

THE SOCIALIST NETWORK OF CLUBS PUBS AND PEOPLE

Newsletter No. 2

Who Are We?

We are a network of people involved in a diversity of clubs, pubs and community organisations - from a top music venue, a city centre club with a reputation for real ale and an idyllic rural stop off for ramblers and cyclists. We get together from time to time to exchange ideas about matters we might have in common and about how best to promote our values of community and radical politics. We are not a membership organisation. Anyone with an interest is welcome to come along and clubs and other organisations do not need to affiliate.



We get together four times a year and after a short meeting, mainly to allow people to introduce themselves and say a bit about where they are from, we spend most of the time informally chatting and enjoying the hospitality of the host venue. It is usually a pleasant day out with the emphasis very much on making new friends and sharing experiences. Our next gathering will be at The Red and Green Club, 42 Bankwell Road, Milnsbridge, Huddersfield, HD3 4LU at 12 noon on Sat. 10 March, or you can email us at socialismnetwork@gmail.com.



We have not been going long and so far have been confined to Lancashire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire, so it was great to hear from Wes and Chris at Whitstable Labour Club all the way down in Kent. Wes emailed:

Maybe comrades from the Network might fancy dropping by on the occasion when they find themselves passing through the "blue hell" of Kent on their way to the EU. If comrades from the Network wish to they should feel free to get in touch. We are here:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheWhitstableLC>



Our History

The Last Clarion House

In a recent interview in 'The Independent' Jeremy Corbyn was asked what he did for fun. His reply was: "Fun! Life is fun. I love meeting people. I love the sense of community."

This just about sums up the outlook of the socialists in the Clarion movement in the decades leading up to the first world war, and at the last meeting of the Network there was a consensus that this history is incredibly important.

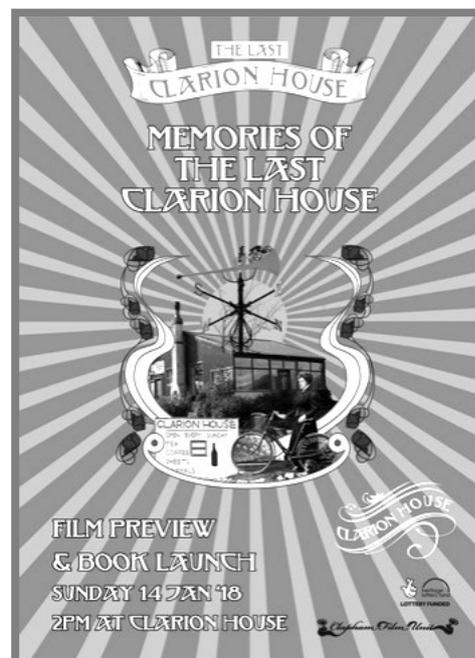
The history of Clarion is inspirational and not nearly well enough known. Based around the socialist weekly, 'The Clarion', founded in 1890, readers used to tour the country in Clarion vans, speaking and selling the paper (which in 1900 had a circulation of 30,000). They formed Clarion cycling clubs, Clarion rambling clubs, and Clarion choirs. Even today there are Clarion choirs such as the one based at Bolton Socialist Club, which continue the tradition.

A hundred years ago there were scores of Clarion Houses dotted across the North West, the Peak District, London and Scotland. Older ramblers in the Sheffield area still remember the Clarion House in the countryside not far from their city. Now Nelson Independent Labour Party* Clarion House, built in 1912, is the last one remaining and a film has been made about its history using the memories of people involved in the Nelson ILP Clarion House over the years.

*One of the first and biggest ILP branches in the country (and which built The Clarion).



Bolton Clarion Choir, based at Bolton Socialist Club, at the 2017 Wigan Diggers Festival



Importantly for all of us, the film shows us why it is that Nelson ILP Clarion House survived when others didn't. (Each generation actively recruits younger socialists to carry on the good work).

