years.**

"Yes, it was really good and informative. John addressed my colleagues, showed us things around the kitchen and we told him how we feel when working in a confined space." **Patricia Dawson, has worked at Highfield Primary School for 12 years.**

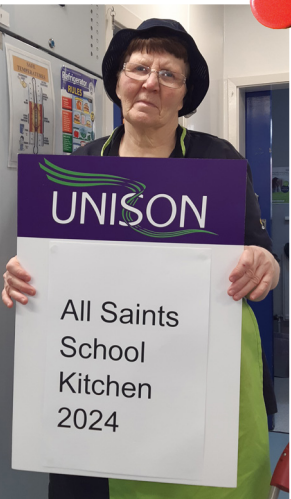
"It was definitely a good thing. They came into the kitchen, went round and made sure everything was alright, and everything was. The potential hazards we face include fire, slips, falls and chemicals, things like that. I think we've got it all correct really." **Sherien Murdoch, has worked at Clarendon Primary School for 15 years**

"They just checked everywhere in the kitchen and asked if we needed help with anything. There's knives about and hot stuff in the kitchen when we're cooking... We have an old fashioned kitchen and we haven't got a dish washer so we have to do everything by hand and use a hot water steamer. It's not really a hazard but it's there." **Susan Perry, has worked at Beaumont Primary School for nine months having worked in care for 24 years.**

"I thought it was a good idea. They were just checking to make sure everything was in place and it was all good. But the biggest health and safety danger is being short staffed. That can cause dangers in the kitchen because you're running around and you shouldn't be, so we're just an accident waiting to happen really. It's not just our kitchen, it's all kitchens." **Janet Williams, has worked at Gaskell Community Primary School for 14 years**

How important is it at the moment to be in a union?

"I used to be in another union but I came out of it because they don't help you. What I like about UNISON is that they always tell you what's going on. I'll never come out of the union because



you never know when you are going to need it. I think everyone should be in the union." **Shirley Davison**

"John told my colleagues about UNISON and how it was here, not just for complaints, but for a variety of things. He helped three of my colleagues who wanted to join the union but didn't know how. He was really helpful." **Patricia Dawson**

"It's definitely important to be in the union. I've used it and it's been helpful." **Sherien Murdoch**

"When I was in the care sector I was in GMB but now I am considering joining UNISON. It's definitely important to be in the union, it gives you the support if you need it. If anything happens you're on your own; they're going to beat you without a union!" **Susan Perry**

"It's very important and we might need the union soon because we're underpaid and under staffed..." **Janet Williams**

Saving Bolton's Iconic Elephants

Bolton food bank, B-nice, steps in to restore famous sculptures...

Food bank, Bolton Nice, or B-nice, has stepped in to restore the elephants that graced the town centre for 25 years before being removed in 2006 and left in a state of disrepair. Now Martin McLoughlin of B-nice, a retired Bolton UNISON member, is looking for volunteers and materials to help bring the elephants back to life.

"They came severely damaged, so we're putting a team together to reconstruct them and put them in a public place" he explains "We are looking for volunteers, and anyone who wants to donate materials or a few pounds to buy some materials to help put them together again."

"It's an exciting little project" he adds "Lots of people who would be adults now were young children when they were sitting on these elephants, and I would like to see young people sat on them again!"

Anyone who wants to get involved contact Martin McLoughlin from B-nice on 07900535403, email at boltonnice1@gmail.com or check the Bolton Nice facebook page.



They Put A Pen Through Our Lives

Andy Birchill's True Life Story of the Miners' Strike...

I started at Parkside Colliery in 1977, age 16, as a mining trainee. At the time it was the only thing I wanted to do. All my family were coal miners. Parkside was the last mine to be sunk in 1957. It was modern. People said to me, *'They're not going to shut this, look at it, there's 1500 of us working here, they'll never shut this...'*

But in London we were just names on paper, and they put a pen through our lives like we didn't exist. I was only 22.

My dad didn't want me to go down the pit. He made me go everywhere to try and get a job but you have that nostalgic feeling as a youngster and so eventually he gave way and got me a job at the pit on condition that I also 'went to school'. At the time the Coal Board had a little entry exam so they could assess your Maths and English, and then they would let you go on day release to St Helens College.

At the pit, we had three months training in Haydock, three months on the surface, then three months underground training, followed by close personal supervision, a mentor who kept you safe. And then I was a coal miner.

One of my first jobs was cleaning spillage under a conveyor belt. It would twist and all the coal would fall off so you'd spend two or three days just under a belt tossing the coal to one side and loading it up again. I can now understand why my dad wanted me to go to college, because you have a moment when you think *'This is it for the rest of your life'* and you'd better sort it out.

I was an underground coal miner while doing studies to become a mining engineer. I loved coal mining studies. My mum thought there was something wrong with me because I was reading books and doing college work. I loved the industry. And I was a strong left wing socialist and activist.

There seemed at the time to be no contradiction. The union encouraged youngsters to go to college and do well for themselves. So even though eventually I would have become an official, a deputy, there was no contradiction. Your peers would pat you on the back and say *'You're doing well lad'*. It was that sort of culture.

