



South East Central Branch

Annual Report

2010/11



In Confidence for South East Central CWU members

Contents

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Page</u>
Branch Secretary Report	Chris Power	3
Chainmakers Festival	BCLM Trust	6
Openreach South East Contact	Steve Browett	7
Equality Report	Di Hill	9
Chairman's Report	Dave Kauffman	10
Assistant Secretary Report	Steve Taylor	12
Health and Safety co-ordinator	Steve Awcock	13
Women's Report	Di Hill	16
Financial Report	Steve Taylor	17
Auditors Report	Les Seymour	17
Retired members Report	Dave Lomakin	17
Safety Officers report	George Hannah	18
Political Report	Di Hill	19
NEC Member report I	Gary Heather	20
Legionnaires Disease	George Hannah	22
Old Minutes	Steve Taylor	23
NEC—Maria Exall	Maria Exall	24
Obituary List		25
Meeting dates		26
Current points of contact		27

The views expressed in this annual report are personal to the author concerned and may not be the view of the branch. This report is “in confidence” and is meant for CWU South East Central members only.

Branch Secretary – Chris Power

Personally speaking 2010 was an out of the ordinary year, since becoming a Branch Secretary back in 1995. Having gone through the excitement, and busy period of getting married in May 2010, and then going to the West Indies for the honeymoon, I indulged in a bit of Caribbean dancing at a street party, and after only 2 rum punches (honest) thought someone had kicked me in the heel quite hard. Having made it back to the hotel room, then just making it to the airport and flew home, was told that my Achilles tendon was ruptured and could be off work between 3 – 6months! Good job the injury was on the last night of the honeymoon and not the first!

Having returned to work some 3 months 2 weeks after the injury, I can only thank Dave



Kauffman and Steve Taylor for all the hard work they put in without me being able to attend any meetings, as all I could do was take calls when off sick. Its a shame that BT Group could not have assisted at this difficult time by releasing Steve Taylor full time to cover my role. That's the way things are I suppose. Although my management were very good to me when I was off which was appreciated.

Within the Annual Report I would like to mention BT Pay, Recruitment and Organisation, General and Committee meetings, Regional issues as the Chair will cover Openreach more in depth.

So, saying that I move straight on to Openreach to detail just the one issue that must explained - Compulsory Overtime: Service Delivery Transformation was agreed nationally in 2009 when 488 out of our 665 Branch Openreach members voted to accept SDT. 73% return with a 76% YES vote to accept. We felt the main issues of “Trackers” in vans related to performance, and attendance patterns, would be the main concerns from members. As it has transpired the biggest issue of concern is the compulsory overtime to a max of 48 hours. We as a Branch don't like it, Head Office doesn't like it, and we know the members don't like it. Unfortunately it's there, and unless challenged will remain in force. We were the first Branch nationally to have a member dismissed in relation to failing to work compulsory overtime. The Branch is fully supporting the member in his current employment battle.

BT Pay



The National Executive of the CWU fought hard on this one, in 2010.

We had several meetings in Brighton, Tunbridge Wells, and surrounding areas on the subject, and whilst BT Group were only offering a below rate of inflation pay rise, many more members seemed more concerned over the possibility of a strike. We had Special meetings that were not particularly well attended, and this was reflected across the country, and so the decision was taken to ballot the membership on a 3 year PAY deal that was massively accepted.

Recruitment & Organisation

BT Group membership, which makes up some 85% of the Branch membership has been in decline for some years due to redundancies and leavers. We finished the year with 849 BT members which, when considering we were just under 1000 BT employee a few years ago is a big drop. It was on this basis that we have run several "Recruitment days" in our main locations of Sevenoaks Workstyle, Brighton Kempton and Brighton Withdean buildings which have been very successful. Thanks to Peter Francis for all his hard work at Sevenoaks, where, whilst there appears to be a hardcore amount of non members, it's mainly transfers from other Branches that is the key. People from all over South London area seem to end up at Sevenoaks and it's these members who should be in the Branch to attain representation from local reps.

Brighton sites, Withdean and Kempton were also visited regularly and many members were transferred into the Branch as a consequence of Gatwick City Place closing. ***WE WELCOME ALL THESE NEW MEMBERS*** to the Branch, and please could they advise colleagues that are still not in this Branch to contact one of the Branch offices to enable transference to **SOUTH EAST CENTRAL BRANCH**.

A very quiet year in relation to the Non recognised sector. Personal Telephone Fundraising (PTF), Virgin Media, American Express, INKFISH, have all seem membership levels drop due to no campaigns being able to be mounted due to not enough reps available. Due to the take up of Agency staff by BT to cover the Field engineering sector, we have attended and been successful in signing many **HAYS Agency** staff into the Branch, and we welcome all new members.

During 2011 we are looking to mount more campaigns and specifically highlighting **VIRGIN MEDIA** staff. We have also signed up for the Building Tomorrow Together initiative being conducted by Head office, to ascertain whether our Branch is working to Best practice, and give us advice on organisation

General Meetings

During 2010 we had 6 General meetings in total around the branch area. These meetings were spread out over the main areas of Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, Hastings and Seven-

