

## Labour Heritage



# Labour Heritage

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## Visit to Kelmscott House

Members of Labour Heritage visited Kelmscott House, headquarters of the William Morris Society on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September. We gathered in the Coach House where we were given a talk by a member of the Society. It was the Coach House where members of the Hammersmith Socialist League attended meetings and listened to speeches from William Morris himself and other prominent socialists of the day such as Keir Hardie and George Bernard Shaw. The wall of the room was adorned by prints designed by Morris's younger daughter May Morris.

Our guide told us about the life of Morris, as a designer, artist and political activist, He and his family had lived for a number of years in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at Kelmscott House. They also had a home in the country called Kelmscott Manor.

Like Kelmscott House this was situated by the Thames with splendid views. The House itself was located in what was then a poor part of Hammersmith, known as 'Little Wapping.' Morris as a socialist admitted that he was glad not to have been born poor, having seen the circumstances of those amongst whom he lived.

We were showed a number of exhibits including an original of *News from Nowhere*, a membership card for the Hammersmith Socialist League and designs for an oriental carpet. Down in the basement we saw a photo of a group of members of the Hammersmith Socialist League, and had a demonstration of the Morris printing press in action. The printing press could print hundreds of copies including *News from Nowhere* of which 200 copies of the first edition, were turned out. (similar to the print runs of academic books today).



Hammersmith Socialist League

William Morris died in 1896 aged 62. His family left Kelmscott House, which continued to be rented by a succession of tenants. The Coach House and basement have been open to the public since 1982 and attract 6,000 visitors a year. The Greater London Council was not successful though in their bid to turn the whole of Kelmscott House into a museum.

## General Strike 1926

### Barbara Humphries

In 1926, nearly one hundred years ago the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called a general strike. It was well supported and lasted nine days, from 4<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of May. Dockers, transport workers, electricians, and printers were called out in support of the coal miners who were faced with cuts in their pay and longer hours.

Coal was one of the most important industries in the UK, employing at its peak over a million workers. The industry was mainly located in the north east of England, the Midlands, Lancashire, Scotland and South Wales. During World War One the coalition government had taken it under control with subsidies for wage levels and hours worked. Heavy industry was dependent on coal and it was also crucial to exports. At the end of the war however it faced difficult times, as it had to compete with coal from the US and the post war boom was followed by depression. The coal owners were resistant to any form of government led re-organisation and expected the miners to take cuts to get the industry back on its feet, an industry which was both dirty and dangerous.



Workers in solidarity action

### Triple Alliance

In a Triple Alliance, unions representing transport workers, railway workers and dockers were pledged to take solidarity action in support of the miners. The Tory governments in the 1920s set up two Royal Commissions. The first of these in 1921 included representatives of the Mining

Alliance of the mine owners and the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). A majority called for nationalisation of the mines and a guaranteed national wage. However as these were opposed both by the government and the owners they were not implemented and the miners were locked out. The triple alliance did not materialise on what was to become known as Black Friday. With the fall of the first Labour Government in 1924 the Tories were elected again, led by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin. He was of the view that all the country's workers would have to take pay cuts to get industry back on its feet. However the government pledged a temporary subsidy to the mines in 1925 and appointed another Royal Commission. This time though there was no mention of nationalisation, only mergers and re-organisation which the owners were against. The government became heavily involved in negotiations as well as preparing for a general strike which they hoped would be defeated.

### Preparations

The government divided the country into areas with assigned commissioners, and volunteers were recruited to ensure transport and supplies continued. In addition to the government's Transport and Supplies organisation, there was an Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS) which envisaged training middle class youth to drive buses and trams. The TUC took on negotiations on behalf of the miners. These went right to the wire as the subsidy ran out and without a settlement the miners would return to work on lower wages and longer hours or face being locked out again. Some members of the government were belligerent, keen that they could defeat the strike. The TUC though wanted a settlement. They were not happy about the prospects of a general strike, especially Labour MPs like Ramsay MacDonald and Jimmy Thomas. In the end following an

incident when printers on the *Daily Mail* refused to print an editorial hostile to the strikers, the negotiations broke down and the TUC called the general strike for May 4<sup>th</sup>.



Government uses armoured cars

### **Councils of Action**

The TUC was nowhere near as prepared as the government. Much initiative came from the local areas as Councils of Action were set up by Trades Councils in conjunction with trades union branch executives, Labour councils and Poor Law Guardians. Strike pay was paid by some of the unions, though not the MFGB, and miners' families could apply for poor relief. Cars and motorbikes were acquired to improve communications. Permits were released by the councils of action for the delivery of essential food supplies. Strike bulletins were published. The government had control of the BBC to put its case and it also had a newspaper printed by scab labour entitled *The British Gazette*. In response the TUC authorised the printing of *The British Worker* to put the miners' case. Councils of Action also organised picketing rotas and entertainments such as football and concerts,

Not all of the workers affiliated to the TUC were called out. Initially it was transport workers, dockers, electricians and print workers. Engineers were to be called out later although some had already walked out if told to work with blacklegs or cross picket lines. There were few reported incidents of violence during the strike although police and troops were used in support of the government in maintaining services. Naval ratings

delivered the electricity supply without many incidents. Volunteers from middle class backgrounds were recruited to drive trams, buses and trains with a limited amount of success. There were incidents of sabotage to railways and trams, some of them being turned over. Councils of Action exerted their power by issuing permits for essential goods, without which deliveries would be turned away. Mass picketing led to conflict between police and trades unionists. Most notoriously the government sent a convoy of 100 lorries into the London docks escorted by armoured vehicles. Winston Churchill, one of the government 'hawks' had wanted to send in tanks as well. However there were also reports of police playing football with strikers and there were attempts at fraternisation. After all, the police and army had faced cuts in pay and would so again in the future. Appeals to troops were treated as sedition and those who said 'don't shoot' could be imprisoned.. This was particularly the case with members of the Communist Party whose central committee members faced gaol for the duration of the strike.

As the strike progressed more powers were acquired by Councils of Action, and more workers were called out. This varied between areas and trades unions. But Councils of Action were setup in 154 towns and cities up and down the country in an example of workers power. There was no weakening of the strike after nine days but the General Council of the TUC called it off, having gained nothing for the miners or the workers who had supported them. There were no guarantees against victimisation. Many workers found themselves locked out or having to work on worse terms than before. There was shock and disbelief amongst the ranks as there were more on strike at the end than at its beginning on May 4<sup>th</sup>. There was only the promise of more negotiations on the Samuel Commission. The government introduced legislation to curb solidarity

strikes and to break the financial link between the trades unions and the Labour Party.