I was consumed by the industry. I still like using a spade to this day, it's part of who I am. I love gardening and I love my spade.



40 Years Since The Miners' Strike A Short History of the Miners' Strike

In March 1984 the official miners' strike, led by Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Mineworkers, began to try and stop national closures of coal mines. It became the largest and most bitter strike in British history since the General Strike of 1926, and was, basically, centred around a political attack on the strength of trade unions by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government.

The strike was characterised by the police using excessive violence against pickets, as the Government used every dirty trick in the book to try to defeat the miners - coal stocks built up, bribes to those who carried on working during the dispute, black propaganda in the media, spies everywhere and phone tapping of union organisers. Plus that police brutality.

Over 26 million person-days of work were lost during the strike which lasted until 3rd March 1985 as the miners were almost starved and beaten back to work. Just before the strike there were 175 working pits in Britain, all of which had closed by 2015. The hated Thatcher Government won by a whisker, with major negative repercussions for the trade union movement that are still being felt...

A Short History of Andy Birchall

From 1977 to 1985 Andy worked in the mines and was a National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) activist. After the strike he was on the dole for two years before working in open cast mining with the NUM. Since then he has studied at the University of Manchester and worked at Preston College, and Lancaster and Morecambe College as a Trade Union Education tutor and Humanities and Business School lecturer.

Over the years, apart from the NUM, Andy has been a trade union activist with TGWU (now Unite), NATFE and the UCU. Now 63, and taking things easier, he is still an active Unite member and was Wigan branch secretary until 2023.



I know it's weird but that's the sort of culture you were in. It was a culture all of its own, very male dominated, and I would say very sexist; all football, drink and women. And then we would talk about politics. But our politics...What were the conditions like? What was the union doing?

'It can only be expressed as man love...'

You couldn't take anything down the pit, not even a battery watch, so it was all newspapers and verbal. Your life literally depended on the people who you worked with and so you found a way through your difficulties. The bonding that you had with people can only be expressed as man love; that brotherly connection that you form down there with one another.

My dad was on the strikes in 1972 and 1974 which brought the Heath Tory

Government down, so all that happened in our house while I was growing up. It's only afterwards you think to yourself that the power brokers were going to move heaven and earth until they got control of the situation. Things were put in place. The stockpiling of coal, lorry drivers already on pay while they weren't employed yet, buying people at the power stations off – they said they could name their price during the strike. All this while we were just working at the pit, getting our heads down looking after what we thought were our interests supporting the union. We trusted our union people.

The process actually started in September 1983 when Ian McGregor was appointed. He already had the track record at British Steel and British Leyland so we knew that something was coming. And then in early March the Coal Board chose to cause the strike by going to Cortonwood in the middle of South Yorkshire, which was the most militant coalfield, and saying *'We're shutting one of your pits'*. They knew, because of the rules of the NUM, that that would be the start of the struggle they had designed and wanted. There was nothing by accident. I get really frustrated when you hear that miners decided at the drop of a hat to walk out on strike. And that it wasn't politically and economically orchestrated by a right wing Conservative Thatcher Government.

'We took on the State...'

We took on the state. People said *'You should have had a ballot'*...What for? What do I as a working class person



need a ballot for? If someone turns up to our workplace from another pit, looks you in the eye, says *'They're taking our livelihood away, they're destroying our community, we need your help'*, what do I need a ballot for? I just need to say to someone who is from the same class as me *'Yeah if it was me and I was asking you I'd expect you not to go to work today'* and we didn't. People like me didn't.

So we went on strike at Parkside and I remember like it was yesterday, the morning that the Yorkshire pickets came. I was on the coach which used to pick up miners who lived miles away from the pit, and at the entrance to the colliery the driver stopped. The pickets were there and a couple of lads got on the coach asking for support. Then we all got off the coach and stood there as part of the picket. The coach went in empty, the driver had a cup of tea, came out again, and we all got back on and went home.

The strike goes on and my dad wouldn't cross the picket line but he was a deputy who oversaw safety and had to go in. He worked like mad in the deputies' union NACODS to get them out on strike, and when they did hold a ballot, voted 81% to come out on strike to support the NUM. That's when Thatcher wobbled and moved heaven and earth to make sure that they didn't come out on strike, because if they had, the power would have shifted in our favour.

Over the spring and summer it was nice to see a bit of sunshine as you were down the pit all the time. Women Against Pit Closures was formed and there were food kitchens. My friend ran the Miners' Wives Support Group. But in November time people were going back to work. If you went back then you were never really classed as a scab, in other parts they were. But they were people who had been on strike for eight months, winter was coming and they had had enough.

My day of despair

'Now, workers won't even have a lunchtime dispute...'

I bumped into some people in Wigan who said they were going back and because the papers and tv were saying that the strike was cracking and people were drifting back to work, I decided to go back on the Monday.

