

# The Modern Records Centre: Fifty years on

Pierre Botcherby<sup>1</sup>, Rachel MacGregor<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Modern Languages & Cultures (French), University of Warwick, Coventry, UK; <sup>2</sup>Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Correspondence: <sup>1</sup>[pierre.botcherby@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:pierre.botcherby@warwick.ac.uk),

<sup>2</sup>[rachel.MacGregor@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.MacGregor@warwick.ac.uk)

Twitter/X: <sup>2</sup>[@MRCWarwick](https://twitter.com/MRCWarwick)

BlueSky: <sup>2</sup>[@anoldhand](https://bsky.app/profile/anoldhand)

ORCID: <sup>1</sup>[0009-0003-8151-829X](https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8151-829X)



**Copyright notice:** This article is issued under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution License**, which permits use and redistribution of the work provided that the original author and source are credited.

You must give appropriate credit (author attribution), provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

## Abstract

*The Modern Records Centre (MRC) is the leading archive in the United Kingdom for collections of national-level trades union and employers' organisation records. It holds the historic records of the University of Warwick and is an important archive for such diverse topics as fringe politics, pressure groups, and cycling, amongst others. The MRC is a key teaching resource for undergraduate and postgraduate students across Warwick's Arts and Social Science faculties and contributes to public engagement and outreach through events for local community groups and schools.*

*In 2023, the MRC celebrated its 50th anniversary with a series of events, culminating in a symposium at the University of Warwick. This paper provides historical background about the MRC's foundation and development, situating it within the wider research and social climate of the 1970s. It then introduces the contributions to this collection of proceedings from the anniversary symposium.*

**Keywords:** Modern Records Centre; archives; trade unions; industrial relations; working class; history from below; University of Warwick

The Modern Records Centre ('The MRC' to its staff and to researchers) is the leading archive in the United Kingdom for collections of national-level trades union and employers' organisation records. It holds the historic records of the University of Warwick and is also an important archive for the study of such diverse topics as fringe politics, pressure groups, and cycling, amongst others. The MRC has become a key teaching resource for undergraduate and postgraduate students across Warwick's Arts and Social Science faculties and contributes to public engagement and outreach through events for local community groups and schools.

2023 saw the MRC notch up its half-century. It began in 1973, an era of high union membership and when strikes could make or break governments (Fraser, 1999: 228-229). As it reaches the fifty-year mark, unions in higher education, nursing, railways, and more are once again showing the importance of worker organisation, campaigning, and protest to society – and, by extension, the importance of understanding these phenomena in the perspective of both the present and the past. The MRC thus remains as relevant today as at its founding.

This special issue of *Exchanges* celebrates the research informed and inspired by the MRC and its collections, rounding off a series of anniversary events that have included: a joint anniversary seminar with the South Wales Miners Library (SWML) and Marx Memorial Library (fiftieth and ninetieth, respectively); an 'MRC in 50 Objects' exhibition featuring archive items chosen by current and former staff, researchers, students, and the public; participation in the national Heritage Open Days in September 2023; and the fiftieth anniversary symposium from which this journal's papers are drawn. This short introductory piece provides some historical details about the MRC and similar institutions like the SWML, as well as an overview of the exciting contributions from researchers at all stages of their careers (undergraduate to Emeritus) which can be found in this edition.

### **The Modern Records Centre's Origins**

The MRC's founding in 1973 was largely down to the efforts of George Bain, Hugh Clegg, and Royden Harrison. Clegg was Director of Warwick's Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU), founded in 1969, and Harrison was Director of Warwick's Centre for Study of Social History; Bain was Deputy Director of the former.

