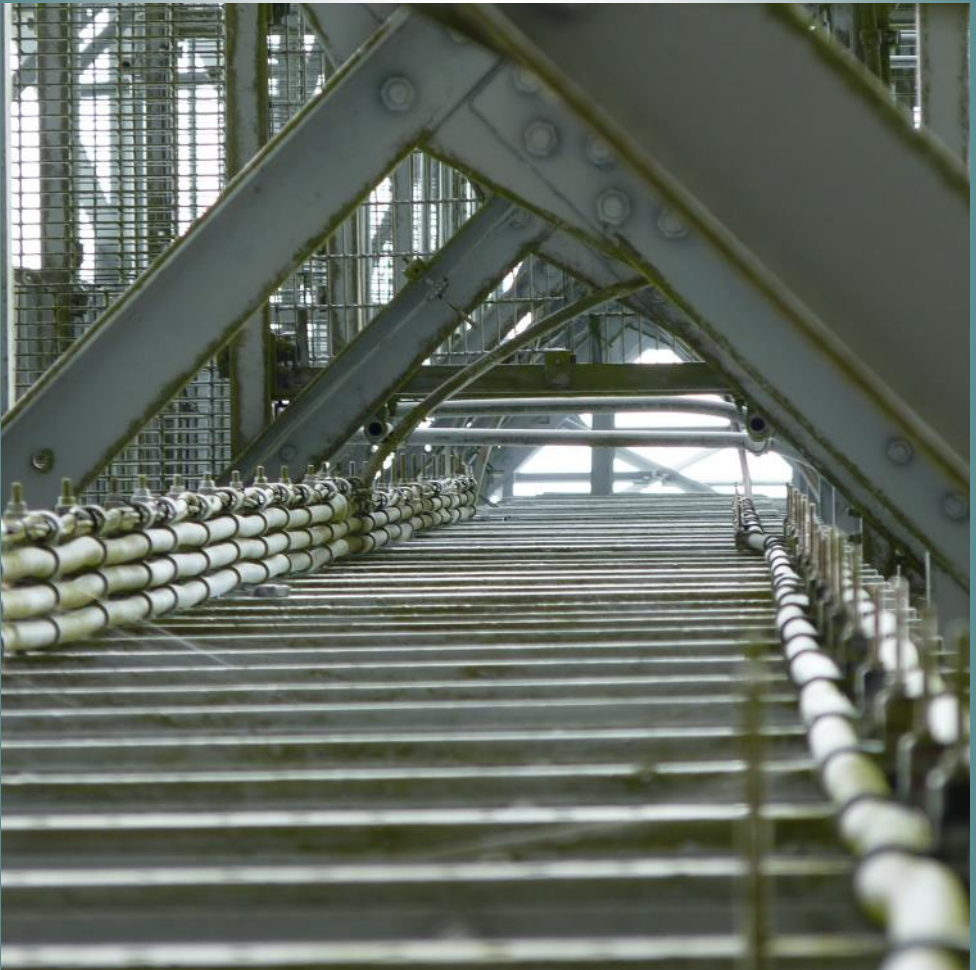




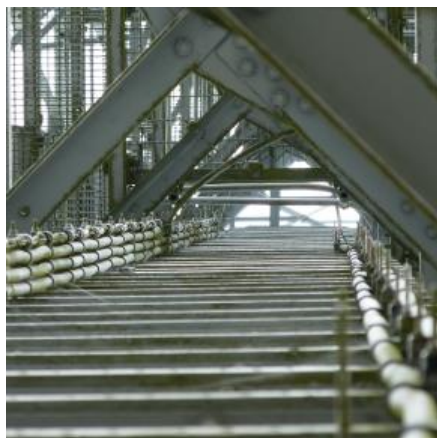
# *South East Central* 2016 Annual Report



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

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### Picture on front cover.

An unusual view of the Flimwell Microwave Radio Tower from underneath, looking vertically upwards.

An example of 1960's *cutting-edge* technology for international calls and television traffic. Just one part of the link to France, BT Tower - Fairseat - Flimwell - Tolsford Hill (Folkestone) and then a quick hop over the channel to France.

*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 2016, the Branch Secretary, Assistant Secretaries and all on the Branch Committee. If you would like to take a more active role in the branch, please contact myself and we can have a chat about how that may be achieved.

I can report that I, and the branch officers, deal with the variety of disciplines for performance, attendance, serious or gross misconduct throughout the year, we also deal with MCC (EWR) cases, accidents at work and anything else that crops up.

2016, has been a year of change, whisper and rumour, I only wish I could put some of the issues to rest, but I'm not a miracle worker! 2016, has seen OFCOM come gunning for Openreach again and I would advise everyone in Openreach and BT to read up as much as they can on this issue, for example, there have been some very good articles on the subject by CWU that head office have re-

leased in the voice and it is well worth a read.

Openreach has seen another new CEO in 2016 and came with the promise of change, we all thought this a breath of fresh air especially after the last 5 years. But it would appear that as we enter 2017 the managers are up to all their old tricks again.