We went in, had a meeting with managers and there was a guy who walked us around the union cabin three times to show the union officials how many people were going back to work. I got the shift out, went home and I burst into tears. I couldn't go back in. I wrote to the Wigan Observer, and they put it on the front page – **'the miner who went back to work for one day'**. Loads of people contacted me to say they were thinking of going back but having read that were not.

I crossed that picket line and will take that guilt to the grave with me. Now, workers won't even have a lunchtime dispute will they? We're talking a different world, a different set of moral codes and values. I upped a gear with my activism and I think to myself, *'I need to tell people because this is my heart and soul, this was my life and look what they did to me'*. Even though it was one day I went against my class – that's how powerful they are.

After over twelve months on strike, I marched back behind the banner on 3rd March 1985. I'd do it all again. Knowing what I know now, I'd do it differently. I would encourage working class people of our society

From Page One

walk round the colliery surface with the device on for seven or eight minutes.

On the walk they took us past the Union cabin twice. Whether this was deliberate or not I do not know but the looks on the faces of those in the cabin was not very nice to see and on the second time round I dropped my head in shame.

I could not look these people in the eye. After finishing the test we then went up to the conference room where the Safety Officer gave 22 of us a little chat on safety. The personnel

Andrew, who lives with his mum and dad, is a former pupil of St Peter's School, Orrell. He has not received one penny since the miners strike started. He is being kept by his parents, with some help from his girlfriend.

He has been a miner for 7½ years and has three certificates from management courses. His dad is working as a Deputy at Parkside Colliery and is a member of NACODS.

before the strike. He was not in his underground clothes but I thought he was reporting for work.

I tried to speak to him and asked him if he was working and he replied: 'No, Andy, they can't buy me with 30 pieces of silver.'

I can tell you now, this was another bad moment, will never

was there any chance of going to work in a particular district where I liked the men.

He replied to me that I'd be going to another part of the pit and that 'beggars could not be choosers.' This made me realise what it would really be like without any trade union representation.

The man destroyed an honest industry in the mine

ANDREW Birchall's letter to the Wigan Observer back in 1984 during the Miners' strike made front page news as he detailed his torment at the time. Last week, on learning of the death of the Coal Board chief at the time of that strike, he felt compelled to put pen to paper again as a tribute to the town's miners of the time.

I WOULD like, through your letters column, to give an opinion on the death of Ian MacGregor, the once chair-man of the coal industry.

When I heard it on the news I immediately said 'Good riddance to bad rubbish.'

This man was a puppet of the Thatcher government that not only destroyed an industry in Lancashire but also destroyed many communities, families and individuals.

He took away from a future generation the chance to be gainfully employed in an environment that had evolved over centuries and lay at the very heart of formulating an alternative way forward to the selfish, greedy, capitalist doctrine that is now reality for British citizens.

I can remember the strike as if it were yesterday. I was the popular

press portrayed Arthur Scargill as if he was a ranting nutter who had nothing on his mind other than Marxist revolution.

How when Arthur said they would close pits and the industry would lose 60,000 jobs, that Arthur had lost touch with reality and the miners were fools for even listening to him.

I was on strike in 1984/85, our argument then, as reasonable people, was that we wanted a job to support our families and that when we had finished we wanted to leave something behind for future generations.

All the forces in the country were brought in to destroy this aim, the police, the army, the secret service and any other associate of the right wing in the country.



ANDREW Birchall with an old copy of the Wigan Observer reporting the miners' strike in 1984.

and Ian MacGregor were these people's front man.

When I look back at my time in the coal industry it was the time of my life but it was an environment where people had their differences yet had a hell of a lot in common. It was a hard job but a happy job.

The culture of the industry was that it taught me to always consider the other, there is much more to life than selfishness and greed and that people working together for common aims can almost achieve anything.

I worked with people that were my heroes – tough, hard men who had hearts as big as lions who would go out of their way to do you a good turn.

My wife and I were born and bred in Wigan but have spent almost 30 years in Africa. Recently my sister, Doris Magraw, visited us in Cape Town and this led us to reminisce.

One of our discussion points was the Sunday afternoon walks around Mesnes Park we used to enjoy when "Keep off the grass" signs were respected and the "duck pond" was a place of beauty.

Of course the subject of brass band concerts arose and a frantic search of our archives revealed this photograph of the Lower Face Temperance Prize band. Family names such as Farrimond, Murphs, Hughes, Worthington, Jones, Rigby, Flanagan, Singleton, McElhannon and our own, Blakeley, came to mind. I thought the photo would stimulate some healthy recollections.

Remember the days of a brass band in the park?



Ron Blakeley
Cape Province
South Africa

Wigan Observer

14,317 Friday, November 30, 1984

MY DAY OF DESPAIR

Heartache of a miner who went back to work for just one shift



ANDREW BIRCHALL

Twenty-three year old coal miner Andrew Birchall sat down at his Standish home this week and wrote one of the most revealing insights into the miners' strike.

Andrew, son of a working miner, of Almond Brook Road, was writing to the Wigan Observer and he called his letter 'My Day Of Despair'.

