



# *South East Central* **2014 Annual Report**



**In Confidence for South East Central CWU members**

## Contents

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Page</u>
Chairs Report	Dave Kauffman	3
Secretary's Report	Chris Power	4
Assist Secretary East Report	Steve Taylor	7
Political Report	Di Hill	8
Assist Secretary West Report	Pete Francis	9
Union Learning Report	Steve Taylor	10
Financial Secretary Report	Steve Taylor	11
Obituary		11
Feature - Depression	George Hannah	12
Feature - The Way We Work	Dave Kauffman	13
Womens Report	Di Hill	14
Safety Co-Ord Report	George Hannah	15
Retired Secretary's Report	Dave Lomakin	16
Feature - Local Heroes	Steve Taylor	17
Future Meeting Dates		18
Current point of contacts		18



Picture on front cover.

*“A cold winters morning being assessed on drop wire training with the best group of Apprentice CSE's I know.”*

*“Taken at BT's Croydon Training Centre, Horatius Way in October 2014. The photo signifies a lot in that knowing a group of people for such a short period of time that you bond like **a band of brothers.**”*

Matthew Hooper

*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.*

# Chairs Report - Dave Kauffman

I would like to thank all those in the Branch for their support during 2014. The branch Secretary, the Assistant Secretaries and all on the Branch Committee. Anyone wishing to take a more active role in the branch please feel free to contact me and we can have a chat about how that may be achieved.

Some things in BT are business as usual and I can report to the Branch that I and the Branch officers deal with things like discipline, be it on performance, attendance or serious or gross misconduct throughout the year. We also deal with MCC cases, accidents at work, and anything else that crops up.

It has been a hard year that has seen disciplines issued to individuals and sadly some dismissals. It has also been a year when, as a branch, we have been able to get a couple of people reinstated in their jobs, after they had been sacked, which is not an easy task in the current climate in BT/ Openreach.



The branch and the officers also meet, as regularly as we can, with Lines of Business managers to talk about the issues that affect you, our members.

It would seem that BT and Openreach have shown us that this year, as they have done over the last few years, change is high on their agenda.

Trying to implement change by eroding the terms and conditions of its employees is not something we would support. The CWU fights hard to maintain the status quo but I am sure at some time, unless we see a change of attitude in BT's management, the CWU membership

will have to make a stand.

Openreach have had a change of CEO, so what are we to expect? This is a difficult question to answer. We know that the head of Openreach wants to change the structure of the company, which will undoubtedly effect managers but how will it affect team members, remains to be seen.

We can expect a hard fight for the CWU and as its members we need you to stand strong and join with us in facing the challenges head on .

This year I continued with the lead role in the branch for Openreach and attended

meetings at CWU HQ on the future of Openreach, the introduction of new grades into BT and Openreach for both single or dual skilled engineers.



This led to Openreach announcing the employment of up to 3000 new team members, from field engineers to call centre operatives.

What causes concern is the release packages that Openreach and BT have launched, targeting certain sections of the work force. I refer to last year's AGM report when I stated that Openreach did not always honour the agreements that the CWU have with them and so I always look, with caution, on these new proposals by the company.

Performance management has reared its

ugly head in Openreach again as we went through 2014 and it would seem more so in Service Delivery than anywhere else. We had an extremely well attended meeting, in Tunbridge Wells, on this single issue and as a branch we feel this is the *live issue* that members are facing. So it may well be that during the year we look to have a campaign on this issue amongst the membership.

The issue of Performance has also hit planning and

frames. It has also been mentioned, to the CWU, that during the inevitable reorganisation, that some parts of Openreach will go though, there may be a need to look at some attendance patterns. I will let you know, when I know. Finally I would like to thank you, the members, for your support through the year and if I am re-elected to the post of Chairperson then I promise to do my utmost for you, the members.



## Secretary's Report - Chris Power

### INTRODUCTION

BT group has gone from around 250,000 when I first started as a Union Representative in 1987 to around 65,000 today, and Union membership has also fallen due to that drop. This is the way the Telecoms market has gone, with other Companies springing up, and where this Union has continually strived to recruit within that part of the Industry.