### **Strike called off**

After the strike was called off the miners stayed locked out for another nine months, and in spite of the best efforts of the labour movement in delivering solidarity relief, known as an 'Industrial Red Cross,' they were starved back to work.

The TUC General Council had not seen the political potential of the strike. Even the most militant members like A.J. Cook did not see the trades unions as an alternative government. Members of the Communist Party, their leadership in prison for sedition, saw the strike as defensive and called for a general election and a Labour Government committed to coal nationalisation. In the 1929 General Election the Labour Party was elected with the largest number of seats but it was a minority government and coal nationalisation was abandoned. The coal mines were not nationalised and anti-trades union legislation later introduced by the Tories was not repealed until after 1945.

So what of today? Firstly the TUC cannot call a general strike as it would be illegal. It would be possible however for unions to co-ordinate strike action. Secondly although there are less trades unions than in 1926, they all have their own rules and agendas. Thirdly a smaller percentage of the workforce are in trades unions. Fourthly there would be few volunteers from the middle classes to drive buses and trains as many are members of TUC affiliated trades unions, but agency staff would be allowed to take on these tasks if the current government has its way. Fifthly as in 1926 the political aims of a general strike would be for the government to resign and a general election called and a Labour government elected. There was no talk of the workers taking power.

## **The Central Labour College**

### **John Grigg**

In February 1926 the *Chiswick Times* reported that the recently formed Brentford Independent Labour Party, was addressed by Mr. G Jones of the Earls Court Labour College. This in fact was the Central Labour College that was based at that time in Earls Court. What Mr Jones said at the meeting was not reported by the *Chiswick Times*. The story of the Central Labour College is told on the internet.

The Central Labour College, also known as The Labour College, was a British higher education institution supported by trade unions. It functioned from 1909 to 1929. It was established on the basis of independent working class education.

The college was formed as a result of the Ruskin College strike of 1909. The Plebs' League, which had been formed around a core of Marxist students and former students of Ruskin, held a meeting at Oxford on 2 August 1909. A resolution was passed calling for the establishment of a Central Labour College to provide independent working class education, outside of the control of the University of Oxford. The provisional committee controlling the new college was to consist of representatives of Trade Unions, The Co-Operative Movement and Socialist Societies,

The college was supported financially by the National Union of Railwaymen and the South Wales Miners' Federation, and was headed by James Dennis Hird, who had been dismissed as principal of Ruskin for supporting striking students. In 1911 the college moved to Earl's Court, London.

In 1915 the college was officially recognised by the Trades Union Congress, and it became the centre of the National Council of Labour Colleges, a national network of colleges, in 1921. In 1926 it was proposed to merge the CLC and Ruskin College into a new Labour College



based at Easton Lodge near Great Dunmow, Essex. However, the move was opposed by a number of large unions, and on 7 September the proposal by the General Council of the TUC to proceed was defeated on a card vote.

By 1929 the mining industry was in severe decline due to the Great Depression. In April a conference of the South Wales Miners' Federation voted to discontinue funding the college unless additional levies could be raised from members. No such funding was forthcoming, and attempts to transfer the ownership of the college to the wider trade union movement were unsuccessful. By July it was clear that the college could not continue to operate, and it closed at the end of the month.



Ruskin College, Oxford

## **The Northern Ireland Protocol**

### **Ivan Gibbons**

When Northern Ireland was established just over a century ago it was to provide a political unit with enough territory, carved out of north-east Ireland, in order to guarantee a secure majority for the Protestant unionist minority in that part of the United Kingdom.

The partition of Ireland was originally envisaged as a short-term pragmatic solution to satisfy the competing and diametrically opposite philosophies of the two nationalisms in Ireland - one Irish and republican and the other British and unionist.

This anxiety and uncertainty over the long-term viability of Northern Ireland even from its inception has fuelled the paranoia of Ulster unionists down the years. Many have lived in fear of two possibilities engulfing them – the replacement of a Protestant majority by a Catholic one, allied to the suspicion that sooner or later they will be betrayed by an uncaring and duplicitous London government.

## **Brexit Referendum**

And now this has come to pass - the Brexit referendum (in which, incidentally, Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU) has, ironically, driven an economic and constitutional wedge between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Unionist Brexiteers had hoped that a no vote would widen the political gap between a Brexiteer north and an enthusiastically pro-EU Republic of Ireland. Instead, the law of unintended consequences has widened the gap between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK and increased demands that the two parts of Ireland should be re-united.

The political and economic fall-out from the Brexit referendum result allied to the

recent initial results of the 2021 census indicating that, for the first time since partition, there is now a larger number of Catholics than Protestants in Northern Ireland, has created a perfect storm and an outbreak of soul-searching amongst Northern Ireland's unionists. Republicans have now accelerated the offensive demanding a referendum on Irish unity although it is obvious that religious identification is not always (and never has been) a determinant of political affiliation. Indeed, the same initial census results indicate that, in terms of national identity, pro-unionist sentiment still commands the majority opinion in Northern Ireland. Put another way, it is a dangerous assumption to believe that the north's Catholic population are all nationalists and republicans. Furthermore, apart from sabre-rattling, no Irish nationalist party, least of all Sinn Fein, has put forward a plan as to what a proposed united Ireland would look like and how it could be achieved. There is also a growing sense that, twenty-five years after the Good Friday Agreement, sustained efforts still need to be concentrated on achieving a consensus in Northern Ireland before moving on to an all-Ireland approach.

However, there is no denying that these recent developments have been a real psychological blow to the Protestant unionist population of Northern Ireland. The tortuous process surrounding the controversial "backstop" manoeuvres of the Theresa May government, followed by the cavalier and reckless decision by her successor Boris Johnson who agreed the Northern Ireland Protocol with Ireland and the wider EU in 2019 in order to 'get Brexit done', have both alienated and infuriated many Ulster unionists. Ironically, the then First Minister Arlene Foster and her DUP originally welcomed the Protocol deal until protests from loyalist paramilitaries forced an embarrassing DUP U-turn on the Protocol. Johnson's blasé guarantee that the Protocol

would not result in more economic and constitutional barriers between the North and Britain have merely fuelled long-standing fears amongst unionists that sooner or later they will be sold down the river by an uncaring British government. Ironically, they had expected this betrayal to come from a Labour government not a Tory one that they had spent so much energy propping-up.