In a postscript, he wrote: "I do not expect you to publish this but I just needed to tell someone and thought I'd give it a try."

This is Andrew Birchall's letter in full.

On Sunday night, 25th of November, I decided because of what the papers and TV had published that the miners strike was cracking and everyone was drifting back to work that I would start back to work the next day.

On Monday morning I got up at 5.30, the first time in eight months, and got the coach to work.

This was the beginning of the most downgrading and unforgettable day of my life.

Sickly

I work at Parkside Colliery, Newton-le-Willows, on reaching the pit entrance all the lights are turned off on the coach, this is so none of your work pals on the picket line can see who is travelling to work.

As we crossed the picket line, the first time I have

to know and understand their own interests and not listen to the rubbish that's pedalled day in and day out in the mainstream media.

'I weep at what I see in my own communities two generations on'

I would encourage every working class person not to only strike for their industry but to have a general strike in the interest of their class. And to show these politicians and these corporations that are destroying our lives, and have not stopped destroying our lives for the past forty years, where the real power lies.

I weep at what I see in my own communities two generations on...we've got foodbanks, they're cutting our benefits and they're still coming after us. Let's campaign with our class to sort this out.

Had the miners won it would be a different world and I'd be a different person. I've never been opposed to closing coal mines. Whoever invented them should have been made to work down them. As you got older and witnessed people dying of lung disease and being crippled and maimed you think to yourself *'No-one should be asked to do that'*. But what we wanted for our class was a just transition where we could exchange our labour in the society and world that we belong to, and that labour would be used productively for the welfare and benefit of all. That's what I still live for...

By Jack Winstanley

sickly feeling inside which for me is very hard to describe. It surprised me how bad I really felt but I made my mind up and decided to carry it through.

After having a drink in the canteen I got changed, reported to the lunny room where they take all the new starters' names and numbers down, got my lamp and reported to the official I charge of my district.

He took my name and gave me some literature on safety when starting back to work after a long lay off.

He then told me to go to the Rescue Room so that I could be tested on a life saving apparatus which is called the self-rescuing device. What you have to do is

UNISON



Bolton Pride

The Branch participates in the Bolton Pride over the May bank holiday weekend...

Bolton branch participated in the Bolton Pride event, having a stall and being part of the colourful rally. The alliances which the campaign forged between the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and British labour groups proved to be an important turning point in the progression of LGBT matters in the United Kingdom.

This year's Pride events coincided with the 40th anniversary of the 1984/85 miners' strike. Miners' groups began to support, endorse and participate in various gay pride events throughout the UK, including leading London's Lesbian and Gay Pride parade in 1985. At the 1985 Labour Party conference in Bournemouth, a resolution committing the party to the support of LGBT rights passed, due to block voting support from the National Union of Mineworkers. The miners' groups were also among the most outspoken allies of the LGBT community in the 1988 campaign against Section 28.

So it was excellent that Bolton Trades Council hosted a free screening of the film *Pride* in Bolton's Library Lecture Theatre. It is a powerful and moving film, based on the true story of solidarity between the Lesbians and Gays Miners' Support Group, or LGSM, with striking miners and their families. Mike Jackson, a founder member of LGSM was able to join us for the film showing, to give an introduction and hold a question and

answer session afterwards. The film tells the story of how the gay and lesbian movement recognised the threats from the Government to them, and, as a community shows the true power of solidarity and its ability to break down barriers and transform lives.

As UNISON members, we know our biggest strength is in solidarity. Our union is fully committed to fighting discrimination and prejudice in the workplace and in society. It is important to recognise inequality and bigotry across society but also celebrate decades of struggle to secure a fairer and more tolerant world for everyone. UNISON stands shoulder to shoulder, with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members, so we were delighted to support this year's Bolton Pride.

If anyone is in any doubt about Pride events remaining a protest, they only have to look at how the Tories started pandering to fringe transphobic groups with their promise to look at the Equality Act if they had won the election. They want to take away hard fought for rights from the LGBT+ community. Make no mistake they won't stop there; they will come for you next.

Stand with us and make sure Pride remains a protest!!

Andrea Egan

Selected photos by
Henry Lisowski



90th Anniversary of National Hunger March

The 1934 Hunger March, which came through Bolton, was a pivotal moment in British working class history...

'We refuse to starve in silence!'

In the tumultuous years between the two world wars, the UK was gripped by economic instability, widespread unemployment and social unrest, which gave rise to increased activism amongst the working class. And between 1922 and 1936 there were six national hunger marches to London from all over the country, mainly organised by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), intended to draw attention to the plight of the unemployed and to put pressure on the government to take action.

The 1932 march saw a northern contingent march to London from Glasgow, via Bolton and Farnworth, followed by the pivotal 1934 national march, with the northern contingent again starting in Glasgow, and taking in Carlisle, Lancaster, Preston and Blackburn, before arriving in Bolton on 5th February en route to a huge rally in Hyde Park ten days later.