We saw, in 2016, some hard negotiations on Saturday attendance with the possibility for all NoTV and Service Delivery, in the Central Downs area, move to a much higher ratio than was finally settled upon.

We also saw a sea change in the way productivity in a field team should be measured. I am aware of the commercial pressure on Openreach, but this should not manifest its self in management bending or breaking national agreements to achieve their own ends.

Pressure on individuals to increase productivity has been, yet again, put upon team members as we break into 2017.



We see managers are not adhering to the 2016 productivity agreement. We are seeing managers challenge team members on their behaviours and yet, when it is pointed out that some managers have got bad behaviours, BT seem just turn and look the other way. It's up to us all, every CWU team member, to gather the evidence with screen shots, emails or anything else to show how manag-



ers are breaking agreements.

So other than OFCOM, OM's and SOM managers attacking team members on productivity, what are the other burning issues in Openreach Field? Flex exceptions, EODT, work allocation, bullying, to name just a few as far as Openreach is concerned. I have yet to discover if this move in management behaviours is being driven by

the new General Manager for the South East, or the managers running rings round a GM, who doesn't yet have his finger on the pulse.

It's not all bad news though, as South East Central has grown, in numbers, as a branch in 2016. There will always be things to do and more cases to attend, I know we will be busy this year. What I can say is that I will always try and re-

spond to any member who needs my help and if I can't help, I will find someone who can.

If any member wants to get more involved, as a union activist, please contact me and I will try and arrange a time and place where we can meet up for a coffee and a chat about how you can help, looking forward in 2017. All the best

*Dave*

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## Assistant Secretary West - Pete Francis



WOW!!! What a year it has been for the branch and myself, so much has happened in 2016.

The year started off with me working part time for the branch and the rest of my time working on a 24

x 7 shift at BT Tower in the Sport Management Centre, managing BT Sport. In May, my role in the branch became full time, enabling me to get fully involved and help bring to fruition some of my and the branches ideas. Most members will associate myself with the Sevenoaks Workstyle building, which has seen a massive expansion in 2016. My first task was to try and get a branch office which was officially opened in November, with the visit of Andy Kerr (Deputy General Secretary - Telecoms), who also had a tour of the site and was impressed

with everyone he met, and unaware that BT had a building with so many divisions in the building, with Openreach, Government and Public Sector, TS&O, Global Services, BTFS, Wholesale all having a presence. I try to make myself as visible as possible and my door is always open, my phone always on and always at hand to help our membership.

I attend many meetings throughout the year, meeting management from different divisions in Sevenoaks as well as across the branch and within the South East



region. As an example, throughout the Summer, Openreach tried to implement more Saturday working for our field service staff, but through prolonged negotiations we managed to stop this going ahead.

We have helped management bring work to Sevenoaks by being in a position to recommend suitable team members able to take up the roles. However our primary role is to manage all our members concerns and changes which affect their daily lives, this involves all our officers and there doesn't seem to be many quiet times throughout the year, we are always at hand to service our member's needs.

My biggest project for 2016, has been the recruitment which the branch secretary, Chris Pow-

er, asked me to manage. This was a project I was particularly eager to do, as I felt there was great scope to grow the branch and its membership. However I may have been a little naïve not realising how much work, time and effort was involved. It took a great deal of my time, but I must thank all the other officers that had an input in the project, especially Rick Cobern, Chris Power, Steve Taylor, Dave Kauffman, and Dianne Hill, who all helped at some stage.

Many of you reading this report would have been approached by myself or another officer, either in Sevenoaks, Brighton or in the field either asking

you to join the CWU or transfer to the branch which area you now work in. Meeting engineers in the field gave particular pleasure, as many do not get an opportunity to meet their branch officials. I felt this was of great benefit having a chat and being able to empathise and explain how the branch are here to help. This was especially beneficial to our younger members, who may not have realised what we can offer.

The project as said was of great success with over 100 new members signed up and over 200 transferred into the branch, and my personal thanks goes to all you members who gave me the time of day to meet you.

If you know a colleague who isn't a member of the CWU, or anyone reading this who wants to join our branch, do not hesitate to contact me.





## Women's Report - Di Hill



2016 saw women's income hit almost 6 times harder than men after the budget, for many reasons, the 40% income tax kicking in at £45,000 which benefits high earners only, a quarter of the 3.2 million who will benefit are women.

Since 2010, 86% of tax savings and benefit cuts have come from women. The tampon tax - this is the campaign to remove VAT from women's sanitary products, which is not a luxury although some women in Africa would probably regard it as one. George Osborne, who cut the funding to women's refuges has allowed the tax collected from this "luxury" to go towards domestic violence funding. So women who get abused and bat-

tered then have to pay for any help they may get. This tax could and should be removed, but where would that leave the refuges, etc? We don't know...oh, but no VAT on men's razors, as they are deemed a necessity!

The murder of Jo Cox was a wicked act, a working class "Yorkshire lass" representing the area she was raised in, Batley and Spen. There were vigils right across the Country, she was an amazing woman and a real loss to the Labour Women's forum of which she was the Chair. I do believe that Farage & Co have to take some responsibility for what happened. You cannot keep telling people that immigration is the cause of most of our problems and not create a situation where racism and hatred creeps in. We are now seeing more and more attacks on vulnerable people and communities. But as Jo said in her maiden speech in Parliament, "We are far more united, than the things that divide us".

