Exchanges

The Interdisciplinary Research Journal

Volume 11, Issue 4 (Autumn 2024) - Special Issue

Issue Highlights:

- Papers inspired by & celebrating Warwick's Modern Records Centre's 50th Birthday
- Looking towards IRCC 2024
- Case studies, policy & practice
- Experiences, reflections & perceptions

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Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal

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Dr Gareth J Johnson (**exchangesjournal@warwick.ac.uk)**

Exchanges is a scholar-led, peer-reviewed, diamond open access, interdisciplinary, online-only journal dedicated to the publication of high-quality work by researchers in all disciplines for a broad scholarly audience. No author fees or subscription charges are levied, and contributors retain their author rights. Since 2013, the title has attracted innovative research articles, critical essays and interviews from emerging domain experts and early career researchers globally. The title also publishes scholarly work by practitioner authors and independent scholars.

A Managing Editor-in-Chief based at the University of Warwick oversees development, policy and production, while an international Editorial Board comprised of early career researchers provide advice and practically contribute to editorial work. Associate editors are recruited to participate in producing specific special themed issues. Exchanges usually publishes two issues annually, although additional special themed issues are periodically commissioned in collaboration with other scholars.

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Nostalgia Ain't What it Used to Be: Editorial, Volume 11, Part 4

Gareth J Johnson

Institute of Advanced Study, University of Warwick, UK
Correspondence: gareth.johnson@warwick.ac.uk
Bluesky: @LegionOfLlama
ORCID: 0000-0003-3953-6155

> *Reg: All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the fresh-water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?*
>
> *PFJ Member: Brought peace?*
>
> *Reg: Oh, peace? SHUT UP!* (**Life of Brian, 1979**)

Introduction

Welcome to the twenty ninth edition of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, our third issue of 2024 and eighth special issue to reach publication. As always if you are a new reader, thanks for joining us and read on to learn a little more about the journal, alongside advice on how you can contribute to future issues. If you're a returning reader welcome back, and hopefully you'll find this editorial a useful introduction to this issue too. Alongside this content, readers will also find advice for potential authors and an update on our social media channels.

To Begin at the Beginning

It barely seems five minutes since I was writing the editorial for our previous special issue, but here we are again with another volume of varied and interesting material. Aside from the above quote, my thoughts in the past month as I collated this issue, have turned to the historical and cultural – as I confess they often do when I am away from the office.

Along those lines, I recently had the pleasure of visiting Guisborough Priory, in Cleveland while on vacation in the region. It's an incredible sight (**Figure 1**), ruined though it is, and perhaps often unfairly overlooked by visitors to the region who charge 30 miles further east to visit Whitby's iconic abbey. I was lucky enough to visit Guisborough on a glorious summer's day – another rarity this year – and was able to take a long and leisurely amble around the grounds. As I strolled, walking in the footsteps of the priory's long-gone monastic inhabitants, I was struck by a thought. What I do for a job today – working in higher education to facilitate and disseminate knowledge – was actually a role I shared with the people who once lived and worked here.

Figure 1: Guisborough Priory Ruins, August 2024 (picture credit, author's own)

I guess this particular conceptualisation may well have surfaced partly because it's Armytage's (**1955**) opening thesis that monasteries and priories were the first universities on British soil. This is a book I recently inherited from late mother-in-law and have been dipping into as time allows. The genesis and evolution of higher education establishments was something I wrote on during my doctoral work, with a particular lens on publication and communication. I suspect though, these ideas of scholarly heritage – and possible hermitage – were probably also there because at the back of my mind I knew that once upon returning to work, my focus was going to be on bringing the year long journey of the issue you're reading now to publication. A scholarly, focused, if often isolating endeavour, I have often found in these final weeks pre-publication. However, the wearing of hessian robes at least is an optional work-wear choice these days!

The Modern Records Centre, usually referred to by most as the MRC given the name's a bit of a mouthful, celebrated 50 years of operation last year. This milestone was marked with a daylong symposium (**MRC, 2023**), which I was delighted to be able to attend. An interesting day which not only served to mark a semi-centennial milestone, but which also brought many speakers and key figures together to share their memories and personal histories of the MRC along with others showcasing the kind of work which has been enabled and inspired through its outstanding historical archival

materials. I had been approached beforehand by an old collaborator to see if we could use this event as a springboard to create another of our special issues. I was more than happy to do so, if nothing else as a valuable way to share, document and create our own archive around the day's events. While we did reach out to all of the contributors on the day, as is always the case, not all of them were able to contribute to this volume. Nevertheless, I am pleased to say we have a strongly representative collection of articles in this issue – so even if you weren't there, you can have a clear idea of the discourse on the day. Who knows, if fifty years perhaps someone will be writing about the contents of this issue as the MRC celebrates its centennial![i]

Personal reflections

Incidentally, in case you have never had the opportunity, the MRC itself is a truly fascinating place, which has been populated by some incredibly talented staff and scholars over these five decades too. It's also been instrumental in supporting some groundbreaking and revelatory research, a mere taste of which you'll find detailed in the articles below. I suspect we'd need a regular annual journal to really give true justice to quite how much work the MRC has enabled over the past fifty years. I would argue here that as an archive the MRC is possibly even closer to propagating the monastic work of our hooded forbears than myself. Perhaps, once again this is why I suspect my brain made the connection as I wandered around Guisborough last month.

Figure 2: The Modern Records Centre, August 2024 (picture credit: author's own)

I personally first encountered the MRC as part of my staff induction, back in 2005 – the first time I worked for the University of Warwick. Back then the archive was yet to enjoy the makeover which makes the current facilities such a joy to visit and work within (**Figure 2**). Nevertheless, I was permitted to look 'behind the curtain' and experience some of the collections first-hand – catalogued and pending alike – which the MRC held. I was struck at the time by the egalitarian nature of the collection, with smaller collections of personal archives rubbing shoulders with extensive reams of material from public bodies and organisations. As an ethnographer, rather than a historian, such quotidian ephemera has always fascinated me for the insights it gives or suggests into the every-day lives of people I'll never meet or work alongside. I have such a deep respect for those scholars who go beyond my surface readings and experiences and synthesise deeper, more meaningful and insightful analysis. Telling these kinds of stories is important in understanding the human condition and appreciating those who went before us. Not just the great and significant, but the normal, mundane, people who laboured, lived and loved, who each helped create the societies we experience today.

Now, this is just my personal take on this vastly important resource, and if the tales and experiences in this issue intrigue you, I'd strongly suggest arranging to visit or contact the MRC yourself. I think you will be very pleasantly surprised by what you find there, and who knows where your own archival explorations may take you.

Anyway, enough about *Exchanges'* journey, let us turn now to the core of this exciting issue and consider the many articles appearing within it.

Papers

This issue then is entirely comprised of articles arising from or inspired by the MRC@50 Symposium hosted last September. Like the event itself, the idea was to offer a *smorgasbord* of content, illustrating the vast variety of work the MRC has enabled. It was also intended to comprise a potted history of the centre itself too, especially with respect to its origins and genesis. As is our custom, you will find below a brief description of each paper, its authors along with a direct access link for reading access convenience. You might also want to consult the opening article below for a more detailed exploration of the issue's themes and contents.

Introduction

We begin with **Pierre Botcherby** and **Rachel MacGregor** offering us some further context on the issue, its contents and importantly the MRC itself. In *The Modern Records Centre: Fifty years on* the authors consider the role the MRC has played for researchers, community engagement and local communities alike. They offer a particular historical insight into the foundation and development of the Centre, which readers will note resonates strongly with some of the later papers too (1).

Critical Reflections

We then move to the main contents of this issue, appropriately enough with **Peter Ackers**' insightful biographical exploration. Entitled *Hugh Clegg (1920-95), the new 'Warwick School' of Industrial Relations and the creation of the Modern Records Centre* the author explores the formative years of some key figures and organisations at the University of Warwick. In particular, the paper focuses on the influence on the MRC alongside Clegg's work on trade union history – a theme which a number of other papers explore further (14).

In our next paper, *On the Doorstep*, **Carolyn Steedman** examines the disjuncture between student users of the MRC and the author's own use of the Centre. Steedman also takes pains to examine some of the historic interpersonal dynamics their work has uncovered in correspondence held within the MRC's collections (21).

We divert to wartime France as **Jessica Wardhaugh** explores *Transnational Encounters and Popular Propaganda*. The author explores the fringes or 'penumbra' of the French Resistance, and those organisations whose activities can commonly be overshadowed by the more 'central organisations' in histories of the period. Wardhaugh explores in particular the surprising trade union links in the UK with these anti-Nazi groups, alongside an illustrated close analysis of some of the Resistance's flyers received in Britain and held at the MRC (29).

We continue in a similar historical period but shifting from resistance to labour, as **Mike Esbester** and colleagues reflect on *Collaboration in the Archive*. Foregrounding the Railway Work, Life & Death project the authors explore the co-productive work which has made freely available accident records from Britain's railways. In particular Esbester and collaborators offer a range of personal reflections on how this project has worked in practice and the legacy of knowledge it has enabled (45).

Our next paper brings us closer to today, as **Klára Řiháková** considers how the authors was *Getting Informed and Inspired* at last year's MRC@50 signature event. The paper explores both the MRC's collections and offers an evaluation of the value of the anniversary symposium from an early

career scholar's perspectives. Excitingly, the paper offers an alternative, fresh perspective on the speakers and papers presented with Řiháková drawing some intriguing, original conclusions of the overarching discourse on offer (61).

In synergy with the prior paper's perspectives, **Nia Belcher** considers the value obtained from *Using the Modern Records Centre as an Undergraduate*. Focusing in on the MRC's materials from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the author explores what this clarifies about the experience of refugees from the country's 1973 coup. Belcher also offers useful reflections and considerations on their experiences of using digitised archival collections, from their undergraduate researcher perspective (72).

The synergies continue as **Verónica Díaz-Cerda** and **Alison Ribeiro de Menezes** further reflect on *The Modern Records Centre's Chile Collections as a Space for Memory and Recognition*. Their paper highlights how refugees often lack access to public and official platforms to share their experiences. As such, the authors identity the particular value derived from non-state, international archives like the MRC as both historic resource but also as a crucial pathways for achieving 'symbolic redress' (77).

We move next to considerations of *British Labour Movement Responses to Strikes and Riots in the English-speaking West Indies 1934-1939*. In their paper **Roger Seifert** pursues the British labour movement's reactions to 'disturbances' in the pre-Second World War West Indies. Drawing on scholarly thought, archival sources and the author's own forthcoming book, the paper paints a rich illustration of the tensions, provocations and domestic responses to these acts of 'colonial labour disruption' (87).

Our next piece, by **Mélanie Torrent**, continues our exploration of colonial tensions albeit this time concerning the Algerian war of independence from France. In *Not on the French radar?*, the author considers how the war impacted and influenced conceptions of socialism in Britain in the 1950s and 60s. Drawing once more on the MRC's unrivalled collections, the piece also reflects on the importance of archives as resources for understanding processes of domination and routes to liberation (99).

We continue our labour considerations closer to *Exchanges*' headquarters with **Ben Richardson**'s piece on *The Transport and General Workers' Union in Leamington Spa*. The article explores the little-known linkages between the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and Leamington Spa, in Warwickshire. The author recounts the TGWU's formation in the early 1920s and its post-World War Two operations through a biographic exploration of its eventual General Secretary, Jack Jones (117).

A shift from labour to law now, as in *'A Particular Kind of Job'* author **Amy Longmuir** explores the Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS) during the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Longmuir examines how this grassroot movement for political and legal change related to the lives of sex workers and those soliciting for their services. The author also highlights the problematic tensions which existed between the PROS and the British Women's Liberation Movement, noting the routes to effective change which emerged from their interactions (124).

Following on, **Kirstie Stage** next invites us to *'Do your duty; get together, work together and take action together, with confidence and pride'*. Drawing on MRC union materials, Stage unpicks the National Union of the Deaf 's (NUD) ongoing dialogues from the mid-1970s onwards with the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The author especially argues the importance of deaf histories in better understanding trade unions, working conditions and political pressure groups alike (136)

Then, in *Social Work Archives and the 'Classic' Postwar British Welfare State*, **Michael Lambert** treats us to a thorough and in-depth consideration of how the MRC resources' played a key role in their research. The stories which emergence from a myriad of archival documents, help to create a rich tapestry and historically contextualised authentic narrative. Lambert uses these to shed a particular light on the complexities of policy and practice which served to configure the postwar welfare state from the 1940s to 1970s (142).

Next it is time to take a literary trip next as **Setara Pracha** invites us to consider *Moving on from Manderley*. The author shares their experiences of working with MRC resources in reconsidering the life and work of Daphne de Maurier. The focus is especially on personal correspondence between de Maurier and her publisher, illuminating both the genesis of their authorial work and contextualising its contemporary subtexts, meaning and representation (177).

At long last, all things come to an end, and our journey concludes on two wheels as **Neil Carter** considers *Cycling and the British*. The article provides a taster of the author's book of the same name, alongside highlighting some of the archival resources which proved invaluable in enabling its creation (184)

Hopefully, these articles will have captured some of the debates, thoughts and reflections present at the MRC's half-century symposium. Additionally, I'm sure readers will agree they have highlighted just a fraction of the invaluable resources which the archive contains in support of past – and hopefully future – research endeavours!

Calls for Papers

While this issue is now live, we would like to remind all readers and potential authors of our various other open calls for papers. Readers and potential authors alike might also wish to register for our email newsletter or engage with following our social media to keep up with our very latest announcements and opportunities. You will find the links for these towards the end of this editorial.

Open Calls for Paper

Exchanges continues to invite and welcome submissions throughout the year on any subject. There are **no manuscript submission deadlines** on our open call and submissions will be considered throughout the year. Manuscripts therefore may be submitted for consideration via our online submission portal at any point. While *Exchanges* is an interdisciplinary journal, we define this as presenting a cross-disciplinary range of published works. Hence, while articles which draw directly or indirectly on interdisciplinary methods, methodologies, praxis and thinking are warmly welcome, this is *not* a pre-requisite. Hence, any topic, written in a manner suitable for a broad, scholarly, academic audience is likely to be accepted for consideration in our pages. Likewise, articles from researchers, practitioners and independent scholars are all equally welcome.

Manuscripts can be submitted for consideration as traditional peer-reviewed research or review article formats, which will undergo a rigorous, double-anonymised external review process. Alternatively, manuscripts may be submitted as one of our editorially reviewed formats - briefer formats which often are able to transit to publication faster.[ii] The editorially reviewed formats can be especially suitable for first-time authors, or those looking to embrace reflexivity, posit an opinion or share professional insights. It is notable that all article formats receive extensive reader attention and downloads.[iii]

Word counts and requirements for all content formats vary slightly, and prospective authors are strongly encouraged to review our author guidance and advice ahead of submission.[iv] Where an exception to the norm is required, authors should discuss their anticipated manuscript with the Chief Editor *before* submission. Manuscripts passing our review processes and accepted for publication will subsequently appear in the next available regular issue, which are normally published in late April and October.

Notably, *Exchanges* has a core mission to support the development and dissemination of research by early career and post-graduate researchers (**IAS, 2024**), we are especially pleased to receive manuscripts from emerging scholars or first-time authors. However, contributions from

established and senior scholars are also welcomed too. Further details of our open call requirements can be found online (**Exchanges, 2024a**).

Informal Approaches

As Editor-in-Chief I welcome approaches from potential authors to discuss prospective article ideas or concepts for *Exchanges*. However, abstract submission or formal editorial discussions ahead of a submission are *not* normally a prerequisite, and authors may submit complete manuscripts for consideration without any prior communication.[v] Authors are always encouraged to include a *note to editor* outlining the article format or call under which their manuscript is to be considered along with any other considerations they wish to bring to my attention.

Exchanges is a diamond open-access, scholar-led journal, meaning there are no author fees or reader subscription charges, and all content is made freely available online (**Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013; Bosman et al, 2021**). Furthermore, authors retain copyright over their work but grant the journal first publication rights as a submission requirement. *Exchanges* is happy to support translations of our published articles subsequently appearing in other suitable journals, and requests only that a link back to the original piece is incorporated for completeness. Authors may wish to familiarise themselves with *Exchanges'* journal policies for further information on how we handle author contributions (**Exchanges, 2024b**).

All submitted manuscripts undergo initial scoping and originality checks before being accepted for editorial review consideration. Manuscripts seeking publication as research articles additionally will undergo one or more rounds formal peer-review by suitable external assessors. Editorial decisions on manuscript acceptance are final, although unsuccessful authors are normally encouraged to consider revising their work for later reconsideration by the journal.

Further advice for prospective authors can be found throughout the *Exchanges* and IAS websites (**Exchanges, 2024c, IAS, 2024**), as well as in our editorials, podcast episodes and blog entries.

Forthcoming Issues

We're not quite done yet with issues this year, as our regular autumnal issue of the journal is scheduled as always for later October. Unsurprisingly this will be where I'll be switching my attentions shortly. Beyond that we move into the realm of our other developing special issues: *Gender & Intersectionality*, *Sustainability Culture*, and *Queerness as Strength*. These are all tentatively scheduled for appearance during 2025. On top of this as well, we will hopefully be developing a second volume of papers relating to research culture for summer 2025, drawing on and derived from this September's International Research Culture Conference (IRCC '24): about which more information will doubtlessly follow this issue's publication.

Acknowledgements

As always, I would like to offer my thanks to all those people who helped make this issue a reality. Firstly, I'd like to thank all the associate editors who worked on the issue: **Pierre Botcherby**, **Hannah O'Brien**, **Eren Delaney**, **Rachel MacGregor**, **Isobel Hadlum** and **Emil Rybczak**. There have been a few challenging circumstances behind the scenes, so I'm doubly grateful for their efforts. You have all been a genuine pleasure to work with, and I will miss our semi-regular get-togethers and chat. I hope the publication of the issue will be a personal milestone for each of you too. An additional tip of the hat to Pierre, who served to originate the idea of this volume, becoming only the second person to collaborate with me as a co-lead on two special issue projects.

I would like to formally thank the MRC as a whole for their support, and especially the permission to include so many images from their collections in this issue.

My thanks too to all our authors for their vital intellectual contributions towards this particular edition as well. Likewise, my thanks to our Editorial Board for their continued support and efforts on behalf of *Exchanges*, and Associate IAS Director **Fiona Fisher** and the Institute of Advanced Study for their continued support of *Exchanges*' diversifying mission.

Continuing the Conversation

Exchanges has a range of routes, groups and opportunities for keeping abreast of our latest news, developments and calls for papers. Some of these are interactive, and we welcome comments from our readership and contributors alike.

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The Exchanges Discourse Podcast

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/podcast

After a quiet few months we are ramping up production on the *Exchanges Discourse* podcast once more, with a number of issues recorded or scheduled for production in the coming weeks. So, if you've not listened before, you might find now a good time to start! I am hoping we will be joined in conversation by a number of authors from this issue over the next few months as well. In the meantime, there's over 50 episodes in our back catalogue – freely available – for listeners to dive into as you wait for new episodes to drop.

There's also a handy list of past episodes available or you can stream the content from most popular podcasting platforms – and specifically our host at Spotify for Podcasting.

Contacting

As Editor-in-Chief I am always pleased to discuss any matters relating to *Exchanges*, our community, contributions or potential collaborations. My contact details appear at the start of this editorial.

Alongside a doctorate in cultural academic publishing practices, Gareth also possesses various degrees in biomedical technology, information management and research practice. His varied career includes running regional and national professional bodies, managing academic libraries alongside various applied research roles. Based at the University of Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study (IAS), he has been the interdisciplinary *Exchanges* journal's Editor-in-Chief since 2018. Today, he retains professional interests on power-relationships and evolution of scholarly academic publication practice, within social theory and political economic frameworks. He has aptitudes in areas including academic writing, partner relationship management and effective communication praxis, and remains a vocal proponent for academic agency through scholar-led publishing. A longtime fellow of the Higher Education Academy, he regularly contributes to a various podcasts and is also a director of a property management company.

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Editorial Board Members

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Endnotes

[i] Sadly, short of downloading my consciousness to a non-organic host I suspect I won't be around to join in these celebrations. But perhaps some of our younger contributors to this issue and the symposium will, providing a wonderful bookend to our endeavours. 'See' you in 2073 everyone!

[ii] **Editorially Reviewed Formats**: e.g., Critical Reflections, Conversations (interviews) or Book Reviews. As these do not undergo external peer review, they are also usually able to be more swiftly published in the journal – provided they pass our editorial scrutiny.

[iii] **Top Articles**: This diversity of format interest is frequently reflected in our annual Top Articles list, which appears in the IAS annual report, and on our blog pages early in the new year.

[iv] **Word counts**: For the purposes of considering a submissions' word count, we do not typically include abstracts, references, endnotes or appendences. While submissions just over or under their word count will still be initially considered for review, any significantly in excess will normally be declined and returned to their authors with advice for revision.

[v] **Expressions of Interest**: We do on occasion solicit expressions of interest ahead of submissions for special issues. For regular (open or themed) issue submissions though, authors may submit their manuscripts without any prior contact.

[vi] Yes, we too would like to jump off Twitter/X given its current owner's recent political lurches, but for now we're still there given most academics seem to have retained their accounts. But we're increasingly favouring Bluesky.social as a strong alternative.

The Modern Records Centre: Fifty years on

Pierre Botcherby[1], Rachel MacGregor[2]

[1]School of Modern Languages & Cultures (French), University of Warwick, Coventry, UK; [2]Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Correspondence: [1]pierre.botcherby@warwick.ac.uk, [2]rachel.MacGregor@warwick.ac.uk
Twitter/X: [2]@MRCWarwick
BlueSky: [2]@anoldhand
ORCID: [1]0009-0003-8151-829X

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**).[i]

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).[ii] 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.[iii] 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.[iv] 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.[v] 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.[vi]

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.[vii] 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 20th 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.

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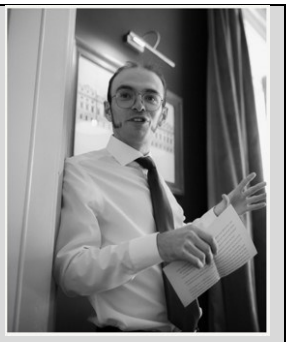
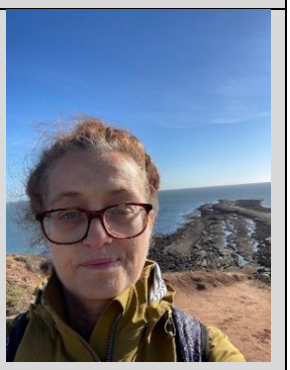
Who we are and what we do. Available at: https://www.wcml.org.uk/about-us/about-wcml/ [Accessed: 05 December 2023].

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 50th 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.



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Endnotes

[i] 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.

[ii] Hobsbawm is cited in: Bain & Woolven, 1971: 409-410.

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

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

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

[vi] On the development of trades unions in Britain, see Fraser, *Op. Cit.*, and Pelling, *Op. Cit*..

[vii] 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.

Hugh Clegg (1920-95), the New 'Warwick School' of Industrial Relations and the Creation of the Modern Records Centre

Peter Ackers
Emeritus Professor, History of Industrial Relations, Loughborough University
Correspondence: peter.ackers1@virginmedia.com

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Abstract

The Warwick Industrial Relations (IR) academics, George Bain and Hugh Clegg, were key movers in founding the Modern Records Centre (MRC) & attracting the unique collection of trade union and employers' records. In the late 1960s, after his crucial role on the 1965-68 'Donovan' Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Clegg was recruited from Nuffield College, Oxford to become a founding professor in what became Warwick Business School. He won SSRC funding to bring the Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) to Warwick, which became the national centre for the field, with a global reputation, at a time when IR was arguably the central UK domestic issue. Leadership of the IRRU passed to George Bain, then Willy Brown. After retirement, Clegg then used the MRC for the final two volumes of his landmark A History of British Trade Unions since 1889 (Oxford University Press 1985, 1994). Based on interviews with the archivist, Richard Storey, George Bain and other members of the 'Warwick School', my paper will discuss: (1) the formation of Warwick School IR; (2) Bain & Clegg's influence on the MRC; and (3) Clegg's writing on trade union history. In 2003, I co-edited a study of academic IR Understanding Work & Employment (OUP) & for the past 20 years I've published widely on Hugh Clegg. My full biography with Routledge is now out.

Keywords: Warwick University; industrial relations; Hugh Clegg; George Bain; trade union history

The Warwick Industrial Relations (IR) academics, George Bain and Hugh Clegg, were key movers in founding the Modern Records Centre (MRC) and attracting the unique collection of trade union and employers' records. In the late 1960s, during his crucial role on the 1965-68 'Donovan' *Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations*, Clegg was recruited from Nuffield College, Oxford to the new Warwick University by the Vice-Chancellor, Jack Butterworth. Until then, Clegg and Allan Flanders had been the two central figures of the 'Oxford School' of IR. In 1967, he became a founding professor in what would become Warwick Business School. By 1970, he had won Social Science Research Council (SSRC) funding to bring the new Industrial Relations Research Unit (IRRU) to Warwick. That year, Clegg recruited George Bain, who became deputy Director of the IRRU. A former Oxford DPhil student of Clegg and Flanders, he had been Professor of IR at UMIST. Leadership of the IRRU passed to Bain in 1974.

Based on MRC and other records, as well as interviews with the former archivist, Richard Storey, George Bain and other members of the 'Warwick School', this article discusses briefly: (1) the formation of Warwick school IR; (2) Bain and Clegg's influence on the MRC; and (3) Clegg's use of the MRC in researching and writing the final two volumes of his classic Oxford University Press history of British trade unions. In 2003, I co-edited a study of the development of academic IR, *Understanding Work and Employment* and for the past 20 years I have published widely on Hugh Clegg, culminating in, *Trade Unions and the British Industrial Relations Crisis: An Intellectual Biography of Hugh Clegg* with Routledge (2024). This article is largely an expansion of my discussion of the MRC in Chapter 10 on the 'Warwick School'.

The Formation of Warwick IR

When the MRC was formed in 1973, IR was the central British domestic political issue. This centred on three inter-linked problems associated with a fragmented, chaotic collective bargaining system: inflation, restrictive practices and unofficial strikes. Labour and Conservative parties both grappled with these. The 1968 Donovan Report was followed by Barbara Castle's 1969 'In Place of Strife' White Paper, then Edward Heath's 1971 Industrial Relations Act, Miner's Strikes in 1972 and 1974, Labour's 'Social Contract' from 1974 and the 1978/9 'Winter of Discontent' public sector strikes. Well into the 1980s, trade unions and IR still seemed central to British politics. Clegg was *the* most prominent academic IR 'troubleshooter' during those crisis years. Large-scale engineering, especially the car industry, was central to the IR problem, as conflictual workplace bargaining expanded, led by shop stewards. Hence, Clegg

moved from one motor manufacturing city, Oxford, to another, establishing the 'Coventry project' of IR research.

Ironically, these severe social problems propelled academic IR to prominence and prosperity as a social science field. Clegg shifted leadership of this field from Oxford to Warwick, creating a national centre, the IRRU, from scratch, which quickly gained a global research reputation. Hence, academic IR was central to the formation of new MRC. Indeed, this was part and parcel of the professionalization of this rising social science by Clegg and Bain, through introducing specialist courses and more sophisticated research methods. I joined the Warwick MA in IR in 1980, when the field was at its strongest and the Warwick founders still there. Clegg's 1979 textbook, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations* was completed just before the election of Mrs Thatcher changed the course of history. Though that was not clear at the time.

Bain and Clegg's Influence on the MRC

George Bain, with Clegg's support, was the principal force behind the formation of the MRC, now the major collection of trade union and management archives in the UK. Supported by yet another grant from Leverhulme (with whom Clegg had links since the 1950s), the centre opened in October 1973. Claims have been for Professor Royden Harrison being the central figure (though not by Harrison himself). He stepped into EP Thompson's shoes as Director of the Centre for the Study of Social History in 1970, and did play a significant role in the MRC's development. However, some Harrison obituaries make no mention of Bain and Clegg. Yet, the founding archivist, Richard Storey, and MRC reports testify to Bain's dynamic central role in drawing up the Leverhulme proposal with the backing of Clegg and the IRRU. Bain, Clegg and Harrison submitted the initial £40,000 bid for four years funding and Bain and Harrison sat together on the 'Academic Committee'. But the first report notes: 'The presence at the University of the Industrial Relations Research Unit, sponsored by the Social Science Research Council, has been a vital element in the success of the enterprise so far'.[i]

Doris Crowther, TUC librarian, conducted some early work, then Warwick academics, including Bain, 'drew up proposals which were submitted to the Leverhulme Trust for a search and rescue operation concentrating on sources for the history of industrial relations, but also extending more generally into the fields of political, social and economic history'. When Bain 'one of the moving spirits' left Warwick in 1989, another IR specialist, Richard Hyman, replaced him on the committee. Clegg remained in contact. 'We have to thank a number of intermediaries for introductions leading to deposits, most notably Professor Hugh Clegg in respect of the Engineering Employers Federation'. In 1997, when Richard Storey retired,

he recalled the original focus was 'records of organized labour…affected by the prevailing political ethos of the 1980s, who saw IR and its history as anachronism'.[ii]

Clegg's Writing on Trade Union History

Clegg's IR publications bridge contemporary issues and historical analysis (see Bibliography). However, the latter was his personal preference especially for empirical studies, particularly at the start and end of his career. Thus, his first book, in 1950, was a historical study of London Transport IR, while he produced two popular early histories of the General and Municipal Workers Union in 1954 and 1965. Moreover, he engaged in historical controversies at the Society for the Study of Labour History (SSLH) in 1962 and 1968. Clegg et al in 1964 was the first volume of a projected history of British trade unions since 1889, picking up where the Webbs' classic study left off. At the time the MRC was formed in 1973, Clegg was the leading figure in a distinctive strand of pluralist IR history – with others like Alan Fox and Bert Turner taking this in different directions.

From the 1970s, academic IR research became increasingly contemporary and sociological, including Clegg's own collaborative studies. However, he retained and carried forward his original historical sensibility, particularly after retirement. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Clegg became a major user of the MRC, researching and writing the last two volumes of the definitive, Leverhulme funded, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889* (Oxford University Press 1985, 1994). By the 1980s, MRC annual reports recorded Clegg's personal use of material for his trade union history and further deposits he made. Clegg's antidote to heroic socialist history mapped the progress of collective bargaining up to 1951, stopping just as his own academic IR career began. 'Professor Clegg has used the Centre extensively for his research into the history of British trade unionism post-1910'.[iii]

Conclusion

It is important to remember that there were strong ideological divisions in Cold War British academic IR and Labour History, between social democratic *pluralists* and Marxist socialist *radicals*. Clegg was a pioneering figure in the British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA) and the SSLH. These academic controversies came to a head during the *Warwick University Ltd* controversy that divided EP Thompson and Clegg, who had been together at the same Methodist boarding school, Kingswood in Bath. Such ideological preferences may have shaped subsequent radical memories of the MRC's foundation. Some other Labour History archives, like the Marx Memorial Library or the Working

Class Movement Library, were partisan leftist foundations, close to a Marxist reading of the past.

The fact that the MRC covers the full range of labour movement history owes much to Clegg and Bain's pluralist intellectual tolerance. So does the emphasis on employers' records. For Clegg's pragmatic, empirical trade union histories stress how much the British state and employers had shaped the progress of trade unions and collective bargaining. His is no story of militant workers striking for socialism, in the radical vein. Rather he describes bipartisan political support for collective bargaining, co-operation and compromise between trade unions and employers as well as conflict. This came from a man, who spent his formative years in the British Communist Party, then became a Cold War social democrat; yet still supervised studies of Communist Labour History and made a young radical, Richard Hyman, his first Warwick appointment.

Peter Ackers is Emeritus Professor in the History of Industrial Relations, Loughborough University. His research bridges contemporary social science and historical approaches to work and employment relations. On the contemporary HRM side, he has published widely on Employee Involvement, Voice and union-management Partnership, leading to the co-edited collection: Johnstone & Ackers, Finding a Voice at Work? New Perspectives on Employment Relations, Oxford University Press, 2015. He is also a Labour Historian, with an interest in Christian Nonconformity, who co-edited, Ackers & Reid, Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century, Palgrave, 2016. Combining these two strands is Peter's research on the history of British Industrial Relations, as both a practical public arena and an academic social science field. A particular interest is the development of pluralist and social democratic ideas, culminating in his Trade Unions & the British Industrial Relations Crisis: An Intellectual Biography of Hugh Clegg, Routledge 2024.

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Endnotes

[i] See IRRU, 'The First Ten Years, pp.116-7. Harrison obituaries, *The Guardian* 03.07.02 and *Labour History Review*, 68(1), 2003, pp.7-10. For Bain's contribution, see MRC annual 'Report for the Session': 1973-74, p.2; 1988-89, p.3; and 1998-9, p.1. Storey, R and Drucker, J. 'Guide to the Modern Records Centre', University of Warwick Library, Occasional Publications No.2, 1977, pp.5-6; and my interview with Richard Storey, former archivist, at University of Warwick, 13.07.05.

[ii] Storey and Drucker, MRC 1988-89, MRC 1981-82.

[iii] MRC 1979-80, p.6, 1980-81, p.2, 1986-87, p.2.

On the Doorstep

Carolyn Steedman

Emeritus Professor, History, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Correspondence: c.k.steedman@warwick.ac.uk

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Abstract

I discuss the disjuncture between supervising generations of students in the Warwick History Department who used the Modern Records Centre collections for research, and finally using the University archives myself for the purposes of researching how social history came to Warwick. I reflect on the role of administrative records - the University of Warwick's own administrative records sequence (the 'UWA') held at the MRC in particular - and the role and identity of the worker within them. I further explore the relationship between Thompson and his research assistant E. E. Dodds, illuminating the 'making of history' through the use of paid work, which comes to light through the correspondence between them held as part of the University's administrative records.

Keywords: archive theory; threatening letters; historical research

I began my contribution to the *MRC at 50 Symposium* with the idea of the oddness of having an archive on the doorstep, a stone's throw away from a place of work, which in my case was the old Humanities Building, Library Road, University of Warwick. That was where the Centre for Social History (and the History Department) were located. The Centre for Social History was founded, or so Wikipedia will tell you, in 1968, by E. P. Thompson. Actually, the archive (the Modern Record Centre [MRC]) will tell you that the last (the Thompson part) isn't quite true, as I *could have* related on the day, at very great length.[i] I was also hoping that with my use of the word `archive', the audience might be willing to discuss nomenclature. Does terminology matter to the historical reconstruction of place and time? The vocabulary `archive' is relatively new: in the pre-Derrida era, before the publication of *Archive Fever* in 1995, we used `record offices' - as in `county record office', or `the Modern Records Centre'. We spoke about `getting to the records' not `going to the archives'. The Public Record Office became The National Archives (TNA) as late as 2003. (**Derrida, 1995**) [ii] Does it matter, at all, that we use a vocabulary to reconstruct visiting the Modern Record Centre or the Public Record Office, in say 1975, that wasn't then current? Now there is also `the *the archive*', a happy formulation of the compendious new collection *Archives. Power, Truth and Fiction*. `The the archive' evokes `archive' as idea, as theory and philosophy, as `fluid and multi-vocal space' (**Prescott & Wiggins, 2023**) as its cover-copy claims, far more than it denotes a place like Warwickshire County Record Office.[iii]

I joined the Centre for Social History in 1992 and my relationship with the MRC was tangential. I knew it at second hand, through the work of supervising dozens of Social History MA and PhD theses based on the records it held. The original MA - in *Labour* History, not Social History - was inaugurated in 1968 and it involved a 40,000-word dissertation rather than the much shorter one supervised in the Centre in the 1990s. These later, shorter dissertations are not held as records - anywhere. I do not know what happened to the ones I packed up and buried in a cupboard in the History Department Office when in 1998 the Centre for Social History was disestablished, and its staff was transferred to the Department from whence, in administrative and institutional terms, it had emerged, in the 1960s.

The early, substantial MA dissertations are preserved and catalogued in the Modern Records Centre, as a kind of material marker of the relationship between the Centre for Social History and the Modern Records Centre. I was later to understand more of this relationship in that extraordinary MRC class mark UWA: `University of Warwick Administration', where you will find that at a meeting of Senate in March 1968, the Centre for Social History was declared `independent' of the History Department, and the MA course in `Labour History, 1867-1926',

was approved. `Social History Independent' announced the University of Warwick *Bulletin* in April. The MA comprised taught courses in comparative labour history, labour in England and the US, and in `States and Industrial Relations' (`the system of industrial relations in Britain and its central problems. An introduction to relevant economic and sociological tools of analysis, and to the legal basis of the system').[iv] Its first intake of six students was in 1969; it was the only MA offered by the Centre until the late 1970s.

In the 1990s I was at a supervisor's and teacher's distance from the records held in the MRC. I came to the Centre for my own historical purposes in 2016, after I had retired from Warwick. So actually - let's be accurate here - travelled the seven miles from Leamington Spa to `the archive'. That's more like it! I thought: `going to the archive' involves time and trouble and perilous journeys, even if it's only on a bus from Leamington. That's my own pathetic little workerist fantasy of the archives, and yes: I have written about it.[v] It was not until 2015 that I understood how much the records held here interpolate *me*, or interpolates any employee who explores the administrative and legal records of the place where he or she works. Finally, in 2015, came that acknowledgement that arrives when you're in say, Warwickshire County Record Office, or The National Archives: that you are caught in a particular kind of state or institutional power, that inscribes in legal and administrative - and always distant and indifferent - terms who you are, and the place where you have your existence.

What happened in 2015 was this: I had done some work on `lawyers' letters', that is those letters written by attorneys on behalf of poor and ordinary people in the long eighteenth century to forward their own interests without recourse to a magistrates' court or the summary justice system (**Steedman, 2016**): a letter paid for by a maidservant wanting her wages, or a carter attempting to get paid for the load of corn he delivered last week. `A Lawyer's Letter' was published in 2016.[vi] Then I had an idea - a good one, I thought - that `lawyers letters' could be thought of as types of threatening letter: in an unequal power relationship a maidservant paid an attorney's clerk to write something for her (`a lawyer's letter') that invoked the law, demanded her wages, suggested perhaps that that a magistrate might be involved if she wasn't paid her due. Social historians of Britain had not paid much attention to threatening letters since the 1970s, though important work on nineteenth-century use in pre-famine Ireland and during the Rebecca Riots in Wales had recently been published. Attention to letters themselves had followed the lines drawn out by Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé in 1969 (discussing the Swing Disturbances, in *Captain Swing*), and Edward Thompson in 1975, in `The Crime of Anonymity' chapter in the collection *Albion's Fatal Tree*.[vii] I went

back to Hobsbawm and Rudé and to Thompson, read them properly for the first time in thirty years. It appeared that all that could be said about anonymous threatening letters had already been said - brilliantly by Thompson - forty years before. But not willing to give up on what I thought of as my happy notion - that the letters he discussed were on a continuum with lawyers' letters - I was idly searching the internet when I came across the correspondence of E. P. Thompson and E. E. Dodd, deposited - guess where? - in the University of Warwick's Modern Record Centre!

Edward Ernest Dodd (1887-1981) worked for Thompson as his research assistant between 1964 and 1979, doing much of the legwork for what would become `The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', `The Crime of Anonymity', *Whigs and Hunters*, and many chapters of the later *Customs in Common* (1980). In the Preface to the last Thompson thanked `the late E. E. Dodd, who undertook many searches for me in the Public Record Office' not mentioning here Dodd's work on the *London Gazette* and its weekly notices offering rewards for information about writers of anonymous threatening letters. Dodd and Thompson wrote to each other about the anonymous letter-writers of eighteenth-century England and letters written by alarmed magistrates and (sometimes) sanguine Home Department officials. They opened the letters for a wider view on eighteenth-century society. They wrote letters to each other about letters. It was good fun (maybe only a historian's kind of fun) to work on documents (letters exchanged between two historians) that had eighteenth-century letters as their topic. This was no claim that eighteenth-century anonymous threatening letters were the same kind of written artefact as the typed letters Mr Dodd put into a Richmond post box in - say - 1971 addressed to Thompson's Worcestershire home. (Thompson had left Warwick by 1971; another version of the oft-told tale can be found in `Social History Comes to Warwick'.) An anonymous letter communicating the information that a farmer's barns would be fired in - say - 1795 unless the price of grain be reduced in the neighbourhood, was a one-off statement of threat. No one *replied* to a threatening letter; Thompson and Dodd on the other hand, conducted a correspondence: an exchange of letters over fifteen years. But reading their mid-twentieth-century correspondence together with the eighteenth-century letters they worked on, is illuminating of the making of history, specifically a history made out of materials uncovered by a paid worker. I encountered the felt hurts and resentments that may arise in this kind of labour relationship in the field of historical research.

