

In this newsletter

1. Branch meeting
2. Welcome to new members
3. London Rally 10.5.25
4. North Devon & Torridge TUC
5. Vampires strike back
6. Branch delegates needed
7. 40 years since the miners' strike
8. S.W TC annual mtg Feb. 2025
9. Pensions & inflation
10. Supporting members' wellbeing
11. Radical Stroud
12. Bristol Bus Boycott
13. Intersectionality
14. International news
15. Erased from the face of the Earth

No.38 MayDay 2025

Are you getting all the info?

If UCU HO has your email you should also receive regular updates on campaigns from UCU head office as well as occasional branch emails. If this is not the case let us know and we can check with the H.O on your behalf.

1. A branch meeting is planned for Tuesday 15th July 2025

This will be a hybrid meeting at the UCU Regional office in **Exeter**; the zoom link and papers will be distributed to members in time for the meeting.

Branch members can contact officers and reps by the emails listed in this newsletter; the general branch email address is ucu.swest@gmail.com and Members are welcome to contact us at anytime.

Tony Staunton chair SWRMB

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

New members are asked if they would like to introduce themselves. If you have any suggestions for the newsletter we are happy to hear from you.

Newsletters: these newsletters are sent to all branch members for whom we have email addresses.

Email addresses: UCU encourages us to use our home email when we retire.

For more information please contact:

ucu.swest@gmail.com

or contact the officers below:

Chair: Tony Staunton

tony.staunton@blueyonder.co.uk

Vice Chair: Mike Sheaff

m.sheaff@plymouth.ac.uk

Secretary: Mike Farmer

mikefarmer84@hotmail.com

Treasurer: John Daniell

john.daniell@btinternet.com

Membership: Jo Corke

ucu.swest@gmail.com

Returning Officer Barbara Segal

barbara.segal@phonecoop.coop

Environmental Rep Tony Staunton

tony.staunton@blueyonder.co.uk

Equality Officer: GAS Ruth Amias,

ruthamias2000@yahoo.co.uk

Regional delegates: Margaret George

mmargaretg@gmail.com

Charles Henderson

charles.henderson@btinternet.com

Stephanie Tailby:

stephanie.tailby@uwe.ac.uk

reserve Mike Sheaff :

m.sheaff@plymouth.ac.uk

TC Cheltenham Mike Farmer

mikefarmer84@hotmail.com

TC Gloucester: Ruth Amias

ruthamias2000@yahoo.co.uk

TC Bristol: Barbara Segal

barbara.segal@phonecoop.coop

and Stephanie Tailby:

stephanie.tailby@uwe.ac.uk

TC Taunton & W. Somerset: Charles Henderson

charles.henderson@btinternet.com

TC Plymouth: Tony Staunton:

tony.staunton@blueyonder.co.uk

and Mike Sheaff:

m.sheaff@plymouth.ac.uk

TC Mendip: Eleanor Jackson. c/o

ucu.swest@gmail.com

TC Torbay & SD vacant

SW NPC GAS Ruth Amias,

ruthamias2000@yahoo.co.uk

Barbara Segal

barbara.segal@phonecoop.coop

and Mike Farmer

mikefarmer84@hotmail.com

International Workers Day.

Our branch was represented at the Bristol event where we remembered the 138 workers who left for work and did not return home in GB in 2023-24.



3. London Rally

Post-16 education in crisis. It is our duty to bring together the whole of our membership to fight back against cuts, attacks in the media, financial mismanagement, and the erosion of your professional pride.

This is why on **Saturday 10 May 2025**; we have called a huge rally in central London for us to come together like never before.

Higher education, further education, prison education, adult and community education--together, united.

UCU branches across the UK will be arranging coaches to ensure that every single member has the opportunity to attend. We will also finance 25% of travel costs for members travelling by other means.

Details of the event are set out below:

Meeting point: 13:00 at Bessborough Gardens, London SW1V 2JE

March: 13:15-13:45 from Bessborough Gardens to Old Palace Yard

Speeches and rally cries: 14:00-16:00 at Old Palace Yard, London SW1P 3JY

Alongside thousands of UCU members on the day, there will be guest speakers, members from our sister education unions, students, well-known supporters and activists. We are building the biggest coalition ever to fight for change in our sector.