When Bain came to Warwick in 1970, he was already interested in consolidating industrial relations resources and had been working since 1967 on a bibliography of secondary source material. Having joined forces with Gillian Woolven in 1969, *A Bibliography of British Industrial Relations* would be published in 1979 (Bain & Woolven, 1979: xiii). The *Bibliography*

was the first ‘comprehensive, retrospective’ bibliography of British industrial relations, published ‘to reduce inefficiency and ignorance’:

*In the past, industrial relations specialists have had to spend a great deal of time and energy compiling bibliographies for their own use. In doing so, they have often unwittingly duplicated the efforts of others, and, duplicated or not, their efforts have often been unsatisfactory. (Bain & Woolven, 1979: 1)*

At the same time, Woolven was working with Harrison on the *Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals*, published in 1977 and described in its Introduction as an ‘indispensable preliminary’ for facilitating better study of the ‘Labour’ press (Harrison, et al., 1977: xi).

Bain and Woolven were also aware of the need to catalogue, preserve, and facilitate access to primary materials on industrial relations. They spoke on the matter at the First Annual Conference of the ASLIB Social Sciences Group in 1971 and their presentation was later published as ‘The Primary Materials of British Industrial Relations’ in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (Bain & Woolven, 1971: 388-414). ‘It is very important’, they argued:

*to try to contribute to the formation of a national policy for the provision of primary materials in industrial relations by reviewing their nature and extent, assessing the adequacy of bibliographical guides, and discussing the problems involved in locating, preserving, and gaining access to these materials. (Bain & Woolven, 1971: 388).*

This starting point expressed similar intentions to their *Bibliography*. Crucially, though, they urged that whilst:

*the preparation of bibliographical guides to primary materials is invaluable, it is not by itself sufficient [...] what is listed, classified, and indexed today may be damaged, lost, or destroyed tomorrow. Primary materials must also be preserved and access to them facilitated. (Bain & Woolven, 1971: 409).*

In short, they proposed a repository for primary materials – a ‘National Documents Library’ – which could ‘encourage the deposit of records and facilitate access to them’. This would mean ‘individuals and institutions would know where they could deposit material, and researchers would know where they could expect to find it’ (Bain & Woolven, 1971: 414).

It was this function which the MRC would come to fulfil. The original Leverhulme bid for £40,000 (around £400,000 in today’s money), put together by Bain, Clegg, and Harrison, accordingly proposed a repository to ‘search out, collect and make available for research purposes – and for posterity – the primary sources for British political, social and economic

history with particular reference to labour history and industrial relations' (**Bain, 2023: 77**). The grant covered two archivists and clerical support for four years, and was made on the expectation that the University of Warwick would continue to fund the MRC thereafter. The 'sterling' work of the original archives manager, Richard Storey, his successors Christine Woodland, Helen Ford, Charlotte Berry, and Rachel MacGregor, and the many passionate and talented archivists who have worked at the MRC over the decades, has made the MRC the 'leading' archive for industrial relations research (and, as its collections have evolved, much more besides) and the largest academic archive in the UK, with around 1,500 collections occupying sixteen kilometres of shelving (**Ibid**).

### **Trades Unions, Amalgamation, and Their Records**

The 1970s was a time when trades unions were strong. Membership was growing, from just over 10 million across the United Kingdom in 1967 to 13.5 million in 1979. In figures provided by Henry Pelling, an upward trend in total trades union membership is visible from 1945 onwards, growing from 7,875,000 at the end of World War Two to 11,444,000 in the year the MRC opened (**Pelling, 1976: 304-305**).

It was also a period of amalgamation: as union membership grew, the number of unions was shrinking. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) had already recommended amalgamation in a 1943 report, but progress was slow on this front until the Trade Union (Amalgamations) Act of 1964. Hamish Fraser notes that, following the Act, around ninety mergers took place by the end of the 1970s, with thirty-six new unions emerging due to transfers and mergers by 1989. By 1998, the 6.7 million TUC members belonged to seventy-five trades unions (**Fraser, 1999: 250-251**). In 1969, by contrast, Bain and Woolven noted 508 unions operating across the United Kingdom, with around 6,000 having existed since 1892 (**Bain & Woolven, 1979: 393**).<sup>i</sup>