The Clapham Film Unit is a collective of film makers whose aim is to train and equip local people to tell their own stories on film. They organise screenings and hold an archive of work as well as providing advice on film making to the local community.

The Clapham Film Unit not only recorded the interviews and made the film but also got the film shown on the Community Channel. You can now view it on youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsQznVb3biM&feature=youtu.be>

This is a fantastic way to not only record our history but to educate and inform people about it.

The project also resulted in a book (see **New Books** below, which can be obtained from Clarion House. No charge but donations welcome.

Our History (cont.)

'On This Day in History'

By Derek Clarke



Glossop Labour Club's Facebook site now has a weekly feature called 'On This Day in History'.

The aim is to look back at individuals and events that have shaped our history - the history of working class people.

In recent times we've featured Rosa Parks Bus Protest 1st Dec 1955, The First Intifada 9th Dec 1967, Tom Paine's birth 18th Dec 1737, Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek 29th Dec 1890, Jack London's birth 12th Jan 1876.

As well as reporting important struggles and victories for working people future postings will also feature the lives of leading figures in the movement such as Mary Wolstonecraft, James Connolly, Antonio Gramsci, Kier Hardy and John McLean.

Each posting will be just a short paragraph on a topic which will then be linked to a website or websites where further information can be obtained.

From our experience over the last couple of months we have received a good number of positive responses and we would like to share our experience with other clubs in the Network. If you have a Facebook site we would be more than happy for you to cut and paste the information across from our site to yours.

In an era when many younger people are starting to engage in the political process it is important that they are made aware of the rich history of our movement. Understanding the battles that have been fought and the lessons that have been learnt gives them this insight.



'Strong and Stable - My Arse'

By Peter Hurst

Red Shed Television presented a series of satirical sketches at Wakefield Labour Club on 6th January, featuring a Magic Money Tree which bore fruit for the DUP, a Queen's Speech with a difference, and lifted the veil on Number 10 with the new star, Larry the Downing Street Cat. Adrian Bond joined the list of musicians travelling from London to make it big in Vicarage Street and Blackwater delivered their usual excellent performance. The show raised £285.



Yvonne Sibald of Wakefield and District Against Fracking said, "The show was an absolute knock out. Sharp, funny and professional. Eventually the money will go to two of the major legal challenges that the anti fracking movement is mounting against the government and Ineos."

The show will be performed at 'The Big Red Picnic', in aid of 'The Morning Star' on Saturday 2nd June, between 12.00-2.00 pm, at Clarion House, Jinney Lane, Newchurch-in-Pendle, BB12 9LL

Welcoming All Ages

Something which has affected all Labour and Socialist Clubs for decades is an ageing membership, to the extent that many clubs have tragically closed for good. However, for those that remain, there is new hope as Momentum and Young Labour meetings are bringing in younger people interested in left politics.



How do we build on this and encourage more younger people to use our facilities and help them feel at home, and that the Club is there for them as much as for anyone else? This was something which was raised at our last gathering and at the previous one.

The Red Shed are finding that encouraging young people to run their own music events is proving successful. Bolton Socialist Club also found this worked well for a while.

Bolton Socialist Club have also found environmental issues, in particular the anti-fracking meetings attracted a lot of young people. In addition Julia from Bolton writes: "At the club we have had two tea time family special music events, one with Roy Bailey, one with Robb Johnson. Young children have brought their families to the club for an hour of music. They have been very well attended."