### BRANCH ORGANISING & RECRUITMENT

Over the last year, we have

played our part in this as a Branch, by having attended the Virgin Media "Red Shed" site in Lancing on at least 6 occasions. We did pick up new and keen members, but the suggested avalanche of new members from this Company, even though the membership is not being treated well, didn't materialise.

The branch has some good activists, especially with the



joining to the Branch Committee last year of 6 new members, most of which appear keen to play a supportive role in the strategic direction of the Branch, and who, in the not so distant future, may well become the

senior Officers of the Branch.

The Branch finished the year with 971 employed members and around 121 retired members. This is a figure that whilst has dropped a bit from last year, has been significantly consolidated with the 3 month recruitment drive we had in BT at the end of 2014. We ended that 3 month period with some 9 new members (Some from the BT Yarnfield site) and 21 transfers of members for other Branches who now work within the South East Central Branch area.

Within BT plc we have planned for the coming 12 months, quarterly recruitment visits at all the Stores Hubs (in Brighton, Hove, Tunbridge Wells, Hastings) within the Branch and also the main sites of Sevenoaks Workstyle, Brighton Withdean TE and Kemp-town buildings, Tunbridge Wells TEC/TE will all be visited quarterly. Recruitment of new members is so important to the Branch, and when an AGM agrees expenditure for recruitment it is money well spent, as this gives us not only the financial backing but also gives the Officers, who are BT Employees, more time off from the employer to support members.

This will all continue in 2015. Part of the recruit-

ment also involves encouraging new activists, especially seeking youth, female, ethnic minority members to become more involved, as these areas are underrepresented. The first step is to come to a Union meeting and consider joining the Branch Committee.



### **BRANCH GENERAL MEETINGS**

The Annual General meeting at the AMEX stadium in Brighton last year was well attended with around 35 members there, although there was an expectation, and promises, of a few more. Great venue though and marvellous food. We then had 2 planned General Meetings at Tunbridge Wells 21<sup>st</sup> May, and also 10<sup>th</sup> September in Brighton. What we agreed to do in 2014 was rather than having 4 planned meetings a year, have the 3 planned meetings, and if the membership wanted any additional meetings they should contact the Branch. The planned meetings are advertised every year in the AGM report

(Details of 2015 meets are on Page 18) and Special meetings called for, by the members, would be emailed to the membership. This happened toward the end of November 2014 when many members in the Tun Wells were upset with the management style in their area of Openreach.

The meeting attracted approaching 60 members (some seen in the photo above) and has resulted in serious talks with senior level management on the issue. This is probably the way to go with General Meetings, the membership should contact the Branch office to arrange one when needed.

### **BRANCH COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Branch Committee is an interface between the General (all members) meeting, and the Officers of the Union, and more so discusses strategic direction of the Branch, and issues that cannot be taken to a General meeting quickly enough.

*We are always looking for new members to join the Committee and take the Branch in new directions Come along to the AGM and say hello.*

4 meetings during 2014 were held, and all were well attended. Really good to see new people on the Committee, and even better that most seem keen to take part in the Unions Educational course, which are all time off work (BT) for free. I would like to thank all Officers and Committee members for their help during the year.

### **BT Group Companies**

The Branch Chair, Dave Kauffman, is the lead for Openreach for the Branch. However, a major part of Openreach Service delivery is the Production Management unit (Workflow control) in Brighton Withead.

With the usual call for a reduction in staff, and the continual rejigging of the controls, it has been an uncertain year. Attendances have been, and will always be, an area the company wants to meet on, and we are governed by the Service Delivery Transformation agreement agreed by members in 2009. We are aware that attendances seem to be firmly on the radar for 2015 both in the Field and the Control environment

Another areas that I cover are Supply Chain, where I sit on the CWU National team which is elected to take the workload off the National Executive. Supply Chain is going through a major change, on the basis of building itself as a Supply mechanism which not only serve BT Group companies, but also companies outside of BT. It's a very

exciting time, with the position that possible the Hubs organisation can take on extra work, therefore taking on additional staff.