Thompson appears to have been a good (or good-enough) employer. He paid well, though apparently had little regard for the material conditions of his employee's labour. He *was* concerned when Mr Dodd had a fall in January 1973, but appeared blithe about a man in his eighties shimmying

up ladders in the Public Record Office - all the hard physical work of the archive about which Mr Dodd was so eloquent. I think we *should* read an employment relationship out of the records, with Thompson asking for things to be done (and done again), posting off lists of Public Record Office and British Museum material as instructions rather than suggestions. That it was an employment relationship (and recognized by both parties as such), is witnessed by Thompson's interest in Dodd's tax status: `ps: Let me know sometime if you get taxed on this. I want to know whether I can claim relief or expences [sic]', he wrote. Then, soon after: `Further to yesterday's letter ... Don't bother to check back your accounts for my tax purposes - I find that I have enough'. Later, he told Mr Dodd that he had applied for a research grant and that `Next year I'm hoping to be in a different situation, and then (since I can claim tax relief on your work for me) it becomes a reasonable proposition to ask you if you can do more'.[viii]

In the way of the eighteenth-century service relationship, the employer told much more of his personal life than did the employee, graciously bestowing confidences in an entirely one-way traffic of the self. Thompson's letters frequently described family events - holidays with the children, breaks in Wales with his daughter, visitors irritating and otherwise (`We seem to be something like Buckingham Palace and Stratford that sight-seers have to take in') sometimes, it appears to this reader, as an excuse for not having met Mr Dodd in London as he had intimated he might. He described his writing life and work routine in a way that Mr Dodd never did. In their letters, they discussed the shape and form of threatening letters; they speculated about the motives of eighteenth-century writers. Mr Dodd had been this way before: he had published a substantial article on threatening letters in the *Bradford Antiquary* in 1964, before he became Thompson's assistant. The article is not referenced in `The Crime of Anonymity'.[ix]

The subtitle of my first draft of `Threatening Letters' had been `The Service Relationship in Historical Research', for Thompson and Dodd operated under a service agreement, called a contract in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that any master or mistress and any servant of the time would have found familiar.[x] In such an asymmetrical arrangement, the employer often threatened the security of the worker. In 1969 for example, Thompson wrote to Dodd to say that he appreciated all the difficulties of xeroxing Assize papers in the Public Record Office that Dodd had outlined, but that xeroxing was what he wanted: `Indeed', he wrote, `I think that I or Mr Thomas will probably have to do this ourselves'. This could be read - I read it - as Thompson's own threatening letter: the hint of a suggestion that he could always use a different, more academic and accomplished researcher.[xi]

I wanted to ask questions about the product of the servant's (the researcher's) labour. Who does the work in the archive? The note taking, the xeroxing, later the photographing and scanning, the opening of filthy ASSI (assize) bundles in The National Archives? Who owns the research done by a paid worker, in an archive? Contract law has told us unambiguously for three hundred years that he or she who pays the piper owns the tune. But there are other theories of labour and ownership that might give us pause for thought about *who* is doing the research, there, at the table next to yours, turning over the contents of a file, making notes. Will they be in a position to make history out of what they note? Or are they a paid worker, providing someone else with the means to *make history*? This is a much more important question than any raised by fretting about the etymology, semantics, and history of `archive', `the archive', and `the the archive'. That was my own lesson learned from the MRC at Fifty Symposium.

Carolyn Steedman is Emeritus Professor in the History Department at the University of Warwick, specialising in the social and cultural history of modern Britain and exploring labour, gender, class, language and childhood. She is a Fellow of the British Academy. She retired from the University of Warwick in 2013 after an association of nearly thirty years. During her distinguished career she has written numerous articles and books including her most recent, History and the Law. A Love Story, (2020). This work revisits her most important encounter with the Modern Records Centre recorded in `Threatening Letters. E. P. Thompson and E. E. Dodd', History Workshop Journal, 82:1 (2016), pp. 50-82.

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[i] For the long version, Carolyn Steedman, `Social History Comes to Warwick'

[ii] Derrida, J. `Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics*, 25:2 (1995), pp. 9-63; *Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne*, Editions Galilée, Paris, 1995; *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996; Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2001.

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[iv] MRC, UWA/M/S/7 Senate, Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th March 1968, p. 7; UWA/PUB/8/2/5, University of Warwick *Bulletin*, Vol. II No. 5, April 1968: `Senate has granted independence to Social History'; UWA/M/BFA/1/2 Board of Arts Oct 1967-Sep 1968, Minutes of a Meeting held on 28th February 1968.

[v] Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 17-37.

[vi] `A Lawyer's Letter. Everyday Uses of the Law in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *History Workshop Journal*, 80:1 (2016), pp. 62-83.

[vii] Thompson, E. P., `The Crime of Anonymity', Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E. P. Thompson, Cal Winslow (eds)*, Albion's Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (1975), Verso, London, 2011, pp. 255-344

[viii] WMRC MSS 369/1/30, EPT to EED, 25 March 1971; MSS 369/1/62 EPT to EED handwritten note, 13 November (1972); MSS 369/1/84, EPT to EED, 6 December (1973)

[ix] Dodd, E. E., `Alarm at Elland', *Bradford Antiquary,* 12 (1964) pp. 124-30.

[x] Steedman, C, *Labours Lost. Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

[xi] WMRC MSS 369/1/8, EPT to EED 30 Jan 1969. For Malcolm Thomas, Dorothy Thompson (ed.) *The Essential E. P. Thompson*, The New Press, New York, 2001, p. 423; `Crime of Anonymity', p. 257, Note 3; `Malcolm Thomas (1945-2010)', *Library of the Society of Friends Newsletter* 7, 2011. Thompson wrote several threatening letters of resignation to the Warwick Registrar this year: Steedman, `Social History Comes to Warwick'.

Transnational Encounters and Popular Propaganda: Illuminating the penumbra of the French Resistance

Jessica Wardhaugh

School of Modern Languages and Culture, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Correspondence: J.Wardhaugh@warwick.ac.uk

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Abstract

Despite the wealth of scholarly research on the French Resistance, there are many aspects that remain in the shadows or 'penumbra' surrounding the more brightly-lit central organisations. Focusing on the resources and connections of French trade unionists in London exile — usually peripheral to accounts of wartime trade unionism — this critical reflection explores the potential of the MRC's collections to open up new research perspectives and possibilities. It foregrounds two key themes meriting further exploration: transnational encounters and popular propaganda. It first examines how French delegates of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) worked not only with their counterparts in occupied France but equally with members of British trade unions and the Labour Party in a complex network of relationships between individuals and associations. Second, it uses a close analysis of some of the resistance flyers received — and sometimes translated and disseminated — by the CGT in London to highlight visual and rhetorical strategies of resistance in popular propaganda. Cumulatively, these case studies invite a wider reflection on how resistance should be defined, and on its spaces, strategies, and balances of power.

Keywords: France; resistance; trade unionism; Second World War; transnationalism; propaganda

It's 11 p.m. on 24 August 1942 in the small village of Lumbres in Nazi-occupied France, around 25 miles from the English Channel. Challenging the wartime curfew, a car speeds into the village and its occupants toss armfuls of printed communist flyers out of the windows before their vehicle disappears once again into the night. German authorities and French police immediately rush to the scene and gather up every text they can find, delivering them directly to the German military headquarters. By 2 a.m., not a single flyer remains. Who were these sudden intruders? No-one knows. Producing and disseminating communist materials is punishable by death in the German-occupied zone, and an elaborate search is instigated. But in the darkness, the car numberplate and the appearance and number of passengers are equally elusive. And Lumbres has never been a particular centre for communist activity. Finally, the French police admit their inability to track down the perpetrators, who must, they say, have been foreigners of some sort or another.[1]

In France, the history of the Resistance during the Second World War has long been associated with shadows and light. For those who participated, resistance was a light in the otherwise 'dark years' of German occupation, hunger, and deprivation: resisters such as Agnès Humbert described it as an *étincelle*, a spark or twinkle (**Humbert, 2010: 44**). At the same time, as in Lumbres, resisters were obliged to operate in the shadows, whether in the obscurity of clandestine environments or in the darkness of the night, cumulatively forming what novelist Joseph Kessel described in 1943 as an 'army of shadows' (**Cf. Dildea, 2015**). Resistance in the shadows could mean an isolated incident like a carful of communists speeding through a small village. Or it could mean a complex network of activists inside and outside France, opposing the German occupier and the French government through propaganda, strikes, attacks, and escapes. Key resistance organisations would contribute to the National Council of Resistance formed secretly in 1943, and to the military liberation of France from Nazi occupation from summer 1944 onwards.

The main figures and leaders of resistance are often well known and celebrated. But there are also outer circles or 'penumbra' in which resisters and resistance remain shadowy in the sense of being less clearly understood (**Douzou, 2019: 96**).[2] Women and men who listened into Free French radio broadcasts or who were arrested for shouting abuse of the Germans or the French Head of State in sudden outbursts of anger or frustration. Resisters who operated more at the peripheries than at the centre: distributing flyers, for example, without necessarily being privy to the identities of those who had created them. Resisters described by historian Claire Andrieu as the mere 'shadow of a shadow', casting only the faintest of traces onto written history (**Andrieu, 1997: 86**).

French resistance documents in the University of Warwick's Modern Records Centre offer a valuable insight into this penumbra or periphery of organised Resistance. They do so by inviting us to challenge some of our assumptions concerning the relationship between centre and periphery, not least by bringing into focus two themes that have often been tangential to the historiography of resistance: the work of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT; principal French trade union) during its London exile, and the artisanal flyers, posters, and newspapers produced by women and men in the wider resistance movement, and sent to French CGT delegates in London for information and dissemination. In dialogue with archival material from France, this critical reflection assesses the potential of MRC collections to open up new research perspectives and possibilities. It focuses on two key themes meriting further exploration: transnational encounters (both personal and textual), and popular propaganda within and beyond wartime France.

Transnational Encounters

French trade unionism was sharply fractured at the outbreak of the Second World War, even before the devastating Fall of France in May–June 1940. Despite having worked together in the reunified and anti-fascist CGT from 1936 onwards, communist and socialist members of the trade union movement were once more divided by the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939. Not only was the French Communist Party dissolved by the government the following month, but the wartime government of Marshal Philippe Pétain aspired to a corporatist state structured by the new Labour Charter of 1941. The CGT — as well as its employers' counterpart, the Confédération Générale du Patronat Français — were formally dissolved in November 1940, and while René Belin, former assistant Secretary General of the CGT, chose to work with the new government as Minister of Labour, other trade union leaders went underground or into exile.[3] Henri Hauck, appointed Labour Attaché to the French Embassy in May 1940 with the personal support of CGT leader Léon Jouhaux, remained in London, and by August 1940 had been appointed Labour adviser to the Free French.[4] Meanwhile, Jouhaux himself continued to cooperate covertly with other trade unionists in France, though was placed under house arrest in December 1941 and eventually interned in Germany and Austria from 1943–45 (**Dreyfys, 1995: 202-3**).[5]

Yet wartime repression also created new opportunities for potential solidarity across political and national boundaries. When Nazi Germany invaded the USSR in June 1941, communist and socialist members of the CGT found a new impetus for cooperation in shared anti-fascism, while the CGT also forged closer relationships with the Gaullist resistance, ensuring the adoption of its social and economic demands by the National Council

of Resistance in March 1944. In London, French trade unionists worked with exiled trade unionists from other European countries, including Belgium, Poland, Germany, Austria, Spain, and Czechoslovakia.[6]

Exactly how representatives of the CGT contributed to Free/Fighting France, or how French trade unionists in exile cooperated with their counterparts in France and Britain, has remained in many ways obscure. It is here that the records in the MRC provide precious and under-explored evidence. Previous histories of wartime trade-unionism have paid minimal attention to those geographically peripheral to the internal resistance. Even histories of the resistance that are explicitly 'comprehensive' —such as Olivier Wieviorka's *The French Resistance* — are sometimes equally explicit in their focus on resistance within France itself (**Wieviorka, 2016: 3-4**), while more specific studies of trade unionists tend to focus on top-level organisation, with only fleeting reference to London representatives such as Georges Buisson, Albert Guigui, or Albert Gazier (**Dreyfus, 2015; Aglan, 2000: 119-28**).[7] At the same time, the location of and networks around the CGT's foreign delegation or *delegation à l'étranger* — a name so proudly stamped over the MRC's resistance documents — are not discussed. Often, information on this foreign delegation focuses mainly on its funding: Buisson and Guigui's channelling of three million francs from Fighting France into the clandestine CGT within France, and the additional financial support from both British and American trade unions. Particularly important in the British case was the support from the British Miners' Federation and the Fédération Syndicale Internationale (FSI), the latter founded after the First World War with headquarters in Amsterdam, and later transferred to Berlin, Paris, and finally London (**Aglan, 2000: 124-6**).[8]

Reframing these exiled French trade unionists within their transnational networks of activity suggests new pathways for understanding the relationships that shaped resistance ideas, projects, and the movement of documentation and personnel to and from Nazi-occupied territory.[9] The most valuable MRC archives in this respect are those of the Trades Union Congress and the International Transport Workers' Federation, and the private papers of Belgian trade unionist Paul Tofahrn and British Trotskyist Jimmy Deane. These archives make it possible to situate CGT representatives abroad within their networks of intersecting relationships, which included Free/ Fighting France, the International Federation of Trade Unions and its general secretary Walter Schevenels, the FSI, the British Labour Party, and the TUC (personal connections with TUC General Secretary Sir Walter Citrine were especially important). Also influential was the support of associations that facilitated transnational exchange, such as the Anglo-French Trade Union Committee, the Alliance Française, and the Franco-British Society. Minutes and memoranda of meetings, personal correspondence, as well as collections of resistance newspapers,

flyers, and other publications, cumulatively build up a nuanced picture of international cooperation, with underlying goodwill offset by moments of mistrust or misunderstanding.

Together, these archival documents illuminate the extent to which French CGT representatives in London operated not only in a bilateral relationship with their colleagues in France, but also within a wider framework of Franco-British connections. Even the location of the CGT's foreign delegation in Transport House, the TUC headquarters, is here significant, grounding exchanges with British trade union leaders and members in the same physical space.[10] The changing addresses on headed notepaper reveal the movements of individuals, such as Albert Guigui's transfer from Transport House to the Free French headquarters at Carlton Gardens to join Charles de Gaulle's Ministry of Industrial Production.[11] Meanwhile, contributions by French delegates to meetings of the International Trade Union Council in London, chaired by Walter Schevenels, bring to light cooperation between exiled trade unionists from across Nazi-dominated Europe.[12] Schevenels himself, with his Belgian diplomatic passport, moved between countries as well as between opposing factions of the French trade union movement (René Belin on the one hand and Léon Jouhaux on the other).[13]

Within these intersecting networks, French trade unionists worked both to solicit British interest and equally to facilitate the movement of personnel and documentation. Letters, speeches, shared (sometimes translated) publications testify to the French concern to explain the intricacies of their own trade unionism — not least the complex relations and tensions between socialists, communists, and Christian trade unionists — and to justify choices that might otherwise, as Raymond Bouyer explained, seem 'incomprehensible to the trade union movement abroad'.[14] (Albert Guigui described this diplomatically as 'a friendly duty to set your minds at rest'.)[15] Particular emphasis was given to the allegedly 'pro-British and sincerely de-Gaulliste' [sic] sympathies of the communist rank and file, offsetting the less easily justifiable decisions of their leaders at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact,[16] and to the CGT's potential for mobilising industrial and human resources in post-liberation France, with a view to attracting and strengthening British and Allied interest and support.[17] Not only did this activity build on personal and associational connections established before the war, but it also reaffirmed patterns of exchange that would continue from 1944–45 onwards. Within these transitional years, requests were made for French resistance members to speak to British workers from the same profession, and placements arranged for British workers in French enterprises.[18] Furthermore, official visits were organised to celebrate the CGT's return to its prewar Parisian headquarters — even if the renewed tensions between socialists and

communists within French trade unionism made for some unexpectedly lively discussions.[19]

Private letters in the MRC collections also shed valuable light on some of the personal connections that facilitated and were in turn strengthened by cooperation on social, economic, and cultural matters. During the war itself, Henri Hauck of the Free/Fighting French endeavoured to introduce visiting trade unionists from the clandestine movement in France to their British counterparts. Similar meetings in 1944–45 allowed visiting CGT members such as Ambroise Croizat and Raymond Bouyer to discuss a range of social and economic questions — from international trade-union conferences to projects for postwar reconstruction and the welfare state — with key British contacts including Ernest Bevin, for whom René Rous acted as interpreter. Letters of introduction from underground CGT leaders in France were crucial in sustaining these transnational working relationships,[20] while letters of farewell — for example from Georges Buisson to Walter Citrine, when the former departed for Algiers in August 1943 to preside at the consultative assembly of resisters — reinforced transnational connections through fulsome gratitude for the 'cordial friendliness shown by all members of the Trades Union Congress.'[21]

Nor were such encounters restricted to socio-economic discussions. Particular efforts were made to honour the revolutionary heritage of 1789 and to reclaim the traditionally left-wing celebration of 1 May — a focus for strikes and demonstrations in the 1930s, but now styled by the Vichy regime as a 'Festival of Labour and Social Concord' — by holding large-scale cultural events in the sizeable Stoll Picture Theatre in London. In 1942, French CGT militants invited members of the British Labour Party to a commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, which included the projection of Jean Renoir's eponymous 1938 film as well as speeches by representatives of Allied nations.[22] In 1943, a celebration of the working-class festival of 1 May was jointly organised in the same location by the CGT and their Christian counterpart, the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFTC): a symbolic cooperation in the light of the recently reunified CGT and the participation of both confederations in the National Council of Resistance. Coinciding with the arrival from France of CGT leader Georges Buisson and CFTC secretary Marcel Poimboeuf and with their associated press conferences, this 1 May celebration represented, in the words of Albert Guigui, 'the first opportunity since the outbreak of war for the French workers' movement to demonstrate publicly on free territory.'[23] There is rich potential here for further study of these intricate transnational connections, and of the degree to which these were disrupted but also reinforced by the challenges of war and resistance.

Popular Propaganda

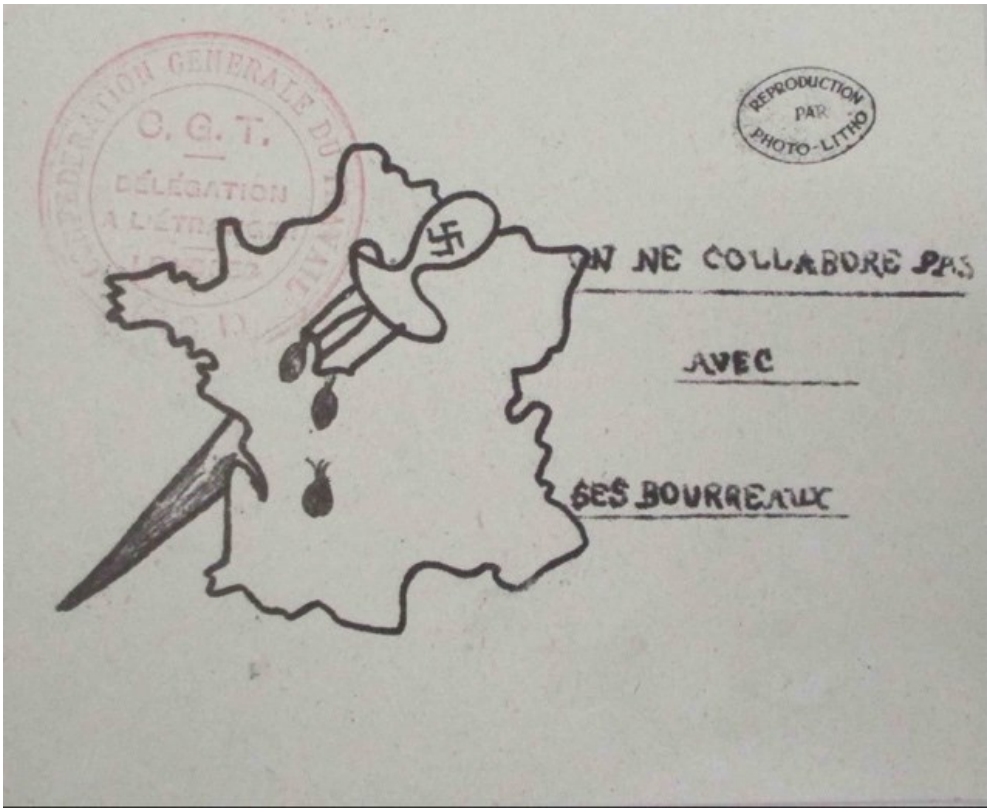
The CGT's foreign delegation in London also received, stamped, filed, translated, and circulated a wide range of written resistance materials that included newspapers, pamphlets, posters, and flyers. Many are stamped not only with the words 'CGT – délégation à l'étranger — FSI', but equally with the mention that they have been reproduced by means of photolithography. Among the newspapers are a number of national titles associated with the clandestine CGT and Communist Party and also available in other collections, such as *La Vie ouvrière*, *L'Humanité*, and *La Terre*.[24] But there are, in addition, rarer examples specific to particular groups defined by profession, region, or gender. These include *Le Combat du Languedoc et du Roussillon*, targeted at the area around Montpellier, and *La Femme comtoise*, which sought to mobilise women from Franche-Comté in eastern France to demonstrate for increased rations of bread, butter, sugar, and milk — especially for mothers and babies.

Within this collection, the small-format flyers known in French as *papillons* offer a particularly precious insight into some of the visual, linguistic, and political strategies of the resistance movement. Resistance propaganda is better known in the case of newspapers and the clandestine publications of the now-famous Éditions de Minuit, while more ephemeral material, such as that produced by individuals or popular committees (some close to the Communist Party) remains less closely examined.[25] Partly this is due to the continuing scholarly interest in the central organised Resistance, which can, as Laurent Douzou argues, entail a neglect of 'the ways in which resistance was also a subtle framework more broadly rooted in society' (**Douzou, 2019: 96-7; Virieux, 2019**).[26] Yet the tendency of such material to remain in the shadows derives equally from its intrinsically ephemeral quality, and the attendant difficulty of tracing its creators and disseminators. Produced for provocation and public consumption, subversive posters and flyers were often rapidly ripped down by authorities and not necessarily filed with the associated reports. In archival holdings, some of the most extensive collections of such material are those removed not from public but from private spaces. The Archives nationales, for example, hold significant collections of drafts and additional copies of propaganda confiscated from the homes of individual resisters, either preceding or following their arrest.[27] Such items are in many cases close in theme and production technique to those in the MRC's collections.

A close focus on two of these MRC flyers offers an illuminating insight into the types of strategies common within popular resistance, especially among working-class and women's groups. These groups included men and women inspired or encouraged by more organised (often communist) resistance networks to disseminate propaganda and take the high-risk

step towards resistance themselves, whether by refusing to accept the compulsory labour draft (*Service du Travail Obligatoire*) in Germany from 1943 onwards, or by demonstrating for higher rations for individuals and families. Focusing on material in the MRC collections also raises questions about what might have happened to the other copies of particular flyers in private and public, French and foreign contexts: the types and trajectories and associations explored within the 'cultural biography of things.' (**Kopytoff, 2013**)

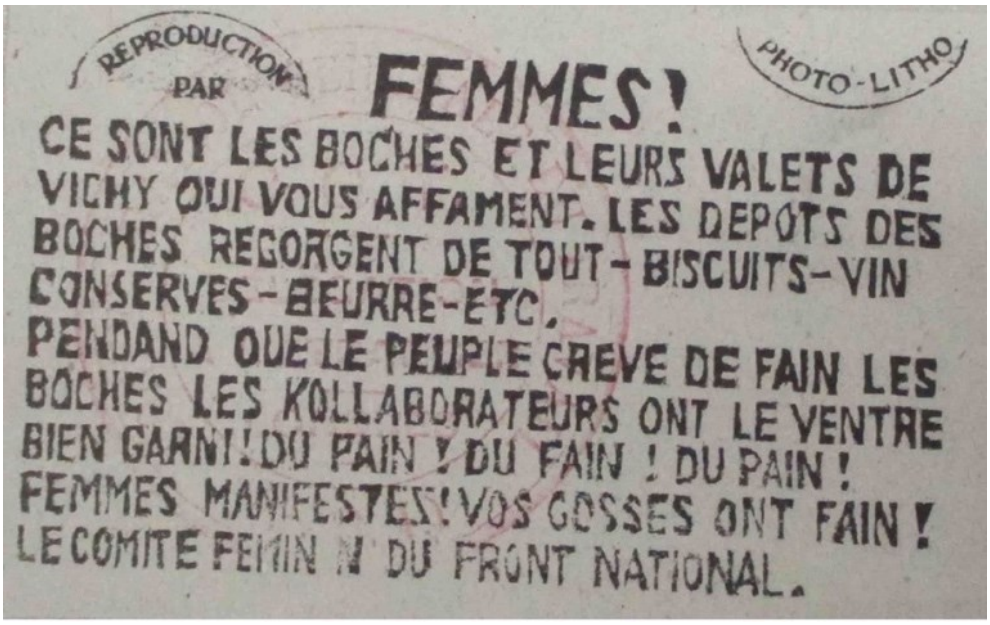
*Figure 1: On ne collabore pas avec ses bourreaux (flyer, 1943). Archives of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Modern Records Centre (**MSS. 159/3/C/a/143/78**; included with permission)*



This first flyer is a postcard-sized image of France, stabbed to the heart by a dagger bearing a Nazi swastika, and inscribed with a single, punchy slogan: 'On ne collabore pas avec ses bourreaux' [we don't collaborate with our executioners], choosing a word for 'executioner' common to other resistance materials.[28] With its upper-case letters and monochrome imagery, this is a high-impact and yet deceptively simple piece of propaganda. In fact, there is more than immediately meets the eye. First, the dagger stabs not Paris, which could be seen as the symbolic heart of France, but the location of the demarcation line, which, following the Fall of France in 1940, slashed the country into occupied and unoccupied zones. By 1943, when this flyer was produced, the Germans were in fact occupying the whole of France, but this flyer recalls that original flesh wound in the body of the nation. Second, the very depiction of the shape and boundaries of France — though to modern eyes unremarkable — is

also an act of radical expectation. The Armistice agreement of 1940 enabled Germany to occupy (though not formally annexe) Alsace-Lorraine in the east of France, meaning that the image on this flyer corresponds not to France during the Second World War but to France as it had been between 1919 and 1940, and as it would be following an eventual victory.[29] (Similar tactics were used on other resistance flyers that made more explicit demands for the restoration of national integrity).[30] Behind the deliberate simplicity of the line drawing and neatly underlined statement, there is thus a deeper reflection on the wounding and also potential restoration of the nation. There is also a thinly veiled threat. What will happen to those who collaborate with their 'executioners'? And would accepting the compulsory labour draft count as collaboration?[31]

*Figure 2: Flyer by the Comité Féminin du Front National. Archives of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Modern Records Centre (**MSS. 159/3/C/a/143/72**; included with permission)*



On ne collabore pas does not indicate its creators, although it may have reached the London representatives of the CGT with correspondence and flyers from the Comité d'Action contre la Déportation, which mobilised the French against 'deportation' to Germany through compulsory labour.[32] In contrast, this second flyer explicitly identifies its production by the Comité Féminin du Front National, a women's group close to the French Communist Party and unrelated to the later far-right movement of the same name. Small enough to conceal in the hand, *Femmes!* similarly depicts collaboration and resistance in straightforward black and white. In slangy language, and with a characteristic rhetorical populism, it condemns the Nazis and their Vichy collaborators for stockpiling produce while the French people are dying of hunger, and features a mouth-watering list of biscuits, wine, jam, and butter. While the Germans are described as 'boches', recalling their popular depiction during the First

World War, their collaborators are also symbolically foreignised by use of a Germanic 'K' at the beginning of the word. Other misspellings such as 'fain' (for *faim*) and 'pendand' (for *pendant*) are not deliberate, and instead suggest that the authors spoke a phonetically correct French without having perfect written mastery of the language — unlike the intellectuals and professional typographers responsible for other resistance propaganda.[33] Nevertheless, the targets and message of this tiny flyer are abundantly clear. This is an urgent appeal to action, specifically to action by women and mothers. Demonstrate to demand bread for your famished children, it urges, mobilising women and mothers to take to the streets at a time when demonstrations were not only illegal but could also, in some cases, result in the arrest and even deportation of those who took part. In August 1942, for example, two women from Lyon were taken to court for 'inciting housewives to demonstrate, moving from one group to another to heighten the sense of discontent.'[34]

Valuable for its very survival, *Femmes!* is equally significant for its representative character, offering further evidence of a close and politically strategic cooperation between the clandestine Communist Party and women at different levels of politicisation. Keen to burnish its resistance credentials after the USSR's entry into the war, the party was anxious to work with a wider network of supporters on questions that might, at least at first, seem politically neutral. Thus Communist Party members and popular committees — especially in the Parisian suburbs, where the party had been particularly strong before the War — played pioneering roles in encouraging and organising demonstrations for food and fuel from the winter of 1940–41 onwards (**Wieviorka, 2016: 37**).[35] It is even estimated that 239 demonstrations, approximately one third of all that took place between 1940 and 1944, were *manifestations ménagères* or 'housewives' demos'.[36]

Sometimes the focus of these demonstrations was purely material — as in those encouraged by *La Femme comtoise* (also in the MRC collections) in August 1943, which specified the exact quantities of butter and full-fat milk that local women should demand for their children. Nevertheless, as in the flyer *Femmes!*, such domestic-based opposition could be inseparable from bitter and sometimes political targeting of those in power at Vichy or in the occupied zone, especially when these authorities managed to acquire additional ration cards or luxury goods on the black market. One confiscated tract produced by 'Les Femmes communistes' and now in the Archives nationales, very similar in tone to *Femmes!*, features a hand-drawn image of women and children demonstrating under the title 'there will be no more bread' (*le pain va manquer*), but proposes the specific solution of a commercial treaty with the USSR.[37] There are, moreover, many examples of women demonstrating with much

more political intentions, as in the unsuccessful march on the German Embassy in Paris to petition for the release of arrested communists and trade unionists (**Gildea, 2015: 38**), and the 11 November demonstrations through which men and women remembered the First World War while anticipating future victory.[38]

These MRC flyers exist in single copies: individual examples of propaganda reproduced in much larger quantities. It is clear from accompanying translations that the CGT representatives sometimes used this material to engage British attention and support; police reports in the Archives nationales also note occasions on which resistance propaganda was dropped by the RAF as well as circulated within France. But what happened to the other copies of these flyers? Where exactly were they produced and reproduced, how were they disseminated in France itself, and with what results? Although the MRC collections allow an occasional and transitory glimpse into the 'biography' of a particular document, there is much that necessarily remains in the shadows. Much, indeed, is still waiting to be explored about the relationship between the French people and the resistance propaganda that moved across national and political boundaries, sometimes meticulously filed and preserved, and sometimes just tossed out of a car window into the darkness.

Conclusions

The constraints of a short critical reflection must leave many questions unanswered. Nevertheless, the aim here has been to highlight the potential of the MRC collections to shed new light on lesser-known aspects of the French resistance, and particularly to suggest a fruitful questioning of some of the relationships between centre and periphery. For many decades, historians have been reinterpreting the strategic postwar myth that resistance was primarily 'military, national, and male' (**Gildea, 2015: 10**). By illuminating some of the penumbra around the more brightly-lit organised resistance, the archives at the MRC reveal that the impetus for resistance activities did not come merely from the central Resistance before moving outwards to the supportive, concentric circles of the 'resistance movement.' Lateral connections between the CGT's foreign delegates and their British counterparts; initiatives by working-class women and men to create and disseminate propaganda; and demonstrations organised both within and around communist initiatives, all invite wider reflection on how resistance should be defined, and on its spaces, strategies, and balances of power. Amid the liberation of France in July 1944, the resistance newspaper *L'Écho des Femmes* called on its readers to 'forge the weapons — however basic — that will enable us to conquer more!'[39] One of the most important reminders of these

highlighted sources is that so much could sometimes be achieved with so little.

Dr Jessica Wardhaugh is a Reader in French Studies at the University of Warwick. She works on the relationship between politics and culture in modern France, and has published widely on popular politics and political spectacle, as well as on concepts of local, national, and European communities. She is the author of two monographs with Palgrave Macmillan: In Pursuit of the People: Political Culture in France, 1934–39 (2009), and Popular Theatre and Political Utopia in France, 1870–1940: Active Citizens (2017). Her current research includes a collaborative study of family resistance networks in occupied France.

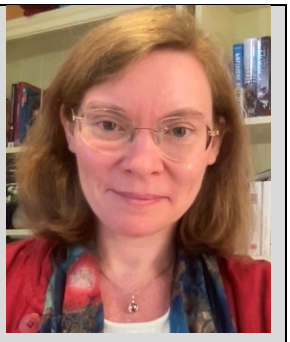


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Figure 2: *On ne collabore pas avec ses bourreaux* (flyer, 1943). Archives of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Modern Records Centre (**MSS. 159/3/C/a/143/78**; included with permission).

Figure 2: *Flyer by the Comité Féminin du Front National*. Archives of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Modern Records Centre (**MSS. 159/3/C/a/143/72**; included with permission).

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The Daily Herald

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Endnotes

[1] 'Douai, le 29 août 1942', Archives nationales de France (hereafter AN), BB/18/7070. In other cases, flyers were dropped by the RAF.

[2] On the concept of a resistance 'penumbra', see also Gildea (2015), Chapter 2.

[3] See Dreyfus (1995), especially pp. 193–5, and Wieviorka (2016), Chapter 2.

[4] See Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC), MSS. 292/944/1/80, MSS. 292/944/1/83, and MSS. 292/944/1/85. On Henri Hauck, see also Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–44* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p. 396.

[5] See also 'Statement made by Mr W. Schevenels on the French trade union movement and the Fall of France to a meeting of International Committee (draft), 5 December 1940', MRC MSS. 292/944/19/41.

[6] 'Summarised minutes of the Emergency International Trade Union Council, London, 1st September 1942', MRC MSS. 238/IF/3/2.

[7] Denis Peschanski examines foreigners working within the internal Resistance but without focusing on cooperation with foreigners abroad, for example within CGT networks. *Des Étrangers dans la Résistance* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 2002).

[8] See also Robert Bothereau, *Le Syndicalisme dans la tourmente, 1940-45* (Toulouse, 2011), p. 30.

[9] On frameworks for 'transnational lives', see Steffen Mau, *Social Transnationalism: Lifeworlds beyond the Nation State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), especially Chapter 14; and Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott (eds), *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

[10] See, for example, the letter from Buisson and Guigui to the Assistant General Secretary of the TUC in MRC MSS. 292/944/1.

[11] 'République Française, Ministère de la Production Industrielle, Mission à Londres, 1 Carlton Gardens, SW1, 25 April 1945', MRC MSS. 292/944/1.

[12] 'Summarised minutes of the Emergency International Trade Union Council, London, 1st September, 1942' in 'Fédération Syndicale Internationale: études, buts de paix, 1942–44', MRC MSS. 238/IF/3/2.

[13] 'Statement made by Mr W. Schevenels on the French trade union movement', MRC MSS. 292/944/19/41.

[14] 'Memorandum of Interview, 20 and 25 April 1945, present: Mr Raymond Bouyer and Mr A. E. Carthy', MRC MSS. 292/944/1/9. Bouyer had edited the CGT newspaper *Le Peuple* and been a close associate of Léon Jouhaux.

[15] 'Speech made by Albert Guigui, representative abroad of the French CGT, at Warrington (translation), 14 July 1944', MRC MSS. 292/946/1/25.

[16] 'Private and confidential: extract from report of a trade union leader active in the resistance movement, made July 1941' (dated November 1944), MRC MSS. 292C/944/3/11.

[17] 'The situation in France and proposals of the delegation of the Confédération Générale du Travail (France) to increase the war effort of their country', MRC MSS. 292/944/1/22.

[18] See 'Miss Rink of the Clerks', MRC MSS. 292/944/1/33, and letters concerning the visits of British workers to France, overseen by the Anglo-French Trade Union Council, e.g., MRC MSS. 292/944/1/19 and MSS. 292/944/1/20.

[19] 'International Federation of Trade Unions (Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1). Report on IFTU delegation to the French Confederation of Labour, 29th September – 2nd October 1944', MRC MSS. 292C/944/3/1.

[20] See 'International department, 23 November 1942, E.A. Bell, Sir Walter Citrine, Trades Union Congress', 'Inter-departmental correspondence from Ernest A. Bell to Sir Walter Citrine, dept: international, 25 August 1944', and 'Memorandum of Interview, 20 and 25 April 1945, present: Mr Raymond Bouyer and Mr A. E. Carthy', MRC MSS. 292/944/1.

[21] Letter from Georges Buisson to Walter Citrine, 6 August 1943, MRC MSS. 292/944/6.

[22] Letter from Henri Guérin and René Rous to Mr Bolton on 20 July 1942, MRC MSS. 292/944.

[23] Letter from Albert Guigui to Mr Tracy, 21 April 1943, MRC MSS. 292/944. On the press conference, see *The Daily News*, 1 May 1943 and *The Daily Herald*, 1 May 1943 (British Newspaper Archive).

[24] These titles form part of the extensive collection of the Musée National de la Résistance in Champigny, digitised by the Bibliothèque nationale de France: https://gallica.bnf.fr/html/und/presse-et-revues/journaux-clandestins-de-la-resistance (Accessed: 19 January 2024).

[25] E.g., Dominique Veillon, *Le Franc-Tireur, un journal clandestin, un mouvement de résistance* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977); Anne Simonin, *Les Éditions de Minuit, 1942–1955: le devoir d'insoumission* (Paris: IMEC, 1994). The MRC also includes an anonymous account by a female resister involved in disseminating popular propaganda. See 'With the French Resistance' (October 1945), MRC MSS. 243/1/11/9/1.

[26] Notably, Daniel Virieux's article on resistance and professions includes illustrations of such flyers but does not discuss them in the text.

[27] See, for example, AN Z/4/112, AN Z/4/150, and AN Z/4/153, which include a wide range of resistance flyers and newspapers.

[28] See 'Français, l'insigne du Maréchal c'est la hache du bourreau', and 'Ouvriers, ouvrières, ne partez pas en Allemagne,' AN Z/4/161/B, dossier 519.

[29] Alsace and parts of Lorraine had been previously annexed by Germany following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 and were restored after the First World War.

[30] 'Nous voulons' (1942) in *Tracts de la Résistance française extérieure: France libre, puis France combattante* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. G. 1475).

[31] Other MRC flyers formulate more explicit threats of postwar retribution. See, for example, 'La Résistance vous communique', MRC MSS. 159/3/C/a/143/76.

[32] See 'Comité d'Action contre la Déportation' (letter and flyer received by the CGT's foreign delegation), MSS. 292/944/1 (59a and 59b). Although 'deportation' now has more specific connotations of Nazi prisons and concentration camps, the term was also used in wartime France to signify the compulsory labour draft.

[33] See, for example, Dominique Veillon, Jacqueline Sainclivier, 'Quelles Différences sociales entre réseaux, mouvements et maquis?', *Mouvement Social*, 180 (1997), p. 50.

[34] 'Condamnation, par le tribunal de Lyon, de Claudia et Germaine Million […] car elles avaient "incité les ménagères à manifester, allant de groupe en groupe pour attiser le mécontentement."' AN BB/18/7069, BL 4515.

[35] For a wider discussion, see also Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in Europe. Choices and Constraints* (London: Longman, 1999).

[36] See Andrieu, 'Les Résistantes', p. 85; cf. also Jean-François Condette, 'Les Manifestations de ménagères dans le département du Nord de 1940 à 1944: révolte frumentaire ou résistance?' in Robert Vandenbussche (ed.), *Femmes et Résistance en Belgique et en zone interdite* (Lille: Publications de l'Institut de recherches historiques du Septentrion, 2007), pp. 125–64.

[37] 'Tract clandestine, *Le pain va manquer*', AN Z/4/112. Explicitly revolutionary rhetoric was also used in speeches, for example by communist resister Lise London in Paris in 1942.

[38] See, for example, '11 Novembre. Parisiens, Parisiennes!' and 'Français, Françaises' (an appeal to the people of Marseille in 1943), MRC MSS. 59/c/a/143, 39, and 60. The MRC also includes the transcript of a 1944 speech by Lucie Aubrac, who played a key role in the Libération-Sud network, describing some of the Nazi atrocities that provoked female resistance. See 'A Woman member of the Resistance', MRC MSS. 212/L/1/84.

[39] 'Forgez les armes, même rudimentaires, qui nous permettront d'en conquérir d'autres!', *L'Echo des Femmes*, 1 July 1944 (Bibliothèque nationale de France).

Collaboration in the Archive: The MRC and the Railway Work, Life & Death Project

Mike Esbester[1], Alex Gordon[2], Cheryl Hunnisett[3], James King[4], Stephen Lamb[5]

[1]School of Area Studies, Sociology, History, Politics & Literature, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, UK
Correspondence: [1]mike.esbester@port.ac.uk
Twitter/X: [1]@RWLDproject, [2]@alexgordon4me, [4]@MRCWarwick,
Threads: [5]@svlamb
ORCID: 0000-0002-6674-5991

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Abstract

In this piece we look at a collaborative project, in which the Modern Records Centre is a co-lead: the Railway Work, Life & Death project. The project is transcribing details of accidents to British and Irish railway staff before 1939. Using a collaborative and co-productive methodology, and thanks to the efforts of volunteers, we are transcribing and making freely available tens of thousands of records of accidents to railway workers. Many of these records come from the collections of what is now the RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) trade union, and their support for our work has been excellent. Here we offer up critical reflections from across the project team about how the project has worked in practice.

