



South East Central

2023 Annual Report



In Confidence for South East Central CWU members

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Front cover

Unable to deploy Tetra. Hoist to the rescue!

A mystery CWU member assist's in the customer's brand new fibre connection. Do you recognise this hard working individual?

*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.*

Dave Kauffman - Branch Secretary



Hello everyone. I, as the Chairperson of South East Central Branch, would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have participated in and supported the Branch during the year 2023. It has been a challenging year, with the lag of Industrial Action from the previous year to all the forced changes within the branch that have occurred.

As for my role this year in the Branch, I have the lead role in most OPEN-REACH related matters

within the industrial scope of the branch. Additionally, I have been elected as the Regional CWU coordinator for Openreach.

You should be aware that there have been changes in the Branch during 2023.

The Branch Secretary, Chris Power, retired in October 2023. After seeking nominations, I was elected as the Branch Secretary in the middle of October 2023. This change led to Steve Taylor acting as the temporary chairperson, and Steve Rhodes stepping in as the acting/trainee Financial Secretary.

As the branch chair, I have been involved in many meetings with management, as well as in disciplines and grievances, supporting members with their issues in any way I can. Within the Branch, I ensure we establish a supportive approach and allo-

cate case work and issues to Branch reps as needed. I offer my support to those learning and to the more experienced to bounce ideas off each other to improve their skills if possible.

I want to put on record my gratitude to those who have supported the branch at TUC and political events, and a special thank you to the Retired Members secretary, Dave Lomakin, for his work in ensuring that section works.



As a Branch, we have suffered under the BT Company Policy of Better Workplace, which does not live up to the name the Project was given. This has essentially been a pre-AI project to downsize the “desk” population within the business, intending to replace proper jobs with AI to save money, as stat-

TUC Changing the world
of work for good

ed by the company. As a Union, we believe people are worth more than that, and we try to push back whenever possible. However, this has resulted in the loss of members to Compulsory redundancy/Voluntary Paid Leaver schemes, particularly with the closure of Sevenoaks and Withean Centres of Excellence.

Regarding Field staff in Openreach, there have been several issues, some of which are fully on my agenda. Within SD, we know and understand that managers are looking to downsize Frames due to the perceived falling volumes. FTTP is growing, and Openreach is pushing Lead to Cash selling full fibre through CPs to end users. Dealing with FTTP management can be challenging. There are still a number of unagreed pay points in Openreach, and

as part of the agreement on finishing the Industrial Action, Openreach committed to resolving these issues. Unfortunately, BT and Openreach Management have failed to address the grading/pay point issues, creating unnecessary chaos within the company.

In terms of Service Delivery and FTTP, we have a few issues that have been ongoing. I believe the issues of performance management have resurfaced, and we can see that Management has misled Team members about their intentions. At the team member level, we observe ongoing bullying by managers. I sincerely hope that team member grades, at supervisory level, do not fall into the trap of becoming pseudo-managers. They are not managers but team members, there to help, coach, and support their

colleagues.

I also understand that there have been issues with Chief engineers, civils, and the Poling teams. If you want the branch to address any issues in your team, please contact the branch, and if possible, we will take on the challenge of looking into the issue.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to all Branch Members for your support. Remember, we are here to challenge the company on the issues you raise. As a Branch, we have a Branch Committee that meets in the evening once a quarter at Uckfield Civic Centre. The meetings last for 2 hours and conclude at 9:30 pm. Refreshments are provided. If you would like to be active in the branch, please consider contacting me and joining the Branch Committee. It's a starting point, and you could make a difference. If you like to be to be an information point/contact, please let me know, as we are compiling a list of geographical contacts.

Thank you.



Steve Rhodes - Equalities Officer



The postal strikes over the past year have made it hard for postal reps to get release, and since our Equality meetings have joint attendance from Postal and Telecoms, it has been difficult to hold the usual meetings. Due to this, we have had some joint meetings with the Eastern region, which helped with attendance and enhanced what we do, shared best practices, and ensured both regions are fully supportive and promote all of the equality strands in the UK.

I was asked to attend the Equality lead meeting with Kate Hudson (the Head of Equality, Education and Development for CWU) in mid-April in Birmingham,

as our regional equalities lead was on maternity leave. This was a two day event that brought together all Equality leads of all strands nationally. I asked what had happened to the Equality officer role within the “Redesign”, and Kate agreed to look into it.

Kate asked me to play a key role in moving this forward. I will be having my third meeting on this this month with her and Kate Dunning. I am really happy to be a part of this piece of work.

I attended the first 2-day Equality conference in Nottingham. It was a very full event and very interesting.

Day 1 consisted of speakers who covered: Breast cancer with speakers from Breast Cancer UK, Islamophobia and Black history, Alzheimer’s Society’s, Employment law from a senior employment rights solicitor at Thompsons Solicitors.

Day 2 consisted of speakers who covered: Poetry from the “Postie Poet”, an alternative history of Nottinghamshire from Notts LGBT Network, Supporting transgender colleagues at work.

Dave Ward (General Secretary CWU) and rail union RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch came to the stage. Mick spoke



Mick Lynch and Dave Ward (plus Pat)

about the 1971 strikes and what unites our two unions, he said: “We’ve both got a culture in our industries that we can say no to bosses when we think they’re wrong.” Dave moved on to note that life is a nightmare for thousands of workers across Britain at the moment. “It is clear that working-class people are being deliberately designed out of politics – and with things like AI, they are being deliberately designed out of their working lives too.” “Collectivism will win a better life for workers and their families.”

Lastly, Marcia Rigg from the United Families and

Protected Characteristics



Friends Campaign, who told the terrible story of her brother Sean Rigg, who died while in custody at Brixton police station in mysterious circumstances.

Due to the changes within the branch, I have agreed to take on the Financial Secretary role. I look forward to the challenge. I

will continue to work alongside Rick as part of our Safety Team, being involved with accident investigations, workplace inspections, and all other aspects of health & safety in the workplace.

Please look for our notice boards for the latest info and current initiatives.

Finances

The finances of the branch are as normal quite buoyant. However, unlike previous years I have to report that the branch has had approximately £14,000 sequestered over the last year.

The sequestration was due to a number of factors. Those being the reduction of members which lowers the sequestration rate, less

officers to do the work for the branch and the continued use of video conferencing.

The accounts have been submitted to head office and are now ready for the auditors to check the expenditure of the branch.

The Welfare account has little movement, and this account is for members hardship. We placed mon-

ies in this account to assist people who could not afford to go on strike. But we did not receive any requests for support.



Di Hill - Political Officer



The pantomime season may be over, but it continues within the Government. After 14 years, there are no real plans for anything! Boris Johnson really does take us for idiots; he partied while we stayed at home. He broke the rules he made, but it looks like they were for us, not him. Good job we have the unions and the opposition holding them to account.

This Government has been as chaotic as we have come to expect. They have broken every area of our country, from the NHS to the very infrastructure of our cities and towns. Many councils across the political spectrum are bankrupt or on the verge. We have probably never had so much power taken from communities by central government, cutting almost 90% of monies that usually would have gone to councils.

In the May local elections 2023, Labour won the council in Brighton back from the Greens, along with Gravesham, Dover, and Bracknell. Across the country, Labour had the highest gains in the South East. In Tunbridge Wells,



we have all-out borough elections in May due to ward changes. I shall be standing again. I was re-elected as Mayor of Southborough, doing a three-year term. The S.E. political committee is to have a meeting with the eight S.E. MPs in March at Portcullis House to voice our concerns and get support for the New Deal. This year sees boundary changes come in; the South East will go from 84 MPs to 91. Proportional Representation (PR) has a lot of support across all age groups and walks of life. Labour is being urged to change the electoral voting for general elections. This debate has been going on for many years now, to bring in a



form of PR and get rid of first past the post.

The NHS is in crisis, with doctors leaving in droves, many going abroad for more money. Junior doctors are on strike, earning less than £15 an hour, which is not right. Almost every sector has been striking for decent wages to live on; the “cost of living crisis” is hitting us all. And what does this government do? Talk to the unions? Of course not! The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill gives extraordinary power to the government to deny to workers what is universally regarded as a fundamental human right. It extends to six sectors - health, fire and rescue, education, transport services, nuclear decommissioning, and border security. We must protect the Right to Strike.

Can Rishi Sunak survive to the next election? Or will the Tories give us another unelected Prime Minister?

David Cameron is back, made a Lord overnight. How does that work? What a con! Foreign Secretary. Caught up in the

Greensill scandal (how many millions did he make from lobbying?), it seems the Tories are short of MPs to do the jobs; it's time to move over. Gaza is in a terrible state, with over 20,000 killed, almost half of them children. I believe there should be an immediate ceasefire, and the UK should stop selling arms to Israel.

This war has overshadowed the terrible plight of the Ukrainian people, whom we continue to support. Many women and children have returned to Ukraine, homesick. The world does seem to be in turmoil, with so many wars and a real worry about what could happen in the Middle East.

The Honours list has become a joke; it's time we had an elected Lords, not the likes of Michelle Mone! The Scottish linge-

rie tycoon lied about her involvement in the PPE scandal. Her husband, a billionaire, made £60m from PPE, much of it faulty, which pays for his new yacht. Our money, taken from the NHS, and lying about it. Government heads will roll, or should do; it's all very dodgy. We want our money back.

I attended the Labour Conference in Liverpool, where Angela Rayner made a commitment that Labour will introduce a bill to ban zero-hours contracts and repeal anti-strike laws within 100 days of coming to power. We must hold them to it. She also launched Labour's Fair Deal for workers, drawn up with affiliated unions to improve the lives of working people. CWU was instrumental in this.

The Liberal Democrats held their conference in



September. They will change the world, and we all know what they did when they had power in 2010: austerity, tuition fees trebled, privatized the Royal Mail, yes, that was Ed Davey. I certainly would not trust them.

HORIZON, the Post Office should be ashamed of itself. Fujitsu should be ashamed of itself. What these sub-postmasters were put through is hard to put into words. Some of them lost everything, committed suicide, went to prison, and Paula Vennells, the CEO of the Post Office, was given a CBE in the 2019 Honours List for services to the organisation. A petition signed by 1.2 million to strip her of the CBE worked, and



she has handed it back. Power to the people!

Food bank referrals for a 3-day food bag have risen from 60,000 in 2010 to over 3 million in 2023. That is not counting millions more using the numerous larders and pantries set up across the country. After 14 years of Tory rule, the rich have gotten much richer, with 17% of households relying on food parcels.

They really do need to go. We need a Labour Government, a party created by the workers to represent the workers, and if they get our vote, we need to hold them to account.

Use your vote!



Obituary

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



John Harris

In memory of a colleague so dear,

Their laughter and warmth we'll always hold near.

Though they're gone, their spirit remains,

In our hearts, forever, their presence sustains.

Local Heroes - Tolpuddle Martyrs



This years Local heroes (taken a little liberty with the word “local” but it is southern England) I take you back to you school history lessons and talk about the Tolpuddle Martyrs, whose harsh Transportation sentence was probably due to the recent “Captain Swing” unrest of Kent and Sussex (see there’s your local link!).

The Tolpuddle Martyrs were a group of six agricultural labourers from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset, England, who became iconic figures in the history of trade unionism and workers' rights. Their story, unfolding in the early 19th century, is a poignant narrative of struggle, injustice, and ultimately, triumph in the face of adversity.

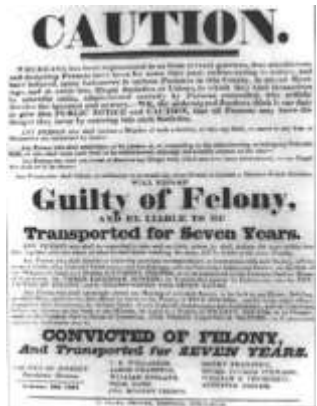
In the 1830s, England was engulfed by the Industrial Revolution, a period char-

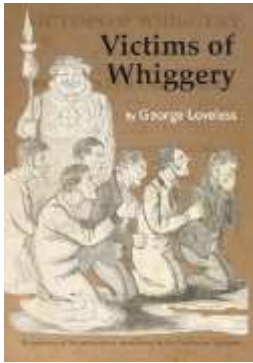
acterised by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. This transformative era, however, brought significant hardship for agricultural workers. Wages were meagre, working conditions were harsh, and labourers had little or no means to negotiate better terms. The plight of these workers was exacerbated by the introduction of new farming machinery, which reduced the demand for manual labour, leading to widespread unemployment and poverty.

Amidst this backdrop, six men from Tolpuddle - George Loveless, James Loveless, Thomas Standfield, John Standfield, James Brine, and James Hammett - resolved to take a stand. In 1833, influenced by the emerging trade union movement, they formed the Friendly Society of Agricultural

Labourers. Their objective was simple: to protest the gradual lowering of wages and to bargain for better working conditions. They swore an oath of secrecy, a common practice among trade unions at the time, to protect their members from employer reprisals.

However, their activities soon caught the attention of local landowners and the government, who perceived trade unions as a threat to social order and the status quo. Under the stringent laws of the time, particularly the Unlawful Oaths Act 1797, the Tolpuddle Martyrs were arrested and charged with administering illegal oaths. The trial was swift, and despite a lack of substantial evidence and the





peaceful nature of their union activities, all six men were found guilty and sentenced to transportation to Australia for seven years, a fate akin to a death sentence in that era.

The transportation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs ignited widespread outrage and became a catalyst for one of the first major popular campaigns in English history. A massive demonstration was organised by the nascent trade union movement, which saw an estimated 100,000 people march through the streets of London in 1834, demanding the release of the Martyrs. This public outcry was supplemented by a petition bearing over 800,000 signatures, an extraordinary number for that time.

The campaign to free the

Tolpuddle Martyrs was not just a matter of public protest; it represented a critical juncture in the labour movement. It highlighted the harsh realities faced by workers and the importance of collective action in advocating for their rights. The widespread support for the Martyrs turned them into symbols of the struggle for workers' rights and the broader fight for social justice.

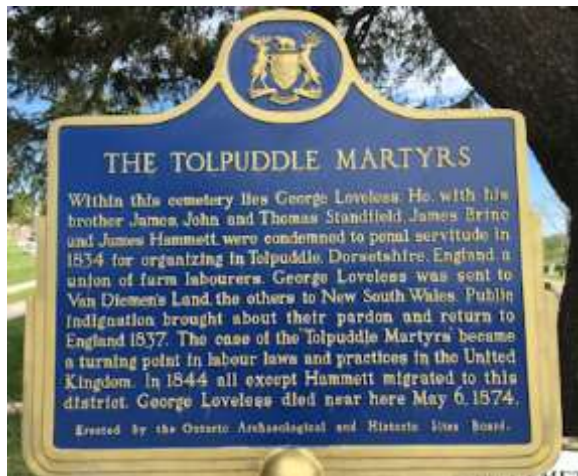
In 1836, the government, bowing to public pressure, granted a full pardon to the Tolpuddle Martyrs, and by 1838, all six men had returned to England. Their return was celebrated as a monumental victory for the labour movement. The Martyrs' story had a lasting impact, galvanising the

growth of trade unions and contributing to the eventual recognition and protection of workers' rights in England.

The legacy of the Tolpuddle Martyrs endures to this day, serving as a reminder of the enduring power of collective action and the importance of standing up for justice and equity in the face of oppression.

Every year a Tolpuddle Festival is held to commemorate these men and this year it is held 19th - 21st July.

If you wish to find out more about the martyrs, George Loveless had letter published in a newspaper in 1892 and transcripts of those can be found on our website.



Chris Power - Ex Branch Secretary



Having served as Branch Secretary of this Branch since its creation in 2005, and previously as the Brighton Branch Secretary from 1995, I left BT employment in October 2023 and resigned my CWU Branch Secretary position after nearly 28 years in the role. However, I hope to remain involved with the Branch in some capacity for many years if needed.

The last significant battle of my Union career was the 2022 PAY dispute, which saw our members striking for better PAY over several months. The

PAY award that was settled for wasn't the best, and this has been pointed out to the Employer during 2023. With Rail employees and NHS workers taking significant time for striking, it appears that the only language employers understand is the withdrawal of labour to secure PAY raises that come close to meeting the cost of living. Members must be prepared to fight for a PAY increase rather than merely wishing for one.

Recruitment was subdued in 2023, as both BT and Openreach scaled back their recruitment of new employees, with the exception of the Civils environment. Sites were still visited by Reps, but it was remarkable to see how few employees were on worksites compared to previous years. Recruitment continued mainly by contacting individuals from details supplied by

the Head office to sign up new members. It was very cathartic during my last week as Branch Secretary to successfully sign up several members in Hastings, from a Civils team, perhaps?

Everything proceeded smoothly in 2023 with a mix of both online (ZOOM) and in-person Union General and Committee meetings. To be fair, the mass membership usually won't attend unless there is a "hot" issue at hand, but we must provide every Branch member with an opportunity to attend Union meetings regularly. The Union is nothing without its members.

The Branch Committee meets four times a year on the first Tuesday of each month in a central location within the Branch - Uckfield Civic Centre. They serve as an interface between the General (All



members) meeting and the Officers of the Union. They also discuss the strategic direction of the Branch and issues that cannot be quickly addressed in a General meeting.

We are always on the lookout for new members to join the Committee and help steer the Branch in new directions. Come to the AGM, say hello, and consider joining the Committee.

The main responsibility of most Committee members is to contribute verbally, share work experiences, discuss workplace issues, and advise Officers on points to raise with BT Managers. These meetings have continued to work very well, and they will continue to take place quarterly.

Officer meetings were held monthly when possible, with the five senior officers who are allocated time off work for Union purposes attending. These meetings are crucial for all Officers to discuss current issues and casework and decide on local initiatives such as recruitment.



While BT/Openreach engineers constitute the majority of the Branch, Sky, Virgin Media, Cable TV installers, Hastings Direct, and many employees of other smaller companies are, and can be, members of this Branch. I have handled discipline, sickness, or performance cases in pretty much all of these companies over the last year.

Hopefully, this is not the end of my Union career, although it will certainly wind down to some extent, as there will be no right to meet with management in BT/Openreach. I can continue to represent any member of the Union at a Disciplinary or Grievance hearing, as that is enshrined in law. However,

BT/Openreach would expect employees of those businesses to represent their staff.

I hope to meet many of you at meetings and events in the coming years and months.

It has been a pleasure to work with all other Branch officers over the years, and I trust that I have been of assistance to many members during my 28 years as a Branch Official.

It would be wonderful to see old friends and members of the Branch at the Annual General Meeting in Tunbridge Wells on Wednesday, February 14th.

**Solidarity, Comrades -
Together United**

Rick Cobern - Safety Officer



The State of the Workplace

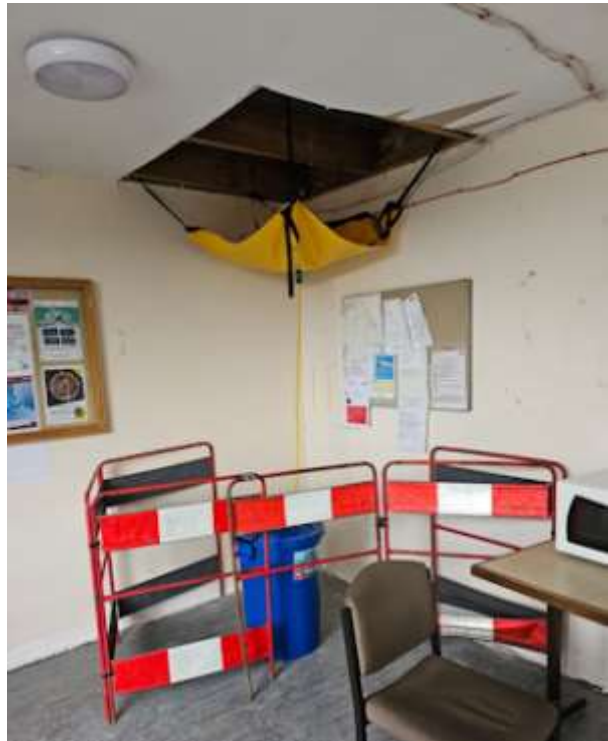
As always, our branch USRs have been working hard, inspecting our workplaces, and reminding the company of their responsibilities to maintain, keep them clean, tidy, and safe. They do this by visiting and recording what they observe, and reporting it to the appropriate lines of business like CBRE/ISS, whose workstack would not be what it is without them. The company has also released extra funds for maintenance and safety, so we have seen a marked improvement in many buildings. That's not to say they are all getting the attention they need, but it's certainly better

than it has been in recent years. This improvement is not only due to the work of USRs but also with your help and support. Last year saw a marked increase in the number of problems reported by members, and for that, I would like to thank you all. It makes a huge difference to the pressure we can apply when we get your support. Many roof leaks have been fixed, and the huge number of

maintenance issues is actually reducing, although we still have some parts of the estate in a dire state. So, the struggle continues.

Accidents & Incidents

Accidents and incidents as a whole have reduced over the year, which is music to my ears. However, the number of near miss reports has taken a sharp downturn compared to last year, for what we think are the wrong reasons. We





believe there is a correlation between this and the disciplines that have been raised on the back of the reports, and the news of this reaching our members. We have expressed our displeasure over this trend to the company directly. My advice is, if you see something that you think needs reporting but you are apprehensive, please don't ignore it. Contact one of us; we will report it for you. This way, you will be helping to address safety issues that could result in an injury or incident, involving maybe one of your workmates or colleagues, and surely that's what we all want. On the subject of incidents, we have seen near miss and incident reports that have involved some sort of injury, so I

must clarify: "Any event that causes injury of any type" MUST be reported as an accident. On that point, if you have an accident and report it, you will receive an email from us, outlining what to do next. We attend any accident investigation along with the manager to make sure our members are treated fairly and try to steer the investigation towards education and learning rather

than discipline. We believe education is preferable to punishment, and on the whole, we have had great success with this approach when we have been asked to attend. So, if you see the email, give us a call. When we attend, it is certainly nothing to be alarmed about; we are there to support you.

As Always, Be Safe, Be Smart, & Be a Member.



Is this safe? (Non BT/Openreach)

Dave Lomakin - Branch Retired Officer



inflation will become matters of interest.

During this past year, the CWU has witnessed the reestablishment of Union committees once again meeting together. The Branch allows me to attend the CWU Regional Retired Members Committee, representing BT Engineers. Other members are from the Postal sections. Additionally, I continue as a CWU delegate at the TUC Retired Forums, forwarding CWU policies, always testing and examining government proposals and legislation governing affairs concerning pensions and allowances for an ever-widening population.

At the 2023 CWU Retired



'I'd like to see how Jeremy Hunt gets out of triple lock pensions.'

2023 has passed with BT still reducing staffing levels, and employees have faced unexpected and unprepared departures from their employment. It is fair to say that another challenging year lies ahead for us as we experience retirement, not forgetting families approaching the retirement scenario. Pensions, social care, and the cost of living with

Members Conference, the two overwhelming themes are as follows:

1. The loss of membership within BT and Postal sections due to unremitting management proposals to reduce the workforce, the introduction of compulsory redundancies, and the employer's requirement to maximize profit.

2. The government's threat to the stability of the state pension by withdrawing the "Triple Lock" safety net, which may prevent state pensions and state allowances from keeping in step with inflation. (This proposal, stated in the Autumn Statement, is now rescinded albeit temporarily?)





RETIRED MEMBERS

The annual distribution of CWU diaries, pens, and Christmas cards to the Branch Retired members throughout the British Isles has been well received. Thank you to all members who sent Christmas cards and messages to the Branch and myself.

If you are thinking of retirement or find yourself in a retirement possibility, please contact the Branch office or refer to the Branch website to continue with CWU retired membership and receive CWU benefits, legal services, and entitlement to receive the Union's Death Benefit

for your nominated next of kin or legal representative.

Please let the branch know of any changes in circumstance, whether it be that you have moved home or

you beneficiary has moved or perhaps just to change your beneficiary.

If you could also make sure we have your correct email address.



Steve Taylor - Assistant Secretary



This year has been far from ordinary when it comes to my updates. The conclusion of last year left me on a sombre note, with the passing of two close family members, my father's descent into the realm of dementia, the discovery of my prostate cancer diagnosis and operation, and the loss of my job. As for my union involvement this year, it has faced significant challenges, to say the least.

The Better Workplace program had a significant impact on our branch, affecting both Una McMahon and me when our workplaces were closed. Una managed to secure another job in a managerial capaci-

ty, rendering her unable to continue as a union representative. On the other hand, I had the option to become a Fibre engineer, or as the alternative ominously put it, "or Else!" I chose the former and embarked on a year as an engineer.

So, after 23 years of office work, I found myself back up a pole. How difficult could it be, right? Well, the engineering tasks were quite similar, but my body was no longer in its 30s. Oh, the aches and pains, the soothing hot baths, and the constant need for ibuprofen! I might add, the whole course was full of us "old 'uns, and not just me!"

I'm pleased to report that I

now have firsthand experience with the new fibre network, rather than relying solely on my dated copper experience from over two decades ago. A big shout-out to those Hailsham colleagues who chuckled at my interpretation of a low customer service point (CSP).

Throughout the year, I managed to maintain my involvement with the branch, particularly in the financial aspects, even though I couldn't engage in industrial relations. In October, with assistance from the head office, the branch welcomed my return to union work on a part-time basis. I can confidently confirm that I am now back on a full-time basis.



Bracknell Training Centre

With Chris retiring, I assumed the role of Acting Chair for the branch while also overseeing the financial responsibilities and mentoring Steve Rhodes. While the branch is undergoing some internal changes, rest assured that our valued members will not experience any adverse effects.

One notable change we've implemented in the branch is keeping our BT/Openreach members informed about the union's activities related to their work. We've introduced a branch newsletter, which will be issued quarterly to keep you updated on current developments. We've already released two editions, with the next one scheduled for the spring. We understand that not everyone can attend general meetings to delve into the nitty-gritty details, but this newsletter will provide you with insights into our activities. If you have specific topics or issues you'd like us to address, please don't hesitate to use the email address provided at the bottom of the newsletter to contact us.

Now that I am back in a



full-time capacity, I've noticed that the world of disciplinary actions continued in my absence, primarily related to attendance issues. The company employs the Bradford Factor, so it might be beneficial to provide a refresher on how it's calculated.

The calculation is derived from absences over a 12-month period: Number of absences x number of absences x total number of days. For instance, if you had 3 absences (lasting 2, 3, and 4 days), the calculation would be $3 \times 3 \times 9 = 81$. The trigger threshold is 100, so in this case, 81 is acceptable as it doesn't exceed the limit. However, there are other factors to consider, such as patterns in absences, like all on Mondays, which would negate the need to use the

Bradford Factor due to the discernible trend.

Lastly, it's crucial to remember to always bring a union representative with you to disciplinary meetings. Don't heed the manager who dismisses the situation with a "it's nothing" remark. Reach out to us and avoid attending these meetings alone. Your union is here to support you!"

As for the prostate! Who'd have thought I set a trend for the king to follow. Gents, get it checked out!

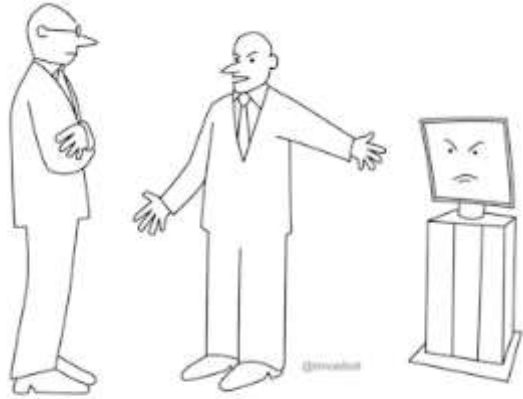


Spreadsheet Culture!

In this age of computers and technical data, comprehending the role of senior managers within a company can be quite challenging. In many respects, their primary objective remains consistent over the years: to generate profit at a reasonable cost, thus fostering a sustainable business model.

However, in the case of BT, we must pause and reflect on where things may have taken a wrong turn and where senior managers have led us. While it's undeniable that competition in our industry is fierce, BT seems to have veered away from the engineering heritage it proudly upheld for over a century.

Recent history has witnessed a rapid shift towards a retail/production-



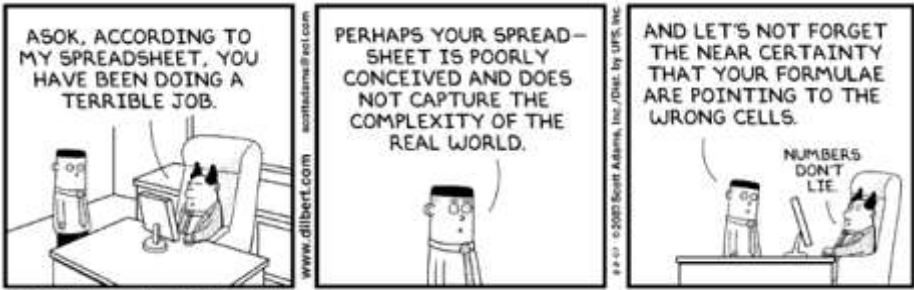
*His decisions aren't any better than yours
— but they're WAY faster..*

line mindset within BT. This shift is likely driven by managers who lack experience in customer-facing technical roles or who prioritise an accounting approach, spending their days immersed in spreadsheets.

Within BT, it's become commonplace to hear managers incessantly discussing efficiency and inefficiency, attempting to amalgamate unproductive time into something useful.

How ever, it's crucial to acknowledge that taking a fraction of time from ten individuals cannot magically transform it into productive time. This misconception only intensifies as it multiplies across more individuals. One minute of unproductive time from





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30,000 people does not translate to 30,000 minutes of usable time in the real world. It's perplexing that managers seem to believe otherwise. This approach, akin to an age-old accountant's ploy to boost productivity, perpetuates a culture dominated by spreadsheets, rather than conducting an honest appraisal of our work processes.

Within Openreach, management has stripped away the genuine work practices of our workforce. They've also revised the way we allocate our time. Consequently, it has become increasingly challenging to evaluate performance as Openreach has replaced

established calculations with concealed AI analytics that merely yield numbers.

In various sections of Openreach, percentage figures serve as targets, yet there's a glaring absence of transparency regarding how these figures are derived. We've observed Passport entries by Patch Managers, which conform to templates and offer little in the way of meaningful educational guidance for team members seeking improvement. The prevailing ethos remains one of "work faster, do more, or face a plan to manage you out of the business." It's imperative that every engi-

neer starts pushing back - by stepping off tours of work, declining to work beyond designated hours, and demanding that managers substantiate the



changes they impose to enhance our daily tasks. Accepting the status quo is simply not an option; you are worth more than being reduced to a mere statistic on an accountant's spreadsheet.

ENOUGH!

Meeting Dates 2024-25

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

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------|-----------|
| General Meeting | Wednesday 5th June | 2024 | Venue TBC |
| General Meeting | Wednesday 4th September | 2024 | Venue TBC |
| AGM | Wednesday, 19th Feb | 2025 | Venue TBC |

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, 9th Apr | 2024 | Uckfield |
| Committee Meeting | Tuesday, 2nd July | 2024 | Uckfield |
| Committee Meeting | Tuesday, 1st Oct | 2024 | Uckfield |
| Committee Meeting | Tuesday, 7th Jan | 2025 | Uckfield |

Dates of all meetings are advertised on the website www.cwusec.org.uk

Think you could help? Think you could do better? Make yourself known to the branch and join our committee. Ring any of the officers on the contact list for more details.

To register a new claim or for any legal advice call
UNIONLINE on

0300 333 0303

Legal Services for Union Members and their Families

South East Central CWU

Current Points of Contact

| | | <u>Telephone No</u> | <u>Mobile No</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Branch Secretary: | Dave Kauffman chair.sec.tw@btinternet.com | 01892 522948 | 07850 815644 |
| Branch Chair Act: | Steve Taylor cwu.sec.finsec@btinternet.com | 01892 522948 | 07377 880526 |
| Fin Secretary Act: | Steve Rhodes srcwuusr@cwusec.org.uk | | 07764 338836 |
| Assist Secretary | Vacant | | |
| Safety Co-ord. (& Vice Chair) | Rick Cobern safety@cwusec.org.uk | | 07498 923159 |
| Political Officer: | Di Hill dianne.hill1@btinternet.com | | 07747 193133 |
| Women's Officer: | Vacant | | |
| Equality Officer (& Assist Safety) | Steve Rhodes srcwuusr@cwusec.org.uk | | 07764 338836 |
| Retired Members | Dave Lomakin via cwu.sec.tw@btinternet.com | 01892 522948 | |
| Youth Officer | Vacant | | |
| BAME Officer | Vacant | | |



South East Central Branch
Annual General Meeting

Royal Wells Hotel

Tunbridge Wells

59 Mount Ephraim, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 8BE

Wednesday 14th February

7.30pm

The agenda will include the submission of the Annual report, elections, branch officers and 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, delegation and proposals to the CWU Annual Conference

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

Refreshments will be available for members.

YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY
PLEASE ATTEND