There are often divergent economic reasons why the Protocol is so controversial in Northern Ireland. From an economic perspective it is at least arguable that it is of benefit to the Northern economy. Northern Ireland is materially benefiting from remaining part of the Single Market able to trade without borders with both the EU and Great Britain. This is the reason many of the unionist business community voted to remain.

### **Single Market**

However, constitutionally there is a downside to all of this. In order to protect the Single Market, customs checks have been established at Northern Ireland's ports to differentiate between goods entering the Single Market through the Irish border, from those destined to remain in Northern Ireland. To an already anxious and uncertain loyalist community this has weakened the link between the North and the rest of the UK and had led to the largest unionist political party, the DUP, boycotting the newly elected Stormont Assembly which, in another blow to unionist dominance must now, following the recent Assembly election results, have a Catholic republican First Minister. Unionists fear that recent developments have led to the development of a two-tier UK. Ironically, the DUP, which never supported the Good Friday Agreement now argues that this now breaches it as it shrinks Northern Ireland's constitutional position inside the UK without reference to

the Northern Ireland population. Remember, all of this confusion and uncertainty is the result of successive Tory governments' and Boris Johnson's desperation to get an "oven ready Brexit deal" over the line prior to the last election.

## 2021 Census

This has led directly to veiled threats of renewed civil disturbance emanating from loyalist paramilitaries further fuelled by the recent Assembly election results with Sinn Fein now with the largest number of seats all topped off by the obvious demographic change in favour of Catholics as highlighted by the recently published initial census figures.

During the turmoil of the Truss government, political controversy in Northern Ireland was exploited as merely another stick to beat the EU with. Truss threatened to invoke Article 16 of the Protocol in order to arbitrarily tear up an international treaty that her own Tory predecessor negotiated! This legislation is still trundling through Parliament but will the new Prime Minister Rishi Sunak continue to sabre-rattle as, from the Tory perspective, EU bashing is good politics, or will Sunak seek to do a deal with the EU bearing in mind that the DUP will be looking anxiously on, fearing yet another betrayal? In this, Sunak may be influenced by the US government threatening any chance of a long-term trade deal if it perceives that the Good Friday Agreement is being compromised or undermined. There is now apparently an understanding that the Protocol issue will be resolved one way or the other by next April -the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. This could involve lighter touch regulation of goods entering the Northern Ireland market from Britain while maintaining closer monitoring of that traffic entering Northern Ireland but whose onward destination is the Republic

of Ireland. The intention is that this will be sufficient to mollify both the DUP and the EU in order to facilitate the re-establishment of a functioning Assembly in time for the Good Friday Agreement anniversary next Spring. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris, has indicated that the legal requirement for a new Assembly election to be held has now been extended, thus avoiding another election until 2023. The DUP meanwhile, having been totally wrong-footed by their Conservative allies' tortuous contortions on the Northern Ireland Protocol, remain inflexible in their refusal to participate in the Assembly. This may also be because they refuse to pay second fiddle to a newly elected Sinn Fein First Minister.

In the interim perhaps Ulster's embattled and inflexible unionists should pay some attention to the bitter comments of Sir Edward Carson, leader of Irish Unionism as he resigned as leader of the Ulster Unionists after partition in 1921:

"What a fool I was! I was only a puppet, and so was Ulster, and so was Ireland, in the political game that was to get the Conservative Party into power"

(Ivan Gibbons is author of "*Partition - How and Why Ireland was Divided*")



Northern Ireland border

## Deptford Creek and the Co-operative Movement

### Mary Mills

Over the past year I have been looking at the industries of Deptford Creek for a local freebie newspaper and hope to turn the results into a book. It's been a lot of hard work with some amazing discoveries.

Deptford Creek is the final section of the River Ravensbourne as it comes down through Kent to the Thames. It is tidal up to Deptford Bridge where it is crossed by the Roman Road to Dover – now the A2. For most of this stretch it is the boundary between the London Boroughs of Greenwich and Lewisham and was for some centuries the boundary between Kent and Surrey. It has been an industrial waterway a long time with a tide mill certainly pre-Domesday and many other sites and activities. When Greenwich had a Royal Palace it was used by various service facilities – one was the Royal Slaughterhouse. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were major industries here and some huge sites. In 1662 Deptford and Greenwich together were arguably one of the largest conurbations in England – fourth after London, York and Norwich.



Deptford Creek

### Shipbuilding Sites

I have looked at sites working up river on the east, Greenwich, bank all the way to Lewisham Bridge, then turned round and worked down river on the west, Lewisham, bank. Just before getting to Deptford Creek Road Bridge the local government

of the area moves back into Greenwich as we enter St. Nicholas Parish – with major ship building sites, Deptford Royal Dockyard, the East India Company and General Steam Navigation.

My researches reached Deptford Creek Road Bridge two or three weeks ago and started to look at sites between there and the Thames. Along with the big players there were many smaller firms; the majority of them working on the trans-shipment of coal from the North East, along with scrap dealers and few others – an important pottery and a mysterious Alizarin manufacturer. I had copies of the Goad insurance plans which showed detailed use of sites in the late 1890s – and had been trying to see if I could identify them.

### One and All Wharf

The first two wharves on the down river side of Creek Road Bridge are jammed right up against the approach road. Today they are – of course – modern flats but on a detailed modern map we are looking at the creek-side along a path now called Greenwich Quay between the bridge and the now derelict, Hoy Inn Stairs. Historically the roadway was called Stowage – but 'Quay' sounds better to estate agents I suppose. What is shown on the 1890s insurance plan for that wharf has turned out to be very interesting and unusual indeed. It is marked as the One and All Wharf owned by the Agriculture and Horticultural Association and described as a 'chemical manure works'.

There were many chemical manure works on Deptford Creek in the late 19th century. One of them was John Bennett Lawes works where superphosphate was first made and there were many others who followed on from him. So, to be honest I didn't take much notice of this new one



thinking it was just someone else on that bandwagon. But this was something more.

When I looked it up on the internet there was a vast amount of information about the One and All much of it published by themselves and I can see little in it about chemical manure. But there is so much more. This was an ethical venture, an attempt to change the way things were done, maybe to confront capitalism – to help the poor and the working people in general to take action themselves to improve their standards of living, and the wholesomeness of their food while providing for a leisure activity - and it does appear to have been a success..