The march as a whole consisted of almost one and a half thousand people elected by their local NUWM branches, and they were protesting against the

Unemployment Bill, described in the National March manifesto as *"the most far-reaching attack that has yet seen been made on the workers of this country - an attack not only aimed at new heavy economies but especially directed towards the destruction of working-class organisations and the enslavement of the working class"*.*

The Bill made it harder for people to claim unemployment benefits, tightening up the means test, slashing benefits and removing 'hundreds of thousands of claimants from Unemployment Insurance Funds'.

One of the slogans was *'We refuse to starve in silence!'*, while demands for maternity benefit were raised by the women's contingent.

The National Government of the time, led by Ramsay MacDonald, refused to let the marchers speak at the House of Commons but suggested they



lobby their MPs, which they did on 28th February, before returning the next day. Three hundred of them infiltrated the outer lobby, while twenty four got into the public gallery and began chanting 'Meet the hunger marchers' and 'Down with the National Government'. Police struggled to keep control as the House of Commons was occupied throughout the day and evening by protesters singing the *Internationale*.

Outside, large demonstrations were also taking place and massive pressure was put on the Government, which soon relented, reversing the ten per cent cut to benefits in its spring budget and announcing more aid for distressed areas. It also suspended the brutal assessment of benefit claimants by the Unemployed Assistance Board.

However, while

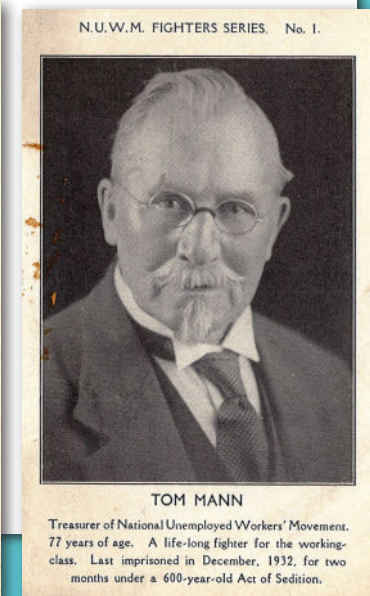
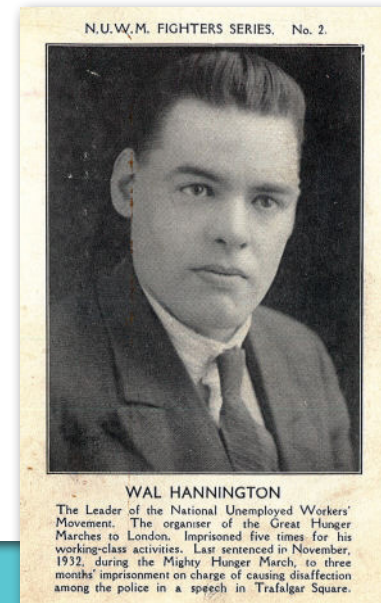
more marches followed, including the famous Jarrow March of 1936, the 1934 hunger march stands out in working class history, not only for winning gains for the unemployed but also for uniting them and stopping the fascists from recruiting, as happened in Germany and Italy.

Reflecting on the 1934 event, a former Member of Parliament, Bob Edwards, wrote: "The hunger marchers paraded their dignity, gave the country a reminder which fashioned new ways and helped to ensure the end of Toryism and awakened Britain to socialist Ideas..."

***Read the full manifesto here... <https://www.wcml.org.uk/our-collections/protest-politics-and-campaigning-for-change/unemployment/manifesto-of-the-national-hunger-march-of-1934/>**



Images courtesy of the Working Class Movement Library (www.wcml.org.uk)



Covering All Bases

Steward and Children's Services worker, Lee Hawksworth, is also a rounders player and referee in the country's biggest league...

Who knew that Bolton has the biggest rounders league in England, with over one hundred teams made up of well over one thousand women battling it out in eleven sections? And at the epicentre of this batting and bowling maelstrom is stalwart Lee Hawksworth, who has been playing for forty years and refereeing for a decade in the top sections.

"Rounders is amazing, you all get to meet up, make new friends, the social calendar is brilliant and it keeps you fit and active" says Lee who plays for Moss Bank Ladies in Section B at the moment "My colleagues are aware that I play, and some of them play too. We also have a lot of male support and male referees but you have to be a female to play."

This version of rounders is slightly different from the game played at school, with eleven players a side, divergent rules and rougher play. The original base-ball can get vicious...

"You can only be hit out at first base, the rest of the time if you're running you get the ball thrown at you" Lee explains "You're a target, you're out if it hits you....and you're sore!"

Each team also has to nominate two referees



Canterburys Nursery

40 m · 🌐

Canterburys Nursery are proud sponsors of Moss Bank Ladies rounders team 💚💚



to oversee some controversial play, what the hundred-year-old league calls 'unruly behaviour', and Lee confirms that her role officiating hundreds of games over the years has put her in good stead to be a UNISON steward...

"You have to be quite confident because you're in a field with twenty two women, so I suppose it helps" she decides "At work, I always spoke up for myself and also for other people, and I'm quite passionate about it. Since becoming a steward in November I've been on plenty of courses and learnt a lot of new things. I've been to an appeal for some of our members who wanted flexible working and, in effect, we didn't lose. It has changed the hybrid policy which is what we wanted.