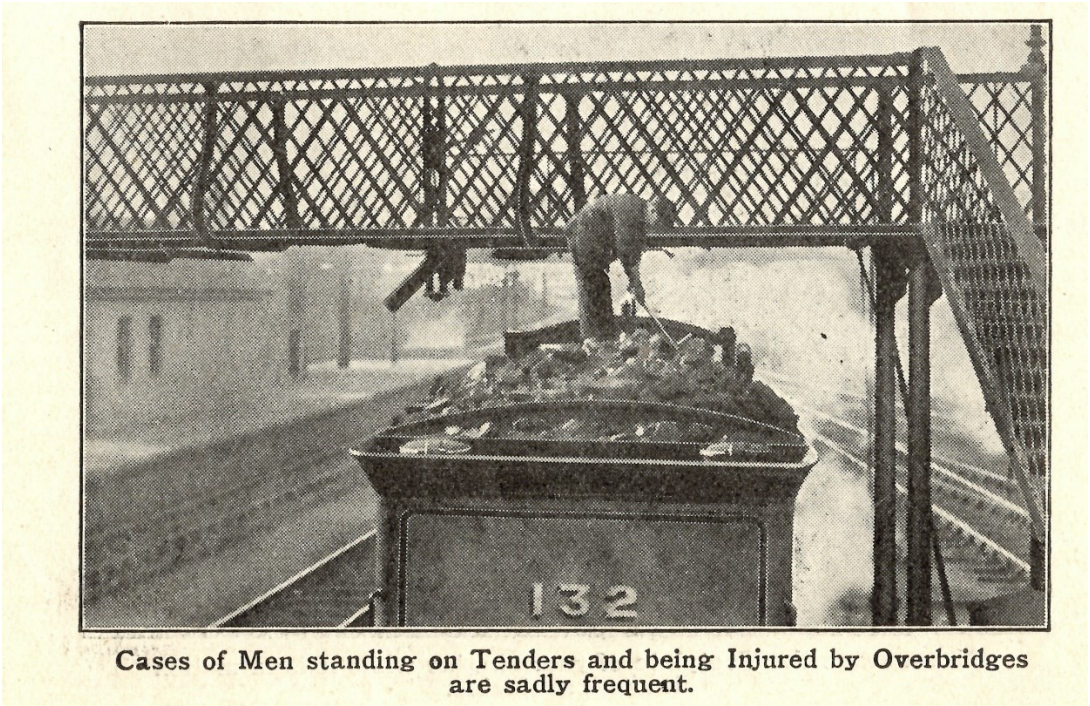
Keywords: collaboration; history; railway; volunteering; trades union; family history; local history; railway history

Introduction

On 13 December 1911, Caledonian Railway engine driver George Williamson was at work as usual. However, he realised that his locomotive had a defective water gauge. From the footplate of the locomotive (where the driver and fireman worked), he couldn't tell how much water they had left in the water tank. Knowing how much water they were carrying was crucial – run out of water and they risked a boiler explosion.

To find out, Williamson climbed on top of the tender as the train was moving near Montrose. He planned to open the cover into the water tank and visually check how much remained. As he did so, the locomotive passed under a bridge – which hit Williamson's head and killed him.

Figure 1: Posed staff safety photograph produced by the Caledonian Railway Company in 1921, warning of dangers of the type that killed George Williamson. (Credit: Railway Work, Life & Death project. Included with permission)



We know about Williamson and this part of his life because he was a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) trade union – and its records have survived, now in the care of the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (MRC). Otherwise, Williamson would have left relatively limited documentary trace – very typical of the vast majority of railway workers at that time.

We also know from the various places Williamson's accident appears in the ASRS records that he belonged to the Edinburgh West branch of the Union. That the Fatal Accident Inquiry jury added a rider to the finding of 'accidental death,' noting the problem of the defective water gauge. That Williamson's dependents received £300 in compensation (equivalent to

around £36,000 now). That he left five children, who between them received six shillings per week in support from the Union, until they reached age 14.[i]

Williamson's was one of 446 railway worker deaths, and 27,848 railway worker injuries in 1911 alone (**HMSO, 1912**). Whilst the records for only a tiny fraction of those accidents, and those of other years, survives in 2024, it still amounts to a huge total – hundreds of thousands of cases. The Union recorded details of those accidents involving its members in the pages of its annual reports – tens of thousands of cases between the 1870s and 1920s (when its reporting changed format).[ii]

That George Williamson's accident was such an everyday, unexceptional case makes it all the more valuable that we know about it. This was far more representative of working life on the railways than the bigger, more spectacular passenger train crashes which typically dominated attention at the time – but which were (as they are today) incredibly rare.

The ASRS became the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) in 1913 after a merger, and the RMT Union in 1990. Its records were saved and preserved in hardcopy at the MRC. However, the accident details were unindexed and challenging to search – if people were aware of them at all. Yet they offer tremendous insights into the past, for many different groups: family historians, the current rail industry, academic historians, local historians, rail enthusiasts and more.

Knowing that they existed, could these records be brought to a wider public? This was a common challenge across many records relating to pre-1939 British and Irish railway worker accidents – and exactly what the Railway Work, Life & Death (RWLD) project was set up to address (**RWLD, 2024a**).

Initially a collaboration between the University of Portsmouth (UoP) and the National Railway Museum (NRM), the MRC joined in 2018. It has since been supported by The National Archives of the UK (TNA) and the RMT Union. It aims to transcribe and research those pre-1939 accident records that exist, focusing on individual workers and their experiences. Being able to name those individuals is crucial. It reminds us of the *people* involved, something previously lost in the numbers.

Given the scale of the task, this was and is too much for any one person – working collaboratively has therefore been key to the project. This has involved small, dedicated teams of volunteers at the UoP, MRC, NRM, and TNA – without whom the project would be impossible. We gratefully thank and recognise all those who have volunteered their time on the RWLD project – particularly, in this context, the MRC team: Cheryl Hunnisett,

Chris Jolliffe, Stephen Lamb, Colin Sharp, and Peter Waghorn, carefully supported by MRC staff Helen Ford and James King.

Given the subject matter, accidents to individuals, it is worth noting the strong ethical core to the project. Some of this is formal; it has been through the UoP ethical opinion process and internal approval processes (including consideration of ethics) at the other collaborating institutions. Some of this, though, is informal: particularly team members' commitment to respectfully remembering and promoting the public understanding of the individuals involved in accidents.

So far, the project has produced a publicly available database of approximately 48,000 accidents. Of these, around 25,000 cases have come from the ASRS/NUR records held at the MRC. They were transcribed by a combination of the MRC and NRM teams, with some added through *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*'s 'Transcription Tuesday' in 2019 (**RWLD, 2019**). They cover 11 years between 1889 and 1920. Hard to estimate with certainty, but the remaining years' coverage (including records extending back into the 1870s) might add a further 30,000 cases.

The database is freely available from the project's website, along with a range of other resources. The website also contains the project blog, regularly updated with research into the individuals and the accidents in the records behind the database. The blog also features contributions submitted by members of the public, often bringing a much more personal connection – frequently these come from descendants of the men and women found in the accident records. Finally, the project's social media presence on Twitter[iii] has generated hugely valuable connections in different spheres, increasing the reach of the project and its work.[iv]

At its heart, the project and this piece speak to some big questions about access to archival records, volunteering and collaboration across institutions and individuals. This piece is therefore a reflection on our project, on collaboration and on work with and at the MRC. All contributors were given free-reign, as we wanted to hear their experiences; we have jointly drafted the piece as peers and co-productively. In the sections that follow each person or group provides their unique insight about their personal or institutional involvement in the project. We end with a joint conclusion, evaluating and questioning the project, and considering its next steps.

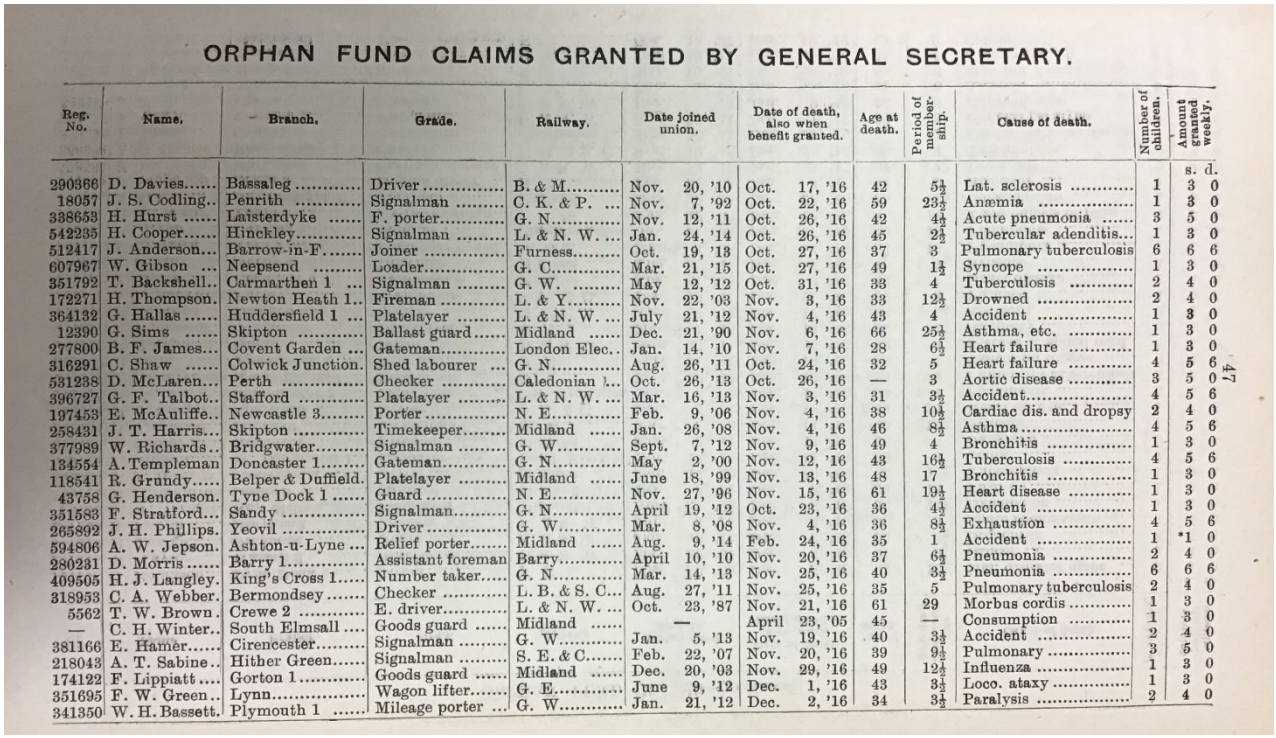
Critical reflections: the MRC volunteers' perspective – Cheryl Hunnisett and Stephen Lamb

Over the length of the project there were five of us, all volunteers living reasonably near the Modern Records Centre, of retirement age with some available time and interested in the challenge of working on a new project. This article reflects the experiences of two volunteers, Stephen Lamb and Cheryl Hunnisett, who have worked on the data since the inception of the project in 2018.

Neither of us had an interest in railways to start with. Stephen became involved because of his interest in social history especially gaining an insight into how working people lived. Cheryl had already undertaken some family history research at the MRC and thought that the archive was potentially a fantastic resource for genealogists but hard to access for majority of researchers, who probably wouldn't know their ancestor had belonged to the Union. Both of them liked the idea of working with original documents and making the data accessible to as many people as possible.

There was quite a steep learning curve for both volunteers and project managers; deciding what data would be recorded, agreeing standardised formats, finding out that over the years different formats and headings were used for the same type of information, agreeing the difference between indexing and transcribing, enabling remote working (which allowed us to carry on working through the pandemic lockdowns), basic raw data interpretation skills and managing spreadsheets. These are all skills that we can use in other projects. The volunteers tackled thousands of pages of data, some handwritten, some prose and some endless columns covering who was paid, how much and when. It was pretty tedious at times.

Figure 2: Typical National Union of Railwaymen Orphan Fund claims table. The team have been transcribing these records, which are feeding into the Railway Work, Life & Death project database.
(Credit: MRC, MSS.127/NU/1/1/4. Included with permission)



ORPHAN FUND CLAIMS GRANTED BY GENERAL SECRETARY.

Reg. No.	Name.	Branch.	Grade.	Railway.	Date joined union.	Date of death, also when benefit granted.	Age at death.	Period of member-ship.	Cause of death.	Number of children.	Amount granted weekly.
											s. d.
290366	D. Davies.....	Bassaleg	Driver	B. & M.....	Nov. 20, '10	Oct. 17, '16	42	5½	Lat. sclerosis	1	3 0
18057	J. S. Codling..	Penrith	Signalman	C. K. & P. ...	Nov. 7, '92	Oct. 22, '16	59	23¾	Anæmia	1	3 0
338653	H. Hurst	Laisterdyke	F. porter.....	G. N.....	Nov. 12, '11	Oct. 26, '16	42	4¾	Acute pneumonia	3	5 0
542235	H. Cooper.....	Hinckley.....	Signalman	L. & N. W. ...	Jan. 24, '14	Oct. 26, '16	45	2¾	Tubercular adenditis...	1	3 0
512417	J. Anderson...	Barrow-in-F.....	Joiner	Furness.....	Oct. 19, '13	Oct. 27, '16	37	3	Pulmonary tuberculosis	6	6 6
607967	W. Gibson ...	Neepsend	Loader.....	G. C.....	Mar. 21, '15	Oct. 27, '16	49	1¾	Syncope	1	3 0
351792	T. Backshell..	Carmarthen 1 ...	Signalman	G. W.	May 12, '12	Oct. 31, '16	33	4	Tuberculosis	2	4 0
172271	H. Thompson.	Newton Heath 1..	Fireman	L. & Y.....	Nov. 22, '03	Nov. 3, '16	33	12¾	Drowned	2	4 0
364132	G. Hallas	Huddersfield 1 ...	Platelayer	L. & N. W. ...	July 21, '12	Nov. 4, '16	43	4	Accident	1	3 0
12390	G. Sims	Skipton	Ballast guard.....	Midland	Dec. 21, '90	Nov. 6, '16	66	25¾	Asthma, etc.	1	3 0
277800	B. F. James...	Covent Garden ...	Gateman.....	London Elec..	Jan. 14, '10	Nov. 7, '16	28	6¾	Heart failure	1	3 0
316291	C. Shaw	Colwick Junction.	Shed labourer ...	G. N.....	Aug. 26, '11	Oct. 24, '16	32	5	Heart failure	4	5 6
531238	D. McLaren...	Perth	Checker	Caledonian ...	Oct. 26, '13	Oct. 26, '16	—	3	Aortic disease	3	5 0
396727	G. F. Talbot..	Stafford	Platelayer	L. & N. W. ...	Mar. 16, '13	Nov. 3, '16	31	3¾	Accident.....	4	5 6
197453	E. McAuliffe..	Newcastle 3.....	Porter	N. E.....	Feb. 9, '06	Nov. 4, '16	38	10¾	Cardiac dis. and dropsy	2	4 0
258431	J. T. Harris...	Skipton	Timekeeper.....	Midland	Jan. 26, '08	Nov. 4, '16	46	8¾	Asthma	4	5 6
377989	W. Richards..	Bridgwater.....	Signalman	G. W.....	Sept. 7, '12	Nov. 9, '16	49	4	Bronchitis	1	3 0
134554	A. Templeman	Doncaster 1.....	Gateman.....	G. N.....	May 2, '00	Nov. 12, '16	43	16½	Tuberculosis	4	5 6
118541	R. Grundy.....	Belper & Duffield.	Platelayer	Midland	June 18, '99	Nov. 13, '16	48	17	Bronchitis	1	3 0
43758	G. Henderson.	Tyne Dock 1	Guard	N. E.....	Nov. 27, '96	Nov. 15, '16	61	19¾	Heart disease	1	3 0
351583	F. Stratford...	Sandy	Signalman.....	G. N.....	April 19, '12	Oct. 23, '16	36	4¾	Accident	1	3 0
265892	J. H. Phillips.	Yeovil	Driver	G. W.....	Mar. 8, '08	Nov. 4, '16	36	8¾	Exhaustion	4	5 6
594806	A. W. Jepson.	Ashton-u-Lyne ...	Relief porter.....	Midland	Aug. 9, '14	Feb. 24, '16	35	1	Accident	1	*1 0
280231	D. Morris	Barry 1.....	Assistant foreman	Barry.....	April 10, '10	Nov. 20, '16	37	6¾	Pneumonia	2	4 0
409505	H. J. Langley.	King's Cross 1.....	Number taker.....	G. N.....	Mar. 14, '13	Nov. 25, '16	40	3¾	Pneumonia	6	6 6
318953	C. A. Webber.	Bermondsey	Checker	L. B. & S. C...	Aug. 27, '11	Nov. 25, '16	35	5	Pulmonary tuberculosis	2	4 0
5562	T. W. Brown.	Crewe 2	E. driver.....	L. & N. W. ...	Oct. 23, '87	Nov. 21, '16	61	29	Morbus cordis	1	3 0
—	C. H. Winter..	South Elmsall	Goods guard	Midland	—	April 23, '05	45	—	Consumption	1	3 0
381166	E. Hamer.....	Cirencester.....	Signalman	G. W.....	Jan. 5, '13	Nov. 19, '16	40	3¾	Accident	2	4 0
218043	A. T. Sabine..	Hither Green.....	Signalman	S. E. & C.....	Feb. 22, '07	Nov. 20, '16	39	9¾	Pulmonary	3	5 0
174122	F. Lippiatt	Gorton 1.....	Goods guard	Midland	Dec. 20, '03	Nov. 29, '16	49	12¾	Influenza	1	3 0
351695	F. W. Green..	Lynn.....	Wagon lifter.....	G. E.....	June 9, '12	Dec. 1, '16	43	3¾	Loco. ataxy	1	3 0
341350	W. H. Bassett.	Plymouth 1	Mileage porter ...	G. W.....	Jan. 21, '12	Dec. 2, '16	34	3¾	Paralysis	2	4 0

However, as the indexed data grew, so did our understanding of how valuable the role of this early trade union was in building up sources of income and support in an era where no state or employer benefits were available for elderly or injured workers, widows and orphaned children. We also learnt a lot about the different jobs men did and how dangerous the majority of them were; being a porter on a 'mineral' line being especially hazardous. We also gained an understanding of why and how health and safety legislation evolved and how necessary it was.

It was especially interesting to be able to find enough information about an individual or group of workers to be able to make mini case studies or to write blogs about them. It brought the statistics to life and gave us another new skill. In Stephen's blog, he researched the background to a case of suicide and unearthed the progress of, what to him, was a clear mental health issue that went unrecognised at the time (**Lamb, 2019**). Cheryl explored the fate of the family of a 37-year-old porter who fell off a wagon and was killed, leaving six young children ranging in age from a few months to eight years (**Hunnisett, 2019**). Both involved investigating a lot of sources outside the ASRS records to build the broader picture. We also found that the modern-day descendants didn't know that history and were very interested in what we able to find.

We discovered a wealth of personal and social history tied up in these pages and we're proud that we've helped provide a huge resource for a wide range of researchers' interests and learnt a lot about real life in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Now we are almost finished indexing the data, we'd like to help promote its existence and usefulness, particularly to genealogists. This may be by doing more research about some of the workers and families supported by the Union, publishing more blogs and going out and talking to various interest groups about it. We also think that there are other related sources out there, untouched as yet, that would benefit from the same attention in preserving the stories within for everyone to find. We've talked about building a bigger volunteer team, perhaps via the U3A, railway history enthusiasts, local history societies - all to be explored!

Critical reflections: the RMT's perspective – Alex Gordon

The fiftieth birthday of the Modern Records Centre (MRC), where so many RMT records are archived for the use and benefit of students, researchers, and trade unionists, is a celebration and a marker for labour, trade union and social movements. Trade union and other working-class organisations suffer from our records being discarded or lost.

Fifty years since the founding of MRC is also fifty years since the Labour's 1973 Programme, which set out to bring about 'a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families' and 'make power fully accountable to the community, to workers and to the consumer'. The MRC is one of the few labour institutions remaining from that era before Thatcher and Blair.

As President of the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT), I was asked by the MRC in 2010 for permission to digitise membership records held here of RMT's predecessor unions, notably the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, founded in 1871 and which became the National Union of Railwaymen from 1913.

Those early trade unionists recorded their membership in painstaking detail in large Victorian ledgers. By the early 21st century, the value of such data was clear to genealogists and access to the internet opened up its commercial application. In a globalised, highly mobile society, millions of people worldwide want to discover their family lineage, to find out how their great-great grandparents lived, worked, and died.

The Victorian railway companies of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales were among the first mass corporations, employing collectively an incredibly diverse workforce numbering millions of men and women.

Early railway unions were social networks, providing news and commentary to the new industrial workforce through newspapers such as *The Railway Review,* and a structure through which political and social aspirations of the new industrial working class could be expressed. Crucially, they also contested the absolute power of employers to hire and fire workers and the terrible conditions of employment, which led to thousands of fatalities, injuries, and cases of occupational illness each year.

Examples of new, ground-breaking research such as that by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery at UCL, which traces the impact of slave-ownership on making Britain, demonstrate the impact on public debate of quantitative research, mapping historic data for a better understanding of the true historical record.

Railway Work, Life & Death (RWLD) is a valuable, innovative project developed with RMT's enthusiastic support by Dr Mike Esbester (University of Portsmouth) along with the National Railway Museum, The National Archives and MRC to link archives, volunteers and researchers to improve our knowledge and understanding of British and Irish railway worker accidents from the late 1880s to 1939.

In excess of 40,000 fatal and non-fatal accidents to railway workers have been compiled by RWLD volunteers from Board of Trade Railway accident investigation reports and ASRS/NUR records of death, disablement and orphan funds. The overall picture they reveal is astonishing and horrifying.

3,929 accidents (777 fatal and 3152 non-fatal) to workers investigated by the Railway Inspectorate between January 1911 and June 1915, constituted only 3 per cent of the total number of accidents reported – over 130,000 workplace accidents during this four and a half-year period, or 2,425 accidents to rail workers on average each month.

As telling as the statistical analysis of this industrial carnage, which provides a rich source for further studies, are the detailed investigations of individual cases that the RWLD volunteers and researchers continue to uncover and commemorate with local communities and descendants of the workers (**Esbester, 2024**). Deaths of working-class people under capitalism are often not regarded as important enough to record or remember. The RWLD project rescues these railway workers from the condescension of history.

For RMT members and railway workers today, this is not only of academic or historical interest. Public and worker safety are issues of fierce public, political debate.

In December 2023, RMT warned that funding cuts threaten the safety of passengers and rail workers and the integrity of Britain's rail network. A litany of rail crashes, including the deadly derailment at Carmont in August 2020 caused by poor infrastructure maintenance are a testament to what can happen through lack of investment.

Following on the heels of the founding of the MRC was the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974), another milestone in labour history. The RWLD project acts as a reminder of how far we have come in the struggle for workplace safety and how far we have to fall.

Critical reflections: the MRC's perspective – James King

As the premier repository for British trade union archives, the MRC holds considerable quantities of material that is of value to family historians and others interested in the lives of individual members. This is in various forms, but predominantly consists of either membership registers or various listings in annual reports (e.g., new members, superannuated members, deceased members, etc.,). Although the information provided by these sources is often fairly sparse (as its main purpose was to record data relevant to the union's finances rather than a detailed record of members' lives), it is still a useful source of biographical data.

Its use by researchers, however, is complicated by the fact that it is very rarely indexed and can thus only be discovered by time-consuming combing through multiple volumes, which may ultimately draw a blank in any case. The MRC does not have the resources to provide a research service beyond a basic search, and the digitisation programme is not likely to reach most of these volumes any time soon, so this can only be accomplished by an in-person visit to the MRC, which may obviously be difficult for those who do not live in the Coventry area (especially since not all family historians researching British roots even actually live in the UK).

Any assistance to make the information held in these volumes accessible remotely is therefore extremely welcome. This is especially the case with information relating to railway workers. The railway companies were once collectively the largest employer in the country and the MRC receives more genealogical enquiries about former railway employees than those of any other industry.

The ASRS/NUR represented all of the many grades of manual workers on the railways, although many drivers and firemen instead belonged to the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) and many workers in railway workshops belonged to the appropriate craft unions. In the days before the modern welfare state, the trades unions played a major role in the provision of benefits for those who were unable to work or the dependents of those who had died. Up until 1921, the

quarterly reports of the ASRS/NUR, which are all held by the MRC, included lists of claims for death and disability payments, accident compensation payments and orphan fund claims, as well as details of Board of Trade inquiries into railway accidents and inquests on those killed on the railways which were attended by union representatives. As is typical with such reports, these are not indexed and a researcher looking for a case must therefore know the relevant year and quarter or face very a long search. This has the obvious result that the records are underused and their potential for family history use is under-recognised.

Therefore, when Mike Esbester first contacted the MRC with a view to getting involved in the RWLD project in July 2018, we were only too happy to collaborate. Not only would it assist a valuable historical research project, but it would also provide opportunities to gather the genealogical data in the ASRS/NUR reports, disseminate it and make it searchable, and also to increase awareness of the extensive genealogical material in our trade union collections.

Over the last five years, the data in almost all the reports has been transcribed for the RWLD project through the hard work of a number of volunteers, some working directly with the MRC and others working with the National Railway Museum in York. The MRC volunteers have visited the MRC search-room to see and/or copy the material directly, whilst the NRM volunteers have worked from copies provided by MRC staff. The data from these reports that has already been made available online by the RWLD project and will be made available in the future will play a vital role in the MRC's attempts to make as much of our collection as possible freely available to researchers, ideally in a form that can be accessed remotely.

Critical reflections: the academic perspective – Mike Esbester

I'd flag three aspects of the academic world to focus on in my reflection: the intellectual, the methodological and the philosophical.

So far as the intellectual goes, over the last 25 years or so, there has been increasing interest amongst academic historians both in the everyday and in accidents.[v] Academic publishing can be a relatively slow business, however, and the project's reach into the different sub-fields of historical research has so far been more limited than I'd hoped. The project and its use of the MRC's holdings has the potential to contribute to social, labour, disability and, of course, railway history amongst other academic areas. What's needed is for scholars who work in these fields to see what they might get from the union records held by the MRC and featuring in the RWLD project. As the academic lead on the project, I do what I can to reach into different fields and to publish – however, I'm only one person. More

academics working on and publishing using our work would be a great benefit, to the project and to academic historical scholarship.

In terms of methodology, our focus on collaboration and where possible co-production is a strength, serving to open the discipline and academic world more (**Esbester, 2020**). I proposed the RWLD project as I believed there were different communities of researchers who would be interested in the records – if they knew those records existed and could be easily accessed. I'd initially thought of family and academic historians – though I've been delighted that the project has reached and worked with so many communities beyond these. Working with groups beyond Higher Education and understanding and respecting each other's expertise has been crucial to meaningful collaboration.

But herein lies a challenge: to do this seriously and in a way that builds and sustains trust – sometimes with groups who are suspicious of academic motives – takes time. A lot of time. Research and writing are small parts of the project equation. Promoting the project, for example, is an intensive aspect of the work. I have a responsibility to the volunteers who are so generously giving their time, effort and expertise (and from whom I've learned an awful lot). They should receive prompt responses from me – though that doesn't always happen, as I try, but don't always succeed, to balance competing pressures.

And this is the philosophical response. This time pressure is reflective of broad challenges in UK Higher Education at the moment (and no doubt worldwide, too). We are pulled in multiple directions, slicing our time and energy ever smaller. If we don't have sufficient time and space to develop and maintain collaborative projects – and these are long-term commitments – then we are all poorer for it. Equally if universities are called upon to produce quick wins, what space is there for projects like RWLD which may take many years to come to fruition and whose benefits are sometimes hard to quantify in ways that fit universities' metrics?

Institutionally there are benefits which Portsmouth accrues. The RWLD project brings public visibility, engagement – and even some of the notoriously-slippery 'impact.' With the RWLD project I have worked with national and local museums and archives, have reach into the heritage sector and have worked within the current rail industry, not least with the RMT Union. This is important, as without these benefits I cannot imagine that my spending time on the project would be viewed favourably at an institutional level.

This isn't why I continue with the project, however. I do what I do because I believe it's *important*. I get a very personal sense of satisfaction from the project's work. And my practice as an academic historian has benefited,

too. When I started my focus was very much on the accidents, with some regard for the individuals. Now my focus is much more on the accidents *and* the people involved. I have built strong connections across perceived barriers – for example, between family and academic history. I have become much more focused on collaboration and co-production as methodologies.

So where will the project, and I, go in future? Wherever it is, it'll be together – trying to break down hierarchies of power which persist (certainly in perception) and being more co-productive. At some point we'll finish transcribing the MRC records – I'd like to see more research into the individuals appearing in the records. In particular, I'd really like to support volunteers to do more of this research – because what they have done so far has been brilliant. I'd like to see that research reaching out into new communities, or communities that haven't traditionally engaged with railway history. Finally, I'd like to see the relationships with the RMT and the MRC strengthened, and to make sure that we work with them to meet their future needs.

Conclusions

What's clear is that each of the groups or people involved at the MRC in the Railway Work, Life & Death project have come with different aims, objectives and skills. There's been enough in the project, though, to form a coherent whole which provides everyone with enough of what they need to make it worthwhile. As such, it exemplifies the power of collaboration, in the archive and beyond. This is particularly significant in this context, as the MRC hasn't run a volunteering project like this before. Might the RWLD project offer a model that can be replicated?

To what's already been said, it's worth adding another dimension: the 'one-off volunteer.' We've seen a lot of this in the project – people offering support by providing further details of cases not yet in the database, or by writing guest blog posts for the project. This is hugely appreciated, and something we firmly encourage (**RWLD, 2024b**). Often it comes from the family history community; to establish a connection like this, between ancestor and descendant, is amazing and pushes the records held by the MRC far outside the climate-controlled space of the archive. We've seen this recently, for example, in contact from the grandson of Francis Huish of Senghenydd; and from various descendants of Crisanto Rego, both of whom feature in our project's work.

So, what of the future for the RWLD project and the MRC records? As we've suggested, some aspects are 'business as usual.' There are still the final records to be transcribed and then checked and released. We want

to remain open to contributions in whatever format and ways people are able to make them – and to be as inclusive as possible.

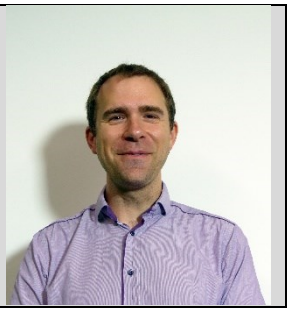
We firmly believe that, for those willing to be involved, everyone benefits – but, equally, how sustainable is the current model? There are very real challenges to archival volunteering, particularly around demography and opportunity. The RWLD project, at the MRC and beyond, is reliant upon individuals to donate their time and effort. At the very least, recognising that is important. Arguably everyone involved wouldn't do it if they didn't get something from it – but does this also mean others are unable to contribute? Or just that they need other ways to do so – the 'one-off volunteer', feeding in with their small part that's relevant to them as opposed to the 'general volunteer' who offers a more sustained commitment and deals with anything. Our project and its work at the MRC is a small manifestation of a much wider question: can institutions and projects support volunteers properly?

Those are issues that are sector-wide. To return to the RWLD project and the MRC, two key areas for our future have emerged. Firstly, making sure that we are reaching as widely as possible and ensuring as many people as possible are making use of the project work and therefore the records at the MRC. Secondly, a change in focus from transcription to more active research into the people and cases in the Union dataset. If this can be a wider effort, co-produced with different people and groups, that would be a real success. How we're able to achieve these objectives is a challenging question – but one we'll try to meet.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the work of the volunteers on the Railway Work, Life & Death project, and the support for the Railway Work, Life & Death project from the University of Portsmouth, the Modern Records Centre, the National Railway Museum, The National Archives of the UK and the RMT Union. We thank the Editor of Exchanges and those involved in the peer review and editorial processes.

Mike Esbester is Principal Lecturer in History at the University of Portsmouth and co-lead of the Railway Work, Life & Death project. His research focuses on the history of safety, risk and accident prevention in modern Britain, with a particular emphasis on the rail industry.



Alex Gordon is President of the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT). Records of RMT's forerunner unions ASRS, NUR and NUS are archived at the MRC. Alex is Chair of the Marx Memorial Library & Workers' School in Clerkenwell, London and writes for the Library's journal, Theory & Struggle. He is a member of the International Brigades Memorial Trust, which recently published a short history of the role of railworkers and seafarers in the fight against fascism in the 1930s.

Cheryl Hunnisett has studied family history and genealogy for the last ten years, and very much enjoys teasing out the stories behind the factual information. In addition to researching her own family line she runs two global one name studies. Her background in regulatory financial services project management & training for one of the big four consulting firms has been good grounding in the organisational skills and standards of proof required for genealogy. She's personally grateful for the explosion of online resources over the last few years and has found it very rewarding to be involved in unlocking the huge amount of information and personal histories from within the pages of the ASRS records and making them available for researchers.

James King is Senior Archivist at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, and co-lead of the Railway Work, Life & Death project.

Stephen Lamb retired from a career in social care and criminal justice in 2018. He got involved in Railway Work, Life & Death shortly afterwards. He had been looking for an opportunity to pursue his interest in history. He is also a tour guide at Arbury Hall, which is a historic house in Nuneaton; an exams invigilator at a school in Nuneaton where he also helps with security; and he works with the Elections team as a Presiding Officer and as a canvasser checking the electoral roll. He enjoys walking, gardening and photography and sharing life with his partner and two cats.

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Endnotes

[i] Modern Records Centre (MRC) MSS.127/AS/1/1/45.

[ii] Records are found in MSS.127/AS/1/1 and MSS.127/NU/1/1.

[iii] Or X, as the site was rebranded by its current owner in 2023.

[iv] RWLD Project Twitter/X account accessible at: https://twitter.com/RWLDproject.

[v] For example, see Roger Cooter and Bill Luckin, eds, *Accidents in History: Injuries, Fatalities and Social Relations* (Atlanta: Rodolphi, 1997); Arwen Mohun, *Risk: Negotiating Safety in American Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Tom Crook and Mike Esbester, eds, *Governing Risks in Modern Britain: Danger, Safety and Accidents c.1800-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016).

Getting Informed and Inspired: Reflecting on Modern Records Centre at 50 symposium

Klára Řiháková

School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh, UK
Correspondence: k.ihakova@sms.ed.ac.uk
Twitter/X/Bluesky: @KRihakova
ORCID: 0009-0002-0429-8396

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Abstract

On 20th September 2023, I attended my first-ever external academic event. This was a symposium organised by the Modern Records Centre on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. The symposium informed and inspired me in my future study and work, on which I would like to reflect in this article. The text first illustrates the broad range of materials available in the Modern Records Centre on the example of my research in this archive. Consequently, by drawing on the personal experience of attending and speaking at the symposium, this critical reflection will identify accessibility as one of the most inspiring aspects of this event. Other benefits connected to this symposium lie in the cross-generational and cross-sector networking of students, early-career researchers, well-established scholars, archivists, and volunteers. In my attempt to reflect on this anniversary event, I believe that the symposium kept its promise to inform and inspire. As examples of diverse speakers illustrate, similar events are beneficial for historical science and academia in numerous ways.

Keywords: Modern Records Centre; symposium; history; inspiration; reflection

Introduction

If you ask senior scholars and academics what career aspect they consider crucial in one's professional lifetime, their answer will probably be along the lines of 'publishing' and 'conferences'. At least that is what I have come across in my studies so far. As a postgraduate student following this advice, when I saw a call for papers to *MRC at 50 Symposium,* I was intrigued by the chance to present my research at an academic event. Even more so since the event was organised by Modern Records Centre (hereafter: MRC), an archive which has played a crucial role in my undergraduate research. I did not hesitate to submit my paper for consideration, but at the same time, I did not allow myself to believe that my paper would be accepted. To my surprise, I was invited to speak at the day-long symposium which aimed to celebrate the variety of research stemming from the MRC's collections.

The Modern Records Centre does not need an introduction for readers from the University of Warwick. Nonetheless, for anyone who is not familiar with the MRC, a brief introduction is in order. Being established in 1973, the MRC celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023, hence the celebration in the form of an exposition of 50 objects from the archive, and a symposium celebrating the various research directions one can take after visiting the MRC (**MRC, 2023a**). The MRC defines itself as 'the main British repository for national archives of trade unions and employers' organisations', additionally, it also possesses vast 'collections relating to pressure groups, fringe political parties and transport' (**MRC, 2023b**). It is, thus, clear that the MRC collections are immense, ranging from trade unions-related materials to records associated with cycling (**MRC, 2023c**). My research experience in the MRC was mainly concerned with student activism; more precisely, with records from the National Union of Students involving Czechoslovak students in the United Kingdom, as well as the magazine called *The Student* published by the International Student Conference (ISC).[i] Little did I know, when I first visited the MRC, these materials were crucial for my dissertation research. Fast-forward two years later and I find myself presenting parts of my research discoveries to not only early-career researchers like me such as Nia Belcher, Amy Longmuir, or Joseph Price, but also to archivists and well-established scholars such as Rachel MacGregor, Professor Carolyn Steedman, or Dr Jessica Wardhaugh.

To avoid overlaps, I am not presenting my full research findings as these are featured in the XXIII volume of the International Students of History Association's journal *Carnival* (**Řiháková, 2024**). Instead, I will first reflect on the material I studied in the MRC, which will confirm the extensive range of materials available in the archive. Consequently, I will attempt to

reflect on the symposium, which enabled cross-generational networking and provided me with motivation for further research and study. Overall, I aim to support the idea of the symposium that the MRC inspires historical research in multiple directions. Furthermore, by reflecting on the symposium and identifying accessibility as one of its core themes, I will illustrate that events like this are beneficial for the improvement of historical science as a whole, and indeed inform and inspire diverse generations of historians. I will especially mention three speakers who inspired and motivated me in my future academic endeavours, that is Kirstie Stage, Professor Roger Seifert, and the 'Railway Work, Life & Death' project presented by Dr Mike Esbester, Alex Gordon, and Cheryl Hunnisett.

My History with the MRC

I first visited the University of Warwick and the MRC in Autumn 2021 as a part of one of my research trips, generously funded through the BA bursary from the Society for the Study of Labour History, to gather as much material as possible for my bachelor's dissertation. My dissertation supervisor at Northumbria University, Dr Daniel Laqua, suggested visiting the MRC, and I must say, it was priceless advice.

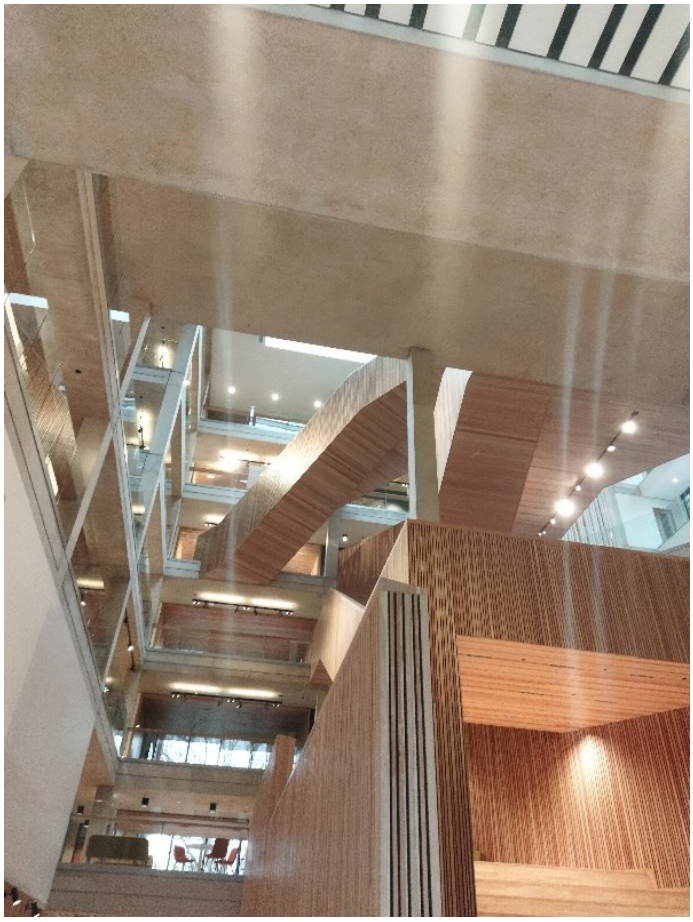
After looking at the National Union of Students collections in the MRC, my research took a specific direction. Part of my argument that developed after the research trips to the MRC, was consequently to argue that there were transnational structures between Czechoslovak and British students after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, which happened on the night from the 20th to the 21st of August 1968. Additionally, the transnational solidarity became evident in the records as well.[ii] This subsequently provided me with an opportunity to contribute to the existing scholarship on the transnational history of student activism across the Iron Curtain, which proposes that the Iron Curtain was not as impenetrable as it posed to be (**Gildea et al., 2013: 3**). Additionally, my research aimed to support the argument of Caroline Hoefferle that 'the British student movement both responded and contributed to […] international dissent movements in the era of the Long Sixties' (**Hoefferle, 2013: 2**). The MRC records were vital in proving this as they introduced me to the Czechoslovak Students' Scholarship Fund. Launched by Lord Murray of Newhaven on 23 October 1968 and co-established by the NUS of England, Scotland and Wales, the British Youth Council and the United Nations Student Association, the Czechoslovak Students' Scholarship Fund distributed over £143,000 during three academic years to finance studies of Czechoslovak students who emigrated or were stranded in the UK.[iii] The existence of this fund provided me with a necessary impulse in the argument about student solidarity across the borders of Eastern and Western blocs. Therefore, as is apparent, my research related to the

transnational approach to history, which, according to Pierre-Yves Saunier and Akira Irie, 'acknowledges and assesses foreign contributions to (…) domestic communities, polities and societies, and vice versa' (**Irie & Saunier, 2009: 3**). This illustrates that the records from the MRC create a unique source base not only for traditional historical research, such as labour history but also for more recent approaches, such as the focus on activism and the transnational aspect, the latter emerging since the early 1990s and 2000s (**Struck, Ferris & Revel, 2011: 573**).