The millions of pounds that has been raised for the Jo Cox fund, are go-

ing to her favoured charities. Some of the money is also to be used for Leadership training for women, over a thousand women have put their name forward.

A week later and the EU Referendum result was to take us out of the European Union. The TUC and most Union Leaders, wanted to stay in, mainly for our Workers Rights. Women workers have achieved huge gains in the workplace since Britain joined the EU, equal pay for work of equal value, the working time directive in 1998 gave more than 1.5 million part-time women workers the right to paid holidays for the first time, pregnancy discrimination and the strengthening of maternity leave, parental



leave, etc. Unfortunately, I don't think we can trust this Government to protect them.

I attended the CWU Women's Conference in Leicester, in November. This was again the best attended of all the Equality Conferences. There were many motions but one of the big issues was women's pensions, with 3 motions stating the unfairness of how this is being brought in with no transitional pension arrangements for women born in the 1950's.

Customer Care Transformation was another issue debated as it is causing problems for many women with attendance patterns, also issues facing women in male dominated workplaces and sexual harassment of young women which shows there is a need for education and training across all areas.

Women's access to justice due to the impact of Government cuts is raising concerns. Sexual discrimination cases fell by 83% following the introduction of fees, and in 2015 added the "criminal court charges", paying towards court costs.

Amanda Richards was the main speaker, a chartered mechanical engineer who was the first woman to qualify as a mining engineer from University College Cardiff, she spoke of her experiences as the only woman in the classes. She moved to Ireland in 2007 and spoke of some of the amazing women of Ireland, many have been airbrushed out of history, from the Rising to 1990 when Mary Robinson became the first female President of Ireland.

International Women's Day celebrates the achievements of women everywhere. In 2016 organizations and individuals around the World supported the "Pledge for Parity" campaign and committed to helping women and girls achieve their ambitions.

In 2017 the IWD campaign is "Be Bold for Change", we can all be

leaders, we can all take actions that can change the lives of women across the Globe.

Millions of women marched in Towns and Cities across the World after Donald Trump became President, they marched to tell Trump "we do not support you or your remarks and treatment of women."

WASPI, Women Against State Pension Inequality, are holding a protest in Westminster on March 8<sup>th</sup> at 1pm, all welcome. Check out the WASPI facebook site for more details.

International Women's Day (many local events) March 8<sup>th</sup>

Labour Women's Conference Brighton Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept

Please contact me if you'd like any info on women's issues.



# Committee Member - Una McMahon



“Hi, please let me introduce myself, My name is Una McMahon, and I have worked for Openreach and BT Global historically, and now work for BT business and public sector.

I started at Tunbridge Wells exchange, as a 151 repair advisor in 1997, so I have been employed by BT Group for 20 years. I am currently based in Sevenoaks Workstyle building.

I am very passionate regarding people, and fairness in the workplace. I am articulate and like to use these skills for the better good, within the CWU and life itself.

I will be very proud to represent our branch members in every way possible moving forward.

I have sent an introductory email to a number of

local female members within the Brighton area, back in December, and will be following the interest that this generates with an appropriate event.

My hope is that I can generate enthusiasm, encourage and support our women members to get more involved in all aspects of the CWU, and to enable them to get the most out of their individual memberships.

I will be hoping to attend a number of educational courses in the coming year.

**“Lets get involved!”**

## Financial Report

The branch finances have yet to be audited by our auditors, Steve Stuttard and Sam Healey, but they will be done by the time this publication is with the printers.

As I have reported before, we have for the last few years been using SAGE, a financial software package, which is linked to head office and

it allows them to look at our accounts, at any time they wish. However, the accounts also come under internal scrutiny and checked by Chris Power.

This year, head office scrutinised all branch accounts, and reported back favourably on the way our branch operates.

So how do our finances

look? Well as Pete has reported and Chris will do later in this report, there has been a lot of recruitment. With a lot of recruitment there is always a lot of expense, but this is balanced by the new income achieved, so things still look healthy.

A full breakdown will be given at the AGM meeting.



## Youth Report - Liam Reed



It is now my second year of being the South East Central youth officer, and over the past year I have attended many events such as the

CWU's general conference down in Bourne-mouth. The annual Conference was a great opportunity for me to network with other youth officers from all the other branches around the UK.

I have been slowly making my way around our two main offices in Sevenoaks and Brighton, where I have had the opportunity to meet some of you face to face.

I am looking forward to the forthcoming year

now I have a greater knowledge of the CWU, which enables me to sit on meetings, such as the Regional Organising Committee meeting, which I will be attending on a monthly basis.

Hopefully, this coming year, I should be getting more involved, now that I have been given some time to attend meetings, and more importantly, speak to our youth members (those under 30 years of age), to see how I can best assist them, in their work life.

## Local Heroes' - Goudhurst Village

This year, instead of a single person showing some union attribute, we have picked a whole village!