Head Office: Campaigns

4. North Devon & Torridge Trades Union Council

We are the local voice of the Trades Union Congress, founded long ago as Barnstaple Trades and Labour Council. The first record of it I have found is in the *North Devon Journal* 1913 when it stood six candidates for Barnstaple Town Council.

We are a part of the Trades Union Congress and have a representative on South West Regional Council. We meet in the Committee Room of the Castle Centre every third Friday of the month, excluding bank holidays, at 6.30pm. All union members welcome. Our May meeting will be taken up with a training session to enable trade unionists to talk to schools and colleges about unions and their role in the workplace and in society.

Today the trades council has three projects. The first is to recruit members of the public to their relevant unions. Where other union bodies have a 'Heart Unions' week we are on Barnstaple's High Street several times a year. We will also be at Pilton's Green Man Festival, Saturday 19th July 2025.

<https://www.piltonfestival.co.uk/>

We organise North Devon Right to Travel which seeks to end so many people's isolation by getting better bus services. It is an absolute scandal that so many communities lack the services needed to get people to work, shop, study, and worship, to attend hospital appointments *etc.*

On Saturday and Sunday 28 June we will be performing our first play for Theatre-fest. It will be the Barnstaple première of William Morris's only play

The Tables Turned or Nupkins Awakened. Tickets nearer the date.

We have booked a coach to go to Tolpuddle for the annual Martyrs' festival which takes place on Sunday 20 July. We heavily subsidise this and are charging £15 for adults and free for under 18s.

For further details please contact me northdevontucsecretary@gmail.com or text to 0784 8007826.

Gerrard Sables secretary

5. Vampires strike back

[The phlebotomists in Gloucestershire continue to fight for pay justice.](#) For years, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has been paying phlebotomists Band 2 wages for Band 3 work. UNISON members raised the issue with their employer over a year ago. Every single phlebotomist in Gloucestershire Hospitals has joined together in their union, UNISON, and over the past year they've elected their union reps, delivered a formal collective grievance direct to their elusive Chief Executive, voted for industrial action and started strike action.

Jo Corke SWRMB

6. Branch delegates needed.

Our branch has several vacancies following our AGM. We would welcome any volunteers to fill these roles.

Branch delegates are needed:

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

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

Torbay & S Devon Trades Council
<https://www.facebook.com/torbaytuc/>

National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) delegate(s) for Devon NPC <https://www.npcuk.org/regions>

Mike Farmer SWRMB

7. Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the miners' strike and the working-class struggles of today!



CC Simon Speed, Wikipedia

Battle Lines re-visits the communities of the 1984-85 miners' strike with songs, music and videos of this historic working-class struggle. Banner Theatre's production links this to today's battles with songs and videos from striking Amazon workers in Coventry to trades union disputes in the Global South.

Cheltenham and District Trades Council is hosting two performances of **Battle Lines** by Banner Theatre.

*Wednesday, **11 June 2025** 19:00

Battle Lines

[Register](#)

George Watson Memorial Hall
Tewkesbury.

*or at 8 pm on Tuesday **24th June**
Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham.

[Register](#)

Register soon because space is limited. Tickets are £2 each. All proceeds will be donated to Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

We would love to see you there and we hope that you are able to join us!

Tanbir Siddique Cheltenham and District
Trades Union Council

8. South West trades councils annual meeting Sat 22 February 25.

Seventeen trades councils were represented. This was the best attended of these meetings I have ever been to which shows the interest in what trades councils are up to. Dave Chapple gave an upbeat report showing that trades councils, where they exist, are an important part of their communities.



-Ines Lage South West TUC secretary told of the advances in workers' rights but recognised their limitations.

Trades councils are having to deal with the rise of the far right and Plymouth TUC had to act fast on this issue.