The Event and its Benefits: Learning experience

The symposium very much reflected the message of displaying the variety of research that can be conducted via the MRC. As any newcomer at an academic event can imagine, I was nervous before attending the symposium, not only due to my student status but also because English is my second language. However, after the warm welcome I received from Rachel MacGregor, Pierre Botcherby, and the rest of the MRC team and volunteers from the University of Warwick, I was more at ease and felt welcomed despite, as I mentioned above, the symposium being my first-ever academic conference. The symposium was held in an architecturally beautiful space of the Faculty of Arts building (**Figure 1**) and was divided into six sections, each reflecting on a specific connecting theme. These included: *Higher Education*, *Latin America*, *Trade Unions and the Wider World*, *Trade Unions and Activism*, *Disability and Health*, and the *National Cycle Archive* (**MRC, 2023d**). The extensive display of the research informed and inspired by the MRC's collections is, in my opinion, impressive. Furthermore, none of the panels, except for the last one, which included only one speaker, was a 'manel' (a panel consisting solely of male speakers). I was incredibly pleased to notice this since in the Czech Republic, where I come from, 'manels' are common (**Homfray, 2019**). This aspect of the symposium speaks volumes about its gender equality policy, which is encouraging and serves as an example to all generations present at the event.

Figure 1: Agora (foyer) of the Faculty of Arts Building at the University of Warwick (author's photo)



Additionally, as should be the case with other academic events, the symposium's organisers enabled speakers and attendees to take part in the event remotely, via the Teams software. This additionally served for creating recordings and transcripts, which can be to this date accessed online on the website of the symposium (**MRC, 2023e**). This is a great example of accessibility for colleagues and peers who might not be able to attend in person either due to socioeconomic status, health or simply conflicting schedules. Moreover, the fact that the organisers generously offered to cover the costs of the accommodation for me is also a testament to this ease of access. Personally, I very much appreciated this offer as someone who wanted to take part in person but is a part-time employee and student travelling from a Central European country.

Therefore, the main theme that I took from the symposium was accessibility. Kirstie Stage's contribution to the symposium about her research on the National Union of Deaf campaigns inspired me greatly in her accessible approach to presentations (**Stage, 2023**).[iv] Kirstie Stage started her presentation by introducing herself, not only as a PhD candidate but also with her appearance. This is something which surprised me, but after thinking about this in more depth I absolutely see the enrichment in this. There might be people in the audience with seeing

disability, who will benefit from Stage's approach. Furthermore, she also made her positionality clear, disclosing her personal connection to her research topic. This is something which should be common across the academic sphere as an essential way in the joint academic strive for objectivity, which according to Paul Newal 'has been defined in various ways and different authors have different conceptions in mind depending on their philosophical background' (**Newal, 2009: 173**). Only a few people can state with absolute certainty that their positionality to research is objective and they enter the research without any personal bias. I cannot say this either as my research is focused on Czechoslovak, student, international and transnational history while all of these identifiers apply to me as well, having been born to a mixed Czechoslovak family, and having experienced being an international student benefiting from transnational structures. However, as Stage demonstrated to me, acknowledging one's positionality is the first step to objectivity. It also fulfils what Richard J. Evans stressed as important for a theorist and journalist E. H. Carr; 'study the historian before you study the work' (**Evans, 2002: 15**). Additionally, as a member of a non-disabled community, I also must make my research and presentation of it as inclusive as possible. Kirstie Stage inspired me in this deeply, and in my opinion, larger academia should take on her example as well.

Another beneficial aspect of the symposium was the cross-generational networking and fruitful feedback resulting from these encounters. As someone who researches contemporary history, I had an opportunity to meet people who took part in the events I am researching. For instance, at the symposium, I met Professor Roger Seifert, who was one of the speakers as well. Apart from enjoying his eye-opening paper on British trade unions and colonialism (**Seifert, 2023**)[v], I received feedback from him as well. He reminded me through sharing his experience from 1968 that the context of the Vietnam War is essential to the period I focus on. This is a valuable reminder since as someone who is still learning the craft of historians, I often immerse myself in my research topic without paying necessary attention to the whole historical context. Thus, at the symposium, I could reflect on my performance and I gained feedback and skills which, I believe, will be of use in my remaining education. Furthermore, the conversation with Prof Seifert inspired me to think about utilising oral history methodology in my future research, as there might be people, who lived through these events and who are willing to share their memories.

The symposium was also beneficial in highlighting the networking of different sectors connected to history. Therefore, from the variety of excellent papers included at the event, the final contribution which inspired me greatly was the collaborative 'Railway Work, Life & Death' project presented by Dr Mike Esbester (University of Portsmouth), Alex Gordon (President of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers), and Cheryl Hunnisett (Volunteer for 'Railway Work, Life & Death' project) (**Esbester et al., 2023**).[vi] This paper educated me on the importance of cross-sector cooperation between academics, museums, archivists, and volunteers. As someone who still has not decided which direction to take after completing my postgraduate studies – whether to stay in academia or to get involved in the museum and archiving sector – this project demonstrated to me that it is possible to be involved across these different sectors and that it is beneficial for historical research to do so since such an approach offers valuable and diverse perspectives alongside engaging wider civil society. Additionally, the project also emphasised that volunteers are invaluable in historical research, and their contributions should be acknowledged more. Aspiring scholars might take this example to produce similar projects encouraging community and cross-sector collaboration. I will certainly seek to do so.

Conclusion

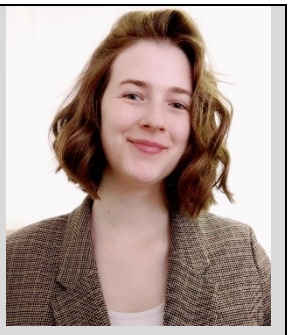
In this critical reflection, I introduced my research in the MRC to illustrate the wide range of research directions one can take when looking into the MRC collections. Furthermore, I also stressed that the MRC was crucial in proving my argument on transnational structures and solidarity between Czechoslovak and British students. Nonetheless, I mostly aimed to critically reflect on my personal experience of attending the *MRC at 50 Symposium* in September 2023. The theme that became the most apparent to me was accessibility. This is because not only was the symposium held in hybrid form, but the financial costs of accommodation were generously funded by the MRC. Additionally, the hybrid form enabled organisers to record the speakers thus making the papers available retrospectively and in a transcribed format as well. I highlighted that open approaches to presentations, such as that from Kirstie Stage, should be introduced into mainstream academia, as they make it more inclusive and objective. Furthermore, I also drew inspiration from collaborative projects like the 'Railway Work, Life & Death' project. Additionally, creating such events as the symposium where early-career researchers can meet with well-established academics is another benefit, since valuable feedback can be shared in both directions. I identified the inspiration and motivation stemming from this event as the two most valuable consequences of this symposium. Where else would I get an opportunity to gain insight into how conferences are organised? For me

this was a priceless chance to broaden my horizons outside of national borders. The *MRC at 50 Symposium* was an amazing learning experience, which alongside practical skills for presenting also gave me motivation to continue my studies. I am indeed incredibly grateful that this symposium became my first-ever academic event.

Acknowledgements

I thank Mike Day for permitting me to access the NUS archive in the MRC: MRC, MSS.280/29/1, 'Czechoslovak Student Fund', 1968–1972; MRC, MSS.280/29/2, 'Czechoslovak Students in UK', 1969; MRC, MSS.280/29/3, 'Czechoslovak Students in UK/Czechoslovak Student Fund', 1968–1970; MRC, MSS.280/18/6, 'The Student', 1965 – June 1968; MRC, MSS.280/19/1, 'The Student', 1956–1964. Furthermore, my thanks are also extended to the Society for the Study of Labour History, whose BA Bursary generously funded my research trips. Additionally, I would like to thank the Modern Records Centre for covering the costs of accommodation during the symposium and the University of Edinburgh for reimbursing travel expenses. Finally, this way I thank Dr Daniel Laqua for his supervision of my research at Northumbria University, giving me the first impulse to disseminate my research, and for helping me to prepare for the conference.

Klára Řiháková is a second-year, part-time MSc student of History at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh. She obtained her BA degree in English Literature and History at Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne in 2022, having written a bachelor's dissertation highlighting the intertwined nature of student activism, political developments, mobility, scholarship schemes, and activists. Her main research interest lies in the transnational approach to the history of activism and social movements transgressing the Cold War boundaries.



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[i] MRC, MSS.280/29/1, 'Czechoslovak Student Fund', 1968–1972; MRC, MSS.280/29/2, 'Czechoslovak Students in UK', 1969; MRC, MSS.280/29/3, 'Czechoslovak Students in UK/Czechoslovak Student Fund', 1968–1970; MRC, MSS.280/18/6, 'The Student', 1965 – June 1968; MRC, MSS.280/19/1, 'The Student', 1956–1964.

[ii] If further interested in this research, see *Carnival*, vol. XXIII (2024) (**Řiháková, 2024**).

[iii] MRC, MSS.280/29/1, "Czechoslovak Student Fund," Czechoslovak Students Who Choose Freedom in Britain, 24 January 1969; Third Annual Report, 1970–71.

[iv] See the video recording on the symposium's webpage at 32 min.

[v] See the video recording on the symposium's webpage at 5 sec.

[vi] See the video recording on the symposium's webpage at 15 min.

Using the Modern Records Centre as an Undergraduate

Nia Belcher

Department of History, University of Warwick, UK
Correspondence: nia.belcher@warwick.ac.uk
Twitter/X: @BelcherNia

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Editorial review: This article has been subject to an editorial review process.

Abstract

The Modern Records Centre holds material from the Chile Solidarity Campaign and that which relates to the experience of Chilean refugees in the aftermath of the 1973 coup d'état which overthrew Salvador Allende. In this critical reflection, I will discuss my experience of using the Modern Records Centre as an undergraduate participating in the EUTOPIA Legal History Connected Learning Community (CoLeCo). This reflection aims to share my experience of using a digitised archival collection to research the experience of refugees who fled to the UK and to gauge the differing levels of support for this group. This reflection should enable a greater understanding of the benefits that digitised archival collections have for undergraduate students.

Keywords: Chile; Modern Records Centre; undergraduate research; digitised archives

Attending 'The MRC at 50' celebratory symposium in September 2023 was, for me, the culmination of work undertaken as part of the EUTOPIA Legal History Connected Learning Community (CoLeCo). CoLeCos aim to increase collaboration with partner universities across Europe. In the academic year 2022-23, the Legal History CoLeCo brought together students from Vrije Universiteit Brussel, CY Paris University, the University of Ljubljana, the University of Warwick, and Nova Lisboa University. Each year, a theme related to legal history is chosen and students from these universities undertake research projects connected to that theme. In 2022-23, the Legal History CoLeCo theme was 'Labour Migration'. Students presented the progress of their research either in-person or online at a peak event, involving a work in progress workshop, hosted by the University of Ljubljana in March. Then, in June, students created blog posts for an online exhibition to present the outcomes of their research. It was as part of this project that, during my first year studying history at the University of Warwick, I researched the experience of Chilean refugees following the 1973 *coup d'état*. This subject was relevant to the 'Latin America: Themes and Problems' module I was studying at the time and was particularly apposite since 11 September 2023 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the coup. On 11 September 1973 members of the Chilean armed forces overthrew the democratically elected Socialist government of Salvador Allende (1970-1973). The *coup* was followed by the establishment of a military junta (1973-1974) and subsequently a dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet (1974-1990). State repression by the Pinochet regime precipitated a significant humanitarian crisis and an estimated 200,000 Chileans fled the country (**Wright & Oñate Zúñiga, 2007: 31**). Around the anniversary in September 2023, newspapers contained articles referring to 'the other 9/11', demonstrating the continued awareness of the impact of the coup and its implications (**Guardian, 2023**).

The Modern Records Centre has a digital collection of material under the title 'Chile Solidarity' about the UK-based movement of solidarity with Chilean victims of the Pinochet regime. With the encouragement of Dr Rosie Doyle, who runs the EUTOPIA Connected Learning Community Legal History project at Warwick, those of us who participated looked at documents held by the MRC. The availability and accessibility of documents in the 'Chile Solidarity' collection online influenced my decision to focus on the experience of Chilean refugees to the UK. Through reading the digitised letters and memorandums from groups such as trade unions, it was possible to track significant fluctuations in UK governmental support towards these refugees. It was clear from the information in these documents how attitudes changed significantly between the initial Conservative government (1970-1974), then a Labour administration

(1974-1979), and finally the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. The Conservative government in 1973 had opposed Allende's government, and the British ambassador to Chile was even given instructions not to shelter Chileans seeking help at the embassy (**Perry, 2021**). However, with the new Labour government in 1974, there was the implementation of a foreign policy that included an arms embargo against Chile and a refugee programme for those fleeing the dictatorship (**Livingstone, 2018: 2**). These policies were overturned following Thatcher's election in 1979, with the former Prime Minister later referring to Pinochet as a 'friend of Britain' (**Livingstone, 2018: 2**). The digitised collection, which included material related to the World University Service, also provided an insight into the role of academia in the reception of Chilean refugees. Previously, this was not an aspect I had researched as I had paid greater attention to the debates within the UK government and protest groups such as the Chilean Solidarity Campaign. As a result of further research, it was revelatory to learn about the role of academics and universities in the UK in allowing Chilean students to leave Chile. The Chilean regime interfered in academia through the appointing of academic authorities and intervening in research and grants (**Perry, 2021**). These issues in the academic sphere led to the establishment of the WUS (UK) Chile Scholarship programme in 1974 which helped 900 students over a ten-year period (**World University Service, 1986: 4**). The collection also demonstrated that concerns with the plight of Chileans were not limited to UK cities, but also existed within smaller towns. One of the most enlightening documents was an 'Appeal for help on behalf of Chilean refugees in Leamington' which was about fundraising for Chilean refugee families who were living in the town (**Leamington Chilean Refugee Committee, 1978**). Although the significance of this document to understanding the response in the UK was perhaps not fully appreciated by the EUTOPIA students in other countries, it was a revelation for me. I was intrigued that the UK response to the *coup* was not limited to large cities as so often happens with global events. It demonstrated the importance of the MRC as a source of information on local, as well as national and international history.

The research I undertook as part of this project was certainly not comprehensive, but it was an opportunity to be guided by archival material, which was not something I had experienced previously as an undergraduate student. The main focus of the presentation that I gave to the other EUTOPIA students, and the blog post that I wrote for the Legal History CoLeCo online exhibition, was on the use of these sources (**Belcher, 2023**). A significant benefit for students using the MRC online 'Chile Solidarity' collection is that it is a relatively small, digitised collection. A first-year undergraduate student might feel intimidated by archival collections due to a lack of experience but the digital access to material

that the Modern Records Centre provides, takes away that concern. An advantage of the digital collection for my research was that, even outside of term time, it was possible to access the material I required to work on my research. The manageable size of the digitised collection was another positive and that meant I was not overwhelmed by the number of sources on the topic. There were documents from a number of sources on the topic of 'Chile Solidarity', from trade unions to campaigning groups, but not so many that that an undergraduate would become burdened by trying to sort through them under the time constraints imposed by the requirements of their degree. I was consequently able to share the work I completed with other students in the EUTOPIA community, and hopefully inspire some of them to consider the benefits of looking at collections such as those of the Modern Records Centre (**Ibid**). The experience I gained through participating in the EUTOPIA project and using archival material has had a positive impact on the rest of my studies as I am now more confident when using archives. Consulting the MRC digital collection has been an invaluable learning experience and I hope to continue to use these skills as I move through my degree.

Attending the 'The MRC at 50' celebratory symposium was a challenging but important opportunity. It allowed me to share the perspective of an undergraduate student with little experience of using the Modern Records Centre, and to highlight the benefits of digitised collections. The chance to reflect on my experience of using the centre has been valuable for considering how I can use my newly acquired skills moving forward in my degree. The opportunity also demonstrated the breadth of the records that the centre holds, from the National Cycle Archive to the Amnesty International Archive and, of course, the World University Service Collection.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to note that this paper was developed as part of the EUtopia Legal History CoLeCo for which they received funds from EUtopia Warwick to present their work at the *Work in Progress Seminar* in Ljubljana in 2023.

Nia Belcher is an undergraduate student in the Department of History at the University of Warwick. She has participated in the EUTOPIA Legal History Connected Learning Community (CoLeCo) in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

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The Modern Records Centre's Chile Collections as a Space for Memory and Recognition

Verónica Díaz-Cerda[1], Alison Ribeiro de Menezes[2]

Department of Hispanic Studies, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, University of Warwick, UK
Correspondence: [1]Veronica.Diaz-Cerda@warwick.ac.uk, [2]Alison.Menezes@warwick.ac.uk
Twitter/X: [1]@veronica_odisea
ORCID: [1]0009-0006-1309-9830

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Abstract

Exiles occupy a marginal status within the field of Transitional Justice. Chileans who fled the Pinochet dictatorship have had limited access to public and official platforms to share their experiences. The MRC´s efforts in gathering, digitizing and disseminating materials relating to Chilean exile demonstrate how non-state and international archiv es can provide alternative and meaningful pathways for acknowledgment and symbolic redress.

Keywords: exile; Chile; archives; memory; transitional justice

Introduction

Through this short survey of the Warwick Modern Records Centre's (MRC) Chile collections, its related public engagement work, and our own related research, we suggest that archives may be viewed as spaces for memory and recognition. Our research on Chilean exiles in the United Kingdom has highlighted the importance of the MRC collections beyond the immediate UK context. Exiles often have a marginalized status within formal Transitional Justice processes. Within Chile, official archives have been largely used as evidence to develop formal Transitional Justice mechanisms, mostly recognizing and documenting human rights abuses committed by the Pinochet Regime, such as forced disappearances, executions, and torture. Exiles may be acknowledged as witnesses of human rights crimes, but there is a certain hierarchical logic to victim recognition that has resulted in less attention being paid to exile. The Pinochet regime was keen to suggest that refugees lived a 'golden exile' (**Sznadjer and Roniger, 2019**; **Wright and Oñate Zúñiga, 2007**), minimizing the upheavals of forced expulsion from Chile and thus victims' experiences of trauma and suffering. For some, exile may also involve a sense of 'survivor guilt'. Finally, exiles are frequently marginalized by the state-centred approach prevailing in Transitional Justice, whereby redress is believed best articulated in the territory where abuses were committed.[i] The work of the MRC in collecting, digitizing and disseminating materials relating to Chilean exile, as well as its involvement in exhibitions related to resistance in Chile, demonstrates the extent to which non-state and international archives may create spaces for memory which articulate individual historical experiences and offer routes towards their due recognition.

The MRC's Chile Collections

The MRC holds several collections of relevance to Chileans' lived experience of repression and exile. It houses the archive of the UK office of World University Service (WUS), thanks to the late Dr Alan Phillips.[ii] WUS was centrally involved in providing support and educational opportunities to Chilean scholars and students tortured, imprisoned, and expelled from their country in the years after the 1973 coup d'état. Within special collections such as the Margaret Stanton Papers and the wider collections relating to trade unions is a significant amount of material relating to the various UK-based solidarity campaigns in support of persecuted Chileans. With funding from the Institute for Advanced Study at Warwick, the MRC digitized portions of this material and made it available globally, including to important Chilean institutions such as the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, which lacks strong documentary evidence of the international support for Chilean resistance to the coup (**see Figure 1**).[iii]

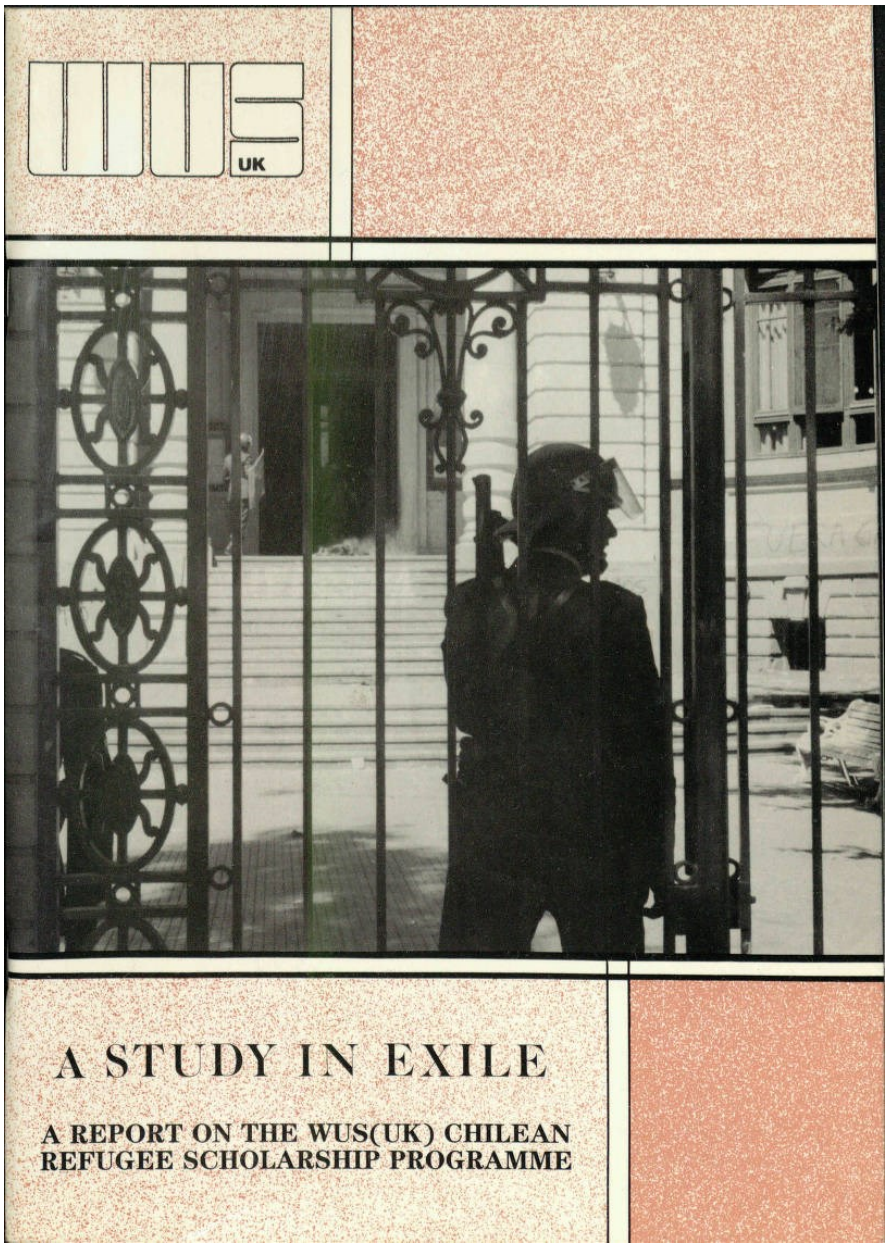
This collaborative exchange helps to combat the vulnerability of memory archives in post-dictatorship contexts and underscores the importance of collections with an international focus. What, for us in the UK, might seem familiar sources are valuable to our partners overseas, and the MRC holdings help to fill gaps in Chilean institutional memory in the wake of repression.

Figure 1: Chile Solidarity Campaign briefing pack, MRC (601/R/24/70).

The MRC's WUS papers consist largely of reports and official papers, and as such they are a vital supplementary resource to the Home Office records regarding Chilean refugees held in the National Archives at Kew Gardens. They also complement the Refugee Council Archive at the University of East London. The MRC's WUS holdings evidence the changing role of refugee support work within the political and social context of late-twentieth-century Britain. They include measures to support refugees' settlement in new communities, educational grants and course completions statistics, and a comprehensive 1986 report, titled *A Study in Exile* (**see Figure 2**), which reviewed the WUS Chile programme.[iv] These documents provide vital context for our current oral history project on first- and second-generation Chilean experiences of exile in the UK.[v] Nevertheless, there are limitations to archives such as that of WUS when it comes understanding the experience of repression and exile. Personal files relating to the individuals supported by WUS were, with a few exceptions, not offered for deposit. Some former refugees, who often may still not be aware of the precise mechanisms by which their lives were saved through the provision of visas to the UK, would like to fill gaps in

their individual stories, but are unable to locate the relevant documents.[vi] We are thus delighted that our oral history of Chilean exile in the UK will in due course become part of the MRC collection. This not only secures information on the lived experience of forced displacement and settlement for future researchers and the public, but more importantly validates both the individual experiences of those who contributed interviews and a wider focus on informal and diverse routes for redress.

Figure 2: World University Service report, A Study in Exile (MRC 717/CH/6/1/9)



From Individual and Collective Experiences to Exile Agency

Contrary to the denunciatory objectives of most official archives of dictatorship-era abuses amassed in Chile, which have focused on gathering empirical evidence of human rights violations, our research explores the long-term emotional impact of forced exile on victims' everyday lives. Transitional Justice often has recourse to the power of storytelling as a form of reparation (**Hackett and Rolston, 2009**; **Clark, 2022**). Hence, Slaughter (**1997**) has argued that the 'voice' should be a central focus in international human rights law. However, storytelling has largely been restricted to specific questions that have consigned to the margins more complex stories, notably a lack of questioning regarding survivors' feelings in Transitional Justice processes. As Clark notes, the emotional legacies of human rights abuses are thus often neglected in Transitional Justice, and we need storytelling spaces which facilitate the articulation of more complex and even 'messy' stories (**Clark, 2022**). We have thus strived to view our project interviews as conversations and emotional encounters rather than moments for fact-finding. By attending to exiles' own reflexivity about the passage of time, given that our interviews were in many cases conducted fifty years after the Chilean coup and resulting territorial displacement, we can begin to move from the micro data of individual stories to the construction of a meso-level narrative about memory, emotion and informal redress through archive-building. This opens up the possibility of a form of Transitional Justice from below since, in the absence of formal state processes, it permits individual pathways towards recognition and offers interviewees the agency to forge their own mechanisms of repair. The construction of an oral archive, and its conservation in the MRC, can begin to provide an alternative form of recognition which is not shaped by top-down Transitional Justice structures, but emerges from the voices of those who tell their stories within it.

Public Engagement as Recognition

The MRC has supported two public exhibitions on Chilean exile. The first, *Crafting Resistance: The Art of Chilean Political Prisoners*, organized by former refugee and WUS scholar Gloria Miqueles with Prof. Jasmine Gideon of Birkbeck, University of London, ran in October and November 2017 and focused on craftwork and objects created by prisoners while in detention in Chile (**see Figures 3-5**). The exhibition's central concern was to challenge the image of prisoners as 'passive victims' and demonstrate how individuals retained a 'degree of agency despite the horrific circumstances' in which they found themselves.[vii] This craftwork, loaned by the Chilean community in the UK, provides important evidence of strategies for supporting mental health and wellbeing during traumatic

experiences. The show created strong emotional resonances among those who viewed it and raised awareness of the story of Chilean refugees with a UK public. Visitors were impressed by the power of the exhibits as evidence of resistance to suffering, and their ability to convey how, in the worst of circumstances, people access their ability to be creative. For MRC archivist Liz Wood, who facilitated the exhibition, 'the help that I was able to provide during the 'Crafting Resistance' project is something that I am most proud of in my working life'. Offering delayed recognition of the hardships Chileans suffered, she expressed the hope that the MRC display 'showed a continuation of some of the solidarity that they received from WUS and other quarters when they were able to leave Chile'.

Figure 3: Santiago Bell, Cristo Inconcluso (wood)
(Reproduced with permission from Jimmy Bell; photograph Tennisons' Photography).

Figure 4: Crafting Resistance: Collection of Badges belonging to Hernando Fernández-Canque, with jeans worn by Sheila Cassidy in the foreground.
(Reproduced with permission from Hernando Fernández-Canque; photograph Tennison's Photography).

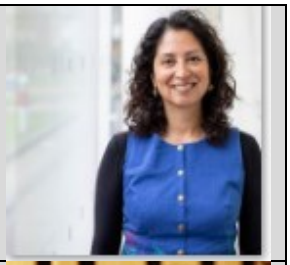
Figure 5: Crafting Resistance: Blouses by Cristina Zamora (foreground) and Gloria Miqueles (background).
(Reproduced with permission from Cristina Zamora and Gloria Miqueles; photograph Tennison's Photography).

The second MRC exhibition, *Chile 50 Years On: Solidarity and Resistance*, was held in 2023 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the military coup in Chile and displayed important documents and posters from the MRC's collections. This show, curated by MRC archivist Naomi Shewan, was organized in conjunction with a seminar on Chilean memories of resistance which brought together first-generation Chilean exiles in the UK, second-generation children of former refugees and social actors responsible for supporting both the Chilean refugee effort in the 1970s and 80s and refugees in the UK today. This combined initiative was aimed at ensuring that, despite the passage of time, the Chilean exile story continues to be heard by new audiences and, in addition, that it is framed intergenerationally. Through its exhibition work, the MRC acts as a nodal point for communities who have a conflicted relationship with their own nation state.

Conclusion

Archives are much more than repositories of documents, and the MRC's Chile collections illustrate the extent to which they can be living spaces of memory and recognition. Transitional Justice mechanisms often focus only on actions within the national territory where human rights abuses occurred. Non-state repositories can supplement this by offering meaningful routes towards recognition and symbolic redress. They can support activities that deepen and extend the social and intergenerational reach of understanding and reveal the agency of victims as actors in their own work towards reparation.

Verónica Díaz-Cerda is a Research Fellow at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick. Her main areas of research interest are transitional justice, memory, exile, transnational advocacy networks and childhood studies.



Alison Ribeiro de Menezes is Professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on questions of cultural memory in the Luso-Hispanic world.

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Figure 3: Santiago Bell, Cristo Inconcluso (wood) (Reproduced with permission from Jimmy Bell; photograph Tennisons' Photography).

Figure 4: Crafting Resistance: Collection of Badges belonging to Hernando Fernández-Canque, with jeans worn by Sheila Cassidy in the foreground. (Reproduced with permission from Hernando Fernández-Canque; photograph Tennison's Photography).

Figure 5: Crafting Resistance: Blouses by Cristina Zamora (foreground) and Gloria Miqueles (background). (Reproduced with permission from Cristina Zamora and Gloria Miqueles; photograph Tennison's Photography).

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Endnotes

[i] The recent Colombian Truth Commission is an exception in this regard, devoting a portion of its work to refugees and exiles from violence; see https://comisiondelaverdad.co [Accessed: 15 February 2024].

[ii] Phillips was a Physics alumnus of the university who went on to be General Secretary of WUS(UK) during the period when it was most involved in assisting Chilean refugees. More information on WUS(UK) is available at its centenary website: https://wus.org.uk [accessed 9 February 2024].

[iii] See https://wdc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/chile [Accessed: 9 February 2024].

[iv] Online at: https://wdc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/chile/id/1045/rec/3 [Accessed: 23 February 2024].

[v] The project, 'Voices of Humanitarianism: British Responses to Refugees from Chile', was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It involved 58 interviews. The data gathering phase was conducted in 2022 in both the UK and Chile.

[vi] Confidential files that have been deposited are currently open only to the named individuals to whom they relate and can be consulted by special request.

[vii] Exhibition notes, *Crafting Resistance: The Art of Chilean Political Prisoners*, Modern Records Centre, 30 October-17 November 2017.

British Labour Movement Responses to Strikes and Riots in the English-speaking West Indies 1934-1939: Solidarity with strings

Roger Seifert

Emeritus Professor of Industrial Relations, University of Wolverhampton, UK
Correspondence: r.v.seifert@outlook.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-4091-0784

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Abstract

This project traces the reaction of the British labour movement (pressure groups; political parties; and trade unions) to the strikes, riots, and 'disturbances' in St Lucia, St Vincent, British Honduras, Trinidad, Barbados, British Guiana, St Kitts, and Jamaica. There were deep-seated differences as between Leninists views on imperialism; and social democrats who viewed colonialism as acceptable if reformed with the right to set up trade unions, to bargain collectively, to strike, and to have state-backed labour standards. Plantation economics dominated these lands, and there are case studies of the strikes and riots on the sugar plantations of St Kitts, Trinidad, British Guiana, St Vincent, and Jamaica; the banana plantations in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados; and in the oil fields of Trinidad, the docks in St Lucia, and the forests of British Honduras.

The earlier strikes in 1934/5 and those in smaller countries (St Kitts, St Vincent, St Lucia) were not widely reported in the UK. But those in 1937/38, especially in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad, were openly discussed. Some MPs raised issues in Parliament; there were motions of support (few and of limited scope) at TUC and Labour party meetings; some individuals visited the West Indies under their own steam; labour movement activists wrote plenty of articles and pamphlets; and invited representatives from the West Indies to attend meetings.

Keywords: British labour movement; colonialism; imperialism; labour history; strikes and riots; capitalism

> *to ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace* (**Tacitus, c.98: 23**)

Introduction[i]

This study traces the reaction in words and deeds of the British labour movement (pressure groups such as Fabians; political parties, Labour and Communist, also the Socialist League and Independent Labour Party; trade unions such as the TGWU including the TUC) to the strikes, riots, and 'disturbances' in eight case study countries in the English-speaking West Indies – St Lucia, St Vincent, British Honduras, Trinidad, Barbados, British Guiana, St Kitts, and Jamaica – from 1934-1939. Its relevance today lies with the British labour movement's serious difficulties in resolving policy issues around the legacy of slavery, racism, empire, colonialism, and currently neo-colonialism and the Commonwealth – see the reaction to Windrush, Black Lives Matter, immigration, and the toppling of slaver statues.

It has the dual aim, therefore, of linking all the disputes in these years with each other, and then to examine how the British labour movement acted and reacted. This should throw light on the policy direction of British Labour Governments and Labour in Opposition on a range of areas: trade union roles at home and in former colonies; worker rights at work and beyond; and the splits inside the labour movement, between Leninists and social democrats.

Three related issues also arise from this study: a general proposition on the nature of employment, namely that whoever 'pays the piper calls the tune' – if I pay your wages then I assume the right to determine what you do, when you do it, and how you do it. This leads to the second point, the 'Oliver Twist' moment – here a challenge for 'more' is met, not just with a refusal, but with the full force of the political and judicial system as such a challenge raises questions of who decides, and who has the right to decide, the distribution of income as between wages, rents, and profits. In this mix emerges certain types of leaders – in a society with poor communications and a semi-literate population, those able to present a coherent joined up story with a powerful voice rise to leadership positions. Many of the strike leaders went on to lead their countries to independence and to become Presidents and Prime Ministers.

The central arguments start with the causes, conduct, and consequences of the strikes and riots in the eight countries examined from 1934-1939. These include the link of industrial disputes over wages with political calls for the vote and independence (**Cole, 1924**). Along the way intermediate civil society demands included better health, housing, education, and access to justice. The response at home was partly driven by mass

unemployment and impending war in Britain wherein the role of the state became part of the fierce political battleground. Within labour the Leninists fixed on anti-imperialism with revolution at home and in the colonies. In contrast the social democrats, while appalled by the treatment of colonial workers, were not anti-imperialist and were more concerned to fight the communists inside the unions than with fuller worker rights.

Capitalism and Slavery

Eric Williams (**1944**) and CLR James (**1938**) were West Indian writers and activists in the 1930s with links to the communists (CPGB). They shared a Marxist-Leninist approach to the exploitation of workers in the plantation economies and beyond in the docks and offices of the towns. They emphasised that it was slavery and post-slave economies that created racism, and not racism that brought forth oppression; and they accepted the dictum that people make their own history even if not under circumstances of their own choosing (**Marx 1852, 1859**).

In contrast most of the mainstream labour movement, especially the Labour Party, TUC, and Fabians, took the view that empire and the colonies were acceptable, and used their non-conformist moralising, linked with social Darwinism and civilisation stage theory (**Gupta, 2002**) to push for trade union and social reforms along the lines of British traditions: right to form trade unions, to bargain collectively, to strike, and to have state-backed labour standards.

The class context of both Britain and in the eight case study countries is explored as one basis for a developing class consciousness and thus possible routes to solidarity. Information flows from the strikes and riots to Britain through newspapers, eye-witness accounts, and official reports were sporadic and until the 1937 strikes in Trinidad slow to emerge. Once it became clear what was happening and why workers were on strike, and why the strikes turned into riots after the violent reaction of the authorities, then the labour movement started to act. It sent out delegations and supported Commissions; asked questions in Parliament; held meetings; passed motions at conferences; set up committees and sub-committees; and invited West Indian activists to attend in person.

Cricket, Christianity, and Calypso

The cultural context included forms of Christianity that had evolved and fragmented between groups and nations, with, in some incarnations, anti-colonial and ancestral practices becoming widespread and forming uneasy links with the wider independence movements. Equally, sport was always an area of contention with British white settlers indulging in a variety of activities, widely reported in the local press, including shooting, horse

racing, and the ubiquitous cricket. Underpinning these deeply ambiguous cultural mores lay music, song and dance. Associated with religion, paganism, revolt, and colonial hegemony, music came to represent both distinctive regional and class formats but also controlled and distorted colonial norms. Calypso music was one such manifestation of identity that become more than its own words and sounds.

Plantation Economics

Adam Smith (**1776**) argued that once colonialists had plenty of land in which to cultivate sugar, bananas, tobacco and other crops then their problem was recruiting labour. They tried to import poor Europeans to work for wages, but that failed and so they turned to slaves. Once slavery was abolished, they needed 'wage slaves' captured in a vicious circle of poverty, deprivation, oppression, and immobility. This allowed planters such as Leonard Lyle of Tate & Lyle, Conservative MP, to present to the British public a racist-based argument that to keep cheap subsidised sugar the country needed profitable businesses that required a low wage, poorly educated, and low-cost colonial working class. By the 1930s the world slump in trade had driven down the price of most commodities and crops, causing greater hardship than usual among fragile working-class lifestyles when wages and hours were cutback.

King Sugar was the dominant commodity for most of these countries, and the planters destroyed huge swathes of forest and indigenous flora and fauna to develop more efficient plantations with associated refining factories and means of transport to the ports. With the end of slavery there developed a post-slavery captive labour system whereby the workforce had little choice but to work in the fields for the planters, who used their political influence to force workers back to work from self-employed enterprises.

A similar story is told for banana production. In this case the USA-owned United Fruit Company dominated the industry and the political systems, giving rise to the term ‘banana republic’. Important developments in refrigeration, speed of ships, and dock facilities, made the one type of banana favoured by United Fruit the dominant strain and the single best seller. This again depended on a captive labour force whose rights were curtailed by a political and judicial system dominated by the so-called ‘plantocracy’.

There were also smaller but more strategically important groups of workers in oil, timber, transport, and on the docks. In Trinidad, for example, there was oil and asphalt, and these products attracted a different kind of corporation and management of production. Elsewhere, timber production in Honduras illustrated the great importance of road

and rail links. This meant that transport workers, including those in the docks, had more bargaining power than agricultural workers.

Context

The 1929 economic crash meant commodity prices fell and, in the scramble to maintain business profits, planters cut wages, laid off workers, and argued for a reduction in the meagre social wage. The rise of fascism in Europe spilled over to the West Indies, especially with the invasion by Mussolini of Abyssinia. The Spanish civil war also contributed to ideals of the popular/united front and international solidarity. The Russian revolution and the spread of communist ideas, alongside experiences of fighting in the Great War and trade union syndicalism in the USA, penetrated some of the movements in some of the countries under study.

These countries were characterised by low wages, high unemployment, under-employment, poor colonial administrators, and in most cases terrible employers and their overseers. These problems were linked with poor housing and health, lack of education, and little access to justice. The British labour movement spent much time debating infant mortality rates, poor sanitation, lack of teachers and schools, shack-like accommodation, and poor nutrition. These matters fitted well with their moral position on fairness. Furthermore, there were no clear paths to address and redress any of these issues. There was no collective bargaining, no union recognition, and no political voice for dissent. As such, grievances were left unattended, and when strikes did flare up, there was no dispute resolution mechanism at hand. These were matters understood by British trade unionists and formed part of their programme for colonial reform. Other sources of reforming zeal came from the West Indian diaspora in London focussing on the League of Coloured People (**Killingray, 2018**) and its influential journal, The Keys (**Duffield, 1978**).

Hart (**1999, 2002**) has written extensively about the resultant disputes. Wage and benefit cuts, unemployment, and a lack of bargaining created the conditions for strikes; and when these were brutally suppressed, there followed general strikes and riots. The British government and the Colonial Office had been warned that trouble was brewing in the region (**Basdeo, 1985**). Several Labour MPs raised specific issues in Parliament, the TUC and individual unions had started passing more strident motions at their conferences, and more pamphlets were being circulated by the Communists.