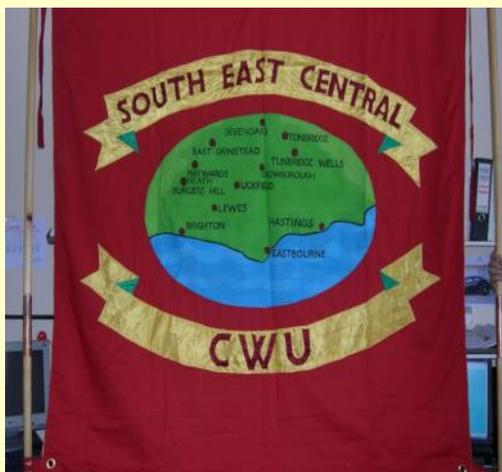
oaks. One meeting did not reach enough for the Meeting to continue (minimum 12 members present) and only one meeting had in excess of 30 members present (PAY Meeting Brighton). For this reason Branch Meetings have been reduced with only 1 meeting in each of the 4 areas, with an AGM in addition to those. If meetings continue to get a lack of interest, which would be a shame, the Officers will consider only calling meetings when a major issue arises, as they do in LONDON. It's a matter of "Use it or loose it". The officers are considering incentives over and above the "Free drink and food", that goes with the current meetings. Maybe meetings on a Saturday or Sunday? Maybe a free raffle once a year for a valuable offering, for those that attend meetings. All is being considered - let the Branch officers know your views of encouraging members to meetings. SPECIAL Meetings can be called at any time as they were last year on PAY.

Committee meetings

The Branch Committee raison d'être to form policy and create a strategic direction for the Branch continues, and are fairly well attended. I do thank all Committee members for attending, as its not much fun travelling to Uckfield on a cold wintry night to discuss workplace issues. We had four meetings last year and into double figure attendance at every one.

Looking Forward

Recruit, recruit, recruit is the key to continued increase in strength. Please support the Branch when meetings take place and we are looking to introduce some Social events this year. I wish all members a prosperous 2011.



***Please Make Use Of The
Branch Website On
www.cwusec.org.uk***

Branch committee 2011

If you are interested in joining the South East Central branch committee, which meets 4 times a year on a Tuesday evening in a central location (Uckfield Civic centre) to help formulate branch policy and negotiating standpoint on issues, please make yourself known to a branch officer or make yourself known at the AGM, at the Royal Wells Hotel, Mount Ephraim in Tunbridge Wells on Tuesday 16th February starting 7.30pm. It is unlikely all positions for committee will have been filled.

Committee meetings last 2 hours and we are especially seeking members from ethnic minorities backgrounds, Union Youth (Under 30) , women, and gay/lesbian members to join the committee.

Also members from companies other than BT are particularly welcomed as we represent members in some 9 companies in this area. If you are unable make the meeting please email your details to cwu.sec.br@btinternet.com where upon receipt an officer will contact you to discuss more.

The Women Chainmakers of Cradley Heath

In 1910 the women chainmakers of Cradley Heath focussed the world's attention on the plight of Britain's low paid women workers. In their back yard forges hundreds of women laid down their tools to strike for a living wage.

Led by the charismatic union organiser and campaigner Mary Macarthur, the women's struggle became a national and international *cause célèbre*. After ten long weeks they won the dispute and increase their earnings from as little as 5 shillings (25p) to 11 shillings (55p) a week. Their victory helped to make the principle of a national minimum wage a reality.

Mary Macarthur proposed that surplus money in the strike fund should be used to build a 'centre of social and industrial activity in the district'. Thousands of people turned out for the opening of the Cradley Heath Workers' Institute on 10 June 1912



You must sink or swim. Be the master and win. Or serve and lose. Suffer or triumph. Be Anvil or hammer - GOETH

Openreach South East Contact - Steve Browett

Steve is elected by CWU Branches in London and the South East as the primary contact between the CWU and Openreach Service Delivery. We asked for his thoughts on Openreach

It's not a secret that Openreach are in trouble, even though finances show profits. It is obvious if you have to force, use compulsion and threaten people to get them to work overtime because there is not enough staff to do the work, then something is amiss. In my view this has been brought about by a historic misjudgement of biblical proportions by Openreach management.

Openreach have used skills, judgement, knowledge, guesswork, probably seaweed and maybe the toss of a coin for the last five years to plan staff levels, and any company that swings from a surplus staff situation, to a state where there is not enough people to complete business as usual work in a matter of weeks, will struggle to keep the confidence of the staff.

But when I hear Openreach, or the Government for that matter, start talking about us "all being in it together", I think about my recent visit to the Titanic exhibition at the O2 arena. The First Class passengers mostly survived on the Titanic, and the workers and the passengers in steerage mostly perished. We are not all in this together. It is only non-management grades that have been forced into work against their will. It is only non-management grades that have been forced to change their hours of attendance, forced to work later, subjected to electronic monitoring and increased performance measurement and management.



Openreach have gone through the full range of forecasting cock-ups, even though the company is in a good position. Even though we are apparently in times of austerity, demand for copper lines, that we were told were going to decline last year, is increasing. Openreach didn't see it coming. Next Generation Access (NGA) is popular, and the demand for superfast broadband is so great, that Openreach are having to recruit more staff to keep up with customer requirements. Remember not long ago they ran a release scheme. Openreach are too late with the recruitment though. Productivity has gone up, which should mean the workstack has gone down, but it hasn't because the pressure to complete more jobs in less time has meant there are now more faults on MDFs and in the network. They have sacrificed speed for quality, and now need a new recovery plan – again.

The approach to getting the workstack down, is to revert to the same old Openreach tactics. Pick up the stick that says “work quicker” and start waving it about. The response from the Openreach workers, was as always, to give the managers what they want, more clears. But that was at the expense of quality and the resilience of the network. So the workstack, instead of going down, goes up. They made the same mistake with SMT. To err is human, but to make such a complete mess of Openreach success, progress and expansion of the telecoms industry takes a certain type of Openreach management.