-Sharon Battishall of Unite told us how victory was obtained in the care sector. With the £70 per day strike pay the workers were able to hold out and some were unwilling to return.

-Rachel Beany, Regional secretary PCS, told us of disputes in Housing and local government, in the Land Registry and threats to Arts and Culture. PCS organises outsourced workers in G4S and Staff in the Met. She also related how there were threats to migrant staff with the increased income requirements.

-Dave Roberts, Regional secretary FBU said they were attempting to get cancer recognised as an industrial disease as fire fighters are more prone to it than the rest of us because going into burning buildings increases the danger.

-Motion 5 on dentistry

"This AGM notes the lack of NHS dentists within England. The lack of such dentistry forces people to take out expensive insurance cover, use A and E in emergencies and self-medicate. This is a major health emergency.

-Exeter Trades Council Tuesday 11 March 2025

I attended to see if the two trades councils could work together on joint issues. Jake Maclean told us how "Fire and Rehire" was being used by Devon County Council to reduce the mileage allowance of employees who use their own cars.

There are many potholes in Devon and the County Council has allowed that to happen without the maintenance that used to be done by its own workforce.

-Unite Retired members AGM Friday 14 March 2025

Unite SW/011999 branch includes those who are retired and have been members of Unite or of any of the many unions taken over by Unite. It has 2409 members, 1439 of whom pay no subs as their former unions used to allow a free card. These arrangements

no longer apply for new retirees. We have 970 members who actually pay and these each received an invitation by post to the AGM.

-South West TUC Regional Council AGM 14 & 15 March 2025

I was surprised to be recognised for my 'decades' of service to the trades council movement with a book about Betteshanger colliery. Those who remember 1984 will remember that pit and the union militancy there. I only gave a short speech as any longer and I would have been sobbing.

Gerrard Sables. secretary North Devon & Torridge TUC

These are the editor's extracts from Gerrard's report.

9. Pensions & inflation.

Inflation data for February 2025 were issued on 26 March 2025.

Dear Colleagues,

The delay in the publication of the inflation data has given me an opportunity to take some time to think about some more of the absurdities in the way that this, and past, Governments have dealt with indexation in the Benefits and Pensions systems. It might give you some laughs.

For some time now, sources in Downing Street have been declaring that they intend to reform the social security system (including pensions). This is clearly a source of concern for pensioners; notwithstanding the fact that the whole system is disorganised, lacking in coherence and recipients could (hopefully?) benefit from serious rational reform. They could also be seriously damaged by the sort of piecemeal kneejerk tinkering and cuts

that led to the current shambles in the first place.

What we have to do, using fact and logic, is to persuade the Government to avoid kneejerk cuts, to consult with knowledgeable experts and to institute sensible rational reform which would enable pensioners to live in the dignity and security that former PM David Cameron promised (though never quite got around to delivering).

Why do I say that the system is irrational and in need of reform? Let's look at some of the inconsistencies and anomalies.

- 1) We have two state Pensions; not one. Which you get depends not on any calculation of need, but on your gender and when you achieved pensionable age.
- 2) Pensionable age is a moveable feast (!?). Changes to this (more of which are promised) invariably lead to fresh anomalies.
- 3) The basic Old State Pension (which most of us are still on) used to be indexed in terms of RPI. In 2011, this was replaced by the CPI; the UK is one of the very few countries which uses CPI for this purpose. The Old State Pension was, for some people, open to supplementation from the "Additional State Pension (ASP)" (formerly – until April 2002, called the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS)).
- 4) Not everyone receives the full State pensions. This depends on National Insurance contributions and/or voluntary NI top-ups or various Governmental credits.
- 5) Some (but not all) Pensions are subject to the "Triple Lock". This was introduced in 2011. Since then (apart from in 2022) the NSP and basic has been uprated in April by the highest of

(i) CPI (as recorded in the previous September and published in October), (ii) earnings growth as recorded between the previous May and July, and (iii) 2.5%.