### **CONCLUSION**

Our Branch continues to attain representatives of real high quality in my opinion, and we always respond to members issues as quickly as we can. Sometimes members can become disgruntled about issues that are not only outside the grasp of the Branch, but also the Union as a whole. This should not detract from the position that we must all stand together, as with the economic climate showing signs that it will be around for a few more years yet- there is no other alternative to standing together, united, both as a Branch and a National Union, to combat any threat that the employer thrusts upon us. United we stand.



**Some of the branch committee on October's Equality & Diversity course**

# Assistant Secretary East - Steve Taylor

Last year although, at the time, did not seem particularly busy, in hindsight I have seen a great many of you in the various different formal processes. Far too many on reflection!

They varied from return to work meetings, attendance procedures, performance measures and even a work place move, and this is just dealing with members' specifics without the management meetings, union meetings and the everyday office work. The life of a union rep is varied and eventful even if sometimes it needs burning the midnight oil.

Telecoms conference was taken up with Performance Management process which meant, try as we might, we couldn't keep Dave Kauffman, our chair, from getting up and voicing your concerns on many of the discussions, and I can report that he didn't pull any punches.

Some of the debates involving our officers were filmed and can be found on our website for those members



The most hits on the website was in December with 338 unique visitors, but most pages viewed was back in November with 2,430 pages looked at and over 13,000 hits, with the most views on the photograph competition scenery section.

On a personal note, I have finally graduated after 6 years of studying History, with the Open University.



At the annual conference last year, the four main IR officers moved a motion each. I moved one prop regarding the state of BT buildings, which also incorporates one of my Regional roles that of BT Estates (did I mention the variety of work?) The Annual Conference, for those who don't know, is where the strategy of the CWU for the coming year is debated. A lot of the

that may be interested, and we will try and do it again this year too.

In regards to the website ([www.cwusec.org.uk](http://www.cwusec.org.uk)) your critical feedback is always welcome, so what would you like to see on it? Did you realise that we would be willing to let members put up stories/news events, should they be in line with the union ethos and not inflammatory!



## Political Report - Di Hill

2014 another year of cuts and more cuts!!! 2014 was another year where the rich got richer at the expense of the poor, another year of a Tory/LibDem Government.

The vote on whether we have a political fund returned an overwhelming Yes! This fund is very important to the Union when it comes to disputes with employers, without it we have no money to fight for these issues. It is also very important with a Condem Government who have this obsession with Trade Unions who if re-elected will bring in more anti-union legislation. They plan to make it more difficult for key public services to strike needing at least 40% support. The TUC, representing 54 Unions almost 6 million workers, stated that the Comdem's plan to get rid of a million public sector jobs and cut pay if they win the election. This will make it impossible for the workers to resist. **This is a Government governing with less than 40% of the Country's vote!**

Our public services are being attacked, run down and sold off, the NHS being privatised through the back door, 5,000 fire fighters gone, that's 20% smaller, police looking at more cuts and so it goes on!

I attended the Tolpuddle Martyrs event in Dorset, which was really well attended, the CWU Youth had a stall and lots of CWU banners in the march. Tributes were paid to Bob Crow (RMT) and Tony Benn,



who's granddaughter, Emily Benn, gave a wonderful account of growing up with such a wonderful Grandfather. Emily is standing for Parliament in one of the Croydon seats.

I have met with some of our Labour Parliamentary Candidates. In Tunbridge Wells we have Kevin Kerrigan who works for an IT Company and is a CWU member, Kevin is working hard with street stalls, etc. around the Constituency. Sarah Owen in Hastings, who is everywhere,

speaking to people, attending events, she is a real hard worker. Nancy Platts is standing in Brighton Kemp Town and has always been very supportive of the CWU campaigns joining picket lines and not afraid to stand up for what she believes in. Nancy will be a real representative for us, the workers when she is in Parliament!

The Government have put our 40% of Eurostar up for sale. The cut off date for interest was October, but all being done in secret so it is not known the level of interest. Taxpayers were ripped off over the sale of Royal Mail so one wonders who will benefit from another bit of our Country sold off.

General Election and local elections in May, very important to vote, 5 more years of the Tories will destroy everything our fore fathers fought for, many giving their lives in wars so we could have a better life. When 80 of the richest people own as much wealth as half of the World's population something is wrong. This is NOT what they fought for.