A risk of amalgamation was that the records of the smaller unions who merged would be lost, not least given the reputation for patchiness in union record keeping anyway. Bain and Woolven, quoting Eric Hobsbawm at length, noted various reasons for this patchiness: the inevitable uncertainty which surrounds unions in their formative years; a utilitarianism which has seen many unions dispense of 'old papers' as mere 'clutter' (a prevailing view amongst some Senior Professors and Administrators at Warwick in the 1970s was that collecting such 'old papers' was not a priority for a university styled as new and dynamic but – thanks in no small part to the then Registrar, Mike Shattock – they were ultimately convinced to continue financing the MRC after the Leverhulme grant ended); changes in union General Secretaries or office locations; and a lack of space, staff, and expertise for dealing with records (**Hobsbawm,**

1960).<sup>ii</sup> On amalgamation, Hobsbawm gave worrying historic examples of the tendency of union records to ‘vanish’ during this process: the dearth of records relating to the Municipal Employees’ Association within those of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (created in 1924 from the merger of the MEA, the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, and the National Union of General Workers); the Transport and General Workers’ Union’s (TGWU) slim holdings concerning the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers’ Union and the Workers’ Union, following its creation in 1922; and the National Union of Railwaymen (created 1913) which boasted ‘fairly full’ records for the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, ‘not much’ for the General Railway Workers’ Union, and ‘*no trace whatsoever*’ of the Signalmen and Pointsmen’s Society (*Ibid*). The emergence of the MRC at a time of union amalgamations in the 1970s thus gave them a convenient home for their ‘old papers’ (‘clutter’) and many, according to Bain’s recollections, were happy to cooperate.

### **The Making of the History of the Working-Class: The MRC, South Wales Miners Library and beyond**

The growing trades union membership was indicative of the broader influence of the working-class in post-war society. Following World War Two, often presented as the ‘People’s War’, there was a synonymity between the terms ‘people’ and ‘working-class’, and to be working-class – to be ‘ordinary’ – was valorised (**Todd, 2014a & 2014b: 119-121**). With rising affluence, full employment, and the Welfare State came rising expectations of autonomy, choice, and participation amongst the ‘ordinary’ masses (**Lawrence, 2011 & Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2018: 9-10**). Within academia and research at this time there emerged methodologies like ‘history from below’ and oral history, which focused on the labouring classes, on ‘ordinary’ people, as historical subjects. ‘History from below’ originated in the Historians’ Group of the Communist Party of Great Britain, for whose members ‘common people made history’ (**Perry, 2021: 89**). One of their most influential members, E.P. Thompson, had been Director of Warwick’s Centre for the Study of Social History before Harrison took the helm in 1971 (**Ibid: 100**). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the MRC was not the only archive or research organisation with an emphasis on history related to the working-class – whether the traditional labour history and industrial relations focus on working-class organisations, or the ‘ennobl[ing] the resistance and non-conformity of bandits, peasants, artisans, industrial workers, poachers, religious millenarians, and transportees’ variety of Hobsbawm or Thompson – to emerge in the 1970s (**Ibid: 85**).

Notably, 1973 saw the opening of the South Wales Miners’ Library (SWML), a joint anniversary the MRC was delighted to celebrate in July