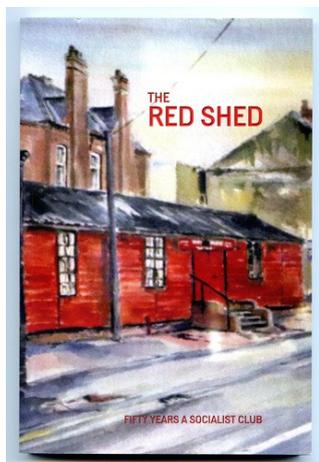
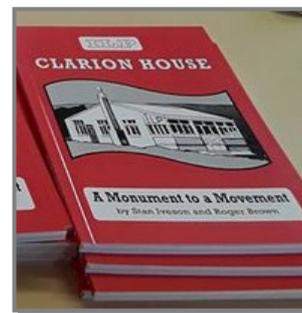
In Glossop two members went on a County Council course for volunteers working with children, following which they organised two graffiti art sessions in the Club for seven to thirteen year olds. Through this, a couple of young parents have also become involved. The next step will be to do a mural on a hoarding attached to the rear wall of the Club. Also in Glossop in September, Young Labour organised a gig, following which the Club now has a Young Labour member helping regularly with the sound.



New Books

Clarion House - A Monument to a Movement

A Monument to a Movement is republished as part of the book on the Clarion House produced by the Clapham Film Unit. Email enquiries via socialismnetwork@gmail.com or contact Clarion House, Jinney Lane, Newchurch-in-Pendle, BB12 9LL



The Red Shed - Fifty Years a Socialist Club

By David Hinchliffe

2016 saw Wakefield Labour Club celebrate the 50th anniversary of when a former army hut was put into place on a slum clearance site near to the centre of Wakefield to create a meeting place and headquarters for the local Labour Party and labour movement. The celebration of what was trumpeted as "50 years of a Socialist Shed" included the lengthy tour of Mark Thomas's "Red Shed" play and the publication of "The Red Shed", a book about the Club's evolution and contribution to political history both locally and further afield.

With editorial guidance from Ian Clayton and Ian Daley, the book draws from the memories and experiences of numerous folk involved with the Club during its first 50 years. The vision of those who established it in 1966 is celebrated, with the inclusion of a photograph of the formal opening by the Labour MP, Alice Bacon. Sadly, all on the picture are no longer alive but the book's stories enables many of them to come alive through the recollections of their contributions to the Club and labour movement.

As well as marking the ups and downs of the Labour Party's fortunes both locally and nationally, the book offers a detailed record of the Red Shed's role in supporting the struggles of working people from its establishment. It sent buses to London to support the Grunwick strikers in 1977. It offered a local base for the Wakefield Miners' Support Group during the last miners' strike and played a similar role for local unions involved in industrial action.

But, away from the serious business of politics, the Club offers award winning fine ales, live music, regular theatre from its own Red Shed Players and excellent conversation.

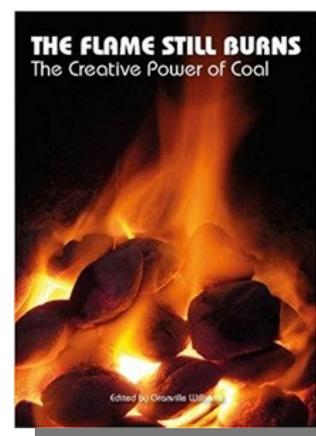
The book is available from Wakefield Labour Club, Vicarage Street, Wakefield priced £5 or you can email via socialismnetwork@gmail.com

The Flame Still Burns - The Creative Power of Coal

Published in 2017, and edited by Granville Williams, this book is a collection of 12 articles by different authors.

The description on the back sums up the theme of the book:

"The mines are closed but a prolific coal mining legacy is still vibrant. The desire of mining communities to preserve their cultural heritage grows stronger, the most powerful expression of this being the Durham Miners' Gala which goes from strength to strength. "The Flame Still Burns" explores this rich inheritance."



Joe Solo and the Hatfield Brigade

Joe Solo, who is well known to a number of Clubs in our Network, joined with ex mining families from Hatfield Main at Stainforth Central Club, South Yorkshire (plus Matt Hill from Glossop Labour Club) to record Joe's song "They Could not Break This Town". A limited edition CD was released in December 2017 with all money raised going to the DN7 Hardship Fund, supporting those struggling to make ends meet in the former pit villages of South Yorkshire. You can still see it on Youtube or download it on Amazon.



The following message is from Leslie Moore of the Hatfield Brigade.