Rushed changes to the electoral rules ending registration by household and the block University registration has seen a real drop in who can vote. Students will have to register separately and with the hike in student fees I don't think they

would be voting for this Government. It's as if Cameron wanted fewer voters, that always helps the Tories. It will get much worse for our young people if the Tories get back in, debts, zero hours contracts, low-pay, broken public

services, unaffordable housing. Their pensions will be, pay more for longer and get less. This is where Labour's campaign for everyone in Britain to have a voice is so important.

Register and Use your Vote

## Assistant Secretary West - Peter Francis

It will be 30 years, this year, since I joined BT but probably only around 6 years in which I have been seriously involved with the CWU and been Assistant Branch Secretary. With all the issues we deal with in BT it has probably given me the most gratification knowing we have achieved something for our members which gets increasingly harder and harder with "terms and conditions" constantly under threat and being whittled away at every opportunity by the company. From being a field engineer for many years the days of, "A day without a laughter is a day wasted," seems long gone.

I am currently working within BT Sport for TS&O in a very exciting, vibrant part of the business working as a Service Leader in BT Tower responsible for the end to end network.

Since last year's update my role within the branch has centred within Sevenoaks WS2000, this is one of the branches main sites with

changes constantly happening. From Global Services Service Assurance finally winding down in November. This gave the branch an enormous amount of work and trying to ensure approx. 100 members were given roles within the company and hoping the roles were suitable.

Sevenoaks is now growing again with other parts of the business expanding their workforce within the building, giving roles to not just re-deployees but also new roles. The site will hopefully continue to grow presenting new opportunities and promotion prospects for our members within the branch area.

The site still has a Global presence mainly with the Cyber defence teams, Openreach, TS&O as well as Retail BTB being the largest presence and doubling its workforce in this last 12 months and still expanding.

Chris, Dave and I attend



many meetings at the site with the management teams. If there is anything you wish to be raised do not hesitate to contact either one of us.

Hopefully this next year will be good for the branch and its members, with some bright new committee members now on board this will be a good opportunity to start getting them involved helping to negotiate and defend our members rights within the region and give them a better insight into the work we do as they are the future of the branch.

# Union Learning - Steve Taylor

Last year I reported that I had managed to acquire the empty office, opposite the union office in the Tun Wells telephone exchange, to open a learning centre. With matched funding from the Branch and head office we equipped it and opened it later in the year.

In the last year I have produced three learning newsletters, one of which celebrated the centenary since the outbreak of the First World War. The newsletter was a case study on how to find First World War combatants online. If you did not realise, yes it was me who that wrote the case study, however, if anyone else would like to produce a case study, please feel free.



There is a further newsletter planned for after the AGM on how to trace the criminals in your family with the help of online court records and old newspapers, and yes I

have found a colourful rogue in my family tree. Once again I will try to run the event and make it open to all members, which will allow retired and non-BT people to attend. Keep an eye out for further details.

During the November Lunchtime learning, a film crew came down to video the event which put a little extra stress upon the day. The film came out all right but has yet to be released but when it does I will put it on the website.

The branch ran a digital photograph competition once again and this year it was won by Geoff Tondeur. His picture of a lake in the Lake District was declared the winner, by the combination of scores from five independent judges. Well done Geoff!

Some of the remaining photos were commandeered to produce a branch 2015 desk calendar which was used as a recruitment aid. Some of the calendars can be found in the welfare areas in local exchanges. We anticipate running the photo competition once again this year and we will announce the competition categories much earlier this year, so perhaps you can get some good photos during your summer leave/holiday. Once again I will make it open to all



members and their immediate family. So get clicking!

As union learning rep I try and do different things to entice you, the members, in trying something new or bettering a skill you already have. This year I tried to start up a book club to promote reading etc., but unfortunately it fell flat on its face with no participants at all!

If you believe there is an education need for yourself and other members, let me know what it is and we will see if we can arrange something. It doesn't have to be computer based and it could be anything, so if you want a knitting club, gardening club, spreadsheet learning, social media learning...etc., let me know. Although we have a learning centre in Withead and Tunbridge Wells telephone exchanges, we can be mobile too and get a room somewhere near you.