"I've also been involved in a grievance and a pay and grade dispute within the transport department" she adds "Because I worked there for 24 years and know about the issues I was asked to go in. This is all new to me and I'm not quite sure what I'm doing yet but I've got good support from Lauren my convenor and branch secretary Andrea."

Members should have no worries about Lee being a success as a steward if her rounders career is anything to go by, having only played and refereed the sport at the very top. Her team, Moss Bank Ladies, are currently on course for the title in the second highest section of the Bolton Ladies Rounders League and union-wise, the bases are all covered...

For more information about the Bolton Ladies Rounders League see <https://boltonladiesroundersleague.co.uk/>

UNISON Heads North

Steve North of Salford Local Government Branch has been elected as the new UNISON President...

At this year's National Delegate Conference in Brighton, UNISON's National Executive Council, or NEC, has elected Steve North, from Salford Local Government branch, to be the union's President. Julia Mwaluke, also from the Salford branch, is the new Vice President, and Lyn Marie O'Hara, from the City of Glasgow branch, is also the new Vice President.

"It's an honour to have been elected UNISON President" wrote Steve a veteran socialist on social media "I intend to work with our Presidential Team, NEC, General Secretary, officers and members to continue building a powerful, organising, strike-ready union that proudly asserts its policies!

"Thank you to my Presidential Team comrades, Julia Mwaluke and Lyn Marie O'Hara, our two recent Presidents, Andrea Egan and Libby Nolan, the wider NEC who elected us and UNISON North West members who elected me to the NEC."



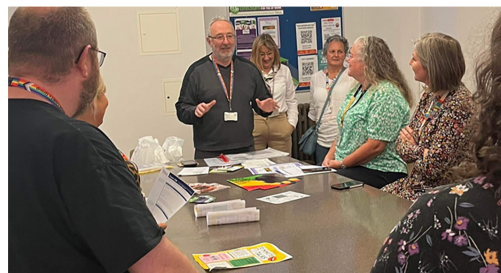
UNISON Ten Minute Talks...

Coming to a workplace near you...

After fourteen years of Conservative austerity with numerous cuts to jobs and services, it is not surprising that people often feel busier than ever at work. Lots of people are trying to balance a busy work life with a busy home life through working part time or condensed hours. On top of all that, people are increasingly hot desking and working remotely in lots of workplaces. Even when there are lots of union members working in a given place, people can feel like ships in the night, with few opportunities to meet up and discuss anything.

For a while now UNISON has been organising Ten Minute Talks in workplaces all over Bolton to give people an opportunity to catch up and discuss issues or concerns.

To organise a Ten Minute Talk where you work, contact the branch office.



International Workers' Memorial Day

While remembering the dead, people urged to 'fight for the living'...

The end of April this year saw International Workers Memorial Day, commemorated with a march, and a series of poignant speeches and tributes on the steps of Bolton Town Hall to remember those who have lost their lives at work.

Bolton UNISON's Tracey Rigby summed up why it is so important to '*mourn the dead but fight for the living*'...

"In the United Kingdom it is fifty years since the Health and Safety at Work Act became law. Since then great progress has been made but we must not become complacent. We must remember that every fifteen seconds a worker dies worldwide. Every year more people are killed at work than in wars. Most don't die of mystery ailments or in tragic accidents, they die because an employer decided that their safety just wasn't that important a priority.

"Recently there has been an awareness of other risks alongside the physical" she explained "In the last decade the number

of self-reported instances of stress, depression and anxiety has risen. Shift work can cause an adverse effect to a person's mental health, and night working can also cause adverse cardiovascular effects and gastrointestinal disorders."

Tracey added that there is a one in twenty five probability of British workers having ill health, while in some parts of the world it is much higher, with no-one held responsible. Global warming and fossil fuel pollution are adding to the risks...

"Every worker, no matter what they do or where they are, has the right to go to work and to return home again after they have finished" she said "No one should die just to make a living. Each and every worker is important and so is their life. We need to work together to improve working conditions and reduce accidents and injuries. We need to commit to fight for a world that is more, not less, safe to work in, and advocate for those who are unable to fight for themselves..."

Creating Bolton's Culture



Bolton at Home's Housing Arts officer, Gaynor Cox, stresses the importance of art in residents' lives...

Inspiration, aspiration and wellbeing. That is the thrust behind the work that Gaynor Cox does as a Housing Arts Officer with the community engagement team for Bolton at Home, supporting all kinds of cultural initiatives that improve people's lives in the town's neighbourhoods.

Using art as a focus for community work might be seen as a bit airy fairy, but it's about finding creative solutions to issues ranging from isolation to domestic violence and more.

One project that began around the concept of gaming for 18 to 24-year olds morphed into a film project, bringing young unemployed men found in pubs, football pitches and bookies together to create an award winning film which was shown at the

Bolton Film Festival.