But it not just the Openreach strategists who get it wrong. Some local managers chip in with daft decisions. There are green and wet behind the ear operational managers, with no life experience and all the jovial “bon ami” of a mortician with haemorrhoids, trying to translate data into coaching plans, enthuse their team to do more overtime, all the time knowing that the direction of travel for Openreach is bewildering and confused.

Openreach people have faced, and coped with a lot of change over the past few years and there is more to come. Why? Competition and privatisation of a natural monopoly is the underlying reason, but there’s nothing we can do about that immediately.

The CWU meet management, and sometimes sit in a mixture of amusement, and genuine concern when Openreach brief out that they are ready to go-ahead with another crackpot idea. But the CWU has to get beneath what they say, and examine what they really want. Get into negotiations to do the best for the members. Talk to your enemies and listen to your friends. And know the members will back you.



Negotiations are about getting the best you can get, by using the strength you have got. And we have strength, especially in a situation where Openreach is vulnerable. We need to use that strength to send Openreach a message about overtime. We will work overtime, if we want to. But we will not be forced. If part of the Openreach recovery plan is to continue to misuse contractual overtime in an effort to mask a lack of resource, then we will react.

The way contractual and compulsory overtime has been used is not in the spirit of the Openreach Attendance agreement, it untenable and un-maintainable in the long term – and remember, we first experienced contractual overtime last April. If they force us to work against our will – we will react.

Equality Report

Equality in the CWU has its own Department which keeps the branches up to date with new issues and offers information and support if needed. The Equality Bill 2010 was rushed through the Commons and the Lords before the election, not everything the Unions wanted was in it but it gave more harmonisation and simplified the various types of discrimination. In October the Equality Act 2010 came into force, unfortunately some aspects were not enhanced by the coalition government one being mandatory pay audits which would highlight where pay is not equal.



In November, I attended the CWU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Conference where there are always many good debates. First motion was asking for support for the Education unions in opposing Michael Gove's free school and academies proposals both with inclusive policies on sex and relationships. Another was around all the equality conferences being held together, this was opposed as it was felt that the time is not right and was reminded of Justin Fashanu who committed suicide 8 years ago after he came out...no other footballer has come out since.

Under the last Government we had Michael Foster as Equality Minister (Hastings MP) and of course Harriet Harman and the unions had input on many issues. We now have Teresa May who until given this role had an appalling record on equality issues always voting against gay and transgender rights!!! There has been much opposition around this unlikely appointment.

Brighton Pride parade 2011 is 6th August; the CWU will be there with the LGBT banner. LGBT, Disability, Women, Black Workers, if you would like to know more, become involved or have any issues regarding any strands of Equality please contact me or the branch.

In the South East we have a Youth Committee if you would like to know more or become involved please contact

Dianne Hill 07747193133 cwuse.women@btinternet.com or cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com

Chair Person — Dave Kauffman

I would like to Thank all those in the Branch for their support during 2010 it has been a challenge and the help and support you as **MEMBERS** of the branch give us, the Officers of the Branch, is always appreciated. I would like to offer you all a 'Happy New Year' on behalf of the Branch as we march on into 2011.

2010 was a difficult year, like so many have been in recent times in BT, as divisions moved to realign their businesses to combat the changes in Telecoms and the down turn in the Economy. In 2009 we saw BT struggling with the recession and this rolled into 2010 but as the year progressed BT saw its business in parts grow with the help of you and this has been part of the challenge and consternation of you, the Membership, in the way you feel the company have treated you .

It was a challenging time in 2010 in the branch, the Branch Secretary was off work with a damaged Achilles tendon and in plaster for 3 months at a time when the CWU were gearing up for Industrial action with the company over Pay.



It has been in Openreach with the introduction of the Transformation Contract that we have seen a large number of changes, in attendance and performance and I know these have caused a lot of confusion and anger amongst people as the year unfolded and Openreach enacted parts of the new contract people found themselves on.

We have had in the last year Openreach pushing Contractual overtime and be under no illusion it's in the new contract and it is something that Openreach people will have to do .

Openreach are also leading on Performance managing of people, applying pressure on people to work in a way detrimental to Health in a push to find the shortfall in productivity to combat the work stacks that where running away with themselves due to poor forecasting by BT and the release scheme held at the end of 2009.

I am well aware of the issues in "Transformation" and although in our area the new contract was accepted in all the votes by a large majority . I continue to push head office to look at the way Openreach sold the contract changes and then the way they implemented them. I understand there is a lot of sympathy at HQ and patience is wearing thin on some issues.

We have also seen a move by the company to change attendance and performance measures in Operate ,Global and Retail in both field and office based work streams

The buzz going forward will be Performance in all divisions, I would urge all of you to log and keep important conversations and emails you have had with managers in a diary as a log of how your performance is managed. This being because the blunt hatchet approach that some managers use to deal with this process will undoubtedly effect some of you during the coming year.

Branch secretary

I would like to thank Chris Power as Branch Secretary for his work during the year and the support he gave even while off sick with his Leg in Plaster.

Finances

Steve Taylor as financial secretary this year, has had us looking at what we spend and how we spend it to make sure the branch gets the best for its Bucks. Steve has also moved the Branch on to the new branch accounting system employed by HQ. Thanks for all the work you have put in Steve.

Political and Women's issues

Dianne Hill has worked hard this year for the branch on these issues and I would like to thank Dianne for this. Dianne has attended several conferences in her own time to represent the branch and report back on the issues that are current. One of the main issues this year on the Political front has been the "Keep the Post Public" campaign as privatisation of the Post Office will dramatically effect this Union

Dianne also does some work on the Equality issues in the branch and helps maintain the branch membership records.