I'm working with Peter Francis to get a room, with internet availability, in the Sevenoaks Workstyle building.

# Financial Secretary's Report

For some time now HMRC have been investigating the way the union finances are organised which caused the people a headquarters some headaches. It was believed that the HMRC thought that within the CWU was unpaid

Tax. For months HMRC would not give the CWU a clean bill of health, which culminated in August when every branch had to send in every expense over a four week period for them to go over with a fine tooth comb.

The result was that, with only minor adjustments to our finances, we got the pass that we were looking for.

The branch funds remain stable at the end of the year, and have been audited by our members Gordon Barrett (elected) and Gill Sargent (co-opted) who were happy with what they saw. However, the coming year does have a lot of equipment expenditure, due to the age of the existing equipment. A full report on the finances for the last year and the budget for the coming year will be discussed at the AGM.



## Obituary

Every year we compile a list of those members who have died and this last year we unfortunately had seven members, of which two were particularly premature as they died whilst still in service.

Our thoughts go with their family and friends.

Victor Terry (retired member)  
 Stuart Humphrey (in service)  
 Ted Goring (retired member)  
 Eric Fielder (retired member)  
 William Willsher (retired member)  
 John Gurr (retired member)  
 Bob Heath (in service)



An email will be sent to everyone after the AGM to ask people to check that your membership details are correct. Please pay particular attention to the person named for your **death beneficiary**, as many people are in the belief that if you told BT that they tell us.....they don't!

One member last year told me, "Change that! I've been divorced from her for over 15 years now and I have remarried."

# Depression

After events in my home life and as an anxiety sufferer, I thought I would broach the, often taboo, subject of mental health, or more specifically, depression.

Due to the limited space in our publication I cannot go into this subject as deeply as I would have liked but hopefully I will provide some useful insight into a subject that affects a large number of people.

So what is depression? Sometimes we will say we are depressed when we feel sad or miserable about life, usually these feelings pass in due course but if they persist and interfere with your day to day life, or if they return more frequently, it could be a sign that you are depressed in a medical sense.

In its mildest form depression can mean just being in low spirits, it doesn't stop you leading your normal life but makes everything harder to do and less worthwhile. At its most severe, major depression (clinical depression) can be life threatening as it can make the sufferer suicidal or simply give up the will to live.

There are a wide range of symptoms of depression such as feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem and being unable to sleep/

sleeping too much. The way a sufferer feels and acts can include being irritable or impatient, avoiding activities they would normally enjoy or cutting themselves off from others and can't ask for help.

The sufferer may experience psychotic symptoms such as hearing voices and seeing visions, they may believe they are a bad person and deserve to feel the way they do. They may, also, have suicidal thoughts and think of ways to kill themselves. People suffering with depression can also suffer with anxiety and the two can occur at the same time and each can make the other worse. Anxiety can have the sufferer's mind full of repetitive thoughts which make it hard to concentrate, relax or sleep.

It's important to accept that there are no instant solutions to problems in life, it takes time and effort. If you start to feel depressed then it is easy to get into a cycle of negative thoughts, you become

depressed about feeling depressed. You have to make a conscience effort to break the hold the depression has on you. Deciding to do something to help yourself is an important step. There are a number of things you can do to help yourself, find something to occupy your mind, keep active with regular exercise and connect with other people.

There is a great deal of help on the pages of MIND the mental health charity website. For too many years, in my opinion, mental health has been a taboo subject with sufferers and healthy people being afraid or ignorant to the damage that poor mental health can have on an individual.

For more information please look at the website

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)



# The Way We Work

It seems a strange title to start an AGM article with but there are a number of things that we all do that effect “*the way we work*” every day.

This is all about the attitude we have to our role, while at work, regardless of division or skill, we all come to work to do a day’s work for a day’s pay.

What we have seen with the introduction of performance management in the work place is that the day’s work we do has changed. The self-preservation part of our DNA has kicked in and as such we are all looking at what the employer wants from us and what we have to do to avoid any sort of disciplinary action or formal warning for not performing.