As wages were cut and jobs lost, the local workers began a series of spontaneous riots and strikes, which were mainly suppressed by violent force, sometimes with British marines supporting local militia. The workers started to form trade unions linked in some cases with nascent political

parties demanding greater voice in the country's affairs. The British state backed local initiatives to ban books and newspapers, imprison the leaders, and shoot and injure those taking part.

By 1934/5, when the first strikes and riots took place, there was very little information available in Britain about any of these 'disturbances'. By 1937, the CPGB launched its Colonial Information Bulletin. This alongside the Daily Herrald and Daily Worker provided more information about workers' struggles in the West Indies. The dual concepts of solidarity and fraternity developed through, for example, the International African Service Bureau (IASB) which included in the leadership CLR James, Jomo Kenyatta, and Amy Garvey. They held meetings and rallies which attracted the notice and support of sections of the labour movement and helped spread both information and ideas.

The mainstream Labour position supported the Colonial Office's efforts (after the 1937 strike wave) to strengthen labour legislation and set up Labour Departments in the colonies with competent officials. Both the Labour Party and TUC had some internationalist credentials as part of their 'brotherhood of man' ideals, and in practice had close ties with the unions in Trinidad and Guiana. The Labour Party set up a sub-committee on the West Indies which busied itself with defining the 'native interest' in the colonies. This hint of racial superiority was in part due to the Fabian flirtation with eugenics. There were pamphlets written and motions passed with increasing frequency as the decade went by, and figures such as Creech Jones, Leonard Woolf, and Arthur Pugh played leading roles. Labour remained wedded to trade and tariff policies, however, that favoured the large corporations. Then, as now, it took the view that workers' welfare was dependent on the success of private enterprise. It was also alarmed by the spread of communist support, and was resolute in its anti-communist policies, especially among the trade unions.

'For the overwhelming majority of the people, the Empire is a vast slave colony' (**CPGB CIB, 1937: 1**). This was the Leninist line backed by the communists and their allies with strong anti-fascist and anti-imperialist policies, espoused by their leaders such as Harry Pollitt and Raj Palme Dutt. The links with the Comitern in Moscow provided support for both British and West Indian communist and communist-front organisations, and this made them both more effective and more dangerous in the eyes of the British government.

Sources

The research is based on local accounts in the eight countries from newspapers (e.g., Trinidad Guardian, Jamaican Gleaner), official reports, eyewitness statements, and materials housed in local archives. These are supplemented by national newspapers (Times, New York Times, Manchester Guardian, Daily Herald, Daily Worker); Hansard reports; pamphlets; minutes of committees and sub-committees especially from the Labour and Communist Parties, and TUC. Union journals, pamphlets, and reports in other outlets such as Labour and the Communist Information Bulletin were accessed in the British Library, MRC at Warwick, and People's History Museum in Manchester.

Cases

Many of the strikes were triggered by low wages, but without any channel for grievances to be heard, the strikes became widespread and ended with riots. These were met with lethal force by a combination of local police, estate managers, and British marines. Below are very brief summaries of some of the events discussed.

The strikes and riots in British Honduras started with a march of the unemployed demanding better relief on 15th February 1934. The Governor made some minor concessions, but the movement spread throughout the colony under the leadership of Tony Soberanis. In this case, an inspirational leader, able to hold and enthuse rallies of workers and their families made a real difference. In all cases, the British sought to arrest and/or kill the leaders, which nearly always backfired. The dispute ended with a partial victory for the workforce, and substantive labour reforms. In St Kitts, sugar plantation disturbances started on 20th January 1935 with a strike of cane cutters, and became more serious when they set fire to the cane fields. It spread to workers in the sugar factories, and the grievances over low pay and long hours again had no legitimate outlet. With workers' voices unheard and unheeded, strikes and subsequent sabotage were the only routes open. The riot at the Buckley Estate saw the shooting of unarmed demonstrators by local militia, and the British press started to report the causes of the strikes and the violent response of the planters and the local police. Questions were asked in Parliament, and this was the beginning of a rapid rise in awareness of the conditions of sugar workers and their families.

In British Guiana in September and October 1935 and again in March 1939 there were riots on various sugar estates – strikes started on the Demerara coast in the autumn of 1935 and spread rapidly, which culminated in the burning of cane fields. This marked the start of radicalisation among the workforce and the wider community, and by March 1939 a much more

serious strike at the Leonora plantation spread rapidly, and the violent police response left several dead and wounded. This time, reforms were forthcoming, and the Guiana trade union movement grew and linked up with nascent labour and socialist parties.

In St Lucia on 4th November 1935 about 100 colliers loading coal went on strike over low wages. They were also concerned about the coal being used to help Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia. This unusual twist underlined the role of racial and religious affiliations spreading through the region. The excessive use of force by marines further fuelled the discontent, leading to stronger calls for union recognition and political reform. St Vincent's population was very poor even by regional standards and with high levels of unemployment and depressed wages, people were near starvation. At that time the Governor sought to increase government revenues by hiking tariffs on imported foods and clothes. This meant higher prices, and that led to riots on 21st October 1935. Immediately, the marines killed and wounded protestors, leading to the spread of riots throughout the islands.

Trinidad witnessed a range of disputes from 1934-1937. The strikes and riots in 1937/8 shook the British government and rocked the boat of fictionalised stability and working-class quietism. On 19th June 1937, after the company had failed to answer his demands for wage increases, 'Buzz' Butler called a strike of oil workers at the Forest Reserve premises of Trinidad Leaseholds Limited. A warrant was issued for Butler's detention but an attempt to arrest him while he was addressing a public meeting was frustrated by the crowd. A police corporal was beaten, soaked with paraffin and burned to death. Within two days a strike had engulfed the oilfields. Strikes in other industries and occupations soon followed and before long the entire economy had been paralysed by a general strike. According to the Port of Spain Gazette, it was a situation 'which assumed a proportion previously unknown in the history of labour agitation' in the colony (23rd June 1937). A state of emergency was declared, and two British warships were rushed to the island. Marines landed, and in addition to the constabulary the local military forces were mobilised. In the latter half of June 1937 there was an intensification of struggle as 'tension increased in Trinidad's oil fields tonight as sit-down strikes spread to embrace workers in almost every oil area. Heavily armed police and deputized volunteers patrolled Fyzabad ... Scores were injured.' (**New York Times, 1937a: 4**). Numerous arrests and imprisonments followed, but Butler was not arrested until September. He was subsequently tried and sentenced to two years imprisonment for sedition.

The detailed account of the strike wave provided by the press and a series of activities in Britain by sympathetic labour movement figures and organisations created pressure for an official commission of inquiry, which was damning in its views of both employers and the Trinidad government (**Forster Commission, 1938**). Reforms, focussing on labour issues and housing, were recommended and trade unions subsequently recognised and involved in wage bargaining.

In Barbados, fourteen people were killed and forty-seven wounded in protests in 1937. At the end of July:

> *News was received ... that in 'minor disorders' in country districts two people were killed, three critically injured, and 12 other men and four women were injured. There were only minor casualties among the police … HM cruiser Apollo arrived here this morning and landed marines. Tension has been eased by a proclamation by the Governor ... in which he appealed for the restoration of order and offered his services in investigating and attempting to remove any grievances the rioters might have*. (**The Times, 1937: 13**).

There was a further flare up when the marines arrived to quell 'a mob of rioting laborers [who] smashed shop windows in the main street ... and pushed automobiles into the sea' (**New York Times, 1937b: 6**).

Jamaica was by far the most populous country in the region and the one best known in Britain. For several years there had been a series of outbreaks, as in 1935, when there were strikes, riots, and lower-level disturbances. The underlying economic and social conditions saw the worsening of the already poor living standards of most workers and their families. Throughout, industrial disputes were linked with politics, and it was this merging of demands for better pay with those for more democratic rights that so alarmed the colonial administration. Early in the year:

> *the riot act was read, and the police fired two rounds of ammunition to drive away a crowd from an election meeting at Trelawny today. The mob bombarded the building in which the meeting was being held, hurling rocks and stones* (**New York Times, 1935: 34**).

The first week in May 1938 saw the most important outburst of discontent among the working-class in Jamaica. It laid the foundations, already emergent, of the Jamaican labour movement and ultimately for independence. It was a stark reminder that British colonial rule was enforced by armed police and marines on behalf of the millionaire plantation owners. On May Day:

> *…a large body of armed police raced from Kingston at noon today to reinforce a small party that was holding 1,000 armed strikers at bay on a sugar cane estate owned by Tate and Lyle near here. The strikers, demanding $1 a day and the removal of an official to whom they object, surrounded homes and offices and threatened the management of the estate. The trouble began yesterday, but armed police kept order last night.* (**New York Times, 1938: 5**).

These are just glimpses of the fuller story...

In Conclusion

The main formal outcome from British labour movement pressure on the government for reform in the West Indies came in the shape of the Moyne Commission of Inquiry launched in 1938 and officially reported in 1945 (**Moyne, 1945**). The labour movement was represented by Walter Citrine (the powerful General Secretary of the TUC). He accepted the Fabian position that what was needed were labour reforms along the lines of the UK model -- trade unions legally free to organise, to strike, and to collectively bargain (**Basdeo, 1983**). This was linked to labour standards upheld by government appointed labour commissioners. These were major issues and were intimately linked with wages, employment rights, housing, health, education, and civil rights. He broke ranks with other members of the commission and spoke independently to a range of trade union gatherings in different countries. Although his position was progressive and radical by local standards, he was determined that trade unionism in the West Indies would discourage rank-and-file activism to keep the communist at bay. This limited the impact of the labour reform movement and meant that British labour solidarity came with strings attached.

Professor Roger Seifert read PPE at Oxford University, then a MBA at London Business School, and then a PhD at LSE. He worked as a management consultant before becoming professor of industrial relations at Keele (1992-2008) and then Wolverhampton (2008-2018). He specialises in public sector, strikes, trade unions, role of the state, and labour history. He has acted as an adviser/consultant to unions (RMT, UNITE, UNISON, FBU, PCS); large corporations (Unilever, Bank of China), and government departments (giving evidence to select committees). He is frequently interviewed on radio and TV, especially over strikes.

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Endnotes

[i] This paper is based on a talk to the 50th anniversary MRC conference at Warwick University, and both are based on a forthcoming book of the same title.

Not on the French radar? Situating Algeria in Labour's map of solidarity at the Modern Records Centre (1954-1965)

Mélanie Torrent

Université de Picardie Jules Verne, CORPUS UR 4295, France, and Institute of Commonwealth Studies, United Kingdom
Correspondence: melanie.torrent@u-picardie.fr
Twitter/X: @TorrentMel
Bluesky: @meltorrent
ORCID: 0000-0003-2271-0452

Editorial review: This article has been subject to an editorial review process.

Abstract

The war of Algerian independence (1954-1962) generated intense debates – and sometimes action – in the British left at a time when Britain itself was facing the end of its empire. Many individuals and several movements and parties were thus involved in the war, giving support to independence movements, protesting against torture, or simply debating the consequences of the Algerian war for Europe, the western world and the future of socialism. Focusing on the papers of Labour MPs, the records of the TUC and of several socialist and Trotskyist groups and individuals, this article shows that the Modern Records Centre holds key collections to understand the ways in which the Algerian war influenced conceptions of socialism in Britain. This is particularly true when they are read against the grain of French surveillance files and situated within a broader, transnational archive. The article therefore also reflects on archives as a site and as a source for understanding processes of domination and means of liberation, for both the colonies and the metropoles, and for the writing of transnational histories of solidarity.

Keywords: decolonisation; Algeria; transnational activism; Labour; Trotskyism; TUC.

Introduction

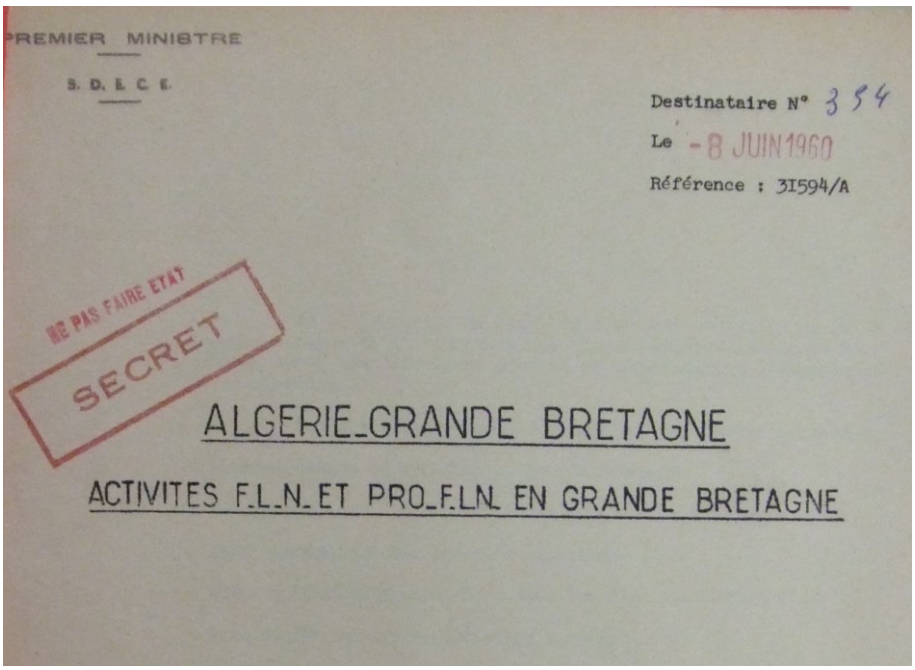
The 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Modern Records Centre (MRC) occurred by happy coincidence as I was completing a long-overdue manuscript on the British left and the war of Algerian independence and reflecting on the wealth and limits of the sources I had worked with in the last ten years or so. In Britain, the archives of individuals, movements and parties that were involved in the war – giving support to independence movements, protesting against torture, or simply debating the consequences of the Algerian war for Europe, the western world and the future of socialism – are held across the country: in Aberystwyth, Birmingham, Bradford, Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Hull, London, Manchester, Oxford and, of course, Coventry. Thinking back to the material held at the MRC, I realised that its collections related to Algeria have one point in common. None of the individuals, parties or organisations that they belong to feature in a document that was particularly useful in the early stages of my research: a 29-page volume produced in 1960 by the French intelligence services about the aid given during the previous year to the main Algerian nationalist movement, the National Front for Liberation (*Front de libération nationale*, FLN), by British people and by people and organisations located in Britain. This is, admittedly, true of others: Eirene White, for instance, who gave support to the FLN's rival, the Algerian National Movement (*Mouvement national algérien*, MNA), and whose papers are held at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, does not feature. In the research process, however, what was also striking was the volume of the MRC collections related to Algeria, as well as the variety of opinions and institutional cultures they reflect.

In this short piece, I focus on three main groups in turn: the two Coventry Labour MPs, Richard Crossman (Coventry East, 1945-1974) and Maurice Edelman (Coventry West, 1945-1950 and Coventry North, 1950-1974 – later Coventry North West, 1974-1975); the Trades Union Congress; and the Revolutionary Socialist League and two of its members, Jimmy Deane (who was its first general secretary) and Ken Tarbuck (who joined in 1957 shortly after its creation, before moving to the International Group in 1961). I show that the MRC collections have been valuable for me precisely because they hold the papers of those above, or under, the French official radar, before offering some brief remarks on their importance for the teaching of transnational, connected history.

On the Aadar: A 29-page 'guide' to FLN and pro-FLN activities in Britain

The French intelligence report of 1959-1960 was an extremely valuable initial guide because it identified who had an interest in, or connections with, the dominant Algerian nationalist movement in the war of independence.

Figure 1: Report of the French intelligence service (SDECE, Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage) on Algeria-Britain / FLN and Pro-FLN activities in Britain, France, Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères, 29QO/44, 8 June 1960. (MRC Collections)


PREMIER MINISTRE

S. D. E. C. E.

Destinataire N° 354

Le - 8 JUIN 1960

Référence : 3I594/A

NE PAS FAIRE ETAT

SECRET

ALGERIE-GRANDE BRETAGNE

ACTIVITES F.L.N. ET PRO-F.L.N. EN GRANDE BRETAGNE

Within the Labour movement, some Labour Party members – particularly men – feature prominently, notably Tony Benn, Michael Foot and Fenner Brockway. The French authorities knew of their support for Mohamed Messaoud Kellou, the FLN man in London since 1957. Among Labour MPs, Jennie Lee is also mentioned. Barbara Castle, who was more involved with Algeria, is not; but she does appear in other reports and was very much, therefore, on the French radar. Also prominent are individuals on the British government's own radar for alleged sympathies with Communism, including the historian Thomas Hodgkin and the journalist Basil Davidson (with surveillance files at the British National Archives complementing the information contained in French files). Clergymen committed to liberation also feature, such as Cannon John Collins of the emerging Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Reverend Michael Scott, who actively opposed the French nuclear tests in the Sahara (**Skinner, 2023**), was then based in Accra where he was in touch with the FLN, and whose biography in the French report's appendix is by far the longest. There are also several Conservative or Liberal figures, partly because of the timing – 1959 was World Refugee

Year, which Conservative members had helped launch – and partly because of the assessment that the French authorities had come to make, in 1959, of British activities in support of Algerian independence movements: what material aid there was to Algeria was in donations of various kinds to the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco, via organisations like Oxfam or the UK Committee for Algerian Refugees, a predominantly but not exclusively Labour organisation set up a few months earlier. Reporting in the mainstream press was also of concern, particularly from Middle East and North Africa specialist Nevill Barbour in *The Observer*.

All these individuals and groups are central to several of the key themes I have been investigating: Labour's divisions over the means and shape of Algerian independence, and the impact of transnational connections on conceptions of solidarity, with Algerians but also with French opponents of the war. They have also led me to the argument that even if aid from British Labour was limited, it did have an impact on the international campaign of Algerian nationalist movements and, as importantly, it influenced how men and women in the Labour movement assessed the objectives, means and consequences of colonial liberation.

But all these points could only really be made once the MRC collections were brought in. Not surprisingly, surveillance files do not provide the full story; and so we return to why the MRC matters.

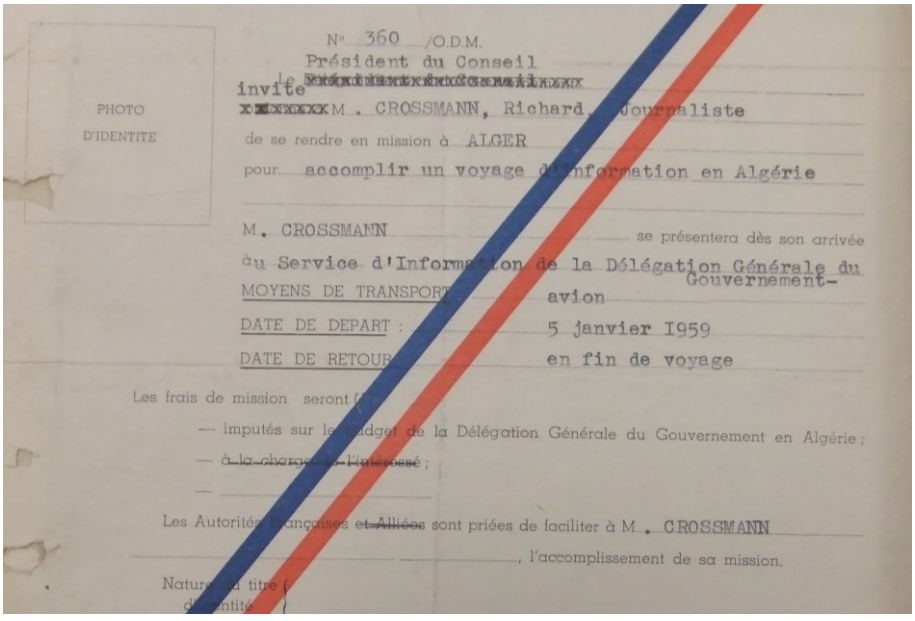
Above Board? The papers of Coventry's Labour MPs

First, the papers of Maurice Edelman and Richard Crossman provide tangible insights into the tensions which the war in Algeria generated within the Labour Party, the importance given to Franco-British friendship, and the uneasiness – sometimes the sense of powerlessness – in the face of the use of force by French authorities and by Algerian nationalist forces. Edelman was known by the French authorities to be a dependable ally committed to high-level Franco-British cooperation and, most importantly, an admirer of de Gaulle, who had returned to power in 1958. What dominates his papers are numerous drafts for various publications on de Gaulle (including after 1962), as well as information leaflets produced by successive French governments in support of their actions in the empire (including in the Sahara).

As for Crossman, he had come to approach the Algerian question through the lens of the Jewish and Israeli questions, and feared the radicalism and violence of some in the FLN as much as the die-hardism of some of the French settlers. As importantly, he had travelled to Algeria in January 1959, on the invitation of the French government and escorted by the French army. His 'ordre de mission', to be found in his papers at the MRC,

gives a sense of the strict, monitored conditions in which he undertook this trip. His impressions of what he called the 'Algerian Tragedy' were published in the *New Statesman* on his return and were, therefore, readily available. He argued for a middle ground, showing concern for all Algerian residents including the European settlers and promoting negotiations between all parties. But the direct experience of Algeria seemed to affect him more profoundly than his articles, or his broadcasts (**MSS.154/4/BR/8**)[i] on the BBC Hebrew Service, suggest. What shows best the effect of his trip is a letter he wrote to Tony Benn, a staunch supporter of Algerian independence *and* the FLN (**MSS.154/3/POL/259**). Following a heated exchange at a meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, Crossman wrote to Benn that he had 'made [him] feel, almost for the first time, older, wearier, less high-principled and more humane' than him, shedding light on other accounts of the meeting (the terser minutes of the NEC, and Benn's published diaries, 1994). Crossman volunteered to ask the French authorities if they would allow Benn to see Algeria for himself (an offer unlikely to have been accepted by either party, although Benn's papers, currently being catalogued by the British Library, may yield further details). This does not mean that Crossman approved of French policy – the British Consul in Algiers, Roderick Sarell, followed up on his conversations with Crossman to look more carefully at 'the real mechanisms' of regroupment camps and 'psychological warfare' in Algeria (**MSS.154/3/POL/183**). But the use of diplomatic and official channels, combined with the contents of private correspondence, rather confirms that Crossman was no direct threat to French policy.

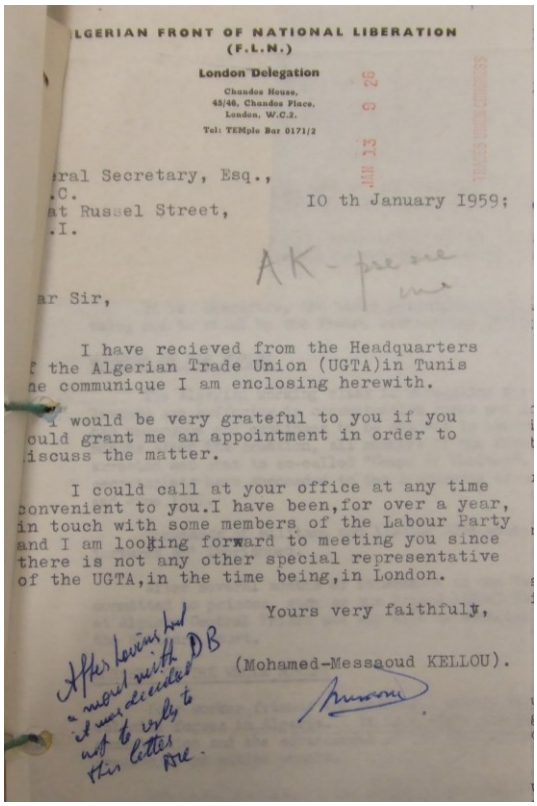
Figure 2: Laissez-passer delivered to Richard Crossman for travel to Algiers, December 1958, Modern Records Centre, Richard Crossman Papers, MSS.154/3/POL/182. (MRC Collections)


N° 360 /O.D.M.
Président du Conseil
invite
M. CROSSMANN, Richard, Journaliste
PHOTO D'IDENTITE
de se rendre en mission à ALGER
pour accomplir un voyage d'information en Algérie
M. CROSSMANN se présentera dès son arrivée
au Service d'Information de la Délégation Générale du Gouvernement-
MOYENS DE TRANSPORT : avion
DATE DE DEPART : 5 janvier 1959
DATE DE RETOUR : en fin de voyage
Les frais de mission seront
— imputés sur le budget de la Délégation Générale du Gouvernement en Algérie ;
— à la charge de l'intéressé ;
Les Autorités françaises et Alliées sont priées de faciliter à M. CROSSMANN
l'accomplissement de sa mission.
Nature et titre

The Trades Union Congress: Underestimating transnational connections?

More surprising, perhaps, is the absence of the TUC from the French report. By 1960, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) had approved the membership of the General Union of Algerian Workers (*Union Générale des travailleurs algériens*, UGTA), the Algerian trade union sympathetic to the FLN. The French authorities do mention Algerian trade union interest in TUC activities at times, but very much in passing. And yet, the record-keeping of the TUC gives us several original letters and telegrams from UGTA and FLN members, which are not generally found, or easily accessible. They are not as voluminous as correspondence coming from British territories, but there was clearly a steady attempt by Algerian unions to form contacts with the TUC, either directly, or through common contacts like Benn. The TUC archives hold several short notes from Mohamed Messaoud Kellou, in his capacity as the main representative of the FLN and of the Algerian Red Crescent in London, with two distinct letterheads.

Figure 3: Mohamed Messaoud Kellou to General Secretary of the TUC, 10 January 1959, TUC Papers, 292/964.1. (MRC Collections)



LGERIAN FRONT OF NATIONAL LIBERATION
(F.L.N.)
London Delegation
Chandos House,
45/46, Chandos Place,
London, W.C.2.
Tel: TEMple Bar 0171/2

JAN 13 9 26

ral Secretary, Esq.,
.C.
t Russel Street,
.I.

10 th January 1959;

AK - pre ere

ar Sir,

I have recieved from the Headquarters
f the Algerian Trade Union (UGTA)in Tunis
ne communique I am enclosing herewith.

I would be very grateful to you if you
ould grant me an appointment in order to
iscuss the matter.

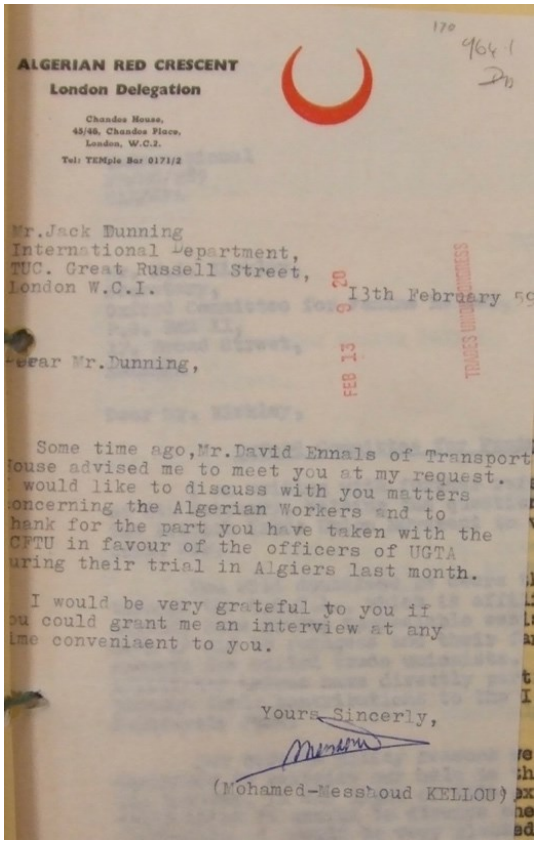
I could call at your office at any time
onvenient to you.I have been,for over a year,
in touch with some members of the Labour Party
and I am looking forward to meeting you since
there is not any other special representative
of the UGTA,in the time being,in London.

Yours very faithfully,

(Mohamed-Messaoud KELLOU).

After leaving had a word with DB it was decided not to reply to this letter now.

Figure 4: Mohamed Messaoud Kellou to General Secretary of the TUC, 13 February 1959, TUC Papers, 292/964.2. (MRC Collections)



ALGERIAN RED CRESCENT
London Delegation

Chandos House,
45/48, Chandos Place,
London, W.C.2.
Tel: TEMple Bar 0171/2

Mr.Jack Dunning
International Department,
TUC. Great Russell Street,
London W.C.I.

13th February 5

Dear Mr.Dunning,

Some time ago,Mr.David Ennals of Transport House advised me to meet you at my request. I would like to discuss with you matters concerning the Algerian Workers and to thank for the part you have taken with the CFTU in favour of the officers of UGTA during their trial in Algiers last month.

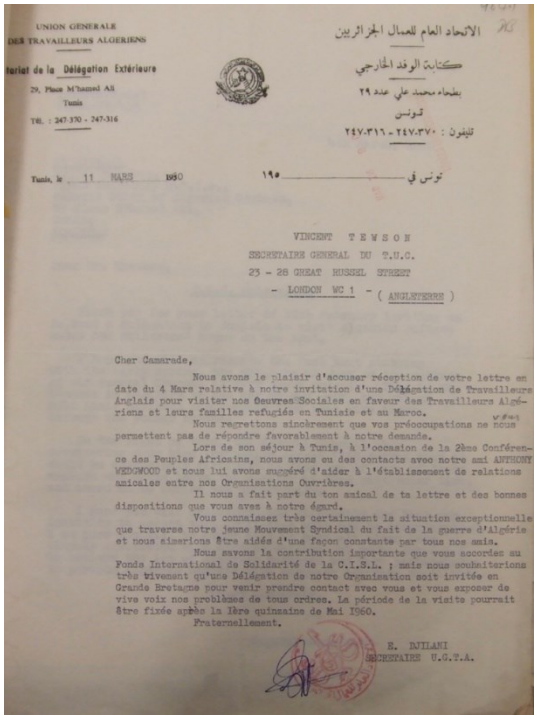
I would be very grateful to you if you could grant me an interview at any time conveniaent to you.

Yours Sincerly,

(Mohamed-Messaoud KELLOU)

But if the TUC signed several declarations and letters, it often did so when prompted by the ICFTU, by individual British unions (such as the National Union of Seamen or the Electrical Trades Union) and by the UGTA itself, whose letters did not always meet with a positive reply (or with one at all). And while the TUC considered training for Algerian workers, it was on a very small scale, and with fluency in English (or lack of, rather) mentioned recurrently as a problem. The translation services of the TUC were put to use in the correspondence but they also highlighted, therefore, the need for intermediaries on several occasions.

Figure 5: E. Djilani to Sir Vincent Tewson, 11 March 1960, TUC Papers, 292/964.1/2. (MRC Collections)



UNION GENERALE
DES TRAVAILLEURS ALGERIENS

الاتحاد العام للعمال الجزائريين

tariat de la Délégation Extérieure
29, Place M'hamed Ali
Tunis
TEL. : 247-370 - 247-316

كتابة الوفد الخارجي
بفضاء محمد علي عدد ٢٩
تونس
تليفون : ٢٤٧-٣٧٠ - ٢٤٧-٣١٦

Tunis, le 11 MARS 1960

تونس في ١٩٥٠

VINCENT TEWSON
SECRETAIRE GENERAL DU T.U.C.
25 - 28 GREAT RUSSEL STREET
- LONDON WC 1 - (ANGLETERRE)

Cher Camarade,

Nous avons le plaisir d'accuser réception de votre lettre en date du 4 Mars relative à notre invitation d'une Délégation de Travailleurs Anglais pour visiter nos Oeuvres Sociales en faveur des Travailleurs Algériens et leurs familles refugiés en Tunisie et au Maroc.

Nous regrettons sincèrement que vos préoccupations ne nous permettent pas de répondre favorablement à notre demande.

Lors de son séjour à Tunis, à l'occasion de la 2ème Conférence des Peuples Africains, nous avons eu des contacts avec notre ami ANTHONY WEDGWOOD et nous lui avons suggéré d'aider à l'établissement de relations amicales entre nos Organisations Ouvrières.

Il nous a fait part du ton amical de ta lettre et des bonnes dispositions que vous avez à notre égard.

Vous connaissez très certainement la situation exceptionnelle que traverse notre jeune Mouvement Syndical du fait de la guerre d'Algérie et nous aimerions être aidés d'une façon constante par tous nos amis.

Nous savons la contribution importante que vous accordez au Fonds International de Solidarité de la C.I.S.L. ; mais nous souhaiterions très vivement qu'une Délégation de notre Organisation soit invitée en Grande Bretagne pour venir prendre contact avec vous et vous exposer de vive voix nos problèmes de tous ordres. La période de la visite pourrait être fixée après la 1ère quinzaine de Mai 1960.

Fraternellement.

E. DJILANI
SECRETAIRE U.G.T.A.

The TUC's files at the MRC suggest three reasons why the organisation was not a source of particular French concern: when it came to Algeria, the TUC consulted with French unions; it also consulted with the Foreign Office, which helped host other North African trade unionists as part of a larger cultural diplomatic drive to woo newly independent nations; and, consequently, it remained very cautious on contacts with Algerian representatives – in early 1959 no action was taken, as the handwritten note on Kellou's letter indicates, regarding his request for a meeting. In the files, Algeria is found in the series on North Africa but also on France and French unions, with the latter prism dominating many of the discussions. As noted in Roger Seifert's contribution to this Special Issue, the TUC's caution towards nationalist movements in Britain's own territories and the persistent paternalism, even belief in racialism, of many was observably strong. The fact that the TUC continued to receive documentation from the FLN's rival body, the MNA, for quite some time, much after such documentation ceased to appear in the archives of bodies like the Movement for Colonial Freedom or even the Fabian Commonwealth Bureau, suggests that the TUC's cautious attitude towards the FLN and armed struggle was a known fact (simultaneously, such caution also explains why the MNA found it difficult to capitalise on support in Britain after 1957, when action against the war, against torture and for independence became more organised and more vocal).

British Trotskyist Groups: Deceptively marginal?

One of the reasons why I visited the MRC early on in my research was to find out more about the activities of British Trotskyists and particularly the RSL and Jimmy Deane, who were identified in various accounts, memoirs and interviews, as having given direct assistance to the FLN's manufacturing of weapons in a transnational network involving Dutch and Moroccan locations. I returned to their files on several occasions, as I soon realised a broader understanding of both the place of Algeria in the left and of the fabric of Trotskyism in Britain was first needed. They are also more difficult to navigate than the TUC files, with clearly less of a machine and fewer funds devoted to record-keeping by the producers. Notes kept by members suggest that quite a few decisions were made at RSL meetings without necessarily being recorded, or over the phone. Several members were strapped for cash, and it is not always possible to determine to what extent the activities of a branch at specific times slowed (right) down, or were simply not recorded. Some correspondence, particularly on splits between and within the various Trotskyist groups, is particularly detailed, but some letters are also very elusive, with initials being preferred to full names, and with people going by several names. It is a known fact that Michel Raptis, the Greek leader of the Fourth International was known as 'Pablo' and 'Gabe', used in many of the letters; but not everyone is as well-known, and some of the initials remain elusive.

As mentioned above, one of the (many) reasons that drew me to the MRC archives is that witness accounts and interviews mention that British workers – and Jimmy Deane in particular – provided direct aid to the FLN, via the Fourth International, by participating in arms production in Morocco, with warehouses also located in Holland, where the Fourth International under Pablo had established itself. But concrete evidence of this is hard to come by in the files. Pablo and his Dutch colleague, Sal Santen, were tried in 1960 for their involvement, as well as for printing counterfeit money and, more generally, for aiding the FLN – the need for secrecy and the police raid had an impact on what sources remain and what they yield. There is, however, one original letter that mentions it as explicitly as I have found on paper: 'Maybe as I remember you [sic] our stay in Morocco', wrote Dutchman Wim de Bruin to Deane in mid-October 1962, 'you will know who is writing to you now' (**MSS.325/22/A62 (98)**). Their stay in Morocco is – unfortunately – not dated, but it is clearly before the end of the war; and it is also perhaps precisely because independence was celebrated in Algeria in July that their Moroccan venture could be mentioned.

Elsewhere, information is far more difficult to use, partly because Deane was also travelling to India for the Fourth International – and simply

because the documents are quite elliptic. One example among many is Pablo's letter to RSL's leader, Ted Grant, dated 15 April 1960: 'Dennis told you probably about the necessity to visit Jimmy and ask him some extra help for our Friends. All the I.S. [International Secretariat of the Fourth International] thinks that Jimmy must do it, and I hope that you shall intervene in the same sense, asking him to go there immediately. Some money can also come from this for your section.' (**MSS.325/22/A60 (16)**). By all accounts, such aid as took place in Morocco remained marginal, and the overall British contribution even more so. But one important point to make is that incoming and outgoing correspondence reveals much more than a list of actions – of marches, petitions, collections, for both French anti-war workers and Algerian nationalists. It shows that Algeria as a war of colonial liberation and as a potential revolution was the object of sustained discussions within the Labour movement, and within the European Labour movement, including in and on the fringes of the Labour Party. In this respect, the archives of Dutchman Sal Santen held at the International Institute of Social History complement in important ways the collections of the MRC. One instance of this is that they hold correspondence related to the making of *Free Algeria*, the journal of the British Friends of the Algerian Revolution (whose first issue included an endorsement by Michael Foot), to editorial discussions and to production work.

Figure 6: First issue of Free Algeria, Papers of the Socialist Party (formerly the Revolutionary Socialist League, Militant Tendency and Militant Labour), 601/R/12/9/1. (MRC Collections)

FREE ALGERIA

Published monthly by British friends of the Algerian revolution

Vol 1 No 1 APRIL 15, 1960 THREEPENCE

COLONS WIN A BATTLE, BUT WILL SURELY LOSE THE WAR

THE settlers' revolt is quashed. But the voice of the settler rings loud and clear through every Ministry in Paris. And on March 4 it spoke through the lips of General de Gaulle himself.

Shocked by the revelation that someone, after all, has been plotting against de Gaulle, the General has stripped his critics naked only to deck himself out in their stolen garments. After slapping down Massu and snubbing Soustelle he has adopted the substance of their programme: Algeria is French! War to the death against the F.L.N and the Provisional Government! No negotiation without surrender!

This is the outcome of de Gaulle's mission to Algeria. His task, as he clearly conceived it, was not to bring peace to Algeria, but to restore peace within the French army in Algeria—not at all the same thing. The Provisional Government and the Liberation forces have lost no time in giving the General his answer. The path to negotiation is clear and the door to settlement still open.

But the negotiating must proceed as between equals. Algerian independence must be recognised as the pre-requisite for a cease-fire. And elections must be conducted freely by the only authority acceptable to the overwhelming majority of Algerians: the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic.

These are the Enemies of Freedom

Thus has the situation been set back to what it was on the morrow of the coup of May 13, 1958. For a time, following de Gaulle's declaration of September 16, 1959, it seemed as if that section of French big business which wanted to impose a compromise might triumph.

Uninterested in the petty claims of the colons, shocked by their shortsightedness and embarrassed by their primitivism, the would-be modernizers of the ramshackle French economy saw an agreement in Algeria as a pre-condition for their plans. De Gaulle, the "strong man", seemed the only one who could impose such a settlement on their hill-billy cousins in Algiers.

But the settlers rose. The buckwoodsmen rebelled. The General acted. The colons lost their leaders, but they gained their point.

It was a triumph above all for the settlers' lobby: the men who since mid-September had redoubled their efforts to strike down the rising hopes for peace and freedom, the enemies of the revolution who never relaxed.

Committee To Aid Prisoners In France

By Our Paris Correspondent

MORE than 25,000 Algerians are being held without trial in prisons and camps in French territory. Many have actually been acquitted by French military courts but, like the martyred trade union leader, Aissat Idir, are detained on the authority of the administration.

Conditions in these detention camps defy description. Deaths from starvation and ill-treatment are common; men and women frequently disappear, news of their whereabouts being witheld from lawyers and relatives for months or even years.

A committee to provide legal and financial aid to these detainees has now been formed in France. It includes Georges Arnaud, Colette Audry, Robert Burnat, Simone de Beauvoir, Béatrice Dock, Doyen Chatelet, Jean Daniel, Gisèle Julliard d'Asually, Clara Malraux, André Mandouze, Louis-Martin Chauffier, Claude Roy, Françoise Sagan, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Savary, Roger Stephane, Pasteur Voge and Pierre Mauzze.

General secretary of the Committee is Georges Arnaud. Jean-Jacques Rousset is assistant secretary, and Jacques Bellanger treasurer. The address of the Committee, to which donations should be sent, is Comité d'aide aux detenus Algeriens, 18 Rue St Ferdinand, Paris 17me, France.

Those interested in forming, serving on or assisting a British committee with similar aims are asked to write to *Free Algeria* or to John Baird, M.P. House of Commons, London, S.W.1.