Safety

I would like to thank Steve Awcock, George Hannah and Nick Smith for their work on the safety team this year. I know that the Safety team have worked hard to maintain their level of support in Accident investigation, Building inspections and driving hard to try and reduce the amount of accidents at work.

I know management always release a safety statement saying "Safety is paramount and all process will be followed", but I feel sometimes this statement is at odds with local management style on what is safe, as BT push for productivity as this will impinge on time on Job and this will effect productivity an Accident waiting to happen.

So Stay Safe in 2011

The fourth coming year will see a number of branch meetings across the **South East Central Branch** patch and I would ask you all to try and attend these and have your say it is always a pleasure to talk to members. Don't worry if you have not been to a meeting before as I will always try to explain protocol if I see new faces at a meeting. We always offer a buffet and a drink after the meeting, which we try to keep to a 2 hour event

Assistant Secretary East - Steve Taylor



Is the grass greener on the other side? Many engineers out there think that office workers have it easy; however office workers have their own problems.

In the Openreach SMC's of Tunbridge Wells and Brighton and soon to be in Sevenoaks is a phone system called HAD (you have been) which is linked to a tool which delivers the work called WFM (woofum).

The work delivered by WFM can be a mixture of calls, emails or other activities, and all calls delivered are recorded even the screens people look at, and everything is timed to the second including the toilet breaks. Even tea and lunch

breaks have an allotted time and if you are late it goes against the adherence measure. So the standard procedure of, I want more productivity, I want it better quality and when you hit the targets we are going to raise them, is not just restricted to field staff.

However, this message is not for doom and gloom but for advice that is useful for everyone. I have had several cases of formal warning hearings in regards to productivity, including a final formal warning that I successfully overturned within the SMC. My advice is, if you get taken to one side and warned that your performance is low, don't be defensive, look at what equipment, software or training you could do with to make your job easier and ask for it to be recorded in your training plan. Ask for a root cause analysis of your work, if the manager cannot give you one, how can you be certain where you need improving? Having a "stat" saying, you take four minutes longer on the phone than everyone else; this does not count as a root cause analysis.



Any formal procedure that says you can take a union representative in with you; always, always, always take one! Don't be fooled by managers who say "lets have a chat", "it's not a problem" etc., as once you start down the formal route of discipline it's possible that 3 months down the line from the "little chat" you no longer have a job.

Health & Safety Co-ordinator Report -Steve Awcock

It has been a strange year for me this year. I spent the first part of the year nursing a bad back and spent the majority of the middle of the year having physio-therapy for a bulging disc. I have to say that whilst there was a delay in the treatment I received, once I was in the program, the treatment I received via the company was excellent. I would highly recommend that anyone who finds themselves in the position of unfortunately having muscular skeletal health issues and is offered the chance of phsysio through the company, that you take it. I ended up on a fairly intensive 10 week program which made a vast difference to my mental and physical condition. Like most people I haven't kept up with my exercises as I should do, but the improvement in my mobility and what I can now achieve compared to before is amazing. During this program I was able to work, and through proper management of the condition I was allowed to do increased my duties on a daily basis.



Also for the last part of the year I have moved to the dark side, on a temporary basis, covering my field manager due to his ill health. It has been an eye opener to say the least, and has made me more aware of the roles and responsibilities we all play and have in the field of health & safety. As far as co-ordinating Union Safety Reps and managing a team the roles are not that dissimilar. If you are lucky and have a manager on your team that shows an active role and concern in health & safety, you should count yourself very lucky. It is one thing to say you are, but another to act on it. Issues between the local Unions and management are much less now than they were 5 – 6 years ago on health & safety matters (I know the same may not be true with the industrial relations side of things) but with health & safety the aim is the same, we just want people to come to work, work and go home at the end of the day healthy and safe. It still amazes me, even after doing this role for somewhere near 10 years, that people still ignore even the basic health & safety rules.

Every year when I start writing my report I try to not make it preachy (looking back I've started with that line 4 times before) but it is difficult not to. At a recent team meeting, the discussion of when and where it was correct to wear a safety helmet, when working in the field. This basic fundamental safety procedure almost caused world war three, yet one would think that everyone was as used to wearing their safety helmet as they were their high visibility jerkin.

As far as accidents this year it has been a lot less traumatic than last year when we had to deal with a near fatality and it has been very refreshing to carry out most of the accident

investigations alongside management which is the way it should be. Far too often we were left out of the loop and due to time scales unable to form a case and find causes due to lack of co-operation. This has been one thing that has changed over the last 2 – 3 years and a reasonable working relationship has been formed with local management regarding accident investigations. We still have problems sometimes getting your Union Safety Reps the time they are entitled to, to be able to learn new legislation and to meet on a quarterly basis but we are going to try harder in the coming year to rectify this issue. It's not an easy problem to solve as the company is in a high state of repair and installation at the moment and the added focus on NGA work.



If

there is anyone out there interested in becoming a union safety rep please do not hesitate to contact me or the branch as any extra reps are always welcome. Sometime we aren't as efficient in getting some reps started on their path as we should be but again it is something the safety officers and I are hoping to rectify this year.

Within Openreach at the moment accidents are on the increase and all too often the root cause I'd put down to a poor risk assessment. I always worry that this is an easy cop out and misses the opportunity to really work out what the defining root cause is within most accidents. I understand that there is an increasing amount of pressure out there on all individuals no matter what division you work for be it internal or external (I still make sure that I work in the field for over 50% of my week so that I can stay in touch with the issues that affect us all every day). We made a conscious decision as a safety committee to share out the time that would be afforded us for that exact reason. I know that all everyone talks about at the moment is productivity, rosters, productivity, ipop data and productivity, but we have to stay safe and make sure our colleagues do as well.