Most employees accept their annual APR review and during the year at discussions or 1-1 meetings with managers would be able to show what they have done to determine their grade. It is only now when management have to justify a percentage of people on a low mark, that they level people down a grade. It’s then that team members look to enhance their performance to avoid being in the bottom quartile.

Strange as we know that these type of behaviours in

the banking industry led to the position which Great Britain PLC and the banks found itself in 2007/2008 up to the present day, lying about performance to tick a box, rather than doing a good job will eventually have a consequence.

So in Parts of BT I think we can see people generating good performance to please managers ticking a box as it were, to avoid a sanction against themselves. Where this effects *the way we work*, is that BT are managing task times though an analysis of AVERAGE TASK TIMES. This means that every time somebody clears a task quickly, it drives down the average task time for that task. This, if done often enough, allows BT to cut task times on jobs which in turn puts pressure on a team members working day to cut times again, in an ever decreasing circle, like water travelling down a plug hole.

So how many times can a task time be cut? How do you get the time to do things correctly, reasonable questions team members ask daily to management with no real answer except with, “*others can do it, so why can’t you?*”

So there we have it, the actions of all Team members in trying to be good

employees and create the expected performance, just means we give the employer the opportunity to bully people with tougher and tougher targets to reach.

You also have to understand that managers get 0% bonus if they get a “DN” marking and as such to avoid this they will put pressure on their staff to perform, and let’s face it, regardless of what they say managers don’t care how performance is reached as long as they can deny all knowledge if you break rules on safety or quality to get where they need you to be.

So the “*the way we work*” affects our day at work, so remember this during 2015 and take this thought with you:-

YOU ARE STRONGER AS A COLLECTIVE like bricks in a wall, one brick is easy to move but a wall of bricks cemented together is a lot harder to move .



# Women's Report - Di Hill

Women's conference this year was held in Leeds and was once again the largest of all the Equality Conferences. Speakers included Rosie who at 21 is the youngest Mayor in the UK and Alicia Castro, Ambassador for Argentina who outlined the change with female presidents now in Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

"Women in the CWU", is a 2-day course that has been successfully run here in the South East. Trish Lavelle, National Education Officer, attended speaking on the importance of women getting involved in their Union. Liz, the Regional Learning Secretary has said another one could be run if there was enough interest. If you are interested let the Branch or myself know.



**Trish Lavelle**

We had a joint regional Women's meeting with

London at HQ where one of the speakers spoke on the issue of domestic violence stating cuts to the police and funding for women's refuges is going unreported.

Tunbridge Wells Labour Women's forum was a great success celebrating International Women's Day, with MP Seema Malhotra, Sarah Owen, Emily Westley, and the UK Feminista group from the Girls Grammar school. Great to see 16-17 year olds speaking out on issues especially the campaign to get rid of page 3 of the Sun. Probably better to get rid of the Sun newspaper all together!

At our latest Regional meeting it was decided we would meet in Margate in February and after the meeting attend the anti-UKIP (no friend of the Unions) march.

Since the General Election in 2010 with the focus on cutting public services it is women who have been hit the hardest. 74% of austerity cuts have come from women, with many losing their employment in the public sector, they are earning much less in the private sector with the pay gap rising for the first time in 5 years. Services such as child care and care for the elderly are seeing support services cut and women left to pick



up the pieces.

The Women's National Commission which was formed to advise Government on women's issues has now been abolished decisions are made with no women involved.

Just in case you've forgotten... Men outnumber women 4 to 1 in Parliament, of 22 cabinet Ministers only 5 are women. The business world is in the main run by men. With only 17% of FTSE 100 directorships held by women. In the media world only 5% of editors are women and within the legal system just over 13% of senior judiciary are women

If anyone would like to get involved or would like to attend the course please contact me:  
dianne.hill1@btinternet.com  
07747193133

# Safety Report - George Hannah

Firstly I would like to thank the branch's USRs for their hard work throughout another eventful year, it is always a challenge doing any work for our union with management that are at best disinterested and, in some cases, hostile to our role. Special thanks go to Steve Taylor for his help in writing the minutes of our meetings. This year we have had a number of new USRs, I hope they have found the work interesting.