In introducing the Triple Lock, the then Pensions Minister (Steve Webb) explained that it was intended to reverse (albeit glacially slowly) the decline in the State Pension relative to national earnings which had begun in 1980 when the then Government under Mrs Thatcher abolished the Earnings Link with the State Pension. It did achieve this effect largely because, for a number of years initially, inflation and the rise in earnings were nugatory or negative. However, in the 15 years since the introduction of the Triple Lock, pension (percentage) increases have not always kept pace with inflation and earnings. Of course, since average earnings are several times higher than either State Pensions, keeping pace with percentage increases does not prevent pensioners from falling further behind in cash terms.

6) It is immediately obvious that while the Triple Lock has been of some undoubted benefit to pensioners, the criteria employed defy any rational analysis.

It is clearly ludicrous that we have a multiplicity of different pensions made up of elements indexed in different ways and applicable to men and women differently and there are several consequences.

a) While people on the NSP benefit from the Triple Lock, even if they keep pace with average earning in percentage terms, since the NSP is lower than the average wage, they will fall behind in cash terms.

b) People on the basic Old State Pension, will fall (in cash terms) behind those on the NSP and even further behind the average wage since the basic Old State Pension is lower than both.

c) People on the Old State Pension who benefit from the ASP (formerly known as SERPS) will fall even further behind since the ASP does not benefit from the Triple Lock.

It is difficult to see any logic behind these consequences unless one believes that those of us old enough to remain on the OSP and ASP are somehow especially unworthy and therefore deserving of discriminatory punishment. Surely not?

Could these be elements in some cunning plan masterminded by a superior mind in this (and past) governments? Will this master plan eventually reach its predetermined goal, currently beyond the ken of humble mortals like ourselves? What will that goal look like? I must confess to scepticism.

It seems more likely to me that there is no masterplan but that there are simply unintended consequences of piecemeal tinkering with an unnecessarily complicated and irrational system. If so, now is the time to reform it constructively and on the basis of a proper, fair and agreed plan.

We must also observe that pensioners have, over the years, been given (and partially deprived of) various sticking plaster schemes in lieu of a resolution of the deficiencies in the various pension schemes and in response to random events.

The free TV licence was given by Chancellor Brown when the uplift to

the pension was so derisory that he was seriously embarrassed. It was partially removed by Chancellor Osborne.

The Christmas Bonus (of £10) was given by Prime Minister Heath more than half a Century ago. Had it been indexed in terms of the then official index (RPI) it would be worth £175 today.

The Winter Fuel Allowance was introduced as one of our Universal Benefits. Chancellor Reeves has just subjected it to a crude cliff-edge means-test. Was a proper impact assessment carried out? An upcoming case in the Scottish Court of Session may give us an answer.

What reforms are necessary?

Firstly, as Steve Webb and others have observed, the UK State pensions are very poor in comparison with comparable developed countries. They must be improved.

Secondly, a responsible Government should consult widely to establish an agreed target for the level of a unified State Pension. This could be an agreed percentage of the average wage, the Living Wage, or some other fair criterion.

Thirdly, the Government should set a target date for achieving the agreed level of pension.

Fourthly, the Government should establish an agreed method of indexation of the State Pension.

None of these tasks is easy but, with serious professional analysis and thought, the difficulties are not insuperable. It is not unreasonable for us to expect that from a Government.

This is the editor's summary of the longer document produced by Philip for the UCU Retired Members Committee. You can contact Philip if you want to be on his mailing list.

From the Archives



CC. [Old Age Pension Book Postal Order, 1909](#)

Google AI contribution: In 1909, the United Kingdom introduced the first state pension, the "Old Age Pension," which was paid through the Post Office. This pension was paid to individuals over 70 with limited income, who were British subjects and had resided in Great Britain and Ireland for at least 20 years. The pension was a non-contributory system, meaning it was funded by taxpayers generally.

10. Supporting members' wellbeing amid cuts and workload pressures.

UCU and other teaching trade unions, have reported the ongoing crisis in education - job losses, cuts and course closures - that is having a devastating impact on our members. Across both HE and FE, increasing workload pressures are taking a serious toll on mental health and wellbeing.