2023 with an online seminar featuring talks from the two archives, as well as the Marx Memorial Library, who were turning ninety. Beyond the year, there are several parallels between the two institutions' founding. Where the MRC owed much to the personal interest of Bain, the SWML was the brainchild of Hywel Francis, who had already helped found the society for the study of Welsh labour history, *Llafur*, in 1971 (**Hopkin, 2022: 315**). Being from a mining family and imbued with a 'total and unwavering commitment to the notion of community and in particular to the South Wales valley where he was born', Francis was concerned by the dispersal of Miners' Institute libraries across South Wales following the closures of ninety-one collieries in the region between 1959-1971 (**Ibid: 316; Francis, 1976: 183**). He obtained a one-year Social Science Research Council grant (subsequently extended) to 'identify and save' the remaining libraries, a similar intention to Bain and Woolven's regarding industrial relations primary sources. Where Bain was concerned about union amalgamations, Francis feared pit closures and the 'simultaneous break-up of traditional mining communities' would lead to the destruction of 'invaluable' records about mining and miners and the loss of the immense library holdings of the regions' Miners' Institutes (**Francis, 1976: 183**). His fears were not without foundation: of the 40,000 books said to be held by the Institute libraries of the Mid-Rhondda valley, only 350 were saved; from the Mardy Institute, a hotbed of communism, only one book survived (**Ibid: 186, 188**). Francis' project saved large parts of the collections at twenty-six Institute libraries, as well as smaller sections from twenty-three others, following which the SWML was established at Swansea University under his direction (**Ibid: 191**). It now contains books (writing in 1976, Francis said the total was over 20,000), journals, and pamphlets (over 5,000, again according to Francis) from the Miners' Institutes, oral histories of the South Wales coalfield (nearly 400 hours' worth), banners and posters from various working-class organisations, and personal libraries of individuals from the region or related to the mining industry (**Hopkin, 2022: 216; Francis, 1976: 184**). Expressing similar sentiments to Bain and Woolven, Francis hoped the SWML would:

*serve as an example, in the way that the Manchester Working Class Movement Library, the Oxford Abe Lazarus Library and the Marx Memorial Library have already done [...] for the establishment of similar institutions throughout the country [...] there is a desperate need for a series of regional and local libraries of the kind which would be capable of locating books and manuscripts at grass-roots level. (Francis, 1976: 192)*

Deliberately or not, the hopes of Bain and Woolven and Francis were being heeded, as the concomitant emergence of similar institutions testifies. The Regional Heritage Centre in Lancaster began life in 1973 as the Centre for

North-West Regional Studies, and is now home to the Elizabeth Roberts Working Class Oral History Archive.<sup>iii</sup> So, too, did the North West Labour History Society, whose founders included Ruth and Eddie Frow, who in the 1950s had started what would become the Working Class Movements Library by collecting labour history books and documents at their home in Stretford, Manchester; this personal collection became a Charitable Trust in 1971 and moved to its present home in Salford in 1987.<sup>iv</sup> The People's History Museum, now also based in Manchester, began in 1975 when the Trade Union, Labour, and Co-Operative History Society opened a collection at Limehouse Town Hall in London.<sup>v</sup> The 1970s, clearly, were a propitious time for the study of labour history, and the field is very fortunate that these rich repositories continue to nourish researchers today.

### **A British Archive of Global Importance**

When Bain and Woolven were talking about a 'National Documents Library', they included trade union records and reports, employer records and reports (both employer's associations and individual employers), joint organisations' records and reports (that is, 'staff committees' and 'joint consultative committees'), state records and reports, statistical records and reports (from the various sources listed already), personal papers (letters, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, oral history), visual materials (iconographic, photographic, and cinematic), and literature and folklore as comprising the primary sources required for the study of industrial relations (**Bain & Woolven, 1971: 392-409**). These industrial relations-related areas form the backbone of the MRC's collections. With trades unions, for instance, from the initial National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) deposit in February 1974 to the ongoing cataloguing of the recently acquired National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) archives, from the emergence of fledgling unions like the Journeymen Cabinet Makers of Belfast (c.1788) to the large-scale amalgamations like Unison and Unite today, the MRC boasts the national records of hundreds of unions.<sup>vi</sup>

Over time, though, the MRC's collections have broadened in scope. Bain and Woolven discounted records related to political parties and newspapers or journals not produced by employers or trade unions, due to their marginality to the study of industrial relations. Both areas – far-left (particularly Trotskyist) and some far-right, for political parties, and in relation to the University of Warwick, cycling, and innumerable grassroots campaigns for newspapers and journals – are now very much part of the MRC (**Bain & Woolven, 1971: 392**). Bain and Woolven were also focused on sources related to Great Britain and, whilst the MRC has often been presented as an archive for British history, the reach of its collections has become truly global.