Over the past year there has been a certain lack of engagement from BT/Openreach, they decided to have a major reorganisation within the safety team which meant that many of the managers we had been working with found themselves no longer part of the safety team. The accident conference calls stopped and we were left with a lot of questions going unanswered. Some of the issues

that we hoped to get resolutions on were road works guarding, working beside water and the USR database. There was also the fact that the regional chair was taken ill and spent a number of weeks on sick leave. Shortly before he came back I was contacted by a local SOM to try and arrange a more local meeting but as the Openreach GM was unaware that she was required to attend it looked like that was going to wither on the vine. Since then a dialogue has been started and a date for the inaugural meeting set, so fingers crossed for a meaningful meeting.

There have been a number of accidents ranging from slips, trips and falls to back injuries and as I have said, many times, even one accident is one too many. I find it worrying that some people around us cannot see cause and effect, an

engineer can be doing something as simple as walking along a driveway and puts his foot on what should be a solid drain cover, to find that it hasn't been fitted as it should be this then means that he has an injury and, therefore, time off work. Had the person who owned the drain ensured that it was fitted correctly then that engineer wouldn't have had sick leave.

The year ahead promises to be a very interesting one, we have a general election in May and the prospect of a new government, the coalition came in promising to, almost, rewrite the health and safety laws so that they were less of a burden on business, the Lofsted report was an eye opener for them I think, but as we know good safety practices within a workplace are cost effective. Not only does it mean less lost time it means a happier workforce as well.

On a branch level I hope to see our USRs taking advantage of the numerous courses that are available through the education department. I believe that an individual is never too old to learn something new. As ever, if you feel you would like to be more involved or you would like to make a difference in your workplace please either contact me or the branch.



# Retired Secretary - Dave Lomakin



Another year has gone by with increasing problems for retired people with the gradual rise in living costs, CPI has replaced RPI despite all our protests which has reflected directly on future increases with our pensions. The voluntary alterations offered to BT Pensioners still continues to be rolled out on a selective national basis and gives rise to mistrust and confusion, but for some an unexpected surprise! It is always advis-

able to seek an independent view especially now new tax bands are proposed.

I will be attending the annual CWU Retired Members Conference this year, to be held at CWU HQ in Wimbledon, on behalf of the Branch. Passionate and informative debating will take place with propositions for the CWU to put into action.

Also on behalf of the Branch I took part in the TUC Day of Action march through London on 18th October, a very colourful and noisy procession with a large gathering of CWU participants arriving from all across the UK.

Along with my Branch roles I have a regional role as Chairperson of the CWU South East Region Retired Members Council, here I deal with BT and Postal issues, varying from Na-

tional to local level reporting or actioning policies to the CWU National Executive members.



I also represent the CWU at the TUC committee for pensions and retirement associations. Present at these meetings are representatives from all major unions, trade councils and TUC affiliated representative organisations. During 2014, I was elected to become a TUC delegate to attend the National Pensioners Parliament held in Blackpool and also to attend meetings at the Houses of Parliament confronting and questioning MP's who are progressing the future of pensions and social support for the future senior citizens.

Union diaries and Christmas cards were sent to all Retired Members for Christmas 2014 and for some the added bonus of the South East Central Branch desk calendar.



# Local Heroes - Sophia Jex-Blake

This section is to name a little known *local hero* which may be passed by without much thought. This local hero is Sophia Jex-Blake, whose life personified equality and education.



Sophia pushed the gender boundaries within the male dominated medical profession, with her guile and determination.

The medical profession was not always male dominated, in fact during the Elizabethan period in England the landed gentry women were encouraged to look after the wellbeing of the local populace, such as Lady Grace Mildmay (1552-1620). Even much lower down the social scale, some women were classed as “wise women” and midwives, although this would not be the main job for them. The wise women gave out potions and salves to various ailments and this

was acceptable and not thought of as witchcraft, as the modern media would have us believe.

When Sophia was born, in Hastings in 1840, women had been reduced to supportive nursing and midwifery and very much subordinate to the male doctors. Sophia, who moved to Brighton when she was 11, was independent minded.