"For our tenth anniversary we did outdoor projections" Gaynor recalls "We recruited some light artists who worked with over one hundred people on our estates and made films with them on their own doorsteps. The films were all mashed together and projected out of each of the town hall offices, including the Chief Exec's office, onto the whole of Le Mans Crescent façade. That was *Door To Door*, a real highlight."

With an art history degree behind her, Gaynor manages many of the projects, developing partnerships with organisations from Bolton Council's Museum and Libraries Department to the Bolton Octagon.

"We had a partnership with the Octagon for

ten years" she says "But the funding that supported this partnership work ended last year due to budget cuts at Bolton at Home. However, we are still working very closely with the Theatre."

Gaynor is currently involved in *Future Furnishings* with Bolton University, centred around upcycling and repurposing textiles, while her colleague is working with emerging artists to do a mural with the *Men In Sheds* project. Meanwhile, *Cotton Queens*, which aims for women to develop skills, confidence and wellbeing by engaging with cultural and historical aspects of Bolton, has literally changed lives.

"At the start of the project a woman joined who had fled domestic violence, and it turned out she was good at writing" Gaynor recalls "She did a creative writing degree at Bolton University, came out with a first, and got a job at a domestic violence refuge. She is now delivering workshops with the community. In the space of a few years she had got a degree and job. Things like that are brilliant."

"I like trying new things, working in partnership with people" she adds "And we're collaborating with Northstone Homes, via the Section 106 public art allocation, where artists are working in schools to look at the environment and local heritage, and that artwork will be incorporated into the eventual housing site."

Everything the service does is geared to engaging with Bolton at Home residents and the wider community, from confidence building workshops to free summer family events.

"We work across all mediums to develop projects with the community, so some groups might want to do more visual arts, particularly the over 50s groups" she says "I enjoy the day to day and I enjoy the variety. But things are getting more challenging..."

Over the years, despite engaging with thousands of Bolton residents, budget cuts across the organisation have meant housing arts officers have been cut from four to two, with Gaynor and her Community Engagement colleagues having to bring in more and more external funding to cover costs and initiate lots of partnership working.

"With front-facing tenant support staff at risk of losing their jobs, art isn't always seen as a priority and rightly so" she reflects "But it is important, and with funding being restricted we've had emails from customers saying '*I hope the Octagon membership scheme keeps going because it's the only thing I can afford at the moment that gets me out of the house*'. It is important to some people."

"Social isolation is only going to get worse over the next few years" she adds "The Octagon has said that a lot of its audience hasn't come back since COVID, so there are a lot of people still sat at home too scared to leave the house...and those are the people who we really want to try and engage. We want to reach those people and bring them together but it takes time to find them."

Tory Government cuts and policies have seen the department almost de-railed, with Gaynor revealing that, as a steward and senior steward with Bolton at Home, she seems to be doing more union consultation work than arts work. However, she remains optimistic for the future with a new cultural strategy in place for Bolton, its award of Town of Culture this year and new large pots of arts money to apply for.

"The future could be bright" Gaynor insists "Keir Starmer was talking about how important arts are, particularly in schools. And I'll be doing a lot with schools over the next twelve months or so. There's always something..."



SPORTS AND SOCIAL EVENT 2024

WIGAN DIGGERS



SATURDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER

The Wigan Diggers' Festival is a FREE Annual Open Air Festival celebrating the life and ideas of Wigan born and bred Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676) and the 17th Century Diggers (True Leveller) movement. Expect plenty of music, poetry, food stalls and a specialist bar set up.

Core Officers from Bolton branch attend in a group - if you're making your own way there you'll find the branch in the seated area near the stage

COACH PICK UP AT 10.30AM

MORRISONS CAR PARK, BLACKHORSE STREET, BOLTON

YOU MUST RING THE BRANCH TO BOOK YOUR SEAT

PLEASE NOTE: ATTENDEES WILL HAVE TO MAKE THEIR OWN WAY HOME

BRANCH WILL GIVE £10 TOWARDS TRAIN FARE / A SANDWICH TO EVERY

BOLTON LG MEMBER ATTENDING

TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT CONTACT THE UNISON OFFICE

admin@unisonbolton.org // 01204 338901



Wigan Diggers Festival

This year's free annual open air festival takes place on 7th September but what's it all about?

Each year a unique festival is held, celebrating the life and values of Gerrard Winstanley, a radical 17th Century pamphleteer and philosopher from Wigan. The festival usually attracts hundreds of people wishing to celebrate the life of the man who founded the Diggers movement and is well-known for his view that "the Earth was made a common treasury for all".

On 1st April 1649, Winstanley and his followers took over vacant or common lands on St George's Hill in Surrey. Other Digger colonies followed in Buckinghamshire, Kent and Northamptonshire. Their action was to cultivate land and distribute food without charge to anyone who would join them in their work. Local landowners took fright from the Diggers' activities and

in 1650 sent hired armed men to beat and destroy their colony. Winstanley protested to the government to no avail and eventually the colony was abandoned.