It was set up by Edward Owen Greening. I had come across him before when I wrote up the 1889 Gas Workers strike for my M-Phil in the 1970s. He was one of a number of local worthies who offered to try and achieve a conciliation in the strike between George Livesey and the Gas Workers Union and like all the others he failed. Greening appears in Manchester based histories of the Co-op as one of their heroes and indeed Lewisham too have taken him on and put up a plaque to him on the site of his home in Belmont Grove in the nicer bit of Blackheath.

### **Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society**

Despite Lewisham's interest this wharf was in Greenwich and Woolwich was the home of the Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society (RACS). There have been many histories of RACS but I have never seen this wharf mentioned, although I may have missed it. Mostly they are about RACS political background and their vast spread across Kent and Surrey, their factories, their mines, their social and community work. I have however been reminded that there is a 'Greening Street' on the Co-op Housing Estate in Abbey Wood – other names include Crumpsall, Owenite, Federation, and Shieldhall but the main

road is McLeod, who of course got his statue in Woolwich.



Co-op shop in Woolwich

Greenings life story is well known and most historians of the Co-op will know far more than me. He came from Warrington and lived in Manchester. By the age of about eighteen he was a wire drawer and had started his own business. He became involved in local radical causes, founding the Manchester Manhood Suffrage League, and so became immersed in the Co-operative Movement. In 1867 he set up a journal *The Industrial Partnership Record* and began to organise co-operative conferences and events in Manchester and beyond. He stood for Parliament in 1868 for the Reform League. He then came to London where he set up a number of unsuccessful cooperative ventures but with One and All he had a big success.

This was a world I used to know a lot about and could well have studied it rather than local industry. We hear very little of this world of 19<sup>th</sup> century radicals. 19<sup>th</sup> century life seems to be stuck between the colonialists, the industrial inventors and entrepreneurs and the hapless poor but bubbling away under the surface were a mass of social movements – the Co-op was just one of them. I have recently been looking at the temperance organisations in South London in connection with, of course, my work on George Livesey and the gas industry in Peckham but goodness the temperance movement really was quite something! The size of it, the huge numbers of residents involved and its power as a social force was amazing. It wasn't just anti-alcohol but about how you – the poor

person – the worker could take charge of your own life and change things. It's about aspiration and it has ties with the friendly societies, like the Buffaloes and the Odd Fellows, the building societies and of course the trade unions and the Co-op. It has strong links with ideas of 'back to the land' and 'grow your own food' - every man an independent producer in touch with nature, sort of pre-Green greens. which is where I guess One and All came in and flourished.

The organisation was set up as a limited company in 1867 allegedly backed by John Ruskin, Thomas Hughes and other well-known public figures. It had a headquarters in Covent Garden – Endell Street and in Long Acre. They were in the old St Martin's Hall which they 'filled with seed packing machinery.' The Deptford wharf was their 'works.' Greening was the Managing Director. Its aims were to 'aid rural revival and back to the land in a practical way.' Dividends were limited and profits were to go to employees, customers and good works generally. An advice service was free of charge. They published endless books and magazines. They had 300 staff. There were lectures, music, dancing and football. They produced a 'high quality and reliable source' of seeds, fertilisers and other necessities for farm and garden culture in small quantities for allotment holders and cottagers. They could boast gold medals and Greening was a 'Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society, Life Member of the Royal Agricultural Society, and founder of 'many great cooperative organisations.'

### **Co-operative Festival**

Among many reports of events I picked out a co-operative festival at Crystal Palace at some time in the 1890s. 34,800 people attended and it had half a mile of exhibition tables. Trade unionists were there having decided to forge an alliance with co-operators' and this included Ben

Tillett and the 'redoubtable' Tom Man. Over 100 co-operative societies were there with exhibits of all sorts – like textiles, jewellery and furniture. There were some delegates from Europe, and there was a grand concert with 6,000 singers and a new Labour song specially composed for the day.

The event was summed up by one of the speakers "what do we want? ... good music, the love of flowers, the appreciation of the domestic arts, the practice of athletics, the desire for culture, association in employment... when every just man who pines with want shall have a moderate and befitting share of that which lewdly pampered leisure now heaps with vast excess."

One and All didn't survive the Great War and closed in 1915. Greening continued with his work for a while and lived to oppose, and then support, the new Co-operative Party. But now he and most of his ideas are forgotten. He died in 1923 and is buried at Hither Green Cemetery.

Woolwich had RACS - in its day massively powerful but it is now forgotten and most historians of the Co-op seem to think it was just another small town outfit. But – come on - RACS had its own seat on the Labour Party's National Executive. Like the Royal Arsenal itself it somehow gets dismissed as south London, no interest.

The Co-operative Movement is far from dead in Greenwich. RACS would never have anything to do with the Co-op Party, since they had their own Political Purposes Committee but Greenwich Borough now has its own large and successful branch of the Co-op Party; The Royal Borough of Greenwich is now a 'Cooperative Council' and 45 of its Labour councillors are 'Labour and Co-op' with another seven we need to speak to. Most of all it has

Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency, an immensely successful organisation - but not quite getting 34,000 to its events - well, not yet!

And, like I said – Deptford Creek had all sorts of surprising things on its banks!

See *Labour Heritage bulletin* Spring 2020 for an article by Mary Mills on Greenwich and Woolwich and its Co-operative Society.



Woolwich Co-op HQ

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**The forgotten tribe: British MEPs 1979-2020** edited by Diane Hayter and David Harvey, Harper Publishing, £18

Diane Hayter was Chief Executive of the European Parliamentary Labour Party and Shadow Brexit Secretary in the House of Lords. David Harvey was a career official of the European Parliament.

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**Woodbine Willie - The Reverend Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy**  
John Grigg



The Reverend Kennedy gained this nickname by giving an estimated 850,000 woodbine cigarettes to soldiers on the Western Front when he was a chaplain in the First World War.

In January 1926 the *Acton Gazette and Express* reported on him speaking at the Gunnersbury Baptist Church about the need for religion, and regretting how many serious and admirable people were indifferent, or did not want to hear about religion. Like many who heard him speak, the local newspaper reporter commented on Kennedy's extraordinary speaking skills that held audiences spellbound. He was born in Leeds in 1883 the seventh of nine children (one report says the 12<sup>th</sup> of 14 children.) He came from a religious family. His father was vicar of St. Mary's in Leeds and his grandfather had been Dean of Clonfert in County Galway. His father's parish was a deeply impoverished district and Kennedy grew up helping his father relieve poverty in the area. It was then that he gained a profound affection for the poor and a fierce hatred of social injustice.