Although Goudhurst village is now a picture of idyllic village life, (if we ignore the traffic pinch point), with beautiful tile hung houses and the church at the top of the hill. 270 years ago this was not the case.

In the 1700's, due to England, becoming a world

power, and wanting to have a say in our European neighbours policies, were often debated at the end of a musket or cannon (this was pre-Brexit). Although Britain and its allies, at the time, were rather successful in their aggressive debates, it fell on the taxes of the country to pay for these debates. The government often had to think of new and exciting ways to



squeeze more and more money out of the people, so they introduced even more taxes.

Smuggling, or duty free shopping (joke), became the norm, as people tried to make ends meet. These

smugglers got together in gangs and controlled huge stretches of land, and one of the biggest was called the “Hawkhurst Gang”.

Most people, of the time, happily accepted the smugglers and their cheaper goods, but as the Hawkhurst Gang expanded and the control of the Gang passed to a new leader, Thomas Kingsmill, things took a turn for the worst.

The smugglers became a large gang of unchecked violence. Stop thinking of, “Poldark” and think more the bad guys in the “Magnificent Seven”. Where, if anyone disagrees with the gang or got in their way, they would certainly get a beating or worse! They dominated the area by terror.

By the 1740’s, the Hawkhurst Gang’s field of operation covered the South East of England to as far as Poole, in Dorset. Their legendary violence was directed inwardly too, as one Warbleton labourer found, when they quizzed him on a couple of barrels of tea that had gone missing. Protesting his innocence

he was beaten to death and his body dumped in a local pond.

In Goudhurst, in 1747, a young corporal came home from one of Britain’s many foreign debates and decided that he did not like what has become of his home town. George Sturt, a man in his early 20’s, gathered the villagers of Goudhurst and the surrounding area and collectively, they decided to form a militia to protect themselves from the gang. However, the plan was revealed when one of the militia was caught and tortured. Kingsmill was not happy with what he heard.

Kingsmill, confident of getting the better of this militia, sent a letter to the town, promising to eat the hearts of 4 local men, and rob all the houses in the town, as retribution. So confident that he was of victory, he told them he would arrive on April 21st, and even told them what time!

The local militia, under the command of Sturt, had time to gather weapons and create their lead shot, and reputedly gathered up 2 cwt of gunpow-

der (about 100Kg).

Kingsmill, who can never be accused of being tardy, turned up on the correct day and time, with up to 150 gang members and ne’er do wells, looking for a fight. But the militia had prepared positioned men in the Star and Eagle pub and in the church, with an excellent vantage point from its tower.

The battle went on for about an hour and when Kingsmill’s brother was killed in the action, the smugglers retreated, with the villagers in hot pursuit. 2 smugglers had been killed and 20 wounded, and several others taken prisoner. On a ghastly note, two of the caught gang members who were from Goudhurst where gibbeted, one at Goudhurst Gore and the other outside his father’s house.

The Hawkhurst Gang, although still in existence, lost their untouchable status and two years later most of the leaders had been caught.

Goudhurst - showing what collectivism can do for those who stand together.

# Assistant Secretary East - Steve Taylor



This year, as if I wasn't busy enough, I completed a Diploma in Employment Law by correspondence course. Although at a higher level than is needed for a union rep, is always handy to know as it puts OM's at a disadvantage when sitting opposite them, in a case.

Although I haven't had an awful lot to do with local recruitment, I have been up to Yarnfield, BT's training centre, to help the local branch, who recruits on a national basis.

With George leaving with a hop skip and jump (I believe he was happy), I was left holding the role as the South East regional safety lead for a few months, until a rep from Portsmouth was persuad-

ed to take over the role.

The main role I have is that of lead officer with attendance and performance issues. This time last year, the managers were ramping up the performance management stakes with several of our members going off with stress. Even after the managers were told that they must show individuals how they can improve, when I looked into most cases, it would appear none was given.

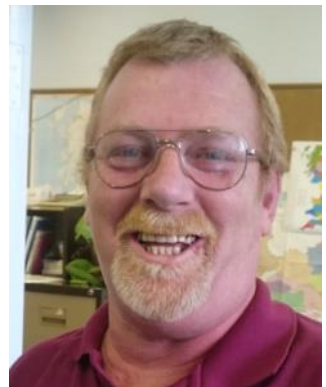
As I was readying myself for another fight and perhaps a high level escalation, (haven't lost an escalation yet), Openreach pulled the rug from beneath my feet. The new CEO of Openreach said that they would not be concentrating on performance.

I had the opportunity to meet the new CEO, Clive Selley recently, and can say I actually liked what he said. He said Openreach had lost its way and the priorities should be as follows. The Customer needs to be first. The Network and its resilience has to be second. Finally it is performance,

but even that, its nowhere near as important as the first two.

So what do managers do, with their performance stick taken away? They bring in a behaviours stick instead, with the thought that it will drive up productivity. Be a few minutes late in the morning or too long a lunch too often, and we'll find ourselves going down the same route as before.