Lastly I must say my thank you's. A huge thank you to George Hannah for his continued support and for taking some of the work load off me whilst I was covering other duties. To Nick Smith whom, no matter how much of a struggle it is for him to get into the safety office, is always helpful (as long as he isn't left unsupervised with his laptop... oh and scissors) and always ready for a fight (not with me...well maybe sometimes) but for anyone wronged and anyone who steps out of line. Lastly to the safety reps, the unsung heroes of any branch. They go about their work almost unnoticed, unnoticed that is until there is something wrong with a building or the rubbish is building up a bit, then they are everyone's best friend. We are hoping to step up our safety briefings this year and one thing we would like to focus on is getting people to report the issues they find, rather than waiting for a rep to come along or someone else to report it. So keep an eye out for them this year and if you have any issues you would like us to cover please feel free to contact us.

Steve Awcock

Health & Safety Co-ordinator sec.safety@btinternet.com

07802 231036



Women's Report - Di Hill

Once again it has been a busy year. Our Women's Conference was in Coventry and very successful. The South East was well represented both on the Telecoms and Postal sides. One of the contentious issues was the Equality Conferences all being held over one weekend, this was opposed; the feeling was that it would not help women come forward.

Opposite is a picture of some of the South East Women, (2010 women's conference) in front of a pull up of Mo Molem (1949-2005) who grew up in Coventry. Mo became a Labour MP for Redcar in 1987 but will be remembered for her courageous work in Northern Ireland.

Women's Conference is in Edinburgh this year and as we would expect there are many propositions around the effect of the cuts on women and families.



It is women who will lose their jobs.

Two thirds of the public sector workforce are women, single parents (90% of which are women) will lose a fifth of their net income according to the TUC. Cuts in working tax credit, childcare, abolishing health in pregnancy grants and child benefit for some women, children's trust fund and Sure Start. We are seeing vital services being cut, support services and rape crisis centres. It all seems disproportionately stacked against women.

In September as secretary of the CWU SE Women's committee I represented the S.E. at the Centenary of the Chainmakers festival, Dudley the West Midlands. The strike which was the first one for a minimum wage was re-enacted around the village of the Black Country museum then a rally with many speakers and musicians Billy Hayes, Tony Benn along with Billy Bragg.

In July the women of the Region once again helped organise the stall at the Guilfest festival in the Unison marquee. We organised a petition and debates on various issues but mainly "keep the post public".

"Made in Dagenham" is an excellent film and it really does make you realise how far we've come. This was the first strike for equal pay 1968 still not there!!

Local elections in May important that we use this hard won right to vote!

We have Regional meetings once a quarter, if you would like to attend or have more information on any women's issues please contact me. 01892 702809
cwuse.women@btinternet.com

Financial Secretary - Steve Taylor

Having completed my first full year as Fin Sec, and have got used to seeing people glaze over when I start talking about the branch finances. I take some comfort in this "Glazing over", as that surely means I must be doing the job well and finances are not high on peoples priorities.



Whilst it's true that the finances for this branch are "sound", the same is not to be said for the CWU as a whole. HQ are continually looking for ways of saving money and one area they have been looking at is the death benefit. Even after a proposition was raised at conference to reduce the death benefit, which was soundly defeated, HQ continue to look at possible ways to reduce the financial burden, especially for the retired members. This branch has forwarded its own ideas to HQ in regards to the death benefit, and we will keep the branch informed of any developments.

A full report of the accounts will be given at the AGM

Senior Auditor - Les Seymour

Myself Les Seymour & Kevin Lench audited the annual accounts of the CWU South East Central branch on the 20/01/2011 & found all accounts to be up to date & correctly administered by Steve Taylor. Thanks to Steve's sterling work as financial secretary, auditing the branch accounts was straight forward, with special thanks for the coffee & cookies.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the branch officers, committee members & safety rep's for their work throughout the year.

Retired Members Secretary David Lomakin

The Branch held the Retired Union members annual "get together" at the Tunbridge Wells Football Club in October 2010. The club house provided an excellent venue for over 110 colleagues renewing friendships and finding long lost workmates. Colleagues travelled from Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Southborough, East Grinstead, Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton and of course Tunbridge Wells . Many thanks to Dianne Hill who helped prepare the refreshments and Paul Bridgett who organised the Hastings coach .

I continue to represent the Branch on the CWU South East Region Retired Members Council (SERRMC) . The council seeks to promote and protect issues affecting and concerning retired colleagues.

Branch safety officer - George Hannah

As the 2010 comes to a close I have been reflecting on what the year has brought, admittedly it has been a much quieter year than 2009 but there was, still, some worrying moments. In the broader sense the year brought us some devastating natural disasters and the advent of the “Age of Austerity”, our government warning that times were tough and going to get a lot tougher yet.



The new coalition government was less than eight months old when it had to deal with riots in the streets of the capital, those of you of an age that can remember the last Conservative led government will know they had to wait a couple of years before they had riots to deal with.

At a more local level and of more relevance to our branch we certainly had fewer serious accidents to deal with but there were a couple of incidents that gave me cause for

concern.

Firstly there was the incident in East Grinstead that, at first glance, seemed to be a non event. A young woman walked into a work site, set up by a couple of engineers, and tripped over a roll of discarded blown fibre tubing. she injured her leg and smashed a bottle of wine, no great shakes you might think but the engineer deemed responsible for the fact that the site had been set up incorrectly was given a final written warning which will hang over him for a year.

The next incident seems even more trivial, one of our colleagues was working in the road in Sevenoaks, he had gone to get some tools from his van, and he took his helmet off while at the rear of his vehicle and, quite simply, forgot to put it back on when he went back to his work site. That lapse in concentration earned him a final written warning for a year and a half. No one would have heard anything about this incident but for one thing, the general manager for our area was driving past at the time the engineer was working.