He was educated at Leeds Grammar School and at Trinity College in Dublin where he graduated in classics and divinity

in 1904. He was vicar of St. Paul's in Worcester when on the outbreak of war in 1914 he was inspired by patriotism and duty to volunteer as an army chaplain. He became something of legend not only for his cigarette generosity but for his morale boosting talks to the troops. He won the Military Cross for rescuing wounded soldiers in no-man's land under heavy fire. Once cut off in a crater with injured soldiers and a medic who had run out of morphine he left under fire for the allied lines and returned with medicine. The horrors of war converted him to pacifism. He became a war poet and his poems outsold the more well-known poets that emerged during the war. He returned to Worcester after the war and then to St. Edmond's in Lombard Street before joining the Industrial Christian Fellowship and went on speaking tours as an advocate for the working classes. He had adopted Christian Socialism as well as pacifism. War, he wrote, 'is only glorious when you buy it in the *Daily Mail* and enjoy it at the breakfast table, it goes splendidly with bacon and eggs. Real war is the final limit of damnable brutality and that is all there is to it.'

He admired the section of the Labour Party's 1923 election manifesto entitled 'Peace among the nations.'

*Labour's vision of an ordered world embraces the nations now torn with enmity and strife. It stands, therefore, for a policy of International Co-operation through a strengthened and enlarged League of Nations; the settlement of disputes by conciliation and judicial arbitration; the immediate calling by the British Government of an International Conference (including Germany on terms of equality) to deal with the Revision of the Versailles Treaty, especially Reparations and Debts; and the resumption of free economic and diplomatic relations with Russia. This will pave the way for disarmament, the only security for the nations.*

(We can ask that if Labour's manifesto 1923 'vision' concerning Germany had been adopted would European history have avoided the disastrous course it subsequently took?)

Although the Reverend Kennedy condemned capitalism he did not join a political party, and his writings suggest that a Christian approach throughout society would ease a journey towards a just society. Perhaps his pacifism influenced his attitude to all conflict? He writes that the greatest enemy Labour had was those who continually preach class war, and the best friends of Labour are the men of goodwill in every class of society who are convinced it is wrong to oppress and sweat the working people. This was a matter of persuasion and a Christian approach was part of that? Was that behind what he said at the Baptist Church in Acton in 1926?

The Reverend Kennedy was a household name in the 1920s. He wanted the church to do more than just charitably helping the poor, and to take a greater lead in fighting inequality. His meetings around the country attracted large crowds. He wrote dozens of books and published his poetry. Now he is forgotten.

He did not have the best of health and he died in Liverpool in 1929 aged 45 where he had gone to address one of his public meetings. The Dean of Westminster refused burial at Westminster Abbey because he said Studdert Kennedy was a 'socialist.' His funeral took place in Worcester attended by war veterans and poor working people. There are memorials to him at The Museum of Army Chaplaincy in Hampshire and at Ripon Clergy College. He is commemorated with a feast day on the Church of England calendar on 8<sup>th</sup> March annually.

**Sources:** *The Thoreby Society, The Historical Society for Leeds and District.*



*Acton Gazette and Express. Church Times March 2013. The Best of Studdert, Kennedy Hodder & Stoughton, 1947. Democracy and the Dog Collar, G A Studdert Kennedy, Hodder & Stoughton, 1921. And (of course) Wikipedia.*

## **The Labour Party 1918-1951: a short history**

### **Barbara Humphries**

#### **Post World War 1**

During World War 1 the labour movement had been divided. A minority of Independent Labour Party (ILP) members opposed the war and some faced imprisonment. This included Ramsay MacDonald who had to step down as leader. The majority of trades unionists and their sponsored MPs supported the war, and tried to get concessions from the government on dilution (employing less skilled workers in place of apprentice trained craft workers – and women in armaments factories at lower wages), profiteering and food queues.

There was revolution across Europe. In the UK strikes and rent strikes took place on ‘Red Clydeside.’ In London in 1920 dockers refused to load a ship, the Jolly George which was to take armaments to be used against the Soviet government. Councils of Action were set up across the country and mass demonstrations were called.

The Labour Party announced that it would pull out of the Coalition Government and prepared to stand candidates in the majority of parliamentary divisions. There were high hopes and high profile candidates were selected. The Party adopted a new constitution and admitted individual members to its ranks. However the federal structure was retained

alongside individual membership and the trades unions continued their affiliation both at national and local levels and supplied funding and in many cases activists for the Party. The affiliated ILP, retained its independence, reinventing itself as Labour’s socialist conscience, dedicated to political education.

Individual membership was especially important for women, many of whom were not trades unionists. All political parties had to appeal to women voters who made up half of newly enfranchised population. The 1918 Representation of the People Act had increased the electorate threefold. Labour set up women’s sections (LPWS) which campaigned on issues of concern to women, such as housing, health and education. Each local party was encouraged to set one up. They often met in the afternoon and held political meetings and social events. Clause 4, Part 4 of Labour’s new constitution appealed to workers by hand or by brain, to indicate that the Party was not just for manual workers in trades unions but for ‘black-coated workers’ and professionals as well. The commitment to public ownership was to facilitate joint candidates with the Co-op Party, which had been founded in 1918.

#### **Tories and Liberals: First Labour Government**

1918 had seen the election of 52 Labour MPs, which disappointed the Party, but it was contesting many seats for the first time. Its candidates stood against the Coalition candidates who hammered home the ‘Hang the Kaiser’ narrative. The local elections of 1919 yielded better results with Labour winning control of many councils in the industrial north of England, South Wales and east London. Many of these were permanently lost to the Liberals and Tories.

The Coalition Government fell apart eventually, its popularity lost due to rising

unemployment and the end of wartime controls. The Liberals and Tories disagreed amongst themselves on who was better equipped to 'take on' the 'socialist menace.' They also disagreed on free trade and protection, the Tories favouring tariff reform.

There were to be three more general elections, in 1922, 1923 and 1924. Labour's vote increased in 1922 and 1923 and in 1924 it set up a minority government which lasted nine months. The Tories had been the largest party in 1923, but their King's Speech had been voted down on the issue of tariff reform. Labour governed with support from the Liberals. The government opened up trade links with the Soviet Union and increased funding for public housing. The latter was thanks to Clydeside MP John Wheatley, as Minister of Health. In the autumn Ramsay MacDonald resigned over a forged letter from the Comintern (The Zinoviev letter). He called a general election and was defeated. Now with a majority the Tory government and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin pressed on with cuts in wages and longer hours for all workers, to get British industry back on its feet. This led to the 1926 General Strike.