Labour MP John Baird, in regular contact with members of the RSL and given the public editorship of *Free Algeria*, does feature in the French report of 1959-1960 as a member of the UK Committee for Algerian

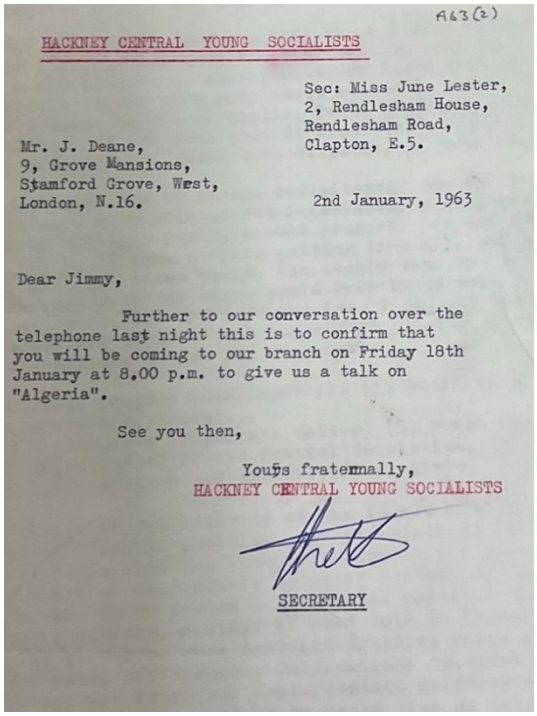
Refugees. Neither the French nor the British authorities saw him as a political heavyweight and therefore did not consider him much of a threat. But Fourth International correspondence sheds important light on what Baird and others wrote in relation to Algeria, how Labour figures were canvassed – successfully, like Foot, or not, like Basil Davidson. And the divisions of records – at the MRC at Warwick, at the IISH in Amsterdam and at La Contemporaine library at Nanterre University, on the outskirts of Paris – reflect the transnationalism of the network, its connections and missing links, its plurality of languages, and its resilience as well as (or despite) its lack of substantial funds.

Missing Links, Alternative Connections and the Experience of the Archive

So, did the French authorities fail to identify British threats to their interests in 1959-1960? Probably not, and it would be difficult to suggest that any of the groups or individuals whose collections are mentioned above posed any substantial threat to French interests (which Benn, or other Labour figures such as Aneurin Bevan, or to a lesser extent Barbara Castle, did), or even to Franco-British cooperation. But it is the collections held at the MRC that make such conclusions possible, shedding key light on the extent and value of the information the French authorities had, and on the tensions within the broad labour movement in Britain. Simultaneously, the MRC collections also show that the events in Algeria generated a new interest in the possibilities offered by the overthrow of colonial rule and stimulated hopes of socialism. In a three-year period, between independence in July 1962 and the overthrow of Algeria's first president Ahmed Ben Bella in a coup in June 1965, what occurred in Algeria and more broadly in North Africa continued to matter. Deane's own files contain clippings of Algerian newspapers. British socialists investigated workers' *auto-gestion*, as part of a more general European interest in 'Third-Worldism' (**Kalter, 2016**), interrogated the meanings of independence, liberation and neo-colonial practices, and some emphasised the need to dismantle racial discrimination in Britain itself. The Algerian 'revolution' – including disputes about its definition and practice – retained an important place in the political training of some, as shown by the activities of the Young Socialists group of Hackney Central. So did evolutions in North Africa more broadly: Moroccan politics became a source of concern with the arrests of Moroccan socialists and the border conflict with Algeria during the Sand War of October 1963. Such questions were also raised in the TUC, within peace groups (as shown by the collections at the J.B. Priestley Library at the University of Bradford) and Labour anticolonial activists hoping to form a government and translate principles into policy (as shown by Castle's papers at the Bodleian Library,

for instance). But the files also show a reconfiguration of transnational networks (part actual, part wished for) that the men of the Fourth International took part in.

Figure 7: Hackney Central Young Socialists to Jimmy Deane, 2 January 1963, Papers of Jimmy Deane, Correspondence, MSS.325/22/A63(2). (MRC Collections)



A63(2)

HACKNEY CENTRAL YOUNG SOCIALISTS

Sec: Miss June Lester,
2, Rendlesham House,
Rendlesham Road,
Clapton, E.5.

Mr. J. Deane,
9, Grove Mansions,
Stamford Grove, West,
London, N.16.

2nd January, 1963

Dear Jimmy,

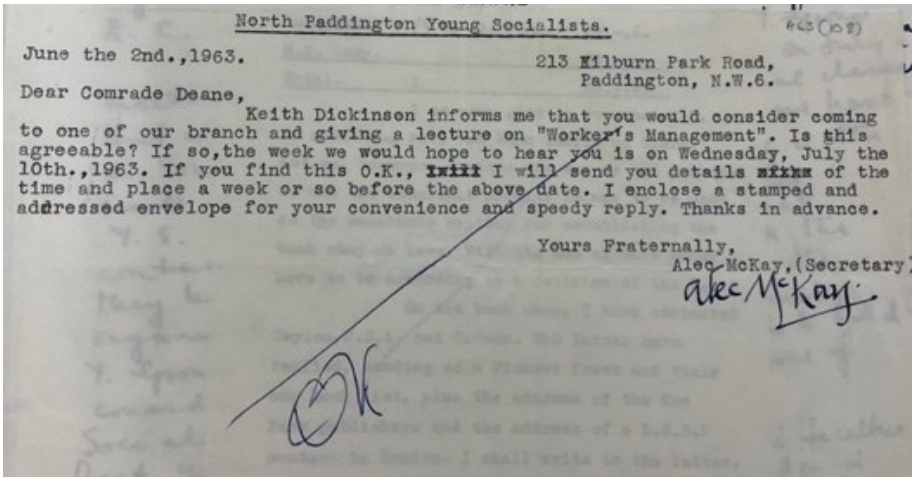
Further to our conversation over the telephone last night this is to confirm that you will be coming to our branch on Friday 18th January at 8.00 p.m. to give us a talk on "Algeria".

See you then,

Yours fraternally,
HACKNEY CENTRAL YOUNG SOCIALISTS

SECRETARY

Figure 8: North Paddington Young Socialists to Jimmy Deane, 2 June 1963, Papers of Jimmy Deane, Correspondence, MSS.325/22/A63(108). (MRC Collections)



North Paddington Young Socialists.

A63(108)

June the 2nd.,1963.

213 Kilburn Park Road,
Paddington, N.W.6.

Dear Comrade Deane,

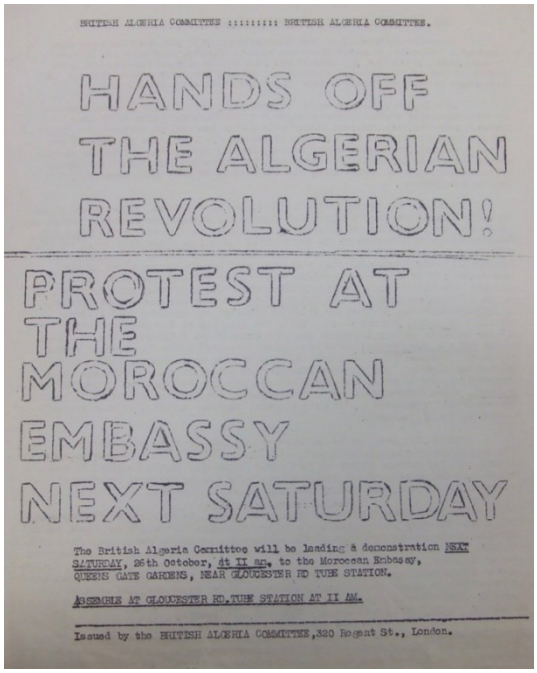
Keith Dickinson informs me that you would consider coming to one of our branch and giving a lecture on "Worker's Management". Is this agreeable? If so,the week we would hope to hear you is on Wednesday, July the 10th.,1963. If you find this O.K., I will send you details of the time and place a week or so before the above date. I enclose a stamped and addressed envelope for your convenience and speedy reply. Thanks in advance.

Yours Fraternally,
Alec McKay,(Secretary)

alec McKay

OK

Figure 9: Leaflet for a protest on 26 October 1963, MRC, Papers of the Socialist Party (formerly the Revolutionary Socialist League, Militant Tendency and Militant Labour), 601/R/25/5. (MRC Collections)



BRITISH ALGERIA COMMITTEE :::::::: BRITISH ALGERIA COMMITTEE.

HANDS OFF THE ALGERIAN REVOLUTION!

PROTEST AT THE MOROCCAN EMBASSY NEXT SATURDAY

The British Algeria Committee will be leading a demonstration NEXT SATURDAY, 26th October, at 11 am. to the Moroccan Embassy, QUEENS GATE GARDENS, NEAR GLOUCESTER RD TUBE STATION.

ASSEMBLE AT GLOUCESTER RD.TUBE STATION AT 11 AM.

Issued by the BRITISH ALGERIA COMMITTEE,320 Regent St., London.

Beyond this, what do the MRC archives on Algeria tell us about the writing and teaching of history and the need to pursue the task of liberation? Whether there are lessons for the contemporary Labour movement to learn – something our panel was asked on the day of the conference – is an arduous question. What stands out for me most, on reflection, is first a guideline. In the 1950s and 1960s, British solidarity with the Algerian people struggling for self-determination could only have true meaning as part of a global assault (intellectual and behavioural, individual and collective) on the structures of empire, which included denouncing exactions done outside the metropolitan territory (in Kenya and Cyprus, notably) and fighting racism and discrimination at home. But it is also a quandary. As Crossman put it in his letter to Benn, mentioned above: 'The principle is nothing. What matters is the application of it' It does not have to read like an injunction for inaction, but it does highlight the complicated task of making policy without compromising ideals and principles. And so we return to the value of the archive, as a site and as a source for understanding processes of domination and means of liberation.

As institutions, records centres hold a vital 'social and political dimension', not only because they facilitate the writing of history, but because they have 'a direct role in the political processes through which the state is built, works or is contested' (**Beerli & El Qadim, 2024: 16**). On the ends of empire and the true meaning of liberation, the slow, partial and sometimes falsely revealing opening of state archives matters not just to historians, who might revise previous interpretations, but to a wide range of people because archives are evidence – for Kenyan veterans in the case

of Britain, or the families of those who 'disappeared' during the war in Algeria (**Branche, 2020; Morin, 2020**). Recent research on the processes by which new archives have come to light warns against facile conclusions. Britain's 'migrated archives', for instance, can also be a way of obscuring what really happened, of painting a positive picture of the state without actually giving away much new information (**Lienebaugh, 2022**). And as Tim Livsey has noted, 'there is the danger of pathologizing and othering postcolonial African archives as uniquely problematic, by judging them according to standards of archiving devised in the western world, to which western countries like Britain have nevertheless not adhered' (**Livsey, 2022: 109**). One important dimension of the 'migrated archives' is that they too show discontinuities, ruptures, absences in the British (and other European) state archives. As Todd Shepard writes, one important question is 'how historical production and archives participate in defining what national sovereignty means post-decolonisation' (**Shepard, 2017**).

One consequence of this has been a renewed interest in the transnational networks and internationalist ambitions of socialism, and in the definition and place of 'European socialism' (**Béliard & Kirk, 2023; Di Donato & Fulla, 2023**). For the Trotskyist groups above in particular, action had a strong transnational dimension, and both the documents and the collections need to be seen in this light. The fact that they can be fragmentary is also a safeguard against generalising and obscuring. Looking at movements of ideas and peoples, Leslie James has shown that large databases can provide impressive interactive visual maps but that these can 'override the non-linear ways that some networks develop, and most importantly, they hide the crucial power dynamics that are always at work in deciding what things move and how they move' (**James, 2016**). Instead, the incentive – and the only avenue, really with part of the collections – is 'to go deeper in the analysis of each fragment, and wider in search of the connections between one fragment and actual, potential, or absent others', something which Kate Skinner also sees as 'particularly pertinent to the study of subversive political activities across national borders' (**Skinner, 2020: 392**); or, to borrow the words of Florence Bernault, to acknowledge that 'the power of incongruous oddities comes precisely from their intrusive, irritating lack of wholesomeness' (**Bernault, 2015: 274**).

Using the MRC collections has certainly made me more mindful of the importance for historians of looking for absences and missing fragments, and to weave them into their writing without downplaying them. This is essential if we take seriously two questions raised in a recent chapter by Raphaëlle Branche, comparing British, Dutch and French ends of empire: 'How do historical narratives of this past resonate with the issues that these countries currently face? What can be done so that these narratives, developed in the former metropoles, do not contribute to a reactivation

of colonial domination, through scholarly or symbolic questions?' (**Branche, 2022**). While I have not been able to use the MRC with students, the experience of the collections at Warwick that relate to Algeria has strengthened my conviction (not an original one, admittedly) that teaching in the archives, with the physical documents, is invaluable. During a seminar session held at the *Archives départementales de la Somme* in Amiens, one of our students was immediately struck by the quality of the paper on which various documents were produced, and reflected in their work on how it influenced their interpretation of the message, how it focused their attention on the production, use, selection and conservation of the source. Witnessing this unprompted realisation really brought home Antoinette Burton's comment that 'the material spaces of archives exert tremendous and largely unspoken influences on their users, producing knowledges and insights which in turn impact the narratives they craft and the histories they write' (**Burton, 2005: 9-10**). The documents pictured above only reflect some of the variety of the fabric of British mobilisation. But they also show the importance of the materiality of the archive and, consequently, of records centres as spaces for teaching, as much as researching. Fragmentary documents are particularly precious because they show what research can be: a stimulating if sometimes frustrating task, and above all, a collaborative experience. This is certainly one of the reasons why the MRC@50 is cause for celebration.

Mélanie Torrent is Professor of British and Commonwealth history at the Université de Picardie Jules Verne (Amiens) and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (London). She became a junior member of the Institut universitaire de France in 2016. Her research focuses on the connected ends of the British and French empires, and their impact on state and society in the (former) metropoles. Her most recent book, resulting from her research with the IUF, is *Algerian Independence and the British Left: Resistance and Solidarities in a Decolonizing World* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

List of Images

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The Transport and General Workers' Union in Leamington Spa

Benjamin Richardson

Politics & International Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Correspondence: b.j.richardson@warwick.ac.uk

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Abstract

This short article details the little known links between the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and the Warwickshire town of Leamington Spa, from its formation in 1921 to the post-war activities of its future General Secretary, Jack Jones.

Keywords: Transport and General Workers' Union; Jack Jones; Leamington Spa; labour movement

The Formation of the Transport and General Workers' Union

On 27 September 1921, one hundred and forty delegates from trade unions around the country assembled at Leamington Town Hall to complete their amalgamation as the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). It was a decisive moment in the history of the British labour movement. The TGWU would go on to become the biggest trade union in the country, advancing workers' rights and industrial relations throughout the twentieth century. It was also central to the representation of the working class in parliamentary politics. In 1947 Prime Minister Clement Attlee proclaimed that: 'No union has contributed more in organised strength, in practical wisdom and in imaginative vision to the success of the Labour Party than the Transport and General Workers' Union' (**Taylor, 2000: 102**).

Figure 1: The founders of the TGWU outside Leamington Town Hall. Image from The Record, October 1921, page 18; Transport and General Workers' Union Archive, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (item 1086/9/1).

The TGWU was the brainchild of Ernest Bevin. As a national leader of one of the many dock worker unions, Bevin was acutely aware of the limits imposed by sectional interests in the labour movement. To prevent employers playing off one group of workers against another, and to extend protection to those unrepresented by a union, Bevin and his allies initiated an ambitious process to amalgamate trade unions across a range of

industries. Eleven of those which balloted their members agreed to dissolve their existing organisations and reconstitute themselves as the TGWU (**see Coates & Topham, 1991**).

Key to their acceptance was the TGWU's innovative 'double structure' which gave occupational groups like dockers, drivers, clerks and vehicle workers the autonomy to deal with matters affecting their particular trade, but was overlaid with area committees that would unite members on a geographical basis and allow the union to speak with a single voice for all the workers it represented (**Bullock, 1960**).

The next stage of amalgamation was to agree on the rules that would govern the TGWU's 320,000 members. For this reason a conference was organised at Leamington Spa, chosen for its central location given that delegates would be attending from all over Britain and Northern Ireland. Ahead of the conference there was a huge consultation exercise whereby the proposed rules were sent to the branches of the amalgamating unions – over 1,000 in total – inviting them to suggest amendments. One of those later adopted at Leamington made 'control of industry by the workers' a guiding object of the TGWU; a socialist principle intended to push the union beyond a sole concern with wages, hours and working conditions and toward a broader transformation of capitalist society (**TGWU Archive, nd**).

It was testament to the design of the constitution and the persuasiveness of Bevin, however, that most of the amendments were relatively minor. The conference proceeded with unanimity and passed off largely without incident. The exception was a fiery debate about how to deal with James Sexton and his union of Liverpool dockers who had apparently accused the incipient TGWU of poaching members. Halfway through the conference, the chair Harry Gosling was thus dispatched to meet Sexton and resolve the dispute.

Gosling resumed his duties the following day with an agreement to pause the TGWU's recruitment drive among Liverpool dock workers on the condition that they would be re-balloted and asked again to join the new union. What only became known later was that Bevin had suppressed publication of the verbatim proceedings of the Leamington Conference, unheard of at the time, because he feared the derogatory statements made about Sexton and his Merseyside members would jeopardise the ballot. His tactic proved successful. The Liverpool dockers chose to amalgamate with the TGWU the following year; one of many unions that would join the TGWU over its lifetime (**Coates & Topham, 1991**).

The TGWU conference also resonated with local concerns. During the three-day meeting unemployed people from across the district gathered

outside the Town Hall, where, according to the local newspaper correspondent, 'Labour Party propaganda speeches' were given by conference attendees (**Leamington Spa Courier, 1921a**). A central theme was the disconnect of establishment politicians and the 'idle rich' from the realities of poverty. The speakers called for 'peaceful agitation' to persuade those in power, nationally and locally, to help shoulder the responsibility for relieving economic misery (**Ibid.**).

This was indeed a desperate time for workers. Economic recession had pushed national unemployment figures to record highs and in Leamington there were around 700 people out of work (**Leamington Spa Courier, 1921b**). In fact, mid-way through the conference a notice had gone up at the Town Hall stating that the Mayor's distress fund had just been exhausted. The focus of the crowd was on the insufficient poor relief offered by the Warwick Board of Guardians. They were represented in this matter by C. W. Gardner: the first Labour candidate in Leamington to be elected to the Town Council, the County Council, and the Board of Guardians. Addressing the crowd too, Gardner pleaded them for patience while he pushed ahead with their cause (**Ibid**).

Following the Leamington Conference the TGWU officially came into existence on 1 January 1922. Two years later it led the first national stoppage in the history of the dock industry and in 1926 threw its weight behind the first (and last) general strike in solidarity with the coal miners, though its preference was for negotiation and tangible gains for its members in the first instance. By 1936 following its merger with the Workers' Union representing agricultural and construction labourers it had become the largest union in Britain and soon after the outbreak of war its General Secretary Ernest Bevin was drafted into the cabinet as Minister of Labour. It was during this period that a second chapter in the story of the TGWU in Leamington began to unfold, led by a young trade unionist – a docker from Liverpool as it happened – called Jack Jones.

Jack Jones

In 1939 Jack Jones was appointed as the TGWU District Organiser for Coventry and surrounding Warwickshire area. Under Bevin, the Ministry of Labour's policy was that all firms receiving government contracts must give workplace access to permitted trade union officers. Jones was one of these officers and he used it to try and organise workers at the Imperial Foundry in Leamington, a subsidiary of the Ford Motor Company.

The foundry was described by Jones as 'a dirty and chaotic undertaking' where, despite his permit, he was 'physically thrown out of the foundry by the works police on two occasions' (**Jones, 1986: 57**). Nevertheless, he managed to recruit more people to the union, and when a national

agreement was later reached with Ford to cover their main factory at Dagenham, it was also extended to the Leamington plant.

Figure 2: Jack Jones (bottom right) with fellow trade unionists and executives after signing a deal for a 42½-hour week at the Standard Motor Co., Coventry, 1 July 1946. Image from Jack Jones's personal papers, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (MSS.625/17/314).

As part of the Joint Trade Union Committee overseeing the Ford agreement, though, Jones believed that it left little scope for shop floor bargaining. Empowering shop stewards to negotiate on behalf of local members was a key tenet of his industrial relations philosophy and he and others at the foundry lobbied to change the agreement's rules. Despite rebukes from national trade union leaders, they were ultimately successful in this campaign, which he believed contributed significantly to the upturn in unionisation (**Jones, 1986**). As well as being hostile to active trade unionists, the Imperial Foundry was also alleged in letters written to the local newspaper to have placed a 'colour bar' on employment. It was the TGWU that in 1963 helped four men from south Asia to find work there, one of whom was Mota Singh, later the Mayor of Leamington and first Asian elected to Warwickshire County Council (**Jennings, 2016**).

Working in Coventry during the war was dangerous and in 1940 Jones' family home was destroyed by a bomb. His newborn son and wife Evelyn – herself an aero-engine worker and unionist – were evacuated to Offchurch, a village on the outskirts of Leamington. Jones writes obliquely in his autobiography of the tensions between his professional and personal life, noting, for example, how he tried to combine his weekend work in Leamington with family trips to the swimming pool or park, which at least 'made up for some of the lost time in cementing family happiness' (**Jones, 1986: 68**).

There was certainly plenty to keep him busy. During his sixteen years at Coventry, membership of the district branches grew from around 3,000 to 40,000, covering many factory and transport workers at Leamington. Based on this record, in 1955 Jones was elected as the Midlands Regional Secretary and in 1968 became General Secretary of the whole union. It was under his leadership that the TGWU reached its apogee. With over two million members it was said to be the largest trade union in Europe and Jones himself became a figure of significant political influence. National legislation introduced in the 1970s on pensions, employment protection, and workplace health and safety would all bear his imprint (**Taylor, 2000**).

At the start of that decade he found time to return to Leamington to commemorate the TGWU's fiftieth anniversary, planting a tree in Jephson Gardens to mark the occasion. The union now no longer exists, having amalgamated to form Unite in 2007; the same year, coincidentally, that the Imperial Foundry closed down. But the tree still stands, a symbolic reminder of the TGWU's roots in Leamington and subsequent growth of the labour movement.

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Ben Richardson is a Professor of International Political Economy in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick. His research focuses on international trade and labour governance.

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'A Particular Kind of Job': The Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting and the British Women's Liberation Movement's stance of sex work

Amy Longmuir

Department of History, University of Reading, UK
Correspondence: a.l.longmuir@pgr.reading.ac.uk
Twitter/X: @amyloulongmuir
ORCID: 0009-0002-8398-0827

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Abstract

The Programme for the Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS), active between 1976 and 1982, campaigned for the legalisation and destigmatising of sex work in Britain. Their campaign started, and thus centred on Birmingham and the Midlands, but quickly expanded to Britain's major cities, including Bristol, Manchester, and Sheffield. This article examines their grassroots organising for political and legal change, effected most obviously in 1979 when PROS were consulted by the House of Commons Expenditure Committee. PROS negotiated not only cultural prejudices against sex workers but the illegality of soliciting, demonstrating their ability to work across a large section of society, gaining support from a number of organisations, whilst including lawyers, social workers, and probation officers alongside sex workers on their committee. Their focus on improving sex workers' rights also led them to a contentious relationship with the British Women's Liberation Movement (BWLM), and although sex work was not considered a high priority by the movement's socialist-feminist strand, this article argues that PROS engaged with the BWLM at certain strategic points to improve their campaigning position, and thus the legal status of sex workers, at a provincial, grassroots level.

Keywords: sex work; prostitution; British Women's Liberation Movement; socialist-feminism; Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting

1976 was another crisis year of the decade, with the women of the Grunwick Photo-Processing Plant Dispute sharing media domination with Harold Wilson's International Monetary Fund loan request, sterling crisis, and consequent resignation (**Tomlinson, 2000: 84; Robinson et al, 2017: 270**). This year was also when a group of social workers, probation officers, lawyers, and sex workers in Birmingham founded the Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting (PROS) with the sole aim of decriminalising sex work and removing the term 'common prostitute' from law (**PROS Bulletin 1, 1977**). Despite being considered a 'marginal organisation', PROS were innovative, drawing on, and at times distancing themselves from, the British Women's Liberation Movement (BWLM) as they learnt how to not only effect legal change, but improve the social status of sex workers (**Connell, 2020**). The organisation focused considerably on providing sex workers with a platform to share their experiences, and made it a primary focus to have them represented on PROS's organising committee (**PROS Bulletin 1, 1977**).

PROS has, however, been largely ignored in the historiography, and aside from Kieran Connell's 2020 article, remains secondary to the more publicly aware and media-astute English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), based in London and affiliated to the Wages for Housework campaign (**Connell, 2020; Walkowitz, 2019**). Connell focuses on the relational nature of PROS to other organisations and political groups, insisting on the ability to 'tread [a] mediatory path', something which, though not denied in the following analysis, is placed secondary to PROS's locality-based, grassroots campaigning successes (**Connell, 2020: 411**). I will thus attempt to shed light onto the organisational structures and campaigns of PROS that allowed them to remain largely provincial whilst both working with and critiquing the BWLM's dominant socialist-feminist strand between 1976 and 1982.

British Women's Liberation Movement & Sex Work

Commonly cited to have emerged around 1968 with the rise of women's activism across the UK, Europe, and much of the Western world, the BWLM was seen to start with the Ford Dagenham strike that forced female collective demands for equal pay, and women's willingness to strike, onto a public stage (**Moss, 2015**). By 1970, the first National Women's Liberation conference was held at Ruskin College, Oxford, organised by Sheila Rowbotham and others who would become key actors in the BWLM and its public-facing rhetoric (**Thomlinson, 2016: 36**). At the Ruskin Conference, four demands were established that became the foundation of the BWLM: equal pay, equal educational and job opportunities, free contraception and abortion on demand, and free 24-hour nurseries. Throughout the 1970s these became increasingly challenged by radical

and revolutionary feminists, with the demands of legal and financial independence for all women, the right to self-defined sexuality and an end to discrimination against lesbians, and freedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of violence, added to the campaign. By the 1978 National Conference held in Birmingham though 'sisterhood was broken down irretrievably', and no other national conferences were organised (**Rees, 2010; 346**). Despite the BWLM's seemingly continuous evolution of demands, sex work was never included, and at a glance then it seems that sex work was not considered part of the BWLM's campaign.

Socialist-feminism was the dominant strand within the movement, and my current research focuses on its attempts to theoretically negotiate socialist and feminist conceptions of work. The strand focused on how capitalism and patriarchy mutually reinforced one another to ensure the oppression of women. It was at the interstices of the two that sex work was situated theoretically, as the extreme form of female oppression under capitalism, whereby the body itself had become a commodity (**Overall, 1992: 717**). The limited engagement with sex work by those such as Wendy Chapkis (**Chapkis, 1997**) who placed it within her framework of 'erotic labour', Judith Walkowitz's examination of Victorian prostitution (**Walkowitz, 1980**), and Michèle Barrett's use of sex work as a lens to understand police 'harassment of prostitutes and reluctance to pursue kerbcrawlers', gave socialist-feminism some understanding of sex work (**Barrett, 1988: 236**). This work was heavily critiqued by revolutionary feminists like Sheila Jefferys (**Jefferys, 1997**), though, for considering prostitution 'a low-priority issue', and the historiography has continued this in separating the BWLM and socialist-feminism from sex workers' rights campaign groups such as PROS (**Kantola & Squires, 2004: 81**). Socialist-feminist narratives of the necessity to raise awareness and then counter the continued exploitation of women through capitalism were reinforced through the promotion of small-group meetings and consciousness-raising efforts that characterised the BWLM's campaigning. PROS engaged with these methods, especially in focusing on raising the consciousness and awareness of exploitation among sex workers themselves. As such, there is much to be explored and gained from examining the, at times strained, relationship between PROS and the BWLM.

It is essential here to briefly present the history of the phrase 'sex work' itself, as it is a loaded term that brings with it an activist perspective when considering the sale of sex for money. American feminist activist Carol Leigh, otherwise known as Scarlot Harlot, is credited with coining the term 'sex work' at a San Francisco Conference in 1979 or 1980 (**Leigh, 1997: 229**). Leigh argued that the term should be used to describe 'what women did', allowing for a recognition of the sale of sex as work, with sex workers then able to identify themselves as workers, key for socialists to encourage

sex workers to organise and lobby for their rights (**Leigh, 1997: 230**). The term was slow to be used in academic and public fields alike, but gained widespread acknowledgement with the publication of Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander's *Sex Work* in 1988, a collection of writings and testimonies from 'women in the industry' **(Delacoste & Alexander, 1988**). This book was published in the UK by Virago Press in the same year and thus the term, albeit imported from the American women's movement, had reached the UK much later than PROS had started their campaign. The changing of the terms in which the sale of sex for money was referred is significant here in the shaping of discourse surrounding PROS and sex work, with the focus now being on sex workers identifying themselves as workers and thus, in the hopes of socialist-feminists, realising their oppression under capitalism *and* the patriarchy.

PROS's Campaign focus

The Programme for Reform of the Law on Soliciting was established in Birmingham in 1976, advocating for the legal abolition of the term 'common prostitute' in law that could define a woman's life if she were convicted of soliciting as it was never removed from criminal records (**PROS Bulletin 1, 1977**). Being mainly a legislation-focused pressure group, they worked with local councils, activist groups, and later national government, to improve the conditions under which sex work was policed, with the end view of sex work becoming fully legalised. Key to establishing PROS was Eileen McLeod, a social worker turned sociologist at the University of Warwick who wrote PROS's flagship book *Women Working: Prostitution Now* in 1982 (McLeod, 1982). Alongside her were Louise Webb, a student of McLeod's, social worker Inger Bird, lawyer Malcolm Fowler, and a number of sex workers, including Brenda, Kim, and Nancy (PROS Organising Group in Birmingham). The inclusion of sex workers on their organising board is pertinent to understanding the organisation's functioning, as well as their considerable involvement in the local area. It allowed PROS to act as a 'mediatory' organisation, providing insight into the actual experiences of sex workers whilst remaining focused on changing their legal status (**Connell, 2020**).

The relationship between PROS and the BWLM was complex, with there being many different ways in which the former both critiqued, and mirrored, the latter. In PROS's first newsheet, thought have been published in 1976, they stated that their supporters included 'members of the Women's Movement', though it was not stated whether these were from the women's movement more broadly, or from specific tendencies, such as socialist-feminism (**PROS Newsheet no.1, [1976]**). In all subsequent newsheets, there was no mention of the BWLM, and thus it can be seen from this perspective that there was little connection between

the women's movement and PROS's campaigning board in public discourse. Despite this, PROS were the subject of some interest in feminist publications; in both *Spare Rib* and *WIRES* – nationally circulated periodicals – they featured in both interview- and report-based articles. The most insightful article concerning the inner activities and politics of PROS was written by Victoria Green in the March 1977 edition of *Spare Rib* which included a number of interviews with PROS's organising board (**Green, 1977**). Here, there was discussion of PROS's reasons for organisation, notably police targeting of, and threats of violence towards, sex workers, and how the group intended to campaign at a local level involving sex workers themselves. The relationship between PROS and the BWLM was also addressed in this article, with Eileen McLeod and Louise Webb stating 'we want women's liberation to think about the whole thing and discuss it, not just *use* it. They have used the word 'prostitute' in a really nasty way' (**Green, 1977: 18**). This engagement with, yet critique of, the women's movement from two members of PROS's organising board placed the group not necessarily in contention with the BWLM, but highlighted the improvements PROS believed needed to happen before they could engage fully with the women's movement.

The Midlands Circuit and the Expansion of PROS's campaign

Unlike the national British Women's Liberation Movement, PROS's understanding of the local area for sex workers was extensive. Established in Birmingham, PROS were aware of what human geographer Phil Hubbard identified as the 'Midlands Circuit' whereby sex workers rotated around the local towns and cities of Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Nottingham, and Coventry, mainly to avoid police targeting (**Hubbard, 1998: 63**). As such, PROS's initial expansion, supported almost entirely by local grassroots campaigning of other social workers, was to three of these cities, and Leamington by 1979. This shows an astute awareness of the local context in which PROS were working, and an understanding of the lives and routines of the sex workers they were trying to recruit and provide support to. With the involvement of three sex workers on their organising board, this was not surprising, but it does highlight the onus that the other founding members of PROS gave to the experiences and opinions of sex workers.

Two years later, PROS had gained a stronger national presence, with groups in Bristol, Manchester and Sheffield. Little is known about how the groups were established in these large cities, but from their writing in PROS's Bulletin 5 'Street Beat', it is clear that these were not satellite branches, but autonomous groups affiliated to PROS's centre in Birmingham (**PROS Street Beat No.5, 1981**). In this bulletin, the Bristol, Manchester, and Sheffield groups wrote about the local problems of their

PROS members, particularly the increasingly harsh and disproportionate targeting of sex workers by the police. These groups showed a clear understanding of the experiences of local sex workers; in an article entitled 'The Sheffield Four', PROS Sheffield gave details of the court proceedings of 'four women [who] received prison sentences of between 2 to 6 months' for soliciting (**Ibid**). Within this, it is stated that the local group 'had reports in the papers and took part in various radio programmes. The women felt they had made their point' (**Ibid**). Alongside this was an update from the Manchester PROS group, who were attempting to form 'stronger links with Manway [Manchester Workers Against Racism] and other local organisations' to oppose the racism encountered by sex workers and their children, again primarily from the police (**Ibid]**). This local reporting presented to the national PROS campaign highlighted their continued grassroots focus, combined with an understanding of how these actions fed into broader activism against sex workers' police charges. This direct awareness of the local experiences of sex workers was mirrored throughout the fifth issue of 'Street Beat' and demonstrated how PROS, although expanded nationally by 1980, remained directly linked to the sex workers they were campaigning for.

'A Particular Kind of Job' Film

Within the Warwick Modern Records Centre exists a source essential to understanding PROS: a film entitled 'A Particular Kind of Job' produced in 1978 in collaboration with students from the London College of Print (**A Particular Kind of Job, 1978**). This film included interviews from the main sex workers involved in PROS, each discussing their experiences of the industry and the key areas they wanted to address, notably the law, money, and emotions. One of the only recordings of the sex workers involved in the organisation, in this film the women were allowed to discuss their experiences in a semi-structured manner. Although the women spoke about their experiences openly, editing still occurred with their discussions split up into topics – the law, money, and jobs – rather than being free-flowing (**Ibid**). Despite this, the film humanised the 'sex worker', and facilitated the sharing of experiences through the words of women involved in PROS.

The three main speakers in this film brought to life their experiences as sex workers. Brenda spoke specifically about the link between poverty and sex work, stating that sex work was commonly the last resort for many women as 'what's left to sell is herself' as a way of making enough money to survive (**Ibid**). She also talked considerably about the never-ending cycle of sex work, as women 'can't get a job because they've been a prostitute, so they're back on the streets', a particularly pertinent statement considering the legal position of sex workers whereby, once convicted of

soliciting, it remained on their police file indefinitely (**Ibid**). Brenda's arguments were complemented by Jeannie, who was interestingly shown in a much more luxurious apartment and had a much posher, southern English accent, compared to the other interviewees with their more Midlands-based accents. She stated explicitly that 'nobody likes doing it for the money', thus removing any notion that the women working as sex workers were engaged emotionally in their work, instead illustrating the economic necessity underpinning the industry (**Ibid**).

Accompanying these two accounts was Rita, a member of the board of PROS, although this was not stated in the film. Her discussion focused much more on sex worker solidarity and organising into a collective. She was 'all for forming a union for the whole of the country and even applying to the TUC', a decision which would mean sex work would have to be considered employment, and thus placing it directly within this framework (**Ibid**). Rita also humanised sex workers in stating that they were just 'human beings with a particular kind of job', rather than continuing the socially-accepted notion that the women involved must be 'different' and the 'other' to be willing to engage in sex work (**Ibid**). This emphasised not only that sex work was work, but that there was active campaign based on solidarity working against the dehumanisation and stigmatising of sex workers by those engaged in the industry themselves.

This film first became 'available for meetings with a PROS speaker' in June 1978, and was then shown at the Birmingham Arts Lab Cinema and Lanchester Polytechnic Coventry, allowing it to be seen by a number of viewers, and not restricted to those who were members or supporters of PROS (**PROS Bulletin 3, 1979: 2**). By 1981, the film was expected to be made available as a video demonstrating a continued demand for the film at least within PROS's immediate circle, and the financial investment PROS were making to put this into a more accessible format (**PROS Street Beat No. 6, 1982: 14**). The testimonies of the three women featured in the film brought to the fore the importance of poverty in placing sex work within the framework of employment, and the conviction of the women involved in campaigning for sex workers' rights. In doing so, they mirrored socialist-feminist discourse surrounding the compounding of women's oppression through capitalist enforcement of poverty and patriarchal subordination of women's bodies. PROS and socialist-feminists thus engaged in intrinsically similar conceptual frameworks of sex work, yet PROS remained differentiated enough from this to promote their own understanding of female liberation through improving the lives and legal standpoint of sex workers.

Political Lobbying and the End of PROS

PROS were significant not only in their organisation of sex workers for better working conditions, legal protection, and sharing of experience, but also for their legal and political lobbying abilities. Throughout their campaign, they lobbied a number of politicians, members of the House of Lords, and local councils for better protection of sex workers and more targeting of those paying for sex. This involvement with politics thus made them one of the most outspoken organisations representing sex workers' rights during this period.

In March 1979, Maureen Colquhoun (MP for Northampton North) brought the private Protection of Prostitutes Bill to the House of Commons. Colquhoun was an influential supporter of sex workers' rights, mentioned in correspondence by both PROS and the English Collective of Prostitutes based in London, for their considerable legislative efforts to change sex workers' legal standing. The debate began at 3.32pm on Tuesday 6th March, with the Bill aiming 'to amend the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and the Street Offences Act 1959, and to provide for prostitutes better protection from exploitation and victimisation' (**HC Deb 6 March 1979, vol.963: cols.1095-7**). Although there were no explicit references to PROS in this debate, their rhetoric of legal change to provide better support to sex workers was obvious, and historian Kieran Connell has stated how PROS continued to play a supportive role in Colquhoun's campaign for better conditions for sex workers (**Connell, 2020: 406**). Despite avid objections from DUP MP Ian Paisley the Bill was passed with a 130-50 majority, but never became law due to the dissolution of parliament very shortly after.

The following month PROS itself was invited to be consulted in the House of Commons. In April 1979, PROS gave evidence to the House of Commons Expenditure Committee on the issue of sex workers being imprisoned for soliciting as part of a wider inquiry into prison overcrowding. This gave PROS national influence, and also indicated their authority as a sex-worker-focused advisory organisation for the government. What was especially significant was that PROS sent a sex worker, Kim L, to the committee to present the impact of imprisonment for soliciting on the lives of sex workers themselves, thus adding a much more personal element to the testimony and reality of prison (**Connell, 2020: 407**).

Despite this, PROS did not have much legal success. The 1982 Criminal Justice Act amended the 1959 Street Offences Act to remove imprisonment as a punishment for soliciting, though the term 'common prostitute' remained (**Connell, 2020: 409**). Seeing this, PROS had failed: their six years of campaigning, lobbying and building an organisation that represented sex workers had not achieved its main aim – to decriminalise

sex work. Imprisonment was also not entirely out of the question for sex workers; fines remained in place for those convicted of soliciting, and failure to pay these very commonly resulted in prison time. Disillusioned, and with an increasingly harsh police presence under Thatcher's government, PROS disbanded. Despite their lack of complete success, though, PROS were an anomaly in the increasingly fragmented 1970s and 1980s when the BWLM itself was struggling to address sex work in any coherent manner. They were also one of the very few organisations that were committed to providing platform to sex workers themselves whilst the sale of sex for money was still considered a crime.

Conclusion: Place within the Archive

The Modern Records Centre was essential to this research; without the comprehensive PROS collection they hold, this research would not have been possible and the important actions of this group forgotten. Eileen McLeod, who has featured considerably here, donated the collection from her own papers after being a University of Warwick lecturer in sociology for some years. Sadly, McLeod passed away in 2023, but her actions, and later her decision to donate the papers, brought the experiences of sex workers to a wider audience. The collection adds a considerably human element to her 1982 book *Women Working: Prostitution Now*, with its sociological examination of the experiences sex workers had, and their legal standing at the time of writing (**McLeod, 1982**).

Within these papers is, as discussed at length, the film 'A Particular Kind of Job'. It is the only copy available to researchers through archives services, despite the film being distributed by PROS themselves throughout their campaign. The film captured not only the position and experiences of women working as sex workers, but gave them platform to talk about their own politics and attitudes. This is a valuable insight given the common silences of the archive, and the lack of written material left about the personal experiences of sex workers in their own words. There is also considerable organisational transparency regarding finances and decisions made about the future of PROS. In the archive there is not only information about who was involved in PROS's campaign, but where the funding came from, especially concerning the Barrow Cadbury donors, the decisions made about how to spend this money through committees, and the network PROS created across the country.