Just last week I was told of an engineer working along the A21 at Castle Hill with no helmet on, I would say that he was extremely lucky that no manager drove past as for some years now all Openreach managers have been told what is expected of field engineers. These two incidents highlight, to me, that the company has processes that we should follow because if we don't then the consequences could be quite severe, if not, career limiting.

Please be safe not sorry.

Political Report - Di Hill

2011 The Trade Unions are on the march, marching for the right to work and public services. Labour didn't win the election in fact no party had a majority and what we have now is a ConDemNation. Nearly every Town and City in the Country is marching. The Condems attack on our young people by trebling tuition fees to pay for the 80% cut in University funding and the scrapping of the EMA. Not since the 80's and Thatcher have we seen such despair and anger on our Streets.

Remember the mass protests over petrol prices well where are they now? The hauliers, the landowners, the farmers, the Countryside Alliance ...of course Labour's not in power, don't rock the boat!!!

Cameron's attack on the very foundation of the NHS will destroy the universal healthcare that Nye Bevan fought so hard to bring in, a service that treats rich and poor alike.

VAT rise, a Tory tax which is the first thing every Tory PM has done since Edward Heath brought it in at 10% in 1974. But as Dave has said "we're all in this together" just feels like some are in bit deeper than others.

Pensions RPI to CPI!!! Closure of Libraries, care homes, cuts to bus services etc. etc!!! Labour have a new leader Ed Miliband who is gradually growing into the role. As the CWU member of the SE regional Labour board I attended a South East event recently where he spoke, it really does seem that we have entered a new era in politics. After the leadership contest we can now get on with what's important.

As a member of SERTUC (Southern & Eastern Regional TUC) where I represent the interests of the CWU we are seeing Trades Councils springing up all around our Region. Brighton & Hove, Hastings, Eastbourne, Worthing and of course Lewes who are to hold a big event later this year against the cuts. The "keep the post public" campaign Royal Mail has kept many of us busy, as Chair of the CWU SE Regional political committee I have attended various rallies and meetings across the Country. With main ones in Witney (Cameron) and Kingston Upon Thames/ Twickenham (ED Davey/ Vince Cable's constituencies) In the South East the campaign has been focused mainly in the marginal seats Brighton and Hove and Hastings. An event is being organised on March 19th starting in Hastings with a campaign bus stopping in Bexhill, Eastbourne and ending in Brighton.

Opposite the South East banner on the CWU march through Kingston 22nd January 2011

TUC March for the Alternative March 26th



Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival 2011 15-17 July
Robert Tressell day, The Brass Monkey Hastings Feb 5th 12pm-8pm free event

Local elections May 5th Use your vote.

If you would like to get involved or would like more information please contact me. Di Hill 07747 193133 or cwuse.women@btinternet.com

NEC Member - Gary Heather

It is a pleasure to report to you again on my activities as a CWU executive member and as the Labour parliamentary candidate for Tunbridge Wells.

I have been a BT customer service engineer since 1981, and I am currently a member of the CWU's National Executive Committee. I have spoken at meetings of your Branch, and work with your officers on the telecoms issues in the south east region.

As an executive member on the Openreach negotiating team I have continued to deal with implementation of Service Delivery Transformation, including attendance patterns, resourcing and performance management. As I write the interim attendance arrangements are ending, so that by the end of the financial year the full extent to the flexible attendance agreement will apply. The executive believes that the company has overused contractual overtime, arguing instead for more permanent recruits to deal with the growing workstack. The union will be trying to use the SDT agreement to get more work done in-house by BT direct labour instead of contractors and agency staff. The review of iPOP is ongoing, and it is hoped that it will lead to a much better and fairer management approach to performance management for Openreach volume engineers. However, it is no secret that SDT is about increasing flexibility of staff and reducing company costs. That is the harsh reality of a privatised telecoms



market. Personally, I support and promote the CWU's policy of public ownership of UK telecommunications as a means of achieving a better deal for customers and workers in the industry.

I also continue to support the union's Delivering Digital Britain campaign for government investment in superfast broadband as a way of achieving "digital inclusion" so that people are not disadvantaged by being excluded from broadband services, either because of low income or due to where they live.

As the Labour candidate for Tunbridge Wells at the last General Election I came third behind the Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates. This was hard-

ly surprising given it is a Tory stronghold. But I fought the good fight, campaigning there for two years prior to the election and I really enjoyed it. With other party members and volunteers - including two of your Branch members, Dianne Hill and Ray Moon, who are both town councillors in the borough - we campaigned for more affordable housing and a better deal for working people in general. I also stood on the picket lines of striking Royal Mail and Land Registry union members during the campaign. I have always campaigned for the repeal of anti-trade union laws and for a positive charter of rights for workers. Part of the reason for Labour's defeat at the General Election was its failure to do enough to help working people and to reduce inequality while in office - things that I continue to campaign for.



Another great challenge for the CWU is to organise and recruit members, given the continual job losses in the postal and telecoms sectors. The executive has made this a number one priority for the union, and needs the active support of branches and members to boost union organisation and membership in workplaces. The CWU is also reviewing itself to better organise and represent its members.

All the best for the future.