### **Fall of the Second Labour Government**

By the time of the 1929 General Election, two million more women were enfranchised. Labour won the election and again formed a minority government with the Liberals. Labour by now had over 200 MPs. The issue was unemployment. However in the autumn of 1929 came the Wall Street crash. By 1931 unemployment in the UK had risen to two million. Parliament set up the May Committee but this committee was only interested in cutting the pay of the unemployed, teachers, civil servants and sailors. The final refusal of the TUC to accept the severity of these cuts led Prime Minister MacDonald to go to the King to offer his

resignation. However the King asked him to stay on and head a National Government, made up of Tories and Liberals. Very few Labour MPs followed him, not many of the membership of the Party or the unions did either. MacDonald was expelled from membership.

Worse was to come. MacDonald and Philip Snowden called a general election - the National Government versus Labour. All resources - the mass media, cars even aeroplanes were put at the disposal of the National Government. Voters were told that Labour's policies were 'Bolshevism run mad,' and that peoples' savings were at risk. Labour lost hundreds of seats and was back down to 52 MPs. The number of votes lost however was somewhat less. The call by MacDonald for the Labour Party to be smashed was defeated by its two precious assets, the membership and the trades unions.

The left wing ILP disaffiliated from the Labour Party in 1932 because it would not bow to the wishes of the PLP. In some parts of the country such as Clydeside this damaged the Party causing a loss of parliamentary seats. As Labour moved to the left a new organisation was set up called the Socialist League. Led by Stafford Cripps it was much smaller than the ILP with only 3000 members. Cripps was later expelled from Labour due to his support for a unity campaign with Communists and Liberals against fascism. However he was to become a minister in the post 1945 Labour government.

### **1930s: a Lost Decade**

The 1930s was a lost decade. However, the National Government lost support over continued unemployment and the introduction of the Means Test. There were angry demonstrations by the Unemployed Workers Movement and naval mutinies. Soon Labour was winning by-elections with a 17% swing in some

cases. Labour won control of key local authorities such as the London County Council and Glasgow city council. There was an emphasis on building the Party especially in new industrial areas. 'Socialist weeks' were called and by the end of decade the Party had 500,000 members, half of whom were women. It launched an immediate programme, including public ownership of the major industries and utilities. As an antidote to MacDonal, left wing MP George Lansbury had been elected as leader. However, he was asked to stand down ahead of the 1935 General Election as his pacifist views were out of step with the rise of fascism in Europe, including the invasion of Abyssinia by Mussolini of Italy.

It was ten years before another general election was called. Labour joined the wartime Coalition Government and took up key positions. Clement Attlee now Labour leader, became Deputy Prime Minister. There was an electoral truce during the war. Bevin as Minister for Labour introduced compulsory arbitration for industrial disputes but he also invited the trades unions into government.

### **The 1945 General Election**

Labour's unexpected landslide victory in 1945 is legendary. It was a stormy election campaign with Tory MPs being shouted down. Labour gained support from the young generation, both in the forces and home-front. Factory gate meetings were held. The Beveridge Report, a blueprint for the welfare state and Labour's manifesto, *Let us face the future* were widely discussed, selling over a million copies. The government faced the problems of post-war reconstruction but carried out its manifesto promises in domestic policy, including the NHS and nationalisation of key industries and public utilities. The modern welfare state was set up and there were targets for building council housing.

Its commitment to NATO and nuclear weapons by foreign minister Ernest Bevin remain controversial to this day. The Party retained its traditional supporters, although losing the 1951 election, when it actually won more votes than in 1945. Membership of the Party rose to one million, the highest ever.

The Tories were elected in 1951. They were not to reverse many of Labour's policies until three decades hence. They cut the housing budget so that numbers but not standards were maintained. However they were able to end rationing and in the words of Harold Macmillan the 'British public had never had it so good.' The welfare state had provided a safety net for all, and now there were high hopes for a consumer society which some had enjoyed in the 1930s.

### **Book Reviews**

***Silvertown: the lost story of a strike that shook London and helped launch the modern labour movement* by John Tulley, Monthly Review Press, 2014**

**Reviewed by Barbara Humphries**

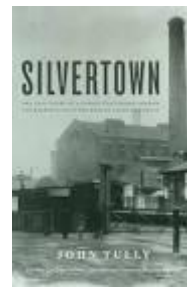
The year 1889 was famous for a handful of trades union victories on the part of sections of the London workforce who had never taken action before. In the city's East End, match women at Bryant and May won the right to union recognition. The London dockers won six pence an hour after support, not just from Londoners but from across the world in Australia. Without this solidarity the strike for the dockers' tanner would not have been won. These were high points for the labour movement. Downstream on the Thames in West Ham, now part of the borough of Newham, the local gasmen also came out on top. But then came the downturn. As summer turned to autumn these successes were not to last.

On the north bank of the Thames Silvertown was considered to be on the edge of London. Few people had heard of it but it was an area of poverty, overcrowding, and slums, home to thousands who had migrated particularly from Ireland, as in London's docklands to find work. It was dominated by a handful of factories, the largest being Silvers the India Rubber Gutta-Percha and Telegraph Company which made cables for electrical telegraph lines. Conditions in the factory were exploitative, based on maximising the amount of profit which could be made out of the workforce by a management devoted to enforcing intolerable conditions. However, in the aftermath of triumphalism unleashed by the London dockers, workers at Silvers joined the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers. A precursor of the GMB this union was one of the new unions which aimed to organise across industries, not restricted to trade or skill. It was like the union which had organised the dockers, a predecessor of the Transport and General Workers Union, now part of the UNITE the Union. The NUGWGL set up a branch in Silvers in September 1889. But after three months on strike the workforce were heavily defeated.

Sometimes it is necessary for the labour movement to learn from defeats as it does from victories. It was only natural for the strike to become forgotten and airbrushed from history. The author has done us a service by rescuing it from posterity and suggests reasons for its failure. The union branch was new in the factory and did not have time to build up a strike fund. The strike committee was led by a Frederick Ling, a little known figure in labour history. It had the support though of Will Thorne of the gas workers and Tom Mann of the dockers, as well as Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl Marx) who gave her unstinting efforts in supporting the strikers. She particularly organised women workers who comprised 10% of Silvers

workforce. She travelled from her home in Soho to West Ham every day.