"When we decided to record this song - which is going to be one of many planned each year until we have enough to fill a full album - we were mindful of the punitive measures continuing in many mining communities. We decided to sing about the fact that for all the deprivation, the poverty and punishment meted out across the coalfields as a result of our communities daring to stand and fight against the full might of the state for a decent future, we are still here."

Our spirit was never broken fully, our pockets were emptied, our futures stolen, our children cast into the wilderness, yet we are here in defiance singing, as it's in the most part all we can do to get our voice heard; but it's also a gesture to show our children and grandchildren they must never give up just like mine and your grandparents fought on. We will not sink into the history books as cowed and beaten people. They stole our jobs, our community cohesion and our pensions that we paid for. We fight on for justice and fair play from politicians that in the main do not understand the meaning of those words.

This song, although recorded in Stainforth, South Yorkshire - the home of Hatfield Main Colliery - could be the history of any community in the UK coalfields from Kent to the valleys of Wales, to our brothers' homelands in Scotland; for make no mistake, we are a brotherhood of miners who respected and defended each other throughout the generations.



Make this song your own. This is your village, your town, your community wherever working men defend their rights you will find the miners at your side."

Winter's Discontent

By John Newman

The Red and Green Club is reputed to be the oldest socialist club in the country. That 'accolade' doesn't matter too much, but it does indicate a noble history of activism and influence in the Colne Valley, where the first socialist MP, Victor Grayson, was voted to parliament in 1907

The Club is old, and so of course is the building. In more recent years it existed as the Milnsbridge Socialist Club, which was closed and then re-opened by some members as the Milnsbridge Social Club; and that in turn went under in ignominious circumstances. Whereupon a group of politically active members stepped in, took over the building and formed a co-operative to run it with the aim of preserving the building and the history.

We weren't able to acquire ownership, and the building is now Crown property, administered by the Official Solicitor. To acquire the building would involve raising thousands of pounds, and is not on our agenda. So we remain 'custodians'.

The main consequence of this situation is that we are unable to make any substantial improvements or raise money to. So we struggle on (sometimes) enthusiastically with poor heating, inadequate electrics and plumbing, an interior 'decor' that is not welcoming, and some (minor) structural problems.

This makes the winter season at the Red and Green something to endure. But we've carried on through some of the recent cold snaps undaunted, with the monthly story telling session and regular Labour Party meetings taking place.

Our programme of events is scaled back over the winter months, but just before the Xmas period a local musician, who had contracted and then come through a cancer illness, organised a fund raising evening for cancer research, and laid on a programme of diverse bands and solo musicians who filled the hall so to speak

and brought sound and light to the darkness of a late December evening. And boosted the bar takings. . . our main source of income.



Then there was a lull in the January dog days after Xmas and New Year, until, on Friday 19th the building became packed with the politically active and interested to listen to a one woman show with the startling title 'The Lynching'.

It's the story of Jackie Walker, a long standing Labour Party member and vice-chair of Momentum, who has been suspended from the Party, supposedly for anti-semitism.

This is not the forum in which to discuss this issue, important though it is. But Jackie decided to write a play about her life and politics leading up to this episode, and initially took it to the Edinburgh Fringe festival, before touring the country.

The performance is powerful and convincing, as she runs through her eventful and at times tragic early years and gives a powerful insight into the racism and prejudice she and other black people have, and still, endure. Jackie doesn't duck any of the concerns and controversies, and after the performance, spends time answering questions and discussing the issues raised with the audience. The evening was organised by Labour activists, and if you want some up front, head on politics at your venue, contact her through her Facebook page.

Winter's Discontent (cont.)

On January 24th we held our AGM. It was the usual informal and anarchic affair, and having got through the formal agenda we discussed and satisfactorily resolved some of the issues facing the club and the building during '18.

Our events co-ordinator, Sam, will be moving away from the area. This role is so important, and we've been grateful for his resilience in pulling together the programme and ensuring volunteers are around to serve at the bar and generally make events run to plan. Thanks Sam.