Another item which I've been involved in is part of the administration of the branch, is the centralisation of data (see page 17). Both Rick Cobern and I, sometimes, have worked to the early hours, to set up the system. Who works 9 -5? Not a union rep, that's for certain!



# Secretary's Report - Chris Power



## Branch Organising & Recruitment

The campaign concentrated on 3 main areas, BT Brighton Withdean and BT Sevenoaks Workstyle sites where Openreach Centre of Excellence' had been created, and also Openreach Field engineers. Over the year, and Peter has reported more in depth how this was approached, we visited sites and employees on a 1:1 basis at their desks, and also out in the Field. This worked really well, and after about 20 specific days of 1:1 meets we ended the year on around 1050 BT members from the 850 the previous year, and when you consider over 100 members left the Branch through release and promotion, we recruited around 300 employees into the Branch, of which 100 are new members

We welcome all these new members to the Branch.

These new members result in more time being allocated to the Branch, meaning that we can have more reps helping members out. It makes our

Branch stronger and more able to cope with the issues that are thrown at members. It also means the Branch can get more involved in areas that are the future direction for this Branch

From the Organising perspective we now have time for our Youth Officer, Liam Reed, to become more able to set up a youth network across the Branch, concentrating on Withdean and Sevenoaks, where meeting up with the more youthful members of the Branch on a regular basis, can find out more about their expectations from our Union.

We also have Una McMahon on our Branch Committee, whom, together with Dianne Hill the Women's officer, wants to become more involved with women members at the two sites, and those women that work in the Field environment. Building up a Women's network, to discuss and advise the Branch on issues pertinent to women is very important for Senior Branch officers. Involvement is key.

2016 was the best year for recruiting members into the Branch since my starting out, as a Union rep, back in 1987 (Year of the strike in BT). We started 2016 with around 850 members that worked for BT which had dropped by about 50 from the previous year. We needed to ensure that all BT workers that worked within the South East Central patch were in the Union, and also those that were, were in the correct Branch.

An officers meeting was held early January 2016, and after discussing and agreeing workloads for all reps attaining time off the Company for BT purpose, Pete Francis was given the lead on Membership recruitment.

These officers together with Animesh Kana our BAME Officer (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic), Steve Rhodes as Disability Officer, Rick Cobern becoming more involved on Health and safety our Branch has new representatives' willing to get involved, with their specialist knowledge, to help all our members.

Contact details for these officers are detailed within this report on page 23.

The Branch is certainly going from strength to strength, and we also take pride in assisting our colleagues who work within the Non-BT Sector such as Virgin Media, EE, and all other TELCO Companies

### **Branch General/ Committee Meetings**

There were 3 General meetings held in Brighton and Tunbridge Wells during 2016, and 4 Committee meetings. Usually there would be Special meetings for issues such as PAY and Pensions, (not needed, as in a 3-year deal) or Attendance patterns, and whilst the attendance issue was very robustly discussed with

management within Openreach, the company's position on increasing Saturdays was prevented by our Branch, no Special meetings were held, as around 20 affected members were contacted on a 1:1 basis.

We currently have 16 members on the Branch Committee, where the Branch Constitution states a maximum of 32, so we are always encouraging new Branch Committee members to get

involved, particularly Youth and Female members, also specifically from Withdean and Sevenoaks sites. We are in the mid part of a 2-year election term, but as there are officer vacancies, and Committee vacancies, these can be filled at the AGM. Please come along on February 15<sup>th</sup> at the Royal Wells Hotel in Tunbridge Wells.

I would like to thank all Officers and Committee members for their help





during the year.

## BT Group Companies

During 2016 I represented members in around 24 discipline, performance, attendance and grievance cases, as well as decision meetings for job search employees. We have great success across the Branch with these cases, and would urge anyone approached by management requiring an attendance at a formal hearing/interview, please contact your Union rep in the

first instance.

## Conclusion

Our Branch continues to have elected representatives of real high quality in my opinion, and we always respond to members' issues as quickly as we can. Sometimes members become disgruntled about issues that are not only outside the grasp of the Branch, but also of the Union as a whole. This shouldn't detract from the position that we must all stand

together, as with the political climate showing signs that it will be a volatile period 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. Together we are stronger, and United we are strongest.

Please support your Union Branch and attend meetings where at all possible.

# Obituary

It comes with great sadness to report that the following retired members have left us. Our thoughts go out to their family and friends.

- Douglas Saunders
- Cyril Funnell
- John Leach
- Leonard Lewis
- Edward King
- Eric King

The world may change from year to year  
And friends from day to day,  
But never will the ones we love  
From memory pass away.



Please make sure you keep the branch informed of any changes, to your death beneficiary.

# Retired Members Report - David Lomakin



With the passing of 2016, retirement issues now take on a challenging approach. The eventual leaving from the E.U. relieves some of the pressures installed by Brussels and Strasbourg legislation, driven by other E.U. countries, who view our state pension system as too generous and that a greater emphasis should be placed on individuals to secure pensions and benefits from private companies.

Our 3 local Branch Offices maintain close liaisons with CWU members confronting their future away from BT as well as offering assistance to retired members.