The PROS archive thus acts as a paper, and video, trail of a campaign that targeted and involved some of the most vulnerable women in society during a period of increasing hardship and industrial turmoil under the Callaghan and Thatcher governments. It sheds light onto this group of social workers, lawyers and probation officers, willing to put their professional and academic credentials aside to campaign, and provide

discussion space, for sex workers who were unable to get help and commonly imprisoned for trying to earn money. The organisation's 'mediatory' nature allowed them to work across the political spectrum whilst also engaging with the BWLM's methods of participation and consciousness-raising (**Connell, 2020**). As such, PROS provides insight into how the liberalising efforts of a provincial, intensely grassroots-focused, group not only gained nationwide support from a number of individuals and movements, including the BWLM, but could also affect legal and social change.

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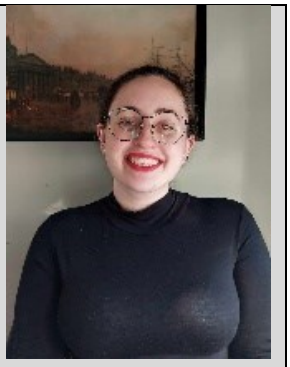
Amy Longmuir is an SWWDTP-funded PhD student at the University of Reading, having also completed her BA and MA in History there. Amy's current research employs intellectual history to explore socialist-feminism and its conceptualisations of work in the British Women's Liberation Movement between c.1968 and 1992. Using anthologies, journals, and other publications, Amy investigates how concepts such as equal pay, skill, domestic labour, and sex work were negotiated by and within both grassroots and academic socialist-feminism.



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‘Do your duty; get together, work together and take action together, with confidence and pride’: Campaigns from the National Union of the Deaf, 1976-2005

Kirstie Stage

Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, UK
Correspondence: kln31@cam.ac.uk
Twitter/X: @StageKirstie
ORCID: 0009-0002-3558-6876

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Abstract

Drawing on sources from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) collection at the Modern Records Centre (MRC), this critical reflection draws on some of the seminal works from the National Union of the Deaf. In addition, MRC sources showed the dialogue between the NUD and TUC, including private correspondence, draft notes and sent letters amongst Deaf members of the NUD and TUC Executive members. Furthermore, these discussions and foundation works provide insight into Deaf people’s political organising in Britain throughout the mid-1970s, as well as the labour movement and broader political landscape of twentieth-century Britain. Deaf histories are integral to better understanding conceptualisations of trade unions, work conditions and political pressure groups.

Keywords: deaf; trade union

Introduction

Drawing on sources from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) collection at the Modern Records Centre (MRC), this work reflects on some of the seminal works from the National Union of the Deaf (f.1976, NUD). In addition, MRC sources showed the dialogue between the NUD and TUC, including private correspondence, draft notes and sent letters amongst Deaf members of the NUD and TUC Executive members. Furthermore, these discussions and foundation works provide insight into Deaf people's political organising in Britain throughout the mid-1970s, as well as the labour movement and broader political landscape of twentieth-century Britain. Deaf histories are integral to better understanding conceptualisations of trade unions, work conditions and political pressure groups.

Before commencing my analysis, it is also important to define some of the key terms that I will use; I have used the exact terms and retained their authentic format throughout to maintain originality. The capitalisation of Deaf indicates different political self-definitions within the community, the struggle for equality within hearing society, the use of a common language, the recognition of British Sign Language, and celebration of Deaf culture. Rather than identifying as disabled, some 'capital D' Deaf people in this period and today may associate with being a minority linguistic and cultural group.[i]

Reflections from this paper come from my master's research, supervised at the University of Warwick and generously funded by a Wellcome Trust scholarship through the Centre for the History of Medicine. This dissertation examined the development and impact of the National Union of the Deaf in Britain. This Deaf-led group, which was founded in 1976, challenged paternalistic approaches from longstanding deaf charities such as the British Deaf Association and the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (**National Union of the Deaf, 1976**).

Through regular newsletters and social events, the NUD fostered a grassroots structure for deaf people from across the United Kingdom. In April 1978, for example, the NUD had 329 members, 64 associate members (from hearing people) and 3 subscribers (**British Deaf History Society, 1978**). The demographics of NUD support was broad in most regions of England and extended further afield to Canada and the United States of America (**Ibid**). While the NUD never formally was disbanded, the group have been less active since around 2005.

The NUD deployed a strong rhetoric of 'unions and unity'. Perhaps the central focus on unions and collective action might have been indicative of leftist politics, which many NUD members took inspiration from. Some

commentaries have also pointed to the radical or maverick nature of the NUD (**Jackson, 2001: 197; BSL Zone, nd**). The MRC's collections show a selection of writings from NUD co-founder Paddy Ladd, who wrote about the importance of brotherhood, grassroots socialism and engagement with trade unions who demanded stronger rights for their membership, usually of male workers (**Letter from the NUD to the Trade Unions, 1977**). However, it is important to note the significant changes to trade union demographics in this period, especially amongst women and people of colour, as well as disabled trade unionists who were beginning to organise independently in the 1980s through groups such as the Trade Union Disability Alliance (TUDA) (**Parker, 2003**).[ii] This framing opens up an interesting avenue to explore Deaf people's engagement with trade union structures and involvement through the NUD with the broader labour movement.

One of the ways in which the NUD pursued this relationship with the labour movement was through developing a formal relationship between the Deaf group and the TUC. In the mid-1970s, the NUD saw this route as the best option to find solutions in the field of employment to advocate for the rights of Deaf members in the same way as earlier blind folk with the National League of the Blind and Disabled (NLBD) had done previously (**Lee, 1992: 68**). Letters from NUD members show that the group took inspiration from the NLBD, who received TUC affiliation in 1899.[iii] In 1976, the NUD applied for TUC affiliation, but they were declined on two accounts: first, that their objectives did not fit with the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974; second, the TUC did not perceive them as a trade union (**Letter from the Trades Union Congress, 1976**). The MRC's archive helps researchers to understand the external perceptions of the NUD, with the TUC situating the organisation as a pressure group who sought to influence governments and deaf organisations about deaf people's needs (**Ibid**).

However, a unique feature of the MRC's TUC archives is that it provides further insight and alternative reasoning for this refusal. Private internal correspondence between Ken Graham and Peter Jacques (active in the TUC Executive at the time) implied that the rejection was indicative of a political decision as they had little desire to partner with the NUD but had to offer a meeting for upholding positive public image and relations.[iv]

Herein lies an interesting example of the TUC demonstrating definitions of a 'trade union', how interpretations were seemingly interrelated to and complied with broader legislation as well as conceptions of pressure groups, even if this discourse around pressure groups appeared to be dismissive of NUD's work and association with the labour movement. Indeed, whilst the rejected affiliation contributed to the NUD's claims to

marginalization, the NUD continued to work with local trade union members to raise issues with the larger TUC infrastructure. Even though the NUD did not receive official affiliation, they nonetheless worked with different groups and individuals, for example social workers and teachers, to amplify their aims and improve conditions for Deaf people in Britain (**National Union of the Deaf, 1977**). Specific issues were prevalent in the archives, offering a helpful lens to understand how the NUD lobbied around particular areas (for example access to further education, use of interpreters, acceptance of sign language and promotion opportunities for Deaf people) as well as drawing on their expansive network to enhance political impact within local communities and the national landscape (**National Union of the Deaf, 1976**).

Through the attempted TUC affiliation, we see a complicated political dynamic between the NUD and the TUC, providing a prism into decision-making with a high-level formal body and points of tension with active grassroots groups. By exploring the NUD's archived letters in the MRC's archive, we can learn more about how the NUD steering group perceived their membership, projected ideas of socialism, and tackled prevalent forms of exclusion. Overall, the NUD is a dynamic case study to question ideas of trade unions and collective action. Whilst employment was not the sole remit of their work, alongside other important areas such as education and television, the NUD's campaigns displayed both individual and collective attempts of campaigning, organizing, and lobbying. In this domain, the MRC's TUC collection allows historians to better understand conceptualisations of trade unions, work conditions and political pressure groups. This question opens up an important direction for historians to explore Deaf people's engagement with trade union structures and involvement with the British and international labour movements.

Kirstie Stage (she/her) is a PhD student between Christ's College, University of Cambridge and the British Library. Her current doctoral project examines 'The Labour and Livelihoods of Deaf and Disabled People in Britain, 1970-2010'. Previously, she explored Deaf-led activism and Disabled-led campaigns in late twentieth-century Britain. In 2022, she co-founded the UK Disability History and Heritage Hub.

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Endnotes

[i] For further discussion on the d/Deaf distinction, see Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Multilingual Matters, 2003); 'Innovations in Deaf Studies: Critically Mapping the Field' in Annelies Kusters, Maartje De Meulder and Dai O'Brien (eds), *Innovations in Deaf Studies: The Role of Deaf Scholars* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[ii] Especially see p.6 and p.29.

[iii] See attachment to letter from Paddy Ladd to Mr Murray, 4/1/77 from Trades Union Congress Archives, Modern Records Centre, 1970-1983, MSS.292D/841.46.

[iv] For more, see undetailed written correspondence between Ken Graham and Peter Jacques, from Trades Union Congress Archives, Modern Records Centre, 1970-1983, MSS.292D/841.46.

Social Work Archives and the 'Classic' Postwar British Welfare State: Between social democracy and social history, 1945-76

Michael Lambert

Lancaster Medical School, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK
Correspondence: m.h.lambert@lancaster.ac.uk
ORCID: 0000-0002-5134-0131

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Abstract

This paper explores how I have used the collections held at the University of Warwick Modern Records Centre (MRC) to understand how the welfare state works from the inside; or within. Histories of the 'classic' postwar British welfare state are mostly either from above or below. This informs the approach and types of sources used. From above, histories of social security, health services and welfare provision are told through legislation, policy documents and government departmental archives. From below, histories of gendered, classed, or racial marginalisation are reconstructed through oral interviews, community and activist archives, and careful reading of official sources against the grain. Using different organisational, professional and individual collections relating to social work held at Warwick, this paper explores how officials did a range of health, welfare and social work whilst being squeezed from above and pressed from below. Ultimately, the view from within revealed by these sources exposes the emergent, contested, and complex relational dynamics of mundane policy and practice which shaped the 'classic' postwar British welfare state from 1945 to 1976.

Keywords: social work; archives; 'problem families'; National Health Service; forced adoption; welfare state; Britain; history from within

This paper explores how I have used the collections held at the University of Warwick Modern Records Centre (MRC) to understand how the welfare state works from the inside; or from within. The collections have enduring significance across a range of research projects reconstructing the welfare state in postwar Britain. Three are examined here, focusing mainly on North West England which, for practical and jurisdictional reasons, has provided a consistent case study across each research project. The first is my doctoral thesis on so-called 'problem families' where disciplinary and organisational turf wars within the social work profession shaped the landscape of child welfare from the 1940s to the 1970s. The second is as a researcher on the Governance of Health project examining the relative positions of money, medicine and management in the National Health Service (NHS) using a case study of Liverpool and Merseyside. The third is through my contribution as an expert witness to the Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry the right to family life: adoption of children of unmarried women, 1949-76. Whilst each of these discrete projects drew on similar materials held by MRC for different purposes, they were able to understand the internal dynamics of the 'classic' welfare state between those of social history from below and social democracy from above.

Histories of the 'classic' postwar British welfare state are mostly either from above or below, informed by certain approaches, historiographical outlooks, and types of sources. From above, histories of social security, health services and welfare provision are told through legislation, policy documents and government departmental archives. These tell of intrigue between politicians and civil servants, running battles between spending departments and the Treasury, and of incremental teleological growth in service provision from the Poor Law to the 'classic' social democratic welfare state created in 1945. These seeming achievements were undone by oil shocks, labour unrest, economic failure with the collapse of political consensus in 1976, and social democracy receiving its death knell through the neoliberal retrenchment of Thatcher from 1979. Such facets are common to standard historical narratives (**Laybourn, 1995; Gladstone, 1999; Glennerster, 2007; Fraser, 2017; Timmins, 2017**). Encapsulating this view is the late Rodney Lowe, whose body of work in history and social policy journals, edited collections on politics and policy, and landmark textbook on the welfare state neatly lead the reader through these debates and their concomitant elite sources (**Lowe 1989, 1990, 1994 & 2004, Davidson & Lowe, 1981, Land et al., 1992**). Being rooted in official sources means that bureaucratic and ideological debates are often reproduced uncritically, and their view of welfare being shaped by the exigencies of the state and government.

From below, histories of gendered, classed, or racial marginalisation by the welfare state are reconstructed through oral interviews, community and

activist archives, and careful reading of official sources against the grain. These are indebted to E. P. Thompson, whose *Making of the English Working Class* 'helped to create' social history as 'history from below', shaping the discipline for future generations of scholars with its locus firmly in Warwick (**Trimberger, 1984; Steedman, 2020**). The historiographical challenge of decentring health and welfare histories from above, through the lens of professionals, institutions and politicians to ordinary people was made by Roy Porter more than 30 years ago (**Porter, 1985**). Whilst this challenge has been met by Steven King and his assiduous reading of records against the grain for the nineteenth century, the position is more ambiguous for the twentieth (**King, 2019; Carter & King, 2021; King et al., 2022**). There is an abundant historiography using postcolonial approaches to centre race in revisiting histories of welfare (**Lewis, 2000; Cox, 2002; Bailkin, 2012, Belchem, 2014**). The work of Roberta Bivins is particularly instructive here, continuing the tradition of pathbreaking social history at Warwick (**Bivins, 2015**). Similarly, Gareth Millward, an honorary keeper of the Warwick tradition, has written extensively in this vein on the mediation of policies and their impacts upon people living with disabilities (**Millward, 2014a&b**). Rooted in the rival locus of social history in Lancaster University (**Taylor, 2018**; **Perkin, 2002**), the oral histories of working-class women from Lancashire undertaken by Elizabeth Roberts and Lucinda McCray Beier, reposition welfare in relation to class, gender and place, exemplifying approaches and sources from below (**Roberts, 1995 & 2000; Beier, 2001, 2003 & 2004**). My own work whilst at Lancaster has offered reflections on how lived experienced of child abuse and harm undermine existing views of idealised childhood in the 'classic' welfare state (**Lambert, nd**). Although compelling, the view from below often remains disconnected from an understanding of the mechanics of the welfare state, its byzantine complexity, fragmented nature, and what unpublished official sources can reveal about contingent and emergent thinking by competing sources of authority within the state.

Approaching the welfare state from within is not a means to transcend or synthesise approaches from above or below. History from within is about grasping the extant pressures which determined what welfare was, how it was provided, to who (or not), where and when. As Virginia Noble argues in her investigation inside the welfare state:

> *While legislation enacted in the 1940s set out the framework for post-war welfare provision, crucial terms and conditions of participation in the welfare state were often determined elsewhere, in decisions made by bureaucrats and in the interactions between those claiming benefit and those dispensing them* (**Noble, 2009: 1**).

Welfare was not simply legislated, implemented or trickled down from above through state structures and social democratic benevolence. Welfare was the cumulative forms of these actions which entailed individual forms of social, health and welfare *work*. This work being organised and delivered through, or by, the state. It was squeezed from the financial and political demands above and pressed from below in terms of population need.

Social work is crucial to understanding this mediation of welfare. Their discretionary decisions – informed by professional norms – became policy by default through their encounters with state-defined client groups in homes, streets and communities (**Lipsky, 1980; Cree, 1995; Crossley, 2016**). The 'lady from the welfare' provided an abiding, ubiquitous view of officialdom from below in the postwar period. Regardless of her role, responsibilities and relationship to structures above, she was – to all intents and purposes – *the welfare state* as far as clients receiving interventions were concerned (**Thompson, 2009: ii-iii & 177-78**). Reconsidering such encounters from within allows the determinants of this social work *as work* to be contextualised; understanding their own organising logics. The value of the collections held at the MRC to peer inside the 'classic' welfare state have already been recognised. Tom Bray's thesis, based primarily on the British Association of Social Work (BASW) materials held at the MRC, explored social work's position 'in the gaps and on the margins' in post-war Britain. He positions social workers as people and social work as a profession occupying a crucial space between the 'shifting structures of society and the hopes and fears of the individuals who inhabited' them (**Bray, 2016: 358**).

Such a view has been repeated by others (**Broad, 2020**), and is immediately recognisable in my own experiences of using the BASW and other collections at the MRC. Whether 'problem families', NHS bureaucracy in Liverpool or forced adoption, the synergies across collections provide a means to reposition the 'classic' welfare state between social democracy from above and social history from below. Moreover, many of these connections emerged not through key catalogue search terms but in conversations with archivists and staff familiar with the collections whilst leafing through material in the reading room. Their expertise and experience with collections is invaluable, if intangible, and an important part of the value of archival research beyond the significance of documents and materials.

'Problem Families'

From above, the principal social work collections offer a straightforward narrative of professionalisation in the 'classic' welfare state. This culminates in the 1968 Seebohm report and subsequent the 1970 Local

Authority Social Services Act, creating generic social work practice and a common, uniform identity under the BASW umbrella the same year from dozens of smaller specialist representative social work bodies (**Seebohm, 1968**). This narrative has been written and overwritten by contemporaries and historians alike, offering a neat, teleological chronology (**Hall, 1976; Cooper, 1983; Burt, 2020; Jones, 2022;**). This overwritten view has become ingrained with the loss of professional recognition, shared identity and deterioration of working conditions associated with the neoliberal rollback of postwar social democracy (**Payne, 2005; Pierson, 2011; Bamford, 2015; Rogowski, S, 2020**). Extensive records from predecessor specialist social work organisations which folded to become BASW, along with its own extensive files documenting its foundation and constitution, membership, finances, lobbying, and evidence to government inquiries, render such a straightforward narrative easily written and very seductive in light of existing historiography. The BASW collection contains far more than this self-evident view from above through formal corporate records. The collection is living, expanding from its original deposit with subsequent ones covering both current and rediscovered historical materials (**Stacey & Collis, 1987; Collis, 1998**). These, along with a careful reading of institutional sources, offer different views inside the welfare state through the lens of social work.

The crucible for distilling these differing views can be found in debates about the 'problem family'. Such families presented multiple problems to the functionally compartmentalised health, welfare and social services of the 'classic' welfare state, disproportionately consuming the time, energy resources of its workers. The debates epitomise the overwritten narrative of professionalisation as each branch advanced reasons why *their* professional training, organisational remit and functional purpose meant *they* were best placed to prevent or rehabilitate such 'problem families' in contrast to their rivals who made exactly the same claims for exactly the same reasons. Such justifications were used to appoint additional staff, obtain resources, and expand the purview of their specialised branch of social work. Whilst social and economic factors were recognised, the emphasis remained firmly on how the behaviour of such 'problem families' could be normalised through social work practice.

These debates and their sources have informed the key contours of the historiography. Pat Starkey has drawn upon the archive of the principal voluntary social work organisation for 'problem families' – Family Service Units (FSU) – to understand debates between the statutory and voluntary sector over flexibility and intensive casework (**Starkey, 1998, 2000, 2001 & 2002**). The records of the Eugenics Society have been reconstructed by John Macnicol to consider how elites and commentators pathologized the behaviour of working-class families to justify social work practices

(**Macnicol, 1987 & 1999**). John Welshman used public health periodicals and published papers to examine synergies between competing professional empires and the incremental growth of the 'classic' welfare state (**Welshman, 1996, 1999 & 2013**). Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly have reconstructed the interactions between families and officials using the records of Norwich's 'problem family' committee (**Taylor & Rogaly, 2007**). Similarly, Selina Todd has criticised the common narrative of pathology and paternalism by using the organisational records of FSU and the Liverpool-based Personal Service Society (PSS) to consider differences between the rhetoric of senior officials and the empathetic realities of street-level junior workers encountering the difficult living conditions of their client families (**Todd, 2014**). Such debates are inextricable from what officials were actually managing: poverty. Or, more accurately, poverty which was enduring and persistent, and primarily impacted women and their children in a context of rising affluence and social expectations.

The point of departure for my research has been privileged access to over 2,000 social work case files of 'problem families' referred to a rehabilitation centre near Manchester called Brentwood from the 1940s to 1970s. Whilst these records have also been used to a lesser extent by John Welshman (**2008 & 2015**), my purpose was to consider social work as work by situating encounters between 'problem families' and the welfare state in their policy context. Methodologically, I have relied upon layered record linkage. Firstly, by using social work case files to reconstruct encounters between families and officials both individually and collectively. Secondly, I have placed these encounters in their local political, social, organisational, and cultural contexts to consider how and why certain families were labelled a 'problem' and subject to intensive surveillance whilst others were not. Thirdly, I have considered the governmental structures which shaped local contexts, examining the civil service, mixed economy of voluntary and statutory service provision, and the political ebbs and flows within government which continued to pathologise family poverty as cultural deficiency in the working class (**Lambert, 2017**). My approach has formed the basis of studies of child protection guidance and substandard housing allocation at a national level (**Lambert, 2019 & 2023a**), along with local examples of 'problem family' policies and practice in Sheffield and Burnley (**Lambert, 2016 & 2023b**).

The social work collections held at the MRC have been invaluable at each stage of the approach I have used to understand 'problem families'. Whilst others have meticulously used periodicals such as the *Eugenics Review*, *Social Work* or the *Medical Officer* – the principal organ of public health leadership – to understand professional horizons and views towards 'problem families', including some social workers, those of child care and children's officers have remained muted despite their significance. Unified

services for children were only established in Britain in 1948, and their rise within social work circles was meteoric until their subsummation within generic social service departments from 1970 (**Parker, 2015: 69-84**). Associated with a 'radical' professional understanding of the 'best interests' of the child, an *esprit du corps* based on university training conferring esteem, and backing from the responsible government department – the Home Office – children's departments in local authorities epitomised the social democratic ideals of the 'classic' welfare state (**Brill, 1991; Holman, 1996a & 1998**). There are separate collections at the MRC for the Association of Child Care Officers (ACCO), representing street-level junior social workers (**MSS.378/ACCO/C/14/1/26**)[i], and the Association of Children's Officers (ACO), for senior directors of individual local authority children's departments. *Accord*, the mouthpiece of ACCO, is not yet digitised and has very limited availability compared with other professional social work or public health periodicals, yet offers similar insights to other periodicals in understanding the 'problem family' and contemporary debates (**MSS.378/ACCO/C/14/3**). Similarly, the *Bulletin* of ACO shows how such families were conceptualised in organisational terms, determining departmental policies and practices which structured social work encounters (**MSS.378/ACO/CO/4 ACO**).

The ACO collection also contains the annual reports of dozens of local authority children's departments; these are invaluable when researching the dynamics and imperatives of the 'classic' welfare state 'from within'. More practically, they are conveniently accessible in one place at the MRC (**MSS.378/ACO/CO/9/1/1**), rather than traipsing across different local archives or accessing piecemeal copies held as part of the Home Office legacy records at the National Archives (**TNA: BN 29/89 to 97**).[ii] As with published periodicals, annual reports of Medical Officers of Health (MOsH) are more comprehensive and accessible, being digitised by the Wellcome Library, making granular excavations of standardised statistics far easier (**Mold, 2018: 3**). The children's department annual reports offer details of different definitions, numbers and resources deployed around 'problem families', and how prevention and rehabilitation existed in relation to other priorities. These contexts are typically absent within the professional literature and discourse but absolutely fundamental in understanding how children's services *actually worked*.[iii] Given the volume of referrals to Brentwood which originated from the North West of England, the region provided a useful, if artificial (**Walton, 2007: 293**), bounded case study for my thesis, enabling a range of comparisons. The MRC collections contain papers from the North West branches of both ACO and ACCO (**MSS.378/ACCO/C6/3/1 to 16 ACCO; MSS.378/ACO/CO/1/2:2 ACO**), and include copies of commissioned research into divergent uses of statutory powers in the region undertaken by Liverpool and Manchester Universities

(**Jehu, 1964; Heywood & Allen, 1971**). These helpfully complement similar collections for regional meetings of MOsH, whose value has already been recognised (**MUA: GB 133 NWH/1/5 to 9; Engineer, 2001**)[iv], allowing me to grasp the significance of geography to debates. Complementing these were formal committee minutes, reports and records from each of the constituent local authorities; these were assiduously gathered through visits to archives and libraries across the North West of England. Although often fragmentary and incomplete, these materials provide important perspectives on mundane encounters between 'problem families' and the welfare state, and the everyday forms of work they represent.

A clear example of the value of the MRC collections to my methodological and analytical approach can be seen in the case of Blackburn. The authority referred few 'problem families' to Brentwood making reconstruction of individual encounters difficult (**Lambert, 2017: 160-1**), although both the quality and quantity of children's committee materials and Home Office inspection records are excellent (**LN: CBBN/1/22/71 to 92; TNA: BN 29/92, BN 29/287, BN 29/288 & BN 29/2780**).[v] In a series within the ACCO records concerning relations with local authorities are papers documenting a dispute between the North West ACCO and the town's MOH over the reclassification of health visitors as medico-social workers (**MSS.378/C/13/1/1 to 14 ACCO**). These could easily be positioned into the recognisable narratives of professional identity by delineating the medical from the social domains within the welfare state, and the nascent development of BASW through appeals to associations, reference to national reports and correspondence with influential academic figures. However, read closely, they capture the jurisdictional disputes at the heart of 'problem family' policies and practices. As mentioned earlier, in the national narrative both children's and public health departments contested their primacy in working with 'problem families' for the purposes of *expanding* staff and resources. In Blackburn these occurred in a context of scarcity underwritten by longstanding recruitment and retention issues. These are recognisable in the MOH's annual reports over a number of years,[vi] and lurked beneath the surface of national comparative studies (**Packman, 1968: 112**). Improving the terms and conditions of health visitors was about *maintaining* staff and resources in absolute terms, but also relative to children's departments as ascendant rivals. Although children's departments likewise struggled to recruit and retain staff (**Boaden, 1971: 71-86; Davies et al., 1974: 77-104**). Within the file correspondence, health visitors were positioned as able to identify and intervene in 'problem families' from the cradle to the grave, rather than on children 'deprived of a normal home life'. This played on professional self-identity as Blackburn's MOH complained that children's services were aloof, existing in splendid isolation, incapable of the

required cooperation and coordination within the welfare state to work with such pathological and disproportionately costly families.[vii] Despite the lack of case files to move closer from history from within to below, the file and correspondence – unavailable outside the MRC in either local or national collections – demonstrate otherwise remote state logics which organised work and, in turn, the very experience of welfare for many in Blackburn.

Situating these individual and local dynamics in the national context is enabled by the personal papers of key protagonists, also held by the MRC. Marjorie Allen, better known as Lady Allen of Hurtwood (**Allen & Nicholson, 1975**), exerted considerable influence on the politics of child care towards the end of the Second World War. In the social work imagination, the birth of children's services is more closely associated with Dame Myra Curtis's report, the tragic case of Dennis O'Neill and the Monckton inquiry into his death, and the atmosphere of reform associated with the welfare state (**Parker, 1983 & 2011, Holman, 1996b, Ball, 1998, James, 1998, Cretney, 1998**). Yet Gordon Lynch has shown this process to be far more incremental, relying on separate processes catalysed by publicity and moral panic in the establishment press, where Lady Allen was vocal and served as a lightning conductor for grievances (**Lynch, 2020**). Her papers held at the MRC were crucial for Lynch's argument, and were equally important in enabling me to understanding the policy transition from a focus on children 'deprived of a normal home life' to neglect, homelessness, and family failure in the space of a few years at a formative juncture of the welfare state.

If Lady Allen catalysed the child welfare state through her criticism of their predecessors and their limitations, then Dame Eileen Younghusband (**Jones, 1984**) was a pivotal figure in its realisation. She wrote two reports on the condition of the social work profession funded by Carnegie from 1947-51 (**Younghusband, 1947 & 1951**), followed by a similar review of postwar developments for the Ministry of Health in 1959 (**Ibid: 1959**) At the close of the 'classic' welfare state, she was well-positioned to write an authoritative two-volume history of the profession, although a shorter, more accessible narrative was published posthumously after her tragic death in 1981 (**Younghusband, 1978, 1981**). Younghusband is also idealised in the professional discourse as a consistent champion of generic social work and professional unification. Such idealism caused problems in her lifetime. Following her Carnegie reports, Younghusband was financed by them to establish and run a generic social work course alongside – and in competition with – specialist ones at the London School of Economics from 1954-57. The ensuing acrimonious 'LSE affair' with Richard Titmuss as Head of the Department of Social Administration led to her departure from the university and for the suspension of generic social work

aspirations for a decade (**Donnison, 1975**). Ann Oakley, Titmuss's daughter, has used Younghusband's papers held at the MRC to challenge this received wisdom by foregrounding gender, power and institutional knowledge against an existing narrative focused on the clash of evidently strong personalities (**Oakley, 2014 & 2015**). My use of her papers to explore the welfare state within has two dimensions. Firstly, and similarly to the ACO collection, her diligent hoarding of contemporary grey literature enabled ready access to dozens of otherwise hard-to-obtain local reports, surveys, pamphlets and other ephemera of everyday activity. Secondly, her correspondence – both personal[viii] and professional[ix] – provides a window into the processes of decision-making, professional disputes, and the politics of social work expansion seen through the lens of the 'problem family'. Although still guarded, it is more insightful than the staid, constrained prose and government logics of her report and its separate legacy papers held in the National Archives.[x] Although I only used a fraction of the enormous collection, her papers expose the contingent and contested growth of social work within the welfare state, rather than one of triumphant teleology. Read closely and contextually, they expose broader themes of gender, class and power which determined how 'problem families' were realised by social workers as the footsoldiers of the 'classic' post-war social democratic welfare state.

A final significant set of materials within the MRC collections I used to understand social work as work in delineating 'problem families' from others within the 'classic' welfare state relating to key protagonists offering their recollections. As noted earlier, FSU were an important voluntary organisation, exerting disproportionate influence on discussions about, and social work with, 'problem families'. The MRC holds a small collection in comparison to the much larger one Starkey gathered and used for her research into them, previously held at the University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives and currently with Family Action, the provider with which FSU merged in 2006 now responsible for their legacy records. Within the MRC's FSU collection are a series of reflections by former unit members written from 2007-10 (**748/9/1-49**). These include many experiences of the 'classic' welfare state including one which felt particularly apt, cutting to the heart of the contradiction at its heart. Whilst the aim of the 'classic' welfare state was to purportedly build a 'New Jerusalem' both materially and socially, during the same period social values and attitudes to the family were remarkably conservative, even when viewed against the interwar period, and created a cloud of gender normativity which permeated every facet of policy and practice (**McIntosh, 1979; Peplar, 2002, Thane, 2003**). Colin Groves, who worked in both Manchester and East London FSUs before being employed as a senior social worker in local authorities then at the Department of Health

and Social Security (DHSS) Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), reflected honestly that 'I blench at the idea that I should have been expounding on working with marital problems at that age and stage of my life (and goodness me! I've got 2 divorces on my CV in the meantime)' (**748/9/17: 3**). This is in stark contrast with how FSU presented the impact of their intensive casework at the time, and the expectations of family functioning, success, and failure (**Starkey, 2007**). Such a remark also hints at common elements of class judgment and coercive practice noted of social workers by contemporary ethnographers (**Handler, 1973, Satyamurti, 1981**), despite Todd's distinction between senior and junior social workers. Although Groves shows how such a neat distinction collapses within individual careers over time. The reflections offer an invaluable insight, with the benefit of hindsight and control over inclusions and omissions of their narrated self, by social workers on social work as lived, breathed, and enacted.[xi]

An additional source of reflections on the state of social work practice come from interviews of the great and the good of the 'classic' welfare state by Alan Cohen. Cohen was a social worker himself, coming from a background of hardship, his parents tracing their lineage to Jewish refugees from the pogroms. However, he experienced considerable social mobility, securing a position in Lancaster University as a lecturer in 1974, although in social administration rather than social history. He took early retirement in 1985 due to funding cuts to prevent junior colleagues having to take redundancy (**McClintock, 2011; TNA: UGC 6/79**), returning to social work roles in Lancaster until 1996 (**Marsh & Cook, nd**). This did not prevent him from researching a history of the FSU during its formative years in his retirement (**Cohen, 1998**). However, Cohen's main contribution can be found in the MRC's collection of his interviews with 26 social work pioneers conducted between 1980-81. These have been transcribed and made available online as 'Social workers speak out' along with the original recordings.[xii] They include Geraldine Aves, a formidable and transformative senior figure in the DHSS who shaped welfare policies and practice (**Aves, 1983; Willmott, 1992**), Margaret Simey, a prominent social work and social science figure in Liverpool (**Simey, 1996**), Elizabeth E. Irvine, one of the key figures in 'problem family' and professionalisation debates (**Smith, 1998**), and Eileen Younghusband among other luminaries. Whilst some of the interviews reinforce the teleological narrative or its components, especially as they are between people who broadly shame the same values and outlook, and held senior professional or academic roles, they capture much of what written records cannot about experiencing and undertaking social work as work. Dozens of researchers have made use of their depth and richness in research, and they provide

personal stories of seemingly impersonal state structures and forces at the heart of the 'classic' welfare state.

Understanding social work as work, created and organised by the state for specific purposes is at the heart of understanding the 'problem family' and poverty in the 'classic' post-war welfare state. State structures were not designed to meet an inability to fulfil material needs; they were designed to meet specific, defined welfare needs. This specificity confounded professional horizons, with 'problem families' being those pathologically unable to respond to social work interventions whilst also legitimating the expansion of those same professional's numbers, training and funding. Crucially, Bray reminds us that narratives of social work identity, responsibility *and professionalisation* should not be confined solely to the parochial debates of the British welfare state and social democracy, with clear international dimensions (**Bray, 2020**). However, when seen from within, a closer analysis of social work helps to understand the dissonance between welfare histories written from above using elite policy sources, and those from below, which emphasise more harmful or varied experiences. They speak to the state, and a need to understand its dynamics, rather than welfare alone.

Governing Health

Narratives of professionalisation in social work are interwoven with others in the welfare state. Creating distance from the 'medical' by articulating and justifying definitions of the 'social' in post-war policy and practice was central to legitimising the work and purpose of social work. These had long been blurred because significant volumes of social work activity were based in – or subsidised from in the case of voluntary organisations – local authority public health and welfare departments prior to 1970. The 1959 Younghusband and 1968 Seebohm reports formed part of this discourse of differentiation, contributing to a distinct 'social' domain in the welfare state, one separate from the 'medical', through local authority social service departments, the foundation of generic social work practice, and concomitant recognised academic knowledge and singular professional representation. These were, after all, the hallmarks of professionalisation and fed into the straightforward, recognisable, and overwritten narrative of social work in the 'classic' welfare state.

It was with the 'medical' domain that I became involved in exploring through my role on the Wellcome Trust funded project 'The Governance of Health: Medical, Economic and Managerial Expertise in Britain since 1948'. The purpose of the project was to understand the evolving and interrelated authority of different forms of expertise in the NHS, and what the consequences of these changes over time meant to how services were organised and delivered. It concerned how health policy was governed.

Each of the three strands from the title – medicine (**Sheard, 2018**), health economics (and money) (**Mackillop & Sheard, 2018, 2019**), and management (**Begley & Sheard, 2019, 2021; Begley 2019, 20223**) – had an assigned researcher, with my strand being to work across the three others through development of a case study of one place over time, to see any discrepancies between national and local levels. Liverpool, or Merseyside (to make it a 'fourth M' strand) provided the case study, mainly through convenience as the project was based at the University of Liverpool.

My previous research on 'problem families' became useful in terms of both geography – with Liverpool and Merseyside being part of the larger North West of England – and welfare state complexity. A key dynamic to the governance of health services in Liverpool is the proliferation of small, specialist hospitals or units. This has, in turn and over time, impacted the wider organisation of hospital services. From 1991 an internal market was introduced into the NHS which, as part of a national policy agenda to introduce competition within the public sector, divided the purchasers of care from providers.[xiii] The introduction of this internal market in Liverpool from 1991-96 led to the establishment of five small hospital trusts based around narrow medical specialties: the Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Liverpool Obstetric and Gynaecology Services, the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital, the Clatterbridge Centre of Oncology and the Cardiothoracic Centre Liverpool. This configuration was, and is, in contrast to most large cities – apart from London – where specialisms are subsumed within larger acute hospital services. There are myriad monetary, medical, and managerial reasons for the Merseyside model (**Lambert, et al., 2020**). Understanding how and why otherwise narrow specialisms obtained such influence, and relating this to patient care formed an important part of the longitudinal analysis.

Here, the collections of the MRC once again proved invaluable. The Cardiothoracic Centre Liverpool, later the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital (LHCH), had its origins in the nationalisation of institutions in 1948, and the organisation of sanatoria and tuberculosis (TB) services. Primarily a disease of poverty, the 'white plague' of TB has an abundant historiography exploring how and why it declined during the twentieth century in Britain.[xiv] Many emphasise social factors such as housing, nutrition, work and family dynamics over medical developments, particularly thoracic surgery which was conventionally seen as ineffective (**Bryder, 1988; Smith, 1988**). Others emphasise clinical knowledge, particularly chemotherapy and the introduction of streptomycin, along with the value of surgery – especially pneumothorax, the artificial collapse of the lung – to treatment (**Hardy, 2003; Leeming-Latham, 2015**). As with the welfare state, such narratives rely heavily on national sources and existing frames of administrative reference. Materials from the National

Association for the Prevention of Consumption and other forms of Tuberculosis (founded in 1899, subsequently the Chest and Heart Association from 1970) and the Society of Superintendents of Tuberculosis Institutions (founded 1920, becoming the British Thoracic Society in 1977) – both held by the Wellcome Library – loom large, along with papers from the Ministry of Health.

Foregrounding Liverpool, and using it as a point of departure to explore developments from within, challenged these historiographical currents in three ways. Firstly, a local study exposed the blurred responsibilities for TB between the different branches of the 'classic' welfare state era NHS: hospitals (further subdivided between service and teaching ones); public health and community services; and primary care, largely general practice. TB was a disease of poverty which, like 'problem families' cut across organisational jurisdictions. Writing in the 1930s, social statistician David Caradog Jones wrote that TB 'is a disease which presents a local health authority with a difficult problem' in Liverpool and – in health policy terms – this had only worsened by the 1950s despite medical developments (**Caradog Jones, 1934: 41**). Secondly, Liverpool experienced many of the social, economic, housing and health issues which sustained high incidence of TB after 1945 despite therapeutic developments.[xv] Given that it served as an indicator of poverty by welfare state officials, TB was certainly prevalent in many of the 'problem family' case files used for my PhD for those coming from, or living in, the city and the wider Merseyside region. The city's descent from the magic mountain of recovery was not precipitous.

The third reason for foregrounding Liverpool concerns questions of geography and the meaning of region within the NHS.[xvi] Prior to the NHS, campaigners tried and failed to secure a unified national service for TB given low notification rates from public health and poor after care, limited support from General Practitioners (GPs) within the insurance model, and the marginalisation of hospital services through sanatoria. The position was different in Wales where the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association (WNMA) enabled some unification, although tensions and fragmentation remained (**Bryder, 1986**). Owing to political pressure rather than Nye Bevan's intervention, Wales became a single hospital region in the NHS (**Webster, 2006**), although patients from across North Wales flowed continually into Liverpool when requiring specialist care. Founding specialist chest services in Liverpool was Welshman Hugh Morriston Davies, an influential thoracic surgeon, who was a leading clinician in the WNMA and a national figure in the British Thoracic and Tuberculosis Association (**BMJ, 1965; Snell, 1978: 82; Webb, 1998; Rivett, 2000**), appointed as the director of the wartime Emergency Medical Service (EMS) special chest unit for the Liverpool region in 1939 (**TNA: MH**

76/113; Timmermann, 2014). As the incidence of TB declined, existing services were repurposed in line with the clinical conquest of organ geography, leading thoracic surgeons to become *cardio*thoracic surgeons, attending to the heart as much as the chest (**Fleming, 1997; Richardson, 2001; Lawrence, 2020**). This meant Liverpool's cardiothoracic regional services increasingly served North Wales, swelling their patient catchment relative to the smaller and constricted organisational geography of the Liverpool region in the NHS (**TNA: BD 18/83**). Exploring Liverpool's exceptionalism from within through one specialist service, the LHCH, and its changing clinical and organisation responses to TB exposed wider governance issues in the NHS over time.

Whilst a '[s]uperficial examination suggests that the NHS marked a fundamental turning-point in the treatment of tuberculosis' (**Webster, 1988: 322**), a closer one shows continuity rather than change. A myriad of fragmented services continued to concern themselves with the social and medical aspects of TB. With nationalisation demand for treatment was confronted with limited surgical and chemotherapeutic capacity for over a decade in the NHS owing to the prevailing atmosphere of austerity. Here, the records of the MRC allow us to understand the relationship between the shifting social and organisational structures of the welfare state, and the lives of those impacted, through the papers of the Association of Tuberculosis Care Workers (ATCW) – the Medico Social Section of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis (NAPT) from 1948 – within the larger BASW archive. Rather than forming part of the overwritten narrative of teleological professionalisation, the narrative for the ATCW is about survival and transition given their declining need. Given the discrepancy between demand and supply of TB services, TB care workers were important gatekeepers and mediators within the 'classic' welfare state, providing support around priority rehousing, work, family and kinship caring arrangements, and maintaining contact outside of institutional settings (**Rodgers & Dixon, 1960: 41-44; Rodgers & Stevenson, 1973: 217-18**). As with other forms of social work, the place of TB care workers within the patchwork of services influenced the extent or limit of their role, and Liverpool was no exception. An early report was careful to give each branch of the tripartite NHS a place, whilst leaving sufficient ambiguity to prevent professional dissent or disagreements (**LRO: Uncatalogued 14/19 1952-58**).[xvii] This did not prevent disputes, particularly within hospitals and competing demands to use patients as clinical material from teaching hospital managers in contrast with service exigencies to treat them (**TNA: BD 18/903**). Reductions in sanatoria and TB beds through reclassification for narrower surgical purposes increasingly pushed scarce TB care workers away from institutional links and into communities and homes (**TNA: MH 133/448**). The consequences

of this can be seen in discretionary handling of cases found in 'problem family' case files from my thesis, pointing to the endurance of TB and the magic mountain it represents under the NHS.