Against her fathers wishes she decided to take a career in medicine. She managed to get a place in Edinburgh University but most of the male students and lecturers refused to share classes with a woman. So she arranged a group of highly educated women to study together, known as the “Edinburgh Seven”.

When it came to graduation, the women were legally and

physically blocked from the examination Hall.

Undeterred she went to Bern and qualified as a Doctor of Medicine. To practice medicine she had to circumnavigate the rules again to register on the General Medical council, by completing an exam in Dublin. She finally set up her practice in the Edinburgh area.

She returned to Sussex when she retired aged 59, in Marks Cross, with her romantic partner, Margaret Todd (MD). Sofia died in 1912 and was buried in Rotherfield churchyard. Six years later Margaret joined her.

Sophia pushed the gender boundaries to allow women to train and become doctors.

She’s our Local Hero!



**Meeting Dates 2015-16**

Members of the South East Central Branch are advised that the following meetings are open to all members:

General Meeting	May ?	Brighton
General Meeting	September ?	Tunbridge Wells
AGM	February ?	Brighton

Meeting venues will be advised closer to the time. Special Meetings may be called to address urgent issues and notified to you via the email address we have for you.

Committee members are advised that the following meetings are open to committee members:

Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 7th April 2015	Uckfield
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 7th July 2015	Uckfield
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 6th October 2015	Uckfield
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 5th January 2016	Uckfield

Dates of all meetings are advertised on the website  
[www.cwusec.org.uk](http://www.cwusec.org.uk)

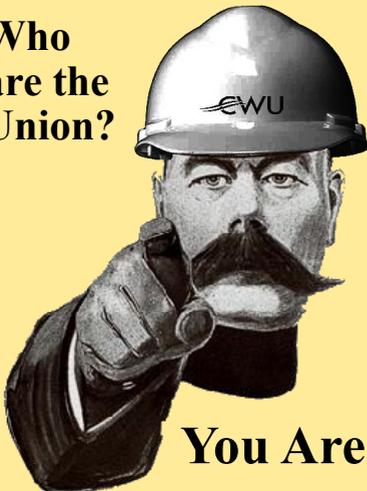
**South East Central****Current Points of Contact**

		<u>Telephone No</u>	<u>Mobile No</u>
Branch Secretary :	Chris Power cwu.sec.br@btinternet.com	01273 565771	07850 840581
Branch Chairperson :	David Kauffman chair.sec.tw@btinternet.com	01892 552948	07850 815644
Financial Secretary: (& Asst Sec East & ULR)	Steve Taylor cwu.sec.finsec@btinternet.com	01892 522948	0791 8147211
Asst Sec West	Peter Francis cwu.sec.assistsec@btinternet.com		07740 720573
Branch Safety Co-Ord: (& Equality)	George Hannah sec.safety1@btinternet.com		07802 231134
Women's Officer: (& Political)	Di Hill dianne.hill1@btinternet.com		07747 193133
Retired Members Sec	Dave Lomakin Via cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com	01892 522948	

**Map of the AGM venue. The Mercure Hotel, Tonbridge Road, Pembury, near Tunbridge Wells. TN2 4QL**



**Who  
are the  
Union?**



**You Are**

***Is The Union Working For  
You?***

***Would You Want Things Done  
Differently?***

***If So.....***

***Become An Activist,  
Get Involved!***

*The first step is to attend the **AGM on 18th  
February** and have a word with Branch  
Officers*



South East Central Branch  
*Annual General Meeting*

**Mercure Hotel**

(in the Parkside Suite)

**8 Tonbridge Road**  
**Pembury, nr. Tunbridge Wells TN2 4QL**

**Wednesday 18th February**  
**7.30pm**

The agenda will include the submission of the Annual report, Branch officers/posts/committee elections and any proposals pertinent to an AGM. i.e. Changes to branch bye laws and any proposals for the forthcoming year including financial proposals, and proposals to the Unions Annual Conference in April.

The meeting will conclude with any questions/current issues, time permitting

**Your Chance To Have Your Say**

**There will be a buffet provided for members**  
**in addition to a drink at the bar**

**NEW VENUE**