I have again been elected as Chairperson for the CWU South East Region

Retired Members Committee (SERRMC). The increasing pressures from BT and Postal Management Boards require ever greater diligence and scrutiny when retirement and pension practices confront CWU members.

Also I am a CWU delegate to the TUC Retired and Pensioners Committee at Congress House, where Government and European legislation, regulation and administration is examined and questioned, with recommendations and criticism placed back to MP's trying to introduce them to Parliament.

I attended, on behalf of our Branch and SERRMC, the CWU Retired Members Conference again held in Manchester. The dominating topic for debate and argument, very much directed at our

General Secretary Dave Ward and Deputy General Secretary Tony Kearns, was the restricted voting rights of Retired members at

Branch level. A very unpopular direction taken by our Union but when subjected to legal interpretation the decision had to be implemented. Further questions will be raised at General Conference!

Thinking of retirement or having retirement put upon you, be sure to enquire at one of our local Branch Offices to continue your CWU membership and receive all CWU benefits, legal services and entitlement to receive the Union death benefit for your nominated next of kin or legal representative.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Branch Officers and Committee members for their support and encouragement throughout this past year.



# Education Report - Steve Taylor

Firstly I must congratulate the winners of our 2016 branch photograph competition.

For the first time ever, it went down to a casting vote and first place went to Martin Skinners sons photograph of a fox cub (see photos below).

Second place went to Kevin Moon son's close up picture of a water droplet splash.

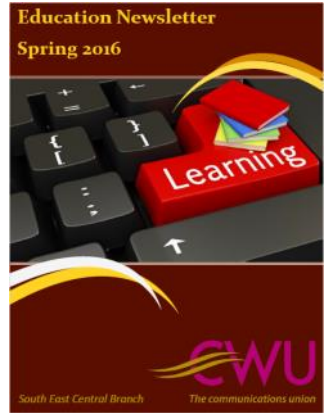
Third place went to, Graham Buttons photograph of a man, metal working in his shop, in Bosnia. A photograph, not traditionally framed but keeps you looking none the less.

Although it's the winners who received the prize money, some of the entries were used in our branch 2017 desk calendar, which was used in

part of our recruitment drive. We do have a handful of the calendars left and I shall bring them to the AGM for members to take home.

Although the photo competition was a success, the same could not be said for our creative writing competition. On July 1st, the last day for entering the competition, we had exactly zero entries. Just think, if you sent in a limerick, by default, you would have won!

The education newsletter which comes out a few times a year, has found that there are several of you out there interested in learning a language. If I spot a trend or enough people interested I will



try and organise a practical lesson for learners in one of our centres of excellence. Keep an eye out for the next edition.

Also I am looking into the possibility of running or to be more precise, BT funding a CISCO router course, after several Sevenoaks members approached me about it.

So far I haven't got very far with BT management, but you know me, I like a challenge.



## Safety Report - Pete Francis

My other role within the branch is the Safety coordinator, which I took on after George Hannah left the company. Anyone who knows George, will know he was extremely dedicated to the role and I'm sure we would all like to wish George the best in all his future endeavours.

When anyone moves into a new role, most will want to make some changes and even though the safety side of the branch was extremely well run, I felt some new technology was needed, which in time would not only help on safety but would help the whole branch. I also felt it would help all the USR's in their role by giving them access to the information they need at their fingertips. After a conversation with Rick

Coburn, what I wanted became a reality. The branch are very lucky to have to 2 well qualified officers who revel in IT, Rick and Steve Taylor, who I must thank for all their work especially in their own time in bringing in the NAS drive (Network Attached Storage) to fruition. We rolled it out, to the USR's, in October at one of our Education days, which was well attended. The NAS will be an on-going project which the branch will benefit from, we are currently loading a disciplinary database on it for the IR team.

The drive will hold all information the branch would need, both safety and IR including processes, LTB's, documentation, demo's, power points, etc. and will be accessible, with all the

necessary security in place, by phone, tablet, laptop anywhere in the world with a Wi-Fi connection. Eligible people will be able to download as well as read only con-

tent for their roles.

We are currently developing an app for the USR's, making it easier for their building inspections and will download the checks to the NAS, allowing it far easier to manage all the buildings in our branch patch.

For 2017, we have new USR's starting who I must welcome and changes for this year will include bringing some of our existing USR's along and specialising their skills, which I hope will benefit the branch in their expertise, to the benefit of all the team.

Lastly, on a personal safety note, can I thank all the USR's in the team and with special thanks to Rick Coburn and Steve Taylor (both assistant safety coordinators) who without we wouldn't be where we are now. Let's hope 2017 is as successful as 2016 .



# Political Report - Di Hill



What a year! where to start or more important where will it end. Brexit, Trump, May!

We have seen many of our Unions on strike across the Country. Our own Union, on the postal side, striking against the closures of the Crown post offices, with the loss of 2,000 jobs and the closure of the pension scheme leaving 3,500 members thousands of pounds worse off in retirement. These services are being placed in shops like WH Smith's where the workforce are paid less.

The latest sell off (that we know of) is the National Grid with the Chinese now being the majority shareholder. Rail fares are up 27% since 2010.