Another lesson Tully suggests was the lack of unity in the factory between the labourers and skilled craftsmen who were members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the trades unions in Britain had been craft unions, and were not sympathetic to the plight of the rest of the workforce and did not support their organisations. For the ASE this was to spectacularly backfire in 1897 when the union suffered its first major defeat, including at Silvers. Skilled engineers faced the situation that their roles no longer had the monopoly that they had once enjoyed, now that they were members of the working class, without bargaining skills.



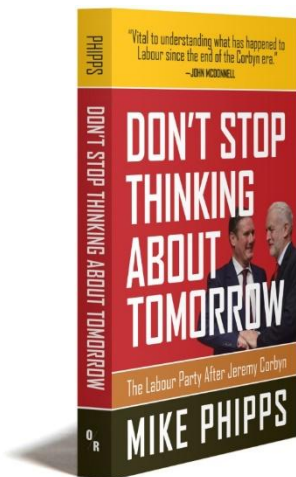
Secondly there was a lack of solidarity on an international scale. Silvers had a plant in Paris to which work from West Ham was transferred during both strikes. The French workers were better paid and did not have much sympathy with their British brothers. All in all though there was a question of lack of preparedness which the unions worked to overcome. In 1914, as Tully says, membership of both unions the NUGWGL and the ASE regained their membership with thousands of new recruits and industrial success.

So what became of Silvertown? It did not survive World War 2 intact, taking a bombing by the Nazis during the Blitz. Tully has done us a favour in relating this episode of labour history. He makes the point that the events in Silvertown and West Ham, saw the foundation of a



modern labour movement in Britain, returning its first Labour MP, Keir Hardie and a Labour local council. The next decade would see the beginning of a working class party in Parliament. Tully's book has received criticism due to not being impartial! Perhaps his critics should imagine life working in Silvers in the 1880s. Some sections of the press had support for the strikers, but the majority were hostile. In the main they also faced organised opposition from the forces of law and order.

**Review of *Don't Stop Thinking about Tomorrow: the Labour Party after Jeremy Corbyn* By Mike Phipps, published by OR Books, 2022. Reviewed by Barbara Humphries**



So much has happened since the 2019 General Election campaign about which we have forgotten. Mike Phipps reminds us very well. For instance, for all the bragging by Boris Johnson with regard to UK levels of vaccinations against COVID, the government's initial response was shambolic, based as it was on the concept of 'herd immunity'. The result was that the UK had the highest death rate in Europe. Scandals about deaths in care homes and the NHS, cronyism in relation to personal protection equipment and a flawed track and trace system were rife in 2020. Then we had the Partygate scandal and the Tory vote of no-confidence and resignations. It

has been conveniently forgotten that Johnson's government was first pressed into changing course on COVID by the Labour opposition, then in 2020 still led by Jeremy Corbyn.

Mike deals with the 2017 and 2019 general elections, offering explanations for the unexpected result in 2017 of a hung Parliament and Labour's defeat in 2019. This defeat has been attributed in part to Brexit and to mass media hostility to Labour's leader Jeremy Corbyn, as well as de-industrialisation in former Labour heartlands, whose voters had been taken for granted by the Party for decades. Mike describes the hostility of the Tory press, but also the treachery of some Labour HQ staffers both in 2017 and 2019. Without this he says, it is possible that Labour could have won the 2017 election. An analysis is given of the pro-Corbyn movement in the Labour Party. Mike fairly makes the point that Jeremy Corbyn had spent all his time as a backbench MP and campaigner, who prior to 2015 had never believed that he would be elected leader. It was against the predictions of both his supporters and opponents, who played their part in his election as leader. This made life difficult for him and his supporters. Moreover, the 'Corbynistas' were split on a generation basis, between 'Old Labour' and young Momentum activists, as the author says.

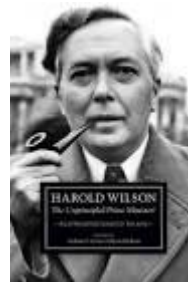
When Starmer was elected Party leader in 2020, it was with the votes of many Party members who had supported the anti-austerity policies of Corbyn, but wanted a leader who they thought could take Labour to victory. For a while this had to be questioned. Starmer has used his time in office, to attack left wingers in the Party, getting them expelled or suspended. He had broken Party rules to do this and as in Wakefield, ignored them to get his preferred by-election candidate selected. 200,000 members have been lost. To many Party members the regime of Starmer was worse than that of Tony Blair. However Mike argues that this hostility is because

the Left is stronger than in the 1990s. It is also a different political situation because the UK and world economy are in crisis economically and politically. Starmer's own offer to resign if charged with breaking COVID rules (Beergate) was seen as a stunt rather than a sign of honesty, adding to the public's cynicism about politicians in general. His performance at PMQs have been akin to a courtroom drama. He focussed on the government's incompetence rather than ideology for its failures. Although Labour was ahead in the opinion polls, Starmer was not. As a leader, he had at one time even fallen behind Johnson in popularity. Local elections in 2021 and the Hartlepool by-election result did not show that Labour could win back the 'Red Wall' seats. More recently in 2022 local government election results show that Labour could still be in danger of losing young voters to the Greens, Liberal Democrats or abstentions. This happened in the 2019 election when Labour lost more votes to these than to the Tories. Mike argues that Corbyn's policies, such as nationalisation are still popular. He says that now is not the time to give up. However, the Left has received setbacks in the Party. If there was a leadership contest tomorrow it would lack the support in the PLP to field a candidate. The memory of the Corbyn years has not gone away – why otherwise would the establishment continue attacking him? Mike illustrates its impact on local government initiatives where building more social housing and taking back services in-house have taken place. Both UNITE and UNISON have elected left wing leaders, showing that the trades unions have moved to the left and increased their membership with campaigns of industrial action for higher wages in light of the cost of living crisis. The Johnson government had to cave into Labour's demand for a windfall tax on public utilities. This book though was written before the election of Liz Truss as Tory Party leader

and Prime Minister and Labour's subsequent rise in the opinion polls. Since then there has been yet another change in prime minister amidst calls for unity in the Conservative Party.