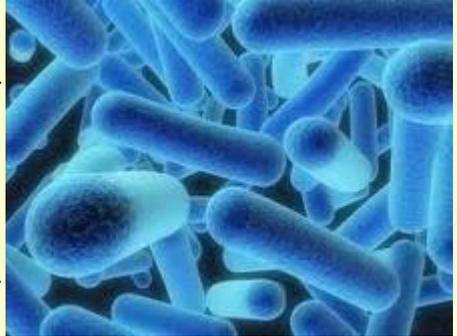
Yours fraternally,

Gary Heather
CWU NEC member
07802 231 613
gheather@cwu.org

Legionnaires Disease - George Hannah

Legionnaire's disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia which can affect anybody. It is caused by the bacterium known as legionella pneumophila and related bacteria found in environmental water sources such as lakes and rivers usually in low numbers. As these bacteria can be found in natural water systems it stands to reason they could be found in artificial or man made water systems such as cooling towers and whirlpool spas.

The Health Protection Agency published a report in June 2010 that suggested that failure to use a windscreen wash solution in your washer reservoir could be putting you at risk of contracting this illness. This is the first time a link has been made between the disease and windscreen fluid.



The HPA said, in a report published in the European Journal of Epidemiology that by adding screen wash could mitigate the transmission of legionella to drivers and passengers.

An HPA spokesperson said: "This preliminary HPA study suggests a strong association between a lack of screen wash in wiper fluid and the incidence of Legionnaires' disease. Further studies are now needed to determine whether the use of screen wash in wiper fluid could play a role in preventing this disease."

The study was carried out by the HPA after finding that cases involving the potentially fatal disease were five times more prevalent among professional drivers in England and Wales than expected.

The study also found that driving or travelling as a passenger in a van, driving with a window open and driving for long periods of time also increased the risk of infection. Also associated with an increased risk were driving an older vehicle and not using showers at home.

However, the report's authors said the findings on windscreen wash were "the most intriguing", concluding that 20 percent of Legionnaires' cases could be avoided by adding screen wash.

"This simple public health advice may be of worldwide relevance in reducing morbidity and mortality from Legionnaires' disease," the report stated.

Between 400 and 550 cases of Legionnaires' Disease have been reported in England and Wales in the last two years, with around one third of those infected as a result of travel to another country.

Minutes of Yesteryear

Every meeting held is recorded in the "minutes", here is a selection from the minutes from the Tunbridge Wells area at the outbreak of the Second World War.

Sept 9th 1939 - 16 members present

....In the view of the international position, members enquired whether it was proposed to continue the (outing) club. Various opinions were expressed and it was finally decided to recommend that the club be continued

Position of skilled men holding kit of tools who may be called up under the military act and replaced by men upgraded. It had been asked what guarantee existed to provide that such men should resume their previous position, when they returned. The Secretary replied that he had put the matter before the General Secretary, who had replied the "The Union" considered the safeguarding of such men's positions to be a prime duty, and that the "Union" would take every possible action should any cases arise.....

Oct 7th 1939 - 24 members present

....Outing Fund. A discussion took place as to whether the fund should be closed owing to the emergency and the possibility of several members being called up. Various views were expressed and it was finally decided to try and carry on. Prop C Gentry, Sec R C Hazelden. Carried

Nov 4th 1939 - 24 members present

....Outing fund. The position was again reviewed, and it was finally decided that in consequence of the general uncertainty the fund be closed and all monies subscribed returned. Prop K Illman, Sec H Mayes. Carried

Correspondence A 10. H O letter on representations made for issue of steel helmets to external staff in vulnerable areas was read. Dept agreed to issue 1000 helmets, but stated that there was bound to be unavoidable delays.....

Cigarette Fund. The Secretary reported that the TH had enquired if the branch would take part in a joint Staff Fund to send Cigarettes etc to members of the staff serving with the forces. It was Proposed E Robinson, Sec K Illman that we are prepared to take part and assist in organising and administrating the fund. Carried. Three members were elected to sit on a Joint Committee when formed. T Stringer, W Harmer, T Powell



NEC Member—Maria Exall

As one of the CWU executive members delegated to the South East Region I am pleased to contribute to your Annual Report. Although I started at BT in 1988 as a Payphone field engineer I found myself in 2010 becoming an employee of BT Openreach along with my fellow Payphone engineers as the field force was transferred.

The happenings at BT Openreach are probably a good place to start my report. There has been a lot going on! The attendance pattern changes have meant many people have found pressure at work affecting their home life. The facility to have adjustments for Personal & Domestic reasons have proved unsatisfactory to many during the interim arrangements. We have to make BT stick to its word about 'work-life balance' or else give up any pretence that they are a progressive employer. The implementation of contractual overtime arrangements so often and on a regular basis cannot carry on.

At the root of the problems on contractual overtime and the problems of taking annual leave is the fact that the current Openreach resourcing model is not working. The CWU is pleased that the company has stated it wants to recruit significantly more engineers over the next period but our challenge is to ensure those recruited have a permanent job (not agency or fixed term) and have terms and conditions equivalent to the current workforce.

In other BT divisions new performance management targets and processes have caused additional stress to an already stretched workforce. The pressures on resourcing and productivity are always with us as workers in the telecoms industry but 2010-11 has been a particularly difficult year. The Union is adopting a new organising strategy – we need to maximise our membership in all the companies where members work to give us a chance to challenge increasing draconian Management.

The year ahead is overshadowed by the problems in the economy which will be made worse not better by the current Conservative policies operated by the Coalition Government with the collaboration of the Liberal Democrats. We know that growth is slowing, inflation and unemployment is up, and the public spending cuts have not even begun to have an effect on the economy yet! It's a myth that when the public sector is being cut things will inevitably improve in the private sector. The reality is that the private and public sectors of the economy are intertwined and that less jobs and less growth is bad for all of us.