This broadened scope and global reach was reflected in the objects featured in the fiftieth anniversary exhibition. Alongside several items from the University of Warwick's own archive (its Grant of Arms, a 1960s map of potential sites for the campus, one of the iconic white tiles which adorn so many of its buildings, and more), there were items related to Coventry (regarding the debate over 'Sunday games' in municipal parks) and Leamington Spa (a photograph of the TGWU's founding meeting in 1921 and a ticket for a Rock Against Racism concert featuring The Specials organised by the Leamington Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee). From further afield came a portrait from the Soviet Union of the trade unionist Tom Mann, scrapbooks on the Spanish Civil War, French Resistance flyers, material from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, and a box of 'sacred blood-soaked soil' from Volgograd.<sup>vii</sup> Within this same list, the MRC's broader scope becomes clear, with items concerned with anti-racism, local politics, higher education, and working-class struggles abroad. The papers presented at the anniversary symposium showed a similar breadth, covering British trades unions, higher education, Latin America, the National Cycle Archive, health and wellbeing, disability, Algeria, France, and the West Indies. It is noteworthy that so many of the records related to these topics were in fact generated or collected by those bodies (individual trades unions, the TUC, employers' organisations like the Confederation of British Industry) or individuals (trade union activists) identified by Bain and Woolven for the study of British industrial relations. Looking to the future, the MRC's collections will continue to evolve and expand. The external store on the University of Warwick's Wellesbourne campus is already filling up and new deposits continue to arrive each month, including 'born digital' records of the twenty-first century.

### **Anniversary Symposium**

The fiftieth anniversary symposium was held on 20 September 2023. Six panels featured twenty-one speakers and you will find contributions from all the panels in this issue.

The symposium began with a conversation between MRC founder, Professor Sir George Bain, and the MRC's Acting Manager, Rachel MacGregor; large parts of this Editorial have drawn on this. The first panel concerned 'Higher Education in the archives', followed by a session on 'Latin America'. After lunch, there were panels on 'Trade Unions and the wider world', 'Trade unions and activism in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain', and 'Disability and health', before a keynote presentation by Neil Carter of De Montfort University about The National Cycle Archive.

The journal begins with a paper by Peter Ackers on another of the MRC founders, Hugh Clegg. He discusses Clegg's influence on the MRC and the IRRU at Warwick, as well as his writings on trades unions. Ackers'



biography of Clegg, *Trade Unions and the British Industrial Relations Crisis*, was published by Routledge earlier in 2024. Warwick Emeritus Carolyn Steedman, meanwhile, writes about ‘teaching’ the MRC to students in the university’s History department, and about the indissociable nature of E.P. Thompson, social history, and administrative records at Warwick. Jessica Wardhaugh, of Warwick’s School for Modern Languages and Cultures, describes her use of the MRC’s resources related to the French Resistance for teaching, schools’ outreach, public engagement, and her own research. Mike Esbester, Cheryl Hunnisett, and Alex Gordon, meanwhile, discuss their collaborative ‘Railway Work, Life, and Death’ project, showing how collaborative work in research can benefit a wide range of different groups, in this case academics, the archives sector, family historians, and the rail industry.