The NHS is in crisis and bit by bit is being sold off through backdoor deals.

In May, I was re-elected as a Borough Councillor on Tunbridge Wells Council with twice as many votes as the conservative male candidate, unprecedented for Labour in Tunbridge Wells. Thank you to the Branch for their support.

I was also re-elected at the S.E. Regional Conference to represent the trade unions on the S.E. Regional Labour Board.

The EU Referendum campaign was won by those wanting to leave, although Tunbridge Wells voted to Remain 54.9% and Brighton also voted Remain 68%. Where we go from here no one really knows, but I can't see the working classes having a better standard of living now we're out, especially when it comes to Rights at Work.

Hate crimes are on the rise with many not being reported as people are too scared, this shouldn't be hap-

pening, trade unions have fought hard for equality with the help of the EU.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, in July, was again well attended and it seems to get bigger every year. Lots of interesting speakers, entertainers, plenty of CWU members, banners and balloons and of course a CWU stall. "Power to our Unions!"

We have a new unelected Prime Minister, who says the Tories are the party of the working classes, but with no sign of "things getting better" 6 million people earn less than the living wage. So the Tory mantra "make work pay" is clearly not working for these people. I see this with more and more people now needing to use the food banks, up 40% in Tunbridge Wells this year, working people who do not earn enough to pay the bills and older people who we haven't really





seen before, struggling to survive. On average in Tunbridge Wells 1 in 8 bags are to domestic violence victims and only 8% are on benefits. Many are on zero hour contracts, low pay or issues with sanctions, tax credits, carers allowances, etc. all having to be re-applied for and often leaving people with no money for weeks until it gets sorted. With Universal credits soon to come in we know "things can only get worse". Tunbridge Wells is a wealthy affluent Town, if this is the situation there what must some of the less wealthy communities be going through. Government have created this situation if you cut millions of pounds from Councils budgets it hits public services and who needs these services...not the wealthy!!

I Daniel Blake, the film about the benefits system, trying to navigate their way around the forms and the impersonal way vulnerable people are treated, is another excellent film from Ken Loach who gave us "Cathy come Home", which highlighted homelessness. Labour leafleted at many of the places

where it was being shown.

I attended the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, which was interesting, informative and professional contrary to what was supposed to be going on in the party. We saw Jeremy Corbyn re-elected as Labour Leader and now with over half a million members the Labour Party is the largest political party in Western Europe. The S.E. Regional reception was well attended, Peter Kyle, Hove MP, was there, the only Labour MP we have along a 200 miles coastline and a very popular, hardworking MP, taking up and speaking on many issues in Parliament affecting Brighton, Hove and the South East.

Yvette Cooper gave a heart tugging speech about the plight of refugees, hundreds of children were alone in the Calais jungle, with no one to protect them. Within a year, 100 children had disappeared from the camp, probably sold or trafficked, but our Government said we have no room for them. During 1938-39, in a program known as the Kinder

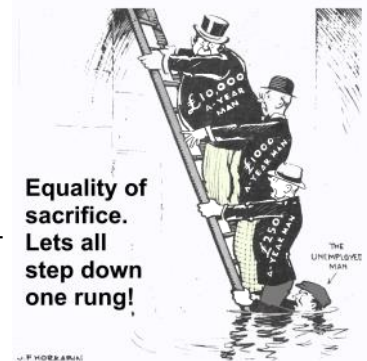
transport, the UK admitted 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children on an emergency basis. In 1945, 732 Jewish children were allowed in, only 80 were girls. Now that same Country, the sixth wealthiest in the World, could not afford to take a few hundred desperate Syrian children. Sad!

Trump's first day in the White House and the LGBT pages on the White House .gov site have disappeared, as have the ones on Climate change. The State of things to come, scary!!!!

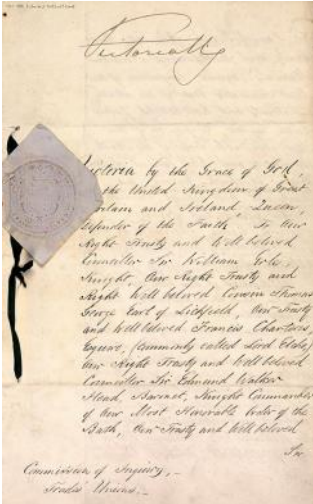
Dates for diary's

- Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival 14-16<sup>th</sup> July 2017.
- County Council elections May 4th

## SACRIFICE?



# Soapbox Corner - Dave Kauffman



2017 sees the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Commissions recommendation, to decriminalise trade unions. This Royal Commission laid out that it would be a benefit, to Employers and Employees, to have such organisations legalised, and in 1871 the then union labour movement began to sort and reform the lives of working people in United Kingdom.

There are many reasons why unions evolved, but it was as much to do about how working people lived and also, what they didn't have. Throughout the 1800's into the 1900's the industrial revolution accelerated the migration from a

rural agrarian society to an industrial urban society, the result of which was the development of city slums, cramped row housing and overcrowding. Such that by 1900, 80% of the population lived in cities.