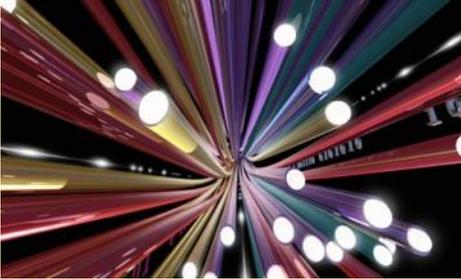
Unfortunately in the 2010 General election the Tories (with a bit of help from the media) managed to place the majority of the blame for the current state of the economy on the previous Labour Government rather than the masters of the global financial services



sector who were out of control. The Labour Government's (popular) policies to prioritise spending on things that matter to our lives (health, education, services for those in need) have been slated when actually we should be criticising the past Labour Government for not doing more to reign in the bonus laden spivs and speculators. But as this present Government of millionaires are rather too close to the very people who caused the problem in the first place so there is even less chance of them doing the right thing.

As a Union the CWU has good policies which aim at improving working people's lives. We need to invest in Broadband Britain and make sure the important telecoms services we provide can come under democratic control and ownership and meet everyone's needs. We need more rights at work to stop management bullying and give us dignity – repealing the anti union laws and improving employment rights would be a good start. We have to continue to campaign on these principles and try to win support for them amongst our wider membership and in society as a whole.

MARIA EXALL
07714 206404
mexall@cwu.org



Obituary List

Every year we sadly compile the list of members who have died during the year and this year unfortunately we had two deaths whilst in service. Although not everything, the Death Benefits were paid to the relatives and we hope that it eased their burden during this sad period.

David Cook
Peter Pickering
Peter Sergeant
Tony Kerwin-Nye
Amrik Mann
Don McLarty
Howard Smith



GENERAL MEETING 2011
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Members of the South East Central branch are advised that GENERAL meetings open to all members for 2011/12 are as follows:

2011

Annual General Meeting	February 16 th	Tunbridge Wells
General Meeting	May 11 th	Brighton
General Meeting	June 8 th	Hastings
General Meeting	September 7 th	Sevenoaks
General Meeting	November 9 th	Tunbridge Wells

2012

Annual General Meeting	February 15 th	Brighton
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Meeting venues will be advised closer to the time.
SPECIAL Meetings may be called to address urgent issues
Please also consult the Branch website on www.cwusec.org.uk

ALL MEETINGS COMMENCE 7.30 AND LAST 2 HOURS

South East Central

Current Points of Contact

Branch Secretary : Chris Power
01273 565771
07850 840581
cwu.sec.br@btinternet.com

Branch Chairperson : David Kauffman
01892 552948
07850 815644
cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com

Financial Secretary: Steve Taylor
07918 147211
cwu.sec.finsec@btinternet.com

Branch Safety Co-Ord: Steve Awcock
07802 231036
sec.safety@btinternet.com

Branch Assist Sec East: Steve Taylor
See Fin Sec

Branch Safety West: George Hannah
07802 231134
sec.safety1@btinternet.com

Branch safety East: Nick Smith
07729413811
sec.safety2@btinternet.com

Women's Officer: Di Hill
07747193133
cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com

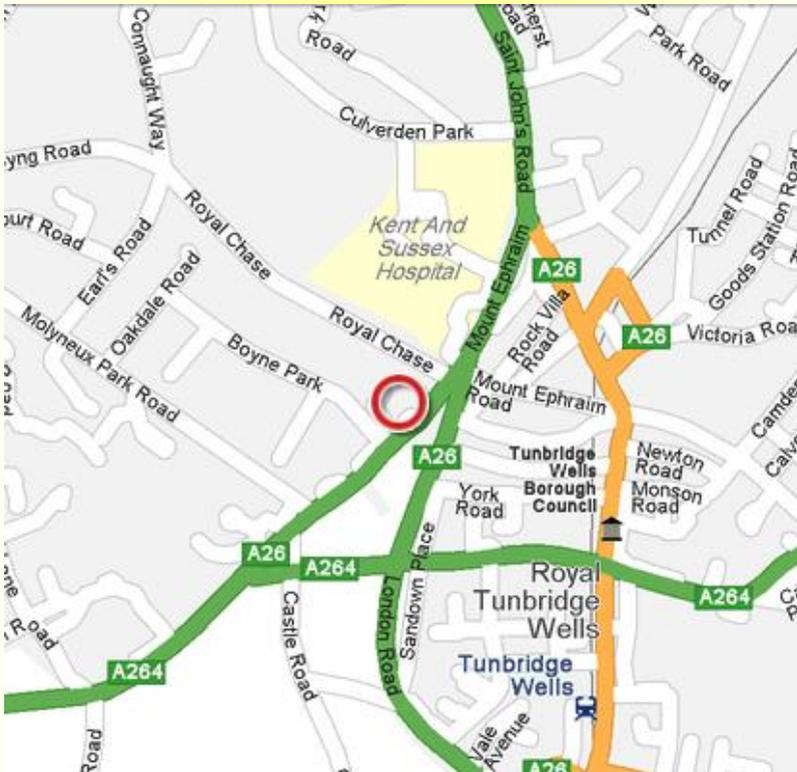
South East Central Branch

AGM

***Wednesday 16th February
2011 at 19:30 in the
The Royal Wells Inn,
Tunbridge Wells. TN4 8BE***

Brighton Office
p.p 102
Withdean Grange
London Road
Brighton
BN1 6YQ
01273 565771

Tunbridge Wells
T Wells Tel Exch
Office 305
St Johns Road
T/Wells
TN4 9TN
01892 522948



There will be a buffet and a drink on the Branch at the meeting for all members who attend. If anyone requires transportation can they please contact either Branch Offices please.