## **Book Launch at the Houses of Parliament: Harold Wilson the Winner**

**John Grigg**



**Harold Wilson**

Hilary Benn MP was in the chair at the book launch of Nick Thomas-Symonds MP's *Harold Wilson The Winner*. The word 'winner' of course being a reference to Wilson winning four general elections for the Labour Party - albeit sometimes by tiny or with minority majorities. It was a pleasant evening attended amongst others by a number of Labour Heritage members. A recurring theme of the evening was trying to unravel why Harold Wilson is much under regarded as a prime minister. It was pointed out that under his watch there were overdue social reforms – the abolition of capital punishment, decriminalisation of homosexuality, reform of divorce and abortion laws, the Race Relations and Sex Equality Acts. Wilson had to deal with economic problems and tense relations with the trade unions. He avoided military conflicts and in particular kept us out of the Vietnam War despite constant pressure from Lyndon Johnson to send 'if only a regiment.' Yet at the same time he was able to retain the close relationship with the USA which he thought was essential. Perhaps, commented Nick

Thomas-Symonds, prominence in foreign policy is important for a Prime Minister's rating. Wilson did take us into the Common Market by means of a referendum: the idea of which Nick, turning towards Hilary Benn, said was first proposed by your father at a Labour Party National Executive meeting. The Tories as a matter of course will always condemn Wilson, and all other Labour Prime ministers, as failures – as will those on the left of the political spectrum.

But at the time I think there was optimism among committed Labour members, like me, that this second spell of Labour Government since the war was going to finish the job started by the 1945 Labour Government and produce a miraculous paradise. I know that was not realistic but the vision was there - and it did not happen. Perhaps that explains the disappointment and why Harold Wilson is associated with the sadness of that shattered dream – and why he is undeservedly unappreciated.

### **Madame Thring and the Occupation of Acton Baths**

John Grigg gave a well-attended talk at the West Trades Union Club on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October on Madam Thring and the occupation of Acton Baths in West London. Madam Thring was a somewhat mystery figure who had played a role in occupations across the capital in the face of post-war discontent. After World War 1 there were mutinies in the British army as soldiers wanted demobilisation to take place more quickly. Rising prices had led to strikes in the coal mines and on public transport. There was a cost of living crisis. This was soon followed by a depression in which unemployment rose. The unemployed, many of them ex-soldiers, demonstrated outside factories such as Napiers in Acton and the Poor Law Guardians in Isleworth for work to be made available. Led by 'Madam' Thring, who was part of the Unemployed Workers' Movement, Acton Baths Hall was occupied by

unemployed workers. This was to provide a premises for the unemployed to be trained. However the baths hall had been a venue for dances and other public events and many people in Acton wanted them back. Miss Smee, Acton's first woman councillor and chairman of the Council wanted the men out of the baths hall. In the end a church hall was offered to the unemployed for a couple of days a week.

Madame Thring had been born in Islington. She continued to be active in the women's suffrage movement and the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain.

The talk was followed by questions and discussion. A full report of the talk originally given at the West London Labour Heritage history day is in the *Labour Heritage Bulletin*, Spring 2020 that is on our website or can be emailed to anybody if required.

### **Sir Ashley Bramwell**

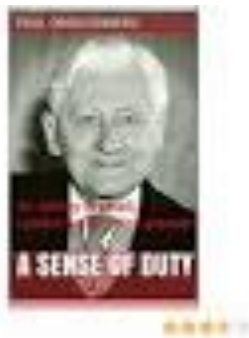
Westminster councillor Paul Dimoldenberg gave a talk to the Essex and Colchester Fabians on the life of Sir Ashley Bramwell. It was held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October and was attended by 14 people on a Zoom call.

Sir Ashley Bramwell was born in 1916 and was one of a generation of radicals who played a part in changing the world post 1945. Like Denis Healey he was at Oxford University in the 1930s and took part in anti-fascist demonstrations. He contested Fareham in Hampshire for the Labour Party but was unsuccessful in 1938 and 1945. In 1950 he narrowly won the marginal seat of Bexley but was to lose to Ted Heath in 1951. He blamed his defeat on the continuation of rationing and the Communist Party who insisted on running a candidate against him. He lost by 1600 votes.

During World War 1, Ashley worked for the Intelligence Service and when he failed to be elected as an MP in 1945 he joined the Control Commission in Germany. He developed an empathy for the German

people believing that they could not all be blamed for the Nazi regime, and during his short spell in Parliament his maiden speech was on the treatment of the German people – an unusual subject for a maiden speech. Out of office he decided to train as a barrister, and when qualified became an expert on landlord-tenant relations, mainly being an advocate for tenants in privately rented accommodation. The Tory Rent Acts in the 1950s gave him plenty of work and he was faced with Rachmanism at its worst.

Ashley's main achievement however was as leader of the Inner London Education Authority from 1970-1981. He championed the cause of progressive and comprehensive education in the face of vigorous opposition from the Tories. One of his flagship schools was in Pimlico, which had a working class and multi-ethnic catchment area, as well as the middle class pupils from Westminster. He ended corporal punishment in ILEA's schools.



Challenged by the Tories on grounds of cost to the ILEA education budget, Ashley was ousted not by the Tories but by the Labour left, led by Ken Livingstone when it won control of the GLC and ILEA in 1981. He was later co-opted by Livingstone however and became chair of the GLC between 1982 and 1983. He was a campaigner for Labour in Westminster where he lived and took part in making submissions to the Boundary Commission. He was not elected to Westminster Council

but was later made an Alderman. He was also a school governor.

Paul Dimoldenberg has written a book about Ashley entitled *A Sense of Duty*. He maintains that compared to MPs, little has been written about Labour councillors who made a huge difference to peoples' lives.

## **One thing Thatcher did that was not awful**

**Linda Shampian**

In 1987 some Californian scientists discovered the worrying hole in the Ozone layer over Antarctica. They tried to get US politicians to listen, but no-one understood the science. However Margaret Thatcher (former chemist) read the paper and understood its significance and she persuaded Ronald Reagan to take it seriously and their work together led to the Montreal agreement, banning CFCs worldwide. She also persuaded Regan that this ban would only work if there was some means of poorer countries being compensated by the richer countries for having to produce more expensive refrigerants to replace CFCs.

*Linda, who died in April, was the secretary of Labour Heritage. Like Margaret Thatcher she read chemistry at Somerville College, Oxford. CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) were widely used in products like packaging, aerosols and refrigerators and were depleting the Ozone layer. The ozone layer is the atmosphere around the earth that absorbs most of the sun's ultraviolet radiation. Its depletion greatly increases the incidence of skin cancer, cataracts and other harms to humans and wildlife. The Ozone layer is now recovering as a result of the worldwide ban on CFCs.*

For more information about Labour Heritage [www.labour\\_heritage.com](http://www.labour_heritage.com)

Or [labourheritage45@btinternet.com](mailto:labourheritage45@btinternet.com)