The assembled members kept their coats on throughout the meeting, and while we will surely have to withstand more of winter's meteorological discontent, spring will not be far behind.



Walks From the Train Network

It was suggested at our last get together that occasional walks led by members of different clubs in their area might be an enjoyable way of meeting and socialising.



Yorkshire Dales

Soon after, Mark, from The Red Shed, emailed to say he would be interested in arranging a series of walks in the spring for the benefit of comrades East and West of the Pennines. His particular interest is in Saturday walks from the train network, such as from the Settle-Carlisle and Calderdale lines, for all ages and abilities. Perhaps interested comrades could get in touch with Mark. If you email socialismnetwork@gmail.com the message will get passed on.

Meanwhile Bob, from Clarion House, will be leading a walk from Nelson Railway Station at 11.30 on Saturday 24th March (about eight and a half miles, but can be reduced if necessary) and Gwyneth, Angela and Ella will be leading a walk from Glossop station at some point (date still to be arranged).

In 1906 two of the founders of Glossop Labour Club, Abel Harrop and Billy Hollins, were respectively Secretary and President of the Trades Council.

Back to Our Roots

By Gwyneth Francis

In the nineteen fifties when Terry Revell, currently a member of High Peak Unite Community Group, ex Secretary of the Club and former Labour Councillor, first came into the Club as a 15 year old apprentice, he remembers that, at that time, "every trade union in Glossop used to meet in the Club"

The eighties, of course, saw the Miners Strike and for the best part of a year Glossop Labour Club was the headquarters of the Miners Support Group. The Trades Council met in the Club until it finally folded in the early nineties, but from that time on, for twenty years, there was no trade union presence to speak of in the Club at all.

Until, that is, a couple of years ago when the then Unite Community Organiser for the East Midlands, David Condliffe, organised the handful of individual Unite Community members into High Peak Unite Community Group (soon to be a branch when we reach 50 members).

High Peak Unite Community Group

Now, once again we have trade unionists using the Club as a base with a thriving, active, local Unite Community Group.



January 2016 - The Launch of High Peak Unite Community in the Club

For anyone who isn't aware, Unite Community is

part of Unite the union and enables those not in work, or who are retired or self employed to be involved in national trade union campaigns and to campaign on local issues.

In two years our activities have included Members meetings, public meetings, supporting the FBU over cuts to the local fire service, participation in national demonstrations and national days of action, two public showings of "I Daniel Blake", following which we are organising support for those affected by Universal Credit and sanctions (we may also at some point have a drop-in at the Club). We have supported the teachers in their fight against education cuts and academies and will be showing the film "Dispossession - The Great Social Housing Swindle". In addition we are planning an outdoor event in the town square with music, speakers and stalls and a May Day concert "Songs of Struggle" in the Club, drawing on local talent.

It's great for the Club to have a trade union presence again and really makes a difference to the political atmosphere. And it's great for the Unite Community group to have a base - somewhere to display literature, to drop off and pick up leaflets and placards, and to meet and drink socially after meetings or activities.



'They Walked on Water'

A play about the 1968 Rugby League Challenge Cup Final and one man's search for the truth

Obsession
Depression
Revolution
and tinned salmon

1968 was a year mass revolt swept the world and threatened the very foundations of the capitalist system. Alongside the revolutionary events of Paris there were mass movements in Mexico, in Indonesia, China, Pakistan, where workers and peasants revolted.

But for Dave Hinchliffe 1968 meant his first pilgrimage to Wembley following his beloved championship-winning Trinity. Little did he suspect that this game would change his life and the very future of the club he loves so deeply.

The play tells the story of the players, officials and the fans who went to the final and addresses life's big questions such as: if we have to make our own meaning in a cold, empty universe - who would try to do it by becoming a Rugby League referee?

Written by Peter Hirst
from the book by David Hinchliffe
original music written and performed by Adrian Bond



If you would like to go on our mailing list please contact The Secretary, The Socialist