In one of several papers showcasing the MRC’s reach beyond Britain, Klara Rihakova, a PhD candidate at Edinburgh, examines the British-Czechoslovak Cultural Exchange programme, particularly in terms of students who studied or found exile in Britain following the Prague Spring. Nia Belcher, a History undergraduate at Warwick and the winner of the prize for best student presentation at the symposium (generously sponsored by the Midlands manufacturing company, Rubery-Owen, whose records are deposited at the MRC), evokes some similar themes in a discussion of her work into Chilean refugees following the *coup d’état* led by General Pinochet in 1973. Also, in the context of the Chilean coup, Veronic Diaz-Cerda and Alison de Ribeiro Menezes discuss the creation of an audio archive for the ‘Voices of humanitarianism: British responses to refugees from Chile’ project, and how this archive can give voice to memories which have been silenced until now. Moving from South America to the Caribbean, Roger Seifert studies the mixed reactions within the British labour movement to strikes and riots in the English-speaking West Indies in the 1930s, a topic with contemporary relevance given the labour movement’s ongoing grappling with issues like the legacy of slavery, empire, and colonialism. Melanie Torrent, from Université de Picardie Jules Verne, engages with the labour movement’s interactions with decolonisation, particularly events in Algeria in the 1950s, showing – like Seifert – a range of mixed reactions, tensions, and competing interests.

Regarding Britain, Ben Richardson, of Warwick’s Politics and International Studies department, combines local history and trades unions to discuss the founding of the Transport and General Workers’ Union in Leamington Spa. Amy Longmuir, a PhD candidate at Reading, examines the Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS), a group campaigning on behalf of sex workers founded in Birmingham in 1976 and ultimately successful in lobbying government to remove the term ‘common prostitute’ from the law. Kirstie Stage, a PhD candidate at Cambridge, writes about the National

Union of the Deaf, particularly its unsuccessful bid for TUC affiliation and how its campaigns empowered workers to assert and be proud of their d/Deaf identity. Michael Lambert, from Lancaster University, eschews the traditional top-down or bottom-up analyses of the British Welfare State to examine it from *within*, showing how pressures in the system from above and below expose complex and contested relations between policy and practice. Setara Pracha, meanwhile, shows the reach of the MRC's holdings beyond the disciplines of History or Politics in her exploration of letters between the novelist Daphne du Maurier and her publisher, Victor Gollancz. The journal rounds off, courtesy of Neil Carter, with a leisurely ride through The National Cycle Archive, the holdings of which contributed heavily to his recent book, *Cycling and the British: A Modern History*.

---

## Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank Professor Sir George Bain for allowing us to use his Q&A from our anniversary symposium as the basis for this Editorial and for his helpful comments and proofreading. It was only fitting that George open the symposium and we were delighted he was able to attend.

Thanks go to all the conference speakers, panel chairs, and attendees for the contributions to a fascinating and immensely enjoyable day of papers. Colleagues across the MRC and the Library – Eren Delaney, Carole Jones, James King, Isobel Hadlum, Rachel MacGregor, Lizzie Morrison, Martin Sanders, Naomi Shewan, Liz Wood, Hannah O'Brien and her team of Library Student Partners (Clytie Tian, Thomas Nguyen, Susie Gabriel, Diya Mehta and Giorgos Vrangas), Karen Jackson, and Anna O'Neill – all bought into the anniversary and Pierre wouldn't have been able to deliver the celebrations without all their hard work.

Thanks, too, to Gaz J Johnson for agreeing to publish the proceedings in *Exchanges* and for his support with this. Thanks to Rachel, Eren, Izzy, Hannah, and Emil Rybczak for their work as co-editors.