A song titled, *The World Turned Upside Down*, sung by Gerrard Winstanley, has survived through the centuries. It was recorded by Chumbawamba on their album, *English Rebel Songs 1381-1914*. Another version of the song with the same title and written by English folk singer, Leon Rosselson, using many of Winstanley's original words, was made famous by Billy Bragg.

"England is not a free people 'till the poor that have no land have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons...." Gerrard Winstanley 1646

UNISON

BOLTON BRANCH

SPORTS AND SOCIAL EVENT 2024

ALBERT HALLS PANTOMIME



SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER 1.30PM

Get ready for a **HAIR-RAISING** show about the lonely Princess trapped in a tower but longing for a life of adventure!

As usual, UNISON Bolton LG Branch has booked out all the seats for a matinee performance of the annual pantomime at the Albert Halls in Bolton and will be selling tickets to branch members at a hugely discounted rate.

TICKETS WILL GO ON SALE:

9AM SATURDAY 19TH OCTOBER

AT THE BOLTON CVS HUB (BOLD ST, TOWN CENTRE)

AND

9AM MONDAY 21ST OCTOBER CASTLE HILL CENTRE

£7.50 PER TICKET, MAX 5 PER MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Supporting Migrant Workers

UNISON launches migrant workers network

Many of our public services would collapse without workers who have come to the UK from overseas. This is particularly true in areas such as social care. All too often migrant workers face low pay and a lack of information about their rights at work, while experiencing isolation and, at times, outright hostility,

UNISON North West has been holding online sessions to support migrant workers to overcome barriers and learn about rights at work, while a UNISON migrant workers network has also been launched which aims to offer support.

To find out more see www.unison.org.uk/unison-migrant-worker-network/

UNISON Migrant Workers



Bolton UNISON Branch Gets A New Banner

A new vibrant, inclusive branch banner is about to be unveiled...

Bolton UNISON has commissioned artists Louise Garman and Andy Smith, who created the mural in the branch office, to design and produce a new banner to light up marches for the future...

"The brief was for the banner to stand out and attract younger people" explains Louise "So we went through quite a lot of thoughts and in the end included issues related to the planet, peace and diversity. There's a dove of peace, which Picasso also famously used, an LGBT+ flag, the mental health solidarity semicolon; and we've depicted lots of young people.

"It's a completely different style from the UNISON mural that we did" she adds "That was almost a watercolour painting, whereas the banner has been done in a more graphic style; very bold and very bright...and it's all hand drawn, hand painted and designed from scratch, so it's original..."

The banner is currently being completed, and will be unveiled shortly...





UNISON

Union Power Wordsearch!

There's power in a union...

We all know the old saying, but can you find these words that follow on from the word union?

O T T D L V C S
 E Y W T C F L P Z E G L
 P V V D J S X N R D N W R W I R
 Z Z X T A C T I O N G R I E V A N C E I
 D O L E A R N I N G K H K E G L C A R D G E
 V X B H C N A R B S L V M K F O U M E O Z U T J
 K F X V P G R M F N Z W D D X T X E B O J E U I
 N J R F Y E H N S L T J K E V I Z E A E A U P J
 P Z E K Y D C S M T F L J R J A S T X J R R S Q
 J R U L E B O O K V X H O H R T Z I D C S G I N
 U F F I K S O L I D A R I T Y I X N V I L S D C
 T V I H O M H J M P I C E T O V G Q A U A R
 M P L X I H G Q Q C T L E N R T T F W V J
 I S H S N O I T C E L E W S U A I E O T
 A U G V E R V F D Y T L S D S L E K
 L D O O C T X C Q A U N V F Q U
 C O T Z I A M P L W S A U M
 Y B U Q F Z W K N R G K
 A J Z E F C S E S M
 P P B C O W I K
 T M S O Y S
 H I L F
 S E

ACTION
 BRANCH
 CARD
 DISPUTE
 ELECTIONS
 FLYER
 GRIEVANCE
 JOB
 LEARNING
 MEETING
 NEGOTIATIONS
 OFFICE
 PAYCLAIM
 RULEBOOK
 SOLIDARITY
 TALKS
 VOTE
 WELFARE

BOLTON UNISON

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Bolton Community College:	Rebecca Davidson	admin@unisonbolton.org

ANNUAL TRIP TO BLACKPOOL LIGHTS



SUNDAY 27TH OCTOBER

COACH PICK UP AT 1PM

MORRISONS CAR PARK, BLACKHORSE STREET, BOLTON

Itinerary

Once we get to Blackpool, we will park near to Coral Island, people will leave the coach and have a couple of hours to do as they wish.

We will be re-boarding the coach at 6.30pm (if the clocks have gone back !!) to come through the lights from North Pier returning to Bolton

Morrisons about 9 pm

TICKETS

£4 ADULT & £3 CHILD (UNDER 16)

NO UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN!!!

BOOKINGS OPEN TUESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2024 FROM 9.30AM

**TO BOOK YOUR SEAT COME TO THE
UNISON OFFICE, CVS BUILDING, BOLD STREET
BOLTON, BL1 1LS TEL: 01204 338901**