These cities were 'organised' into geographical zones, based on social class - the poor, in the inner city, and the more fortunate, living further away from the city core, which was helped by the development of suburban rail network. To make this possible, some suburban rail companies were required, by law, to provide cheap trains for workers to travel into the city centre.

The First World War, saw many thousands of working class men leave their homes, never to return. Things had to change, however, the men that returned home saw very little difference in a post war Britain. When the great depression of the 1930's came, the divide became even more obvious between the haves, and have nots. During the Second World

War, the working men and women put aside their issues for the benefit of the country. But after this war, there was a marked change in the way that working men and women wanted to live and work.

The Labour Party was there to fight for the rights and fair treatment of working class men and women. To help take them out of poverty, massive house building projects, nationalisation of some key industries to stabilise pricing and ensure supply and decent working conditions, the creation of the welfare state with the birth of the NHS to allow free health care, and to support people in society who could not support themselves.

Unions took on company bosses and we saw the death toll in the work place, through the sixties and seventies, shrink dramatically. The unions also demanded a fair days pay, for a fair days work, which led to industrial unrest and strikes. But these were the men and women, who had given their all in the wars, and said collectively,

“Enough!” Pay slowly improved, which in turn improved the peoples spending power, that in turn, allowed them to purchase luxury items, like cars and TV’s, that they were producing.

But like most things, people wanted more, and in the late 1970’s, with the promise of buy your own home, the Tories came to power. Thanks to the Unions increasing workers’ wages (and the Tories slashing the price of your council house), the working men and women of the country could now afford to buy their own home. Why not own your own home and not rent? It was after this, that the Tories then took on the Unions and bought in anti-Union legislation. With a work force increasingly in debt to the banks with mortgages, the working men and women’s attitude in some work areas changed.

So 40 years on from the 1980’s here we sit in 2017, 150 years on from that Royal Commission and what have we got? A health system in decline, due to lack of investment and government wanting to sell you private health care. More and more peo-

ple in rented accommodation, and in many cases slum accommodation with slum landlords. Wages in deflation, with people’s wages going down in real terms, and too much more to list.

So do we want a country of the past? I think not, and I hope that we can all see that we should hold on to what our union forefathers fought so hard to obtain.

Employers will challenge your terms and conditions and no matter how hard you work, you will not earn enough, because employers will always want to pay lower wages. If you are retired, then I sure that you want to escape the net, but the Government will see an aging population as a financial burden. If social care is bad now imagine what it will be without a massive revamp for the future.

**Left wing beliefs** are usually progressive in nature, they look to the future, aim to support those who cannot sup-

port themselves and, believe in equality. People who are left wing believe in taxation, to redistribute opportunity and wealth - things like a National Health Service, job seeker’s and disability allowance are all fundamentally left wing ideas. They believe in equality over the freedom to fail.

**Right wing beliefs** value tradition, equity/money, survival of the fittest to the detriment of the rest, and they believe in economic freedom. They typically believe that business shouldn’t be regulated, no health and safety, no employee rights on pay or holidays or hours worked, and that we should all look after ourselves. Right wing people tend believe they shouldn’t have to pay for someone else’s education, health service, retirement, disability or local government.



# Meeting Dates 2017-18

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

General Meeting	Wednesday, 10th May 2017	Tun Wells
General Meeting	Wednesday, 6th September 2017	Brighton
AGM	Wednesday, 21st February 2018	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, 4th April 2017	Uckfield
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 4th July 2017	Uckfield
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 3rd October 2017	Uckfield
Committee Meeting	Tuesday, 9th January 2018	Uckfield

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

**Map of the 2017 AGM venue, Royal Wells Hotel. Mouth Ehpraim, Tunbridge Wells. TN4 8BE**



## South East Central

### Current Points of Contact

		<u>Telephone No</u>	<u>Mobile No</u>
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Branch Chairperson :	David Kauffman chair.sec.tw@btinternet.com	01892 522948	07850 815644
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Assistant Secretary	Peter Francis cwu.sec.assistsec@btinternet.com	01732 742222	07740 720573
Temp Safety Co-Ord:	Peter Francis	01732 742222	07802 231134
Women's Officer: (& Political)	Di Hill dianne.hill1@btinternet.com		07747 193133
Equality Rep	Steve Rhodes Via cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com		07764 338836
Retired Members Sec	Dave Lomakin Via cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com	01892 522948	
Youth Officer	Liam Reed Via cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com	01892 522948	

**HOW**  
  
**YOU CAN GET**  
**INVOLVED**

*Become An Activist,*

*Start by attending the **AGM on 15th February** and have your say on how your local branch is run. If you want to get more involved than that, speak to one of the officers at the meeting*





South East Central Branch  
*Annual General Meeting*

**Royal Wells Hotel**  
**59 Mount Ephraim, Tunbridge Wells**  
**TN4 8BE**

on  
**Wednesday 15th February**  
**7.30pm**

The agenda will include the submission of the Annual report, Branch officers/committee vacant posts 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 Union Annual Conference in April.

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

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

**YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY-**  
**PLEASE ATTEND**