We know that many members are struggling, and it is vital they have access to the support they need.

Education Support is the only UK charity dedicated to the mental health and wellbeing of teachers, lecturers and education staff across schools, colleges and universities.

They offer confidential, 24/7 support, 365 days a year, including a free helpline, counselling services and financial assistance. [Click here for more information or to access support.](#)

[UCU campaigns team](#)

11. Radical Stroud

Chartist Festival: Sat 17th - Sun 18th May. Fundraiser for the Heavens Valley & the Trinity Rooms.

Saturday 17th May

-11am Commemorative Walk from The Prince Albert, Stroud to Selsley Hill with performances and readings.

-12.15pm Gathering at Selsley Hill (the Long Barrow) for performative history

-2pm Film: DAYS OF HOPE community film about the 1839 Selsley meeting. Showing on the hour at 2pm, 3pm and 4pm

-5pm Political Poetry: Presentation about 19th century political poetry plus readings.

-7pm Music: Stroud Red Band

-8pm Presentations about the Heavens Valley & Trinity Rooms followed by a performance linking Stroud with the 1839 Newport rising

Sunday 18th May 2025

Music: Bands featured in the film Days of Hope

-6.30pm Chinese Burn

-8.00pm Forgetting Curve.

12. Bristol Bus Boycott

Bristol remembered the life and achievements of one of the UK's leading civil rights campaigners during a Bristol Cathedral service in January 2025.

Dr Paul Stephenson, who led the Bristol Bus Boycott and helped pave the way for the Race Relations Act in the 1960s, died in November 2024 aged 87.

From humble beginnings in the East of England, Dr Stephenson became known nationwide through his campaigns, and forged relationships with some of the most famous figures of the 20th Century.

Ahead of a service marking his extraordinary life's work at Bristol Cathedral his daughter Fumi Stephenson has shared a selection of family photos telling his story.

Text from the BBC report of the event. The Great Western Railway InterCity Express Train 800036 is named for Paul Stephenson; I could find no CC clear photos; let me know if you find one and I'll include it next time.

[Jo Corke SW RMB.](#)

13. Intersectionality

In November 2024 I attended the UCU annual equality conference at Aston University. A half day was provided for each of the UCU equality strands and I attended the women members' annual equality conference. The theme was intersectionality- breaking down barriers and enforcing our rights at work. Keynote speakers explained how the term intersectionality is used in the context of equality followed by discussion of how an awareness of intersectionality can guide action and practice.

The history of anti-discrimination legislation is one of responding to inequality with measures that address single issues such as the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005. The Equality Act of 2010 lists nine protected characteristics including disability, race, sexual orientation and age. The Act has a clause covering dual discrimination which allows legal cases to cut across the different equality protected characteristics, but it has never been implemented. This means legal discrimination challenges can only be made on the basis of single characteristics. This does not reflect the experience of discrimination of people who have more than one protected characteristic for example disabled women.

Awareness of intersectionality as a theoretical perspective developed in 1989 with the publication of a paper by *Kimberle Crenshaw*. '*Demarginalising the intersection of race and sex: a Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist policies*'. In this

paper Crenshaw challenges the assumed homogeneity of single identity categories and illustrates how different people within the same group can have different experiences. The paper follows the case of a black woman denied employment in an organisation. When taken to court the organisation could show that it employed black people and that it employed women. The case argued against the organisation was that the black people employed were all men (doing manual factory jobs) and that the women were all white (and employed as secretaries) There was no intersection that included black women and the court rejected the case on the basis that there was no discrimination against blacks and no discrimination against women. The court also concluded that to take a case on the two counts of being black and a woman was unfair as it allowed more chance of proving the discrimination than others would have.



Maxine Looby president of UCU addressed the meeting explaining that she has an unseen disability, fibromyalgia. One of her aims as president is to speak from her own experience to improve understanding of how disability presents and how it intersects with other protected characteristics. As a black woman she says she is 'at the crossroads of

intersectionality. The challenges are real and too often create additional barriers. Black women face double and triple discrimination in the workplace'; Maxine believes too many women go on coping to the point of burnout and we need an inclusive approach to intersectionality. We need to be able to discuss challenges without being considered inadequate. 'As a black woman you have to constantly prove yourself as a woman and then as a black woman.

The last agenda item of the women's conference was how intersectionality can help in practice. Looking at organisations through the lens of intersectionality can prevent groups from being marginalised. For example, rather than looking at how many disabled people or black people are promoted in an organisation, data can be gathered on how many black women are promoted or how many black disabled men. Comparison can be done within groups as well as between groups to ensure no one falls between two positions. The law should reflect the lived experience of discrimination and the provision of section 14 of the Equality Act 2010 should be used to allow for the hearing of cases on dual discrimination. In the workplace racism can be dismissed as just personality conflict. UCU intend to employ a black case worker in 2025 to support members and initiate more legal challenges to discrimination.

Ruth Amias. SW RMB

14. International news: *All we have to lose, after all, is starvation wages and climate catastrophe.*

Solidarity with GKN (Fiat) workers in Florence. In 2018, when British investment firm Melrose acquired the historic GKN factory in Florence, it set the stage for a sudden confrontation.

On July 9, 2021, 422 workers were notified by email that the factory would close within days. In response, they "occupied" the facility, challenging the system that prioritizes profit over people, while trying to re-industrialize the plant "from below." the plan is to recover the factory on a cooperative basis with the production (and recycling) of solar panels, batteries, and cargo bikes.

This is a visionary struggle for a Just Transition from below. A group of very organised and determined workers have a detailed plan to shift production from parts for luxury cars to solar panels and cargo bikes - *not for profit, but for the benefit of the community*. It is a convergence of struggles rising up towards a new vision of the world. Watch the video about the remarkable struggle by the workers at the GKN factory in Florence - a struggle that, incredibly, has a real chance of winning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAGaxBpDhRY>

The Italian website <https://insorgiamo.org/>

John Cabot: The American University in Rome has this April 2025 update. <https://news.johncabot.edu/2025/04/ex-gkn-workers-in-italy-a-fight-beyond-the-factory-walls/>

Bella ciao

15. Erased from the Face of the Earth: A powerful testimony of Ukraine's devastation

M Shed, Bristol. Saturday 26 April to
Sunday 20 July 2025. Free.

[Find out more](#).

A photographic exhibition that
highlights the devastating impact of the
ongoing war in Ukraine following the
Russian invasion in February 2022,
opened at M Shed in Bristol on 26
April 2025.

Organised by the charity Ukraine Aid
and Welfare with the support of the
Embassy of Ukraine in the United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern
Ireland, *Erased from the Face of the
Earth* demonstrates the resilience of
Ukrainians when faced with immense
destruction.

Many Bristolians have welcomed
Ukrainian families since the beginning
of the invasion, helping them rebuild
their lives. They have expressed the
utmost sympathy for the Ukrainian
people, and this exhibition can't leave
anyone unaffected by the destruction
depicted in these images and the
ongoing consequences of Russian
aggression against Ukraine.

The exhibition has already been
successfully presented in several
European cities, including Poland,
Spain, Croatia and Bulgaria.

Philip Walker, Bristol City Council's
Head of Culture and Creative
Industries, said: "I am really proud that
Bristol is the first city in the UK to host
this important photographic exhibition.
We wanted to give people the chance
to see this exhibition that catalogues
this dreadful war. While it is a sobering
experience, the resilience and bravery

of the Ukrainian people really shines
through."

M Shed Princes Wharf,

Wapping Rd, Bristol BS1 4RN



Banksy Stamp; photo Copyright Jo Corke



Another Ukrainian stamp and a poster depicting
the RTS Moskva. Source: Creator: Elena Perez-
Alvaro; author's photograph. [Creative Commons
Attribution 4.0 International](#) Copyright: ©
Copyright by BACHLaw Foundation and the
Authors.

16. Editor's Note.

Contributions to the newsletter are
welcome.

Jo Corke SW RMB