Mirroring these social and medical bordering processes were disputes with other branches of social work. Given the stigma associated with TB, the frequency with which professionals working with tuberculous patients contracted the disease, and the decline of specific services, TB care workers experienced significant recruitment and retention problems throughout the early NHS until their own association was subsumed fully within NAPT. Almoners, as more prestigious, highly paid and qualified medico-social workers, proved a rival source of status to TB care workers, and also an alternative career trajectory (**Golsing, 2018**). This was evident in Liverpool and the wider region, where greater prospects for almoners diminished opportunities for TB care workers (**Fell et al., 1954**). These tensions and their consequences for practice in different areas are readily discussed in the professional periodical, the *Bulletins* of the NAPT, later *Chest and Heart* (**MSS.378/TC/Y/1**). Although the ATCW collection is comparably small and piecemeal, reflecting the diminished position of their specialist branch of social work, the MRC has complementary collections which enable an understanding of their social work as work. Materials from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) collections covering social questions include papers on tuberculosis, its significance for certain occupation group, and materials relating to the NAPT (**MSS.292/841.1/3-4; MSS.292/841.11/6; MSS.292/841.18/1; MSS.292/841.18/2**). Whilst these often consider narrow sectional concerns, they illuminate the significance of TB care workers at the intersection between medical and social, and in contest with other branches of specialist social work as new surgical, chemotherapeutic, and social developments render their role redundant. Once again, understanding how the 'classic' welfare state organised different forms of social work becomes crucial to grasping dynamics from within which mediate relations with the centres of power and government above, and with patients and the wider population below.

Forced Adoption

The final set of social work materials I have used relates to my research on the historic forced adoption of children of unmarried mothers during the existence of the 'classic' welfare state. Like the preceding two uses of the MRC, this exploration began with seeing the issue of coercive adoption emerge in 'problem family' case files. However, the purpose for identifying, gathering and linking materials to understand internal welfare state dynamics was more defined. It formed part of my evidence submission the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) inquiry into The

Right to Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women, 1949-1976. The inquiry was not a statutory independent one with powers to commission research, sequester evidence and compel witness testimonies, but one which emanated from a Parliamentary Committee straddling the House of Lords and House of Commons. They issued a call for evidence focusing on the rights of families, experiences of adoption from birth mothers and adoptees, social attitudes towards unmarried motherhood, welfare state services for single mothers, the legal issues of consent, and the lasting consequences of historical adoption in the present.[xviii] Lived experience was foregrounded through dozens of testimonies, which were centred in how the final report was structured and recommendations articulated (**Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2022**). This built on preceding media coverage of the emotive stories of birth mothers, their children as adoptees – now adults – and their familiar narratives of coercion by a range of officials – including social workers – in the 'classic' welfare state (**BBC, 2021**). Despite the limitations of such inquiries using the authority of the state to explore their own failings and injustices, part of the inquiry was about rewriting the public record by speaking truth to power above from those below (**Lambert, nd**). Once again, understanding the purpose and organisation of social work was central to disentangling responsibility for historic forced adoptions.

The academic literature and other submissions to the inquiry point to this gap in understanding how and why forced adoption occurred. There is a considerable body of work on mother and baby homes. These were the principal locations where unmarried mothers were sent to have their children away from their homes and communities in order to create a façade for themselves to pass off the pregnancy without public knowledge and hide the stigma and shame, whilst allowing adoptive families to bring home a new baby as if it were their own. However, the limits of the literature are the same as those of the wider historiography of the 'classic' welfare state: dependence upon sources from statutory authorities, voluntary organisations, and religious bodies (**Clark, 2008; Greenlees, 2014, 2015; Penberthy, 2020**). Legal scholarship remained disconnected from the wider contours of the 'classic' welfare state which enabled and enacted adoption as a coercive child welfare measure (**Probert, 2014**).[xix] Pat Thane, co- author of the leading study of unmarried motherhood in twentieth century which used the archives of Gingerbread, a campaigning interest group for single mothers dating to 1919, did not submit evidence (**Thane 2011; Thane & Evans, 2012**). Jenny Keating's thorough exploration of the interplay of politics and policy in the creation and growth of adoption finished at the cusp of the 'classic' welfare state in 1945 (**Keating, 2009**). The only work with privileged access to otherwise closed adoption case files to understand the dynamics at play was Jatinder Sandu's doctoral

thesis. She, along with me and Professor Gordon Harold – who also submitted lengthy written evidence – provided oral testimony at the JCHR inquiry's first hearing to provide expert evidence.[xx] Whilst thorough and covering nearly a century of change, the local focus of Sandu's thesis meant it remained disconnected from national debates and bureaucratic administration within the welfare state apparatus (**Sandu, 2012**). Virginia Noble's work looking inside the welfare state explored how unmarried mothers were marginalised and punished by the discretionary decision-making of officials across different services but did not discuss adoption (**Noble, 2004**). This reflected the functional separation of her sources, primarily those of the National Assistance Board, in relation to the needs of unmarried mothers. In short, there was a large body of expertise about unmarried motherhood, adoption, and the welfare state for the inquiry to draw upon, but no single convenient narrative of policy dynamics.

Using a handful of case files from my doctoral thesis where unmarried mothers were subject to coercive intervention by the state, my evidence submission focused on the policy dynamics of unmarried motherhood within the 'classic' welfare state.[xxi] Perhaps naively, and taking for granted the evident extent of state involvement through the governmental apparatus and surviving archival sources, I emphasised how force permeated encounters between different professionals and unmarried mothers to render adoption as the only meaningful option. The JCHR published their report in July 2022, recommending that the UK Government should formally apologise for their role in the historic forced adoption of children of unmarried mothers. Significantly later than promised, the Government responded in March 2023 to acknowledge the harms and lack of choice experienced by mothers, as well as the longer-term consequences of these, but fell short of an apology. They stated that 'the state did not actively support these practices' and they 'were carried out locally, in a range of different settings, at a time when the state's protections were more limited and guidance and procedures localised'. Their response to the report placed some responsibility on local authorities, voluntary organisations and religious bodies, although different social values were seen as mostly to blame (**Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2023: 10**). This was a deeply disingenuous response, and I wrote to the Movement for an Adoption Apology (MAA) – representing birth mothers campaigning for an apology for historic forced adoption – to say I found it 'ahistorical, unfounded, and against a significant weight of academic opinion'.[xxii] Subsequent apologies by the Scottish and Welsh Governments on 22 March and 25 April 2023 did little for the Government's position. Indeed, Nicola Sturgeon's speech on the subject, a parting shot before her departure as First Minister, addressed this directly:

> *Now, there's a line of argument which says that because the government of the time did not support these practices, there's nothing to apologise for… But these are not reasons to stay silent. Ultimately, it is the state that is morally responsible for setting standards and protecting people* (**Scottish Government, 2023**).

My subsequent briefing using central government archives across each of the functionally separate government departments concerned with unmarried mothers scratched the surface of the extent of state knowledge, complicity, and responsibility (**Lambert, 2023c**).

Missing from both the inquiry and subsequent abnegation of rightful responsibility by the UK Government was a closer understanding of forced adoption as a process of work in moral welfare work within the 'classic' welfare state's jurisdiction. No social workers or officials responsible for adoption from the period submitted evidence to the JCHR inquiry, despite harmful, judgmental, and cruel behaviour being common elements of witness testimonies. The only recent public record of this was an interview with a Scottish nurse who worked with unmarried mothers in the early 1970s, attesting to such attitudes and actions being widespread (**BBC, 2022**). Here, the records of the MRC once again prove invaluable in shrinking this distance between above and below in the welfare state by understanding how pressures from within meant moral welfare officials systematically inflicted harm as a process of public policy, rather than as a series of private family tragedies of shame.

The archives of the Moral Welfare Workers Association (MWWA) within the larger BASW collection provides insights into their activities as a form of state-funded, directed and supported work. According to Eileen Younghusband, 'moral welfare combined social work with distinctively Christian help', although 'the service was separate from the main stream of child care and family welfare' (**Younghusband, 1978: Vol 2, 288**). Moral welfare encompassed more than just working with unmarried mothers and illegitimate children, it concerned a range of personal, matrimonial and family issues which had became demarcated as issues of faith and mortality by the Church (**Jones, 2015; Ramsay, 2016**). Moral welfare workers were typically highly trained and professionalised fieldworkers who identified and referred unmarried mothers for adoption and acted as secretaries to Moral Welfare Association (MWA) committees, in contrast to untrained, low paid and isolated matrons who ran mother and baby homes (**Hall & Howes, 1965: 102-23; TNA: BN 29/2663**). Given how deep sectarian divisions were in every aspect of welfare, the MWWA umbrella created a common identity for Protestants and Catholics undertaking identical social work. This did not mean that such work was not sanctioned, or remained outside, the purview of Government and was the

preserve of voluntary or religious organisations; the reverse was true. The MWWA archive provides abundant documentation on how the rapid expansion of their activity with unmarried mothers, and adoption, was a direct consequence of the demands of the 'classic' welfare state. Circular 2866/43 issued by the Ministry of Health in November 1943 was noted in their own history as a 'milestone' because it encouraged local authority subsidies of their activities, proliferating the numbers of workers and homes. This should not be seen as a lack of intervention by central government because proportions of funding were provided by them to encourage implementation, and the Ministry judiciously delineated the extent and limits of local authorities (**MSS.378/MWWA/M/1/1/1: 2; TNA: MH 55/1653**). Some were provided or subsidised entirely by local authorities with the expressed approval of the Ministry (**TNA: MH 55/1510**). This funding was often supplemented further through sponsoring individual cases of unmarried mothers where they, or their families, struggled to meet the costs; although sometimes this was routinised for authorities sending large numbers, with costs recovered directly (**Lambert, 2023d**). In short, the role of the state to the activity of moral welfare, and in turn forced adoption, is evident through its impact on the organisation of their work by the exigencies of the 'classic' welfare state.

The MWWA archive is far from confined to links from above. Their *Bulletin* is crammed with insights into the worldview of moral welfare and their pathological depiction of unmarried mothers through research, exchanges and reports. Such use is similar to other collections in terms of understanding formations of professional identity (**MSS.378/MWWA/M/11/2/1 to 63**). These can be read alongside *Child Adoption*, the mouthpiece of the Standing Conference of Societies Registered for Adoption (SCSRA). The MWWA had significant overlap with the SCSRA given their work, although functional specialisation between unmarried mothers before and after birth, adoption, and casework with adoptive parents provided some differentiation (**LSEPSA: BAAF/111**).[xxiii] There is also material relating to their evidence submissions to both the 1959 Younghusband and 1968 Seebohm reports which provide greater discussion and points of dissent between members than the final formal versions (**MSS.378/MWWA/M/9/1/1; MSS.378/MWWA/M/9/2/1**). Easy access to printed annual reports otherwise dispersed and confined to local archives again allows a picture of national practice to be painted far more readily (**MSS.378/MWWA/M/12/1/1 to 13**), in a manner similar to other social work collections discussed earlier. What these granular sources begin to reveal is how normalised power and paternalism were for moral welfare workers in their understanding of their work, infused with social work professionalism and religious mission. This work was underscored by

state organisation as part of a 'mixed economy' of provision between statutory, voluntary, and religious entities within the 'classic' welfare state (**Stewart, 2019**).

Understanding the purpose of moral welfare work as state-sanctioned faith-based social work, its organisation, financing, and implementation connects private tragedies together to reconstruct what they are in terms of the historic forced adoption of children of unmarried mothers: a public scandal. Looking within provides a means to connect below and above together. From below, the common view of harm, abuse, judgment and coercion drawn from lived experience. From above, the extent of state knowledge, control and direction of a fragmented, diffuse and complex state assemblage delivering a range of welfare functions. This confluence of sources can readily be seen in the case files I used for my doctoral thesis. Properly contextualised, they show how and why moral welfare work was organised for unmarried mothers, and the centrality of adoption to family practices, religious beliefs, and social values around illegitimacy. Without the records of the MRC to understand this as a form of organised work with a clear set of purposes, reconstructing responsibility and accountability for this historic injustice within the 'classic' welfare state would be far more difficult.

Conclusion

The BASW archive held at the MRC enables a view of the welfare state otherwise unreachable from available sources. I have used it to reconstruct an understanding of the 'classic' welfare state which existed from 1945 to 1974/76 from within. It is not a history from above, of social democracy, political consensus and government intrigue which are the mainstay of histories of social work and social policy. Nor is it a history from below, of social history, community and ordinary people's experiences of the welfare state in postwar society. Looking from within allows the two to be brought together in the same frame of reference, rather than relying on the terms of sources to dictate their scope. Looking within explores what welfare does or does not do, who it is and is not for, and how it was understood and realised by different people involved from top to bottom. Across my research exploring 'problem families' and the complexities of professional competition, the governance of health services through the lens of a single specialism, and the historical forced adoption of children of unmarried mothers, the records of the MRC are invaluable in providing an inside perspective at crucial points of mediation and contingency, but also reflecting social work as everyday, routine work. Ultimately, the view from within revealed by these sources exposes the emergent, contested, and complex relational dynamics of mundane policy

and practice which shaped the 'classic' postwar British welfare state from 1945 to 1976.

Michael Lambert is a social historian of social policy in twentieth century Britain and its Empire, particularly in relation to child welfare. He has undertaken commissioned research or served as an expert witness for several government inquiries into historical abuse and harm across Britain. His first monograph, *Managing decline: governing the NHS in Liverpool, 1978-96* is forthcoming with Liverpool University Press.

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Endnotes

[i] Unless otherwise noted, all numeric citations refer to items within the Modern Records Centre (MRC) collections, at Warwick.

[ii] Numeric citations tagged TNA are from The National Archives, Kew.

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[vi] Annual report of the MOH for Blackburn, 1960, p. 7; Annual report of the MOH for Blackburn, 1966, p. 10.

[vii] Annual report of the MOH for Blackburn, 1964, p. 14.

[viii] MSS.463/EY/P1-P3766 covers her personal correspondence from 1905 to 1981 and MSS.463/EY/J1-JJ64 her diaries from 1917-80.

[ix] Professional correspondence is filed by subject. I was most interested in her material and exchanges relating to child care and the family for my work on 'problem families'. MSS.463/EY/A1-A27 covering 1908-78.

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Moving on from Manderley: Daphne du Maurier's short fiction

Setara Pracha

Department of English and Media, University of Buckingham, UK
Correspondence: setara.pracha@buckingham.ac.uk

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Abstract

This reflective article comprises a doctoral research journey for which the archives at MRC were pivotal and produced groundbreaking work, thus enabling the repositioning of a key literary figure from the twentieth century, Daphne du Maurier. The correspondence between the author and Victor Gollancz her publisher led to breakthrough moments connecting contemporary events to the genesis of the short fiction, and this showed du Maurier as an insightful critique of power dynamics in her times.

Keywords: Daphne du Maurier; Victor Gollancz; body gothic; The Alibi; Rebecca; pathology of desire

When I first came to Warwick University's Modern Records Centre (MRC), I was a fresh-faced researcher with little idea of what an archive was, let alone how to use one. I now know that without these institutions and their 'pixie' helpers, students and academics would never get their work completed, submitted and published. Although these hidden heroes of scholarship are traditionally thanked in thesis dedications, it feels good to explain how my research was enriched by their archival expertise and support. It was while studying at the MRC that I first realised my doctoral hypothesis held true and where I became certain about the success of my thesis. The excitement of finding a hidden gem in an archive cannot be expressed exactly when it happens – it is a library, and one must maintain an earnest silence – but that gleeful inner yelp from myself as a doctoral student still resonates, despite years since then spent lecturing.

Daphne du Maurier was not my first choice of research topic. In a Victorian-heavy English Department it made sense to examine periodicals from the nineteenth century, but the materials I found at the Bodleian Library did not enthuse and my literary passion led me elsewhere. On being asked to teach a module called Women Writers I delighted in finding new authors to showcase, ones that were unknown to my students, and merited more attention than the academy had awarded them. Du Maurier was one of those I reappraised for teaching, and I discovered that her reputation languished under the label of 'middle' or 'mezzo brow', with critics dismissing the quality of her writing, scorning her as a popular novelist capable of composing a ripping yarn and little else. As she composed the first gothic novel of the twentieth century – *Rebecca* can be read as a rewriting of both *Jane Eyre* and *Bluebeard* – I was baffled and determined to investigate what I felt was a misconception. So began my exploration of all things du Maurier, including her close relationship with Victor Gollancz, her publisher, mentor, friend and correspondent for many years. It was a desire for a greater depth of field knowledge that first took me to the MRC.

Some of the frequent letters between du Maurier and Gollancz are held at Warwick, and after a few pleasant phone calls with archivists keen to assist with my research quest, I ventured to see them for myself. My aim was to explore the influence Gollancz had on du Maurier's writing, as I knew their relationship extended beyond the professional and into friendship and that she also had a trusted editor in Sheila Hodges. As du Maurier's shorter fiction was commonly less regarded but of significant quality, it became the central focus of my research, and the materials I studied indicated how seriously du Maurier took her publisher's views.

I found the letters with many other useful items, and these were together with editions of the characteristically bright yellow books detailing

Gollancz publications. Gollancz and du Maurier's correspondence is couched in warm and expressive prose with many a du Maurier dash between ideas – as if her pen cannot contain the speed of her thoughts. They even led to her altering the gender of a character when Gollancz took issue with the plot of a short story entitled 'Monte Verità'. In an early draft, du Maurier went so far as to turn Anna's character into a man, but this was vetoed by Gollancz who had doubts concerning the sexual aspects of the story: 'I don't understand the slight implication that there is something wrong with sex', he wrote. Thus, Anna remains female but single-mindedly pursues her dream over the dreams of other, male characters, including her husband, Victor. (It may be a discreet compliment to her publisher that a major character has his name.) Gollancz's comment is quoted in Margaret Forster's biography of du Maurier, and I used it in my work, but it was sourced from letters in the British Library where there was an embargo on du Maurier's correspondence until 2023 (**Forster, 1993: 257**). Though disappointed over this research 'full stop', I knew I was going to graduate and be published long before the embargo ended and, thanks to my findings from the MRC archives, I was.

The missives between author and publisher form a dialogue framing an exchange of opinions on cultural, spiritual and political matters, highlighting both correspondents as enthusiastically engaged in issues of their day, with a keen emphasis on morality, religion and economics. Corporal punishment and Apartheid are two examples of the weighty issues covered in depth and the former is showcased at the denouement of 'The Alibi', a short story from du Maurier's 1959 collection *The Breaking Point*. To illustrate the point, it is useful to see exactly how the issue is woven into a tale of hubris, casual cruelty and a satisfying come-uppance for the main character.

'The Alibi's' plot concerns James Fenton, a would-be murderer who does not ultimately act out his violent plans and yet is eventually arrested for the crime of triple murder and sent to the gallows (the penalty for murder at this time). His chosen, but random, victim is Anna who lives a life of despair and loneliness as a dispossessed itinerant refugee, one of the many drifters through the wasteland of 1950s post-war Europe. The narrative is set during a decade framed by the murders committed by John Christie and others, of those lost and unmissed people disposed of within a domestic setting until their bodies came to light. Christie murdered eight women but was not caught and tried until another man, Timothy Evans, had been hung for the homicides. Du Maurier was fascinated by the issues surrounding these events and communicated her views to Gollancz, opinions subsequently immortalised in her ironically titled short story. The peripatetic Anna's final action is to (according to Fenton), complete suicide killing herself, her unborn child and her infant son, thus leaving him to face

the police, his wife, and finally the gallows. Gollancz and du Maurier debate the best punishment for such crimes in their letters, and while considering the possibility of Christ's views on the subject, du Maurier makes darker references to more appropriate punishments in a missive from 1955:

> *That wretched little man near Paddington who put all those women's bodies in cupboards a few years ago, I forget his name, wait a minute – Christie – must surely have been insane. (I think after being buried in the 1914 war. Psychiatric treatment might have cured him, I don't know, but he was hanged).* (**MSS.157/3/1/DM/1-43**)[i]

Gollancz sent his Cornwall-based author a regular series of newly published texts for review including his own books, among which was John Barlow Martin's Break Down the Walls, an account of the 1952 riots in the State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson. Du Maurier confesses her conflicted response with some candour, 'when I say enjoyed, I mean I was very interested, always am in anything to do with prisons' (**21.2.55, MSS.157/3/1/DM/1-43**). This macabre fascination with the darker aspects of human nature also comes across in her comments on high-profile murder cases, as in her mention of Haigh dissolving an old woman in a bath of acid, or a Mrs Roberts using rat poison on her 72-year-old employer to obtain money in a will. The details are processed and emerge as the genesis of plots, psychological analysis resulting in Old Testament punishment. To du Maurier, as judge and jury, there is:

> *an unnatural sort of greed [...] made them become murderers, or a menace to society. They chose their weapon to destroy, therefore it seems to me just that the same weapon should be used by them to create.* (**MSS.157/3/1/DM/12**)

Du Maurier also made requests of Gollancz for books on particular themes, 'I have a passionate interest always in medical or psychological matters, so if you have anything in that way, send it to me.' (**14.11.55, MSS.157/3/1/DM/1-43**). Gollancz's response was to send more books on morals and medicine to his author, delivered with 'immense love' (**MSS.157/3/1/DM/1-43**).

The topics under discussion range from the particular to the general. In one letter from du Maurier to Gollancz she dismisses the concept of the 'free world' as chittering cant citing the U.S.A. as obsessed with money and plumbing, and Russia as caught up in party doctrine. Her observation on the times is that 'the chaps at the top [are] dictating even now and the herd following'; sixty years later one wonders if much has changed. And yet there is a hopeful note, too. In outlining potential global disasters such as meteors and H-bombs she asks, 'What then is the ultimate answer to

fear? Love, of course, but how does one show it to greatest effect?' In this sober letter her general point is that against a general threat we, the 'inhabitants of the world', might get together and 'all unite to do what we can' (**MSS.157/3/1/DM/12**). In our post-pandemic world, these words seem oddly prescient.

In that period as an early year's researcher, it was gripping to 'eavesdrop' on the insights offered by two great minds of their generation on international politics and morality. The details I found in the correspondence provided the necessary impetus for my ambition to reposition du Maurier as an author of the highest quality, whose fiction offers a clear and topical commentary. Although this element of her fiction is subtextual, the dialogue in the letters reveals du Maurier's strength of opinion on what she regarded as important matters, and it was a short step from this to re-examining her short stories through a political and cultural lens. I knew this approach would both professionalise my research and hopefully reposition my author as someone to take seriously within the literary canon. There is an excitement about researching known only to those lucky enough to feel the definite sense of being on to something, and this inspiring moment came when I read du Maurier's letters containing her views on cultural values and morality and realised they saturated her texts. The confidence I drew from this enabled me to forge ahead with my critique of the scholarly field and inspired me to address the research gap with my own project.

After Victor Gollancz's death du Maurier continued to correspond with his daughter Livia, and these letters reveal that du Maurier was deeply affected by scholarly marginalisation. In fact, it haunted her own sense of authorial success, as her son Kits Browning described in an interview for the *Radio Times* in 2014 (**Browning & Dowell, 2014**). This was despite being awarded the title of Dame of the British Empire for her contribution to literature, and a loyal readership that devoured each new publication. In a letter to Gollancz's daughter, she mentions with some humility how, '[c]ertainly no author can present future scholarly appraisal of his or her work - though in my case I hardly warrant such attention' (**5.8.72, MSS.318/3/LIV/3**). In the respondent letter Livia adds a significant postscript: '[d]o not be so sure that your own work will not receive the accolade of scholarly attention one day' (**9.8.72, MSS.318/3/LIV/3**). I recall sitting in the MRC reading this PS with a smile, certain that my research project would meet with my subject's approval and finally admit her to the halls of academe as a respected writer of social commentary. My research subsequently enriched my teaching practice by adding a depth of context with the result that du Maurier's fiction became a regular favourite with undergraduate students. The first international conference on her work was held in Le Mans in 2019 and, having first encountered her texts as

undergraduates, postgraduate students now choose du Maurier as a research topic.

The archival materials provided an excellent source of intellectual seasoning to my chapters, grounding my observations in real world facts and authorial statements, without which much of my analysis might have read as opinion and not the high-level critical commentary which merits a PhD. It is testimony to my detailed study of secondary materials that during my viva my examiners commented on the strength of my research as its solid grounding in archival sources. My book, entitled *A Pathology of Desire in Daphne du Maurier's Short Stories* was recently published, and du Maurier's 1938 novel, *Rebecca,* is on the GCSE syllabus. This is an instance of authorial repositioning within the canon, something made possible by research supported by the archivists and the archives at the MRC.

Dr Setara Pracha is a Senior Research Fellow and Post-graduate Supervisor at the University of Buckingham. She was the first Ondaatje Scholar to Massey College, Toronto. Her research interests include Gender Studies, Identity and Otherness, and Diasporic Writing in twentieth-century fiction. She is currently working on Robert Browning's influence on Daphne du Maurier's work, and researching 'passing' as a literary trope for a forthcoming book. The research undertaken at MRC was published in book form as *The Pathology of Desire: Daphne du Maurier's Short Stories by* Lexington Books in 2023.

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Endnotes

[i] References in this format are to materials in the MRC's collections – see References for details of the relevant collection area.

Cycling and the British: A leisurely ride through the National Cycle Archive

Neil Carter

International Centre for Sports History and Culture, De Montfort University, UK
Correspondence: necarter@dmu.ac.uk
Twitter/X: @neil1carter
ORCID: 0000-0001-9686-3940

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Abstract

This paper is based on my presentation at the MRC's 50th anniversary conference. Firstly, it gives an overview of my book, Cycling and the British: A Modern History, which was published in 2021, and was heavily based on the MRC's National Cycle Archive. Secondly, the paper provides examples of some of the key records used in the book.

Keywords: cycling; archives; history

This paper is based on my presentation at the MRC's 50th anniversary conference. Firstly, it gives an overview of my book, *Cycling and the British: A Modern History*, which was published in 2021 (**Carter, 2021**), and was heavily based on the MRC's voluminous National Cycle Archive. Secondly, the paper provides examples of some of the key records used in the book.

Cycling and the British charts the shifting place of cycling in British society since 1870 when it was taken up by increasing numbers of people. Cycling is one word, but many things, and the book examines individual forms of cycling, including sport, leisure and transport, but it does not do so in isolation. Instead, it weaves together the separate and often disparate histories of cycling into a coherent whole. In addition to histories of sport, leisure and technology, the book utilises political culture, material culture and the history of transport with a particular focus on the motor car to show how a culture of motoring shaped – and continues to shape – cycling in Britain. In capturing cycling's changing meanings since the nineteenth century, it seeks to understand why people rode – or didn't ride – bikes and who these people were.

The arc of British cycling's history roughly followed that of western Europe. Up to the 1950s, there was an initial omnipresence of the bicycle, only for it to be superseded by motoring. From the 1970s, cycling's environmental qualities were increasingly promoted, which resulted in the bicycle's increasing political importance. This history has been underpinned by various common themes, including: the impact of motoring; traffic policies implemented by the state; the extent to which cycling and motoring have reflected changing social relations; the role of bicycle organisations, both politically and culturally; and the influence of elite sport in shaping cycling cultures more generally.

Despite general commonalities, there were significant differences in the British experience compared to its European neighbours. In the Netherlands and Denmark, for example, cycling as a form of transport was embedded in the nation's infrastructure, and has characterised their cycling cultures since the early twentieth century. By contrast, Britain was one of the first countries, along with America and Germany, to marginalise cycling by prioritising motoring; a process that owed much to reasons of social status regarding each form of transport. Belgium, France, and Italy, meanwhile, have used cycling as a sport to shape their national cycling identity. In Britain, however, this process was largely absent.

More recently, cycling in Britain has been characterised as a marginal, largely male activity and has carried negative overtones due to its image amongst the general public as an eccentric and unsafe activity. Over the course of its history, cycling has been associated with either low social status or the well-educated and Lycra-clad middle classes. As a

consequence, daily bicycle (or utilitarian) use has become a lifestyle choice and a politicised cycling activism and subculture has developed in opposition to the dominant car culture.

Cycling and the British is underpinned by four overlapping core ideas. The first is based on the notion that riding a bicycle has been a political act in its broadest sense. Most people who have ridden a bicycle have not consciously done so for political reasons – although a minority did. Instead, the book is more concerned with prosaic – yet still political – questions such as why do cyclists ride on some roads and why are there cycle paths? The act of riding and where it has taken place has been a product of shifting legal and political debates around cycling, which at various times have either bolstered or diminished its cultural status. Consequently, it explores British political culture and the extent of the state's role in shaping cycling's history.

The second idea is that the history of cycling has been bound up with the changing values of the middle classes – political, social, cultural and economic. It was the middle classes who not only created the modern world, but they did so in their own image. For much of its history cycling has been a mass activity, but it has been the middle classes who have largely shaped its direction and political discourse, which has stretched from the age of amateurism in the Victorian period to growing concerns over the environment by the late twentieth century.

Third, a history of cycling is also a history of the modern world, and the bicycle was an important agent in shaping it. The notions of modernity and the modern world are problematic for historians, given their teleological implications. Cycling, however, emerged in a period that was organised differently compared to what came before and what came after.

Finally, the changing social make-up of cycling, and how it shaped social identities. It is evident, almost a cliché, that the bicycle has been an agent for social change. The sheer visibility and act of riding a bicycle has demonstrated its potential to disrupt social relations to both those riding and those watching. Particularly for women, the bicycle has acted an emancipatory machine.

The book begins with the emergence of cycling as a growing and then popular activity during the Victorian period. Its first chapter examines how cycling became a middle-class recreation, especially for touring – a boom industry at this time – and, as consequence, how it reflected and reinforced middle-class values, especially amateurism. The Victorian period and Edwardian eras are also the setting for chapter two which looks at how the bicycle became part of contemporary popular culture. The main emphasis is on how the sport of cycling developed. The 1890s had

precipitated a boom in cycling more generally, but it was quickly followed by a crash.

The following four chapters cover the middle years of the twentieth century. This period has been largely neglected by historians of cycling, yet it not only witnessed the highpoint of cycling's popularity, but also its shifting political and cultural status. Chapter three examines the changing relationship between cycling and Englishness during the inter-war period through the prism of transport politics. Cycling's cultural status had been firmly fixed to a rural ideology, but motoring's growing integration into the fabric of British life challenged this ideal and thus cycling's association with it. The inter-war years more generally had witnessed cycling's second boom. Chapter four charts the birth of this popularity up until the mid-1950s and its consequences for cycling's role in British society. Cycling became a vital part of the outdoor movement as millions of people would ride their bicycle into the countryside for pleasure. Cycling clubs flourished, although even within this essentially democratic activity, there were class divides. Chapter five is devoted to sport and in particular road racing. The main point here is that developments were inextricably linked with cycling's political and cultural status. The development of the time-trial from the late nineteenth century up to the establishment of massed start racing by the 1950s is set in a narrative of tradition versus modernity. Chapter six is a standalone chapter on women and cycling, highlighting how cycling continued to be a symbol of female emancipation just through the sheer numbers of women who were now riding bicycles for both sporting and leisure purposes.

Boom is usually followed by bust and, following cycling's popularity in the mid-twentieth century, the book turns to the period from 1955-1975. In the age of motoring, cycling declined as a mass activity and especially as a form of transport, a victim of post-war modernity and planning. Cycling was forced to adapt to changing consumer tastes and look to niche markets. The flip-side to this marginalisation, though, was the relationship between the bicycle, politics, and environmentalism. The bicycle came to represent both an anti-modernist critique and a symbol of the bourgeoning environmental movement from the early 1970s. Linked partly to changing attitudes to the environment, and to a growing health and fitness industry, cycling became part of a new consumer boom in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The book's final chapter is devoted to elite sport. It charts the rise of British cycling from the sixties when it was still a largely amateur sport to its international dominance on the road and track in the early twenty-first century. Underpinning this transformation was a greater state investment in sport generally and the media's growing influence. With success,

though, came doubt as British cycling was unable to escape cycling's reputation for doping. Cycling's ubiquity, its many functions and meanings, and the ebbs and flows of its relationship with British society are at the heart of the book.

The research for the book did not completely rely on National Cycle Archive (**MSS.328**)[i]. Other archives were visited, including the National Archives at Kew and the Percy Stallard papers held at Wolverhampton local archives, while another MRC collection used extensively was the British Cycle and Motor Cycle Manufacturers and Traders Union (**MSS.204/1-2**). Neither did the research for the book include all the available archives. For instance, cycling records deposited in numerous local records offices and the Raleigh archive in Nottingham were not consulted. If anything, this gap highlights a rich history of cycling still to be discovered and recovered.

Nevertheless, the book leaned very heavily on the NCA. Out of the seven thousand plus items, I 'only' utilised twenty-four collections within the archive. Naturally, each collection contained varying degrees of depth. One of the largest was that donated by Derek Roberts (**MSS.328/N7**), which consisted of 76 boxes with 166 sub-folders of subject files, covering a multitude of themes and highlighting cycling's ubiquity. It was a useful place to start – for this historian anyway – as an *entrée* into the history of cycling more generally.

In general, the reliance on the NCA was greatest in the book's early chapters, covering the early history of cycling from about the 1860s to 1900. For many cycling historians, this period is the most exciting, certainly in terms of technology, with the different designs ranging from the 'bone-shaker' to the sociable and from tricycles to the ordinary (penny-farthing), before the mass production of the safety bicycle from the 1890s led to it becoming the dominant and standard model. It also ushered in the cycling boom of the middle years of that decade when cycling became a symbol of female emancipation.

As well as being the most exciting, the Victorian period was fruitful in terms of research, especially due to the explosion in cycling newspapers and the variety of sources it produced. For the first two chapters, the book explores these rich sources. The Derek Roberts' collection, for example, not only includes minutes of early Victorian cycling clubs, such as the London Bicycle club, but also contemporary advertisements of cycling machines and key individuals of the period, such as G. Lacy Hillier. One of the quirkiest was Albin, a music hall act, who performed tricks on an over-sized ordinary, again reflecting the popularity and novelty of the bicycle. Moreover, the Roberts' collection provides insights into the early development of cycling as a sport, from the initial focus on track racing to

the development of road racing, and how this form of the sport was based on timed handicapped events rather than 'scratch races', highlighting a peculiarly British approach.

Tourism was at the heart of cycling's early years, which led to the establishment of the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) in 1878. The NCA includes the full records of the CTC, including notably a full run of its journal, the *CTC Gazette* (**MSS.328/C**). The *Gazette* reinforced a middle-class identity among its members, providing insights and debates into touring and cycling etiquette, such as wearing the correct attire for cycling for both sexes (although most ignored this advice). The journal also 'collapsed time and space' through accounts of tours in Britain (and in Europe) by its members and acting as an agency for national identity more generally.

The middle chapters of the book leant heavily on the magazine *Cycling* (**MSS.328/NL/CYC**). It was the sole survivor of the early twentieth century re-structuring of the cycling media. As much as a repository of information for sporting and cycling developments as a leisure activity, this journal was a lens into attitudes towards cycling at the time. A number of its journalists, for example, represented the 'old guard' who had been present during the nineteenth century 'Golden Age', such as FT Bidlake and GH Stancer. Nostalgia and conservatism were prominent themes. In some ways this was unsurprising, as the growth of motoring was taking over the country roads that cyclists once had to themselves. *Cycling* acted as an organ for the cycling lobby as result. Further giving a cultural legitimacy to the nostalgia for a rural idyll was the inclusion in almost every issue of the illustrations of Frank Patterson from 1893 up to 1952 when he died. His sketches represented an extreme ruralism as he attempted to capture a particular ideal of Englishness, shaped in a pre-industrial age at odds with a landscape increasingly subject to an industrial economy. Another prominent theme was amateurism, or at least the opposition to commercialism infecting the sporting side from the perspective of cycling administrators. There was opposition to mass start racing as it was similar to the Tour de France, which was deemed overtly commercial. Instead, the time-trial was promoted as the 'true' form of the sport in Britain. There was constant debate over these tensions during the 1930s.

These tensions became evident with the establishment of the British League of Racing Cyclists in 1942 (**MSS.328/BLRC**), which explicitly organised mass start races, in face of opposition of the conservative cycling authorities. It caused a split within the cycling fraternity before there was a merger between the League and the National Cyclists' Union (**MSS.328/BU**), which was originally formed in 1878, to establish the British Cycling Federation (**MSS.328/BCF**) in 1959. The records of all these bodies are part of the NCA, not only providing minutes of meetings but,

through their language, insights into the relationship between cycling and society more widely. The 'split' was the focus of chapter five, highlighting how the marginal sport of cycling in Britain was attempting to modernise itself and ape its continental neighbours by organising a national tour. Moreover, the split was covered in the archives, such as newsletters and minutes, of numerous cycling clubs, giving a grass-roots perspective on this controversial issue. These records showed that, despite cyclists being largely from working-class backgrounds, many (especially the older generation) opposed the split, when it was promoted as a modern forward-looking initiative.

The focus for chapter four was the inter-war years, and especially the 1930s, which were another boom period for cycling with more people cycling than ever before. Young, mainly male, cyclists organised holidays and camping trips as well as nighttime rides on roads largely free of traffic. Sources such as the club magazines and minutes of CTC district associations gave insights into what associational life consisted of for cyclists, its implications for sociability, and the bonds of friendship it generated. The journals of some clubs during this period – and into the 1950s – highlight how cycling clubs acted as a place to meet members of the opposite sex; many would later marry and reports of their weddings would be carried in the club literature.

Another artefact that highlighted contemporary cycling cultures from this period was an unpublished memoir from 1987 written by Arthur Cook (**MSS.328/N57/3/1/5**). It was a rare retrospective on the life of an ordinary but committed cyclist, providing a lens into the history of cycling across most of the twentieth century. Cook wrote about his time as a member of the Comet club and how its first rule was to promote sport and sociability. For him and his cycling friends, a dress code and looking 'smart' was important on club runs, particularly for working-class cyclists who worked in heavy industry. Yet he also witnessed the changes that were taking place and the negative impact of motoring on cycling.

In writing the chapter on women and cycling, the archival material was more fragmentary, typical of writing women's history more generally. There were some standalone archives, such as the Women's Road Record Association (**MSS.328/N/10/6/F**) and an early women's only club, Rosslyn Ladies CC (**MSS.328/M/249**), but in general the disparate nature of the sources reflected how cycling was a male-dominated activity. The pages of the *CTC Gazette* were more fruitful than most sources for histories of female, albeit, middle-class cyclists. Typically, the stories of working-class cyclists were more difficult to uncover – a not unfamiliar issue for historians of women's history – although club journals were a useful source.

With the growth of motoring in the post-war years, cycling faced challenges as a form of transport. This tension was explored in chapter seven. One response was from Eric Claxton who attempted to incorporate the bicycle into British post-war planning. It was Claxton who was behind the construction of Dutch-style cycle paths in the post-war new town of Stevenage. Ironically, the building of cycle paths in the 1930s had been resisted by the cycling authorities; by the 1970s, in light of the threat of the car, they were promoting their virtues. Claxton's file (**MSS.328/N/12**) provides an insight into the bicycle's place in the changing built environment, which characterised post-war Britain.

Cycling has been at the heart of the shift towards environmentalism since the late twentieth century. The chapter on the relationship between cycling and the environment benefitted from two files, one on Friends of the Earth (**MSS.328/NL/FOTE**), and one on an influential figure from the 1980s, Don Mathew (**MSS.328/N/107**). Mathew had links to several bodies, including the CTC and Friends of the Earth, and advised them on the use of the bicycle in shaping environmentalism.

Thus, the National Cycle Archive formed the backbone of the book. However, there was still a lot left out as there was just not enough time to dig further. If I did, the book might never have been written. Researchers need to know when they have attained a critical mass of research and write up their findings! Thus, there was no examination of cycling companies, which might have given a more rounded picture of the bicycle industry as it shaped – and was shaped – by broader cycling trends. In addition, there were numerous individual collections and those of clubs and associations which were not looked at. The NCA is probably the most voluminous – and under-utilised – archive related to one particular sport and leisure activity.

Dr Neil Carter is a senior lecturer in the International Centre for Sports History and Culture at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. He writes on the history of modern Britain, specialising in the history of sport. He is the author of two other monographs: *The Football Manager: A History* (2006) and *Medicine, Sport and the Body: A Historical Perspective* (2012). He is currently working on a history of sport and penal institutions.

References

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Modern Records Centre

MSS.204/1-2, British Cycle and Motor Cycle Manufacturers and Traders Union

MSS.328, National Cycle Archive

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Endnotes

[i] References in this format are to materials in the MRC's collections – see References for details of the relevant collection area.