---

## References

- Bain, G.S., 2023. *A Lucky Life: An Autobiography*. Typed manuscript.
- Bain, G.S., Woolven, G.B., 1971. The primary materials of British industrial relations. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 9:3, pp.388-414.
- Bain, G.S., Woolven, G.B., 1979. *A Bibliography of British Industrial Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Francis, H., 1976. The origins of the South Wales Miners' Library. *History Workshop*, 2, pp.183-205.
- Fraser, W.H., 1999. *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700-1998*. Houndsmills: Macmillan.
- Harrison, R., Woolven, G.B., Duncan, R. (eds.), 1977. *The Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals 1790-1970: A Check List*. Hassocks: Harvester Press.
- Hobsbawm, E., 1960. Records of the Trade Union movement. *Archives*, 4:23, pp.129-137.
- Hopkin, D., 2022. Hywel Francis 1946-2021. *History Workshop Journal*, 93, pp.314-322.
- Lawrence, J., 2011. Paternalism, class, and the British path to modernity. In: Gunn, S., Vernon, J. (eds.), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.147-164.
- Pelling, H., 1976. *A History of British Trade Unionism*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Macmillan.
- Perry, M., 2021. *Marxism and History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, F., 2018. *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference in England, 1968-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Todd, S., 2014a. Class, experience and Britain's twentieth century. *Social History*, 39:4, pp.489-508.
- Todd, S., 2014b. *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class*. London: John Murray.

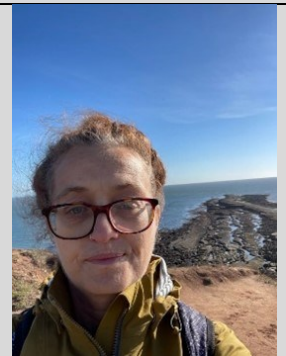
### **Online**

- About the archive. Available at: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/elizabeth-roberts-working-class-oral-history-archive/> [Accessed: 5 December 2023].
- Limehouse Town Hall and St. Anne's Church. Available at: <https://alondoninheritance.com/tag/limehouse-town-hall/> [Accessed: 5 December 2023].
- The MRC in 50 Objects. Available at: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/mrc50/50objects/> [Accessed: 12 December 2023].
- Who we are and what we do. Available at: <https://www.wcml.org.uk/about-us/about-wcml/> [Accessed: 05 December 2023].
-

Pierre Botcherby is currently a Teaching Fellow in French Studies at the University of Warwick. In 2023, he was Outreach and Widening Participation Officer at the Modern Records Centre, where he led the delivery of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and got (nearly) every file in the strongrooms out for teaching sessions. He has also written a forthcoming piece on the MRC for *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* with the provisional title 'For research purposes and for posterity: the founding and early development of the Modern Records Centre'.



Rachel MacGregor is Digital Preservation Officer, at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick where she leads on digital preservation strategy and developing workflows for born digital collections. In 2023 she was Acting Archives Manager at the Modern Records Centre where she was heavily involved in the planning and delivery of the 50th anniversary celebrations. She has worked in archives for over 25 years, with physical archive collections and more recently focussing on the management and preservation of digital archives in Higher Education.



**To cite this article:**

Botcherby, P., & MacGregor, R., 2024. The Modern Records Centre: Fifty years on. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 11(4), 1-13. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.31273/eirj.v11i4.1741>.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>i</sup> Henry Pelling suggests there were 561 unions at this time, of which 150 affiliated to the Trades Union Congress – this overall number fell to the 508 offered by Bain and Woolven in 1973, the year of the MRC's opening. See: Pelling, pp.304-305.

<sup>ii</sup> Hobsbawm is cited in: Bain & Woolven, 1971: 409-410.

<sup>iii</sup> 'About the archive', <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/elizabeth-roberts-working-class-oral-history-archive/> [Accessed: 5 December 2023].

<sup>iv</sup> 'Who we are and what we do', <https://www.wcml.org.uk/about-us/about-wcml/>, [Accessed: 05 December 2023].

<sup>v</sup> 'Limehouse Town Hall and St. Anne's Church', <https://alondoninheritance.com/tag/limehouse-town-hall/>, accessed: 5 December 2023].

<sup>vi</sup> On the development of trades unions in Britain, see Fraser, *Op. Cit.*, and Pelling, *Op. Cit.*.

<sup>vii</sup> Full details on the exhibition can be found online here: 'The MRC in 50 Objects', <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/mrc50/50objects/> Accessed: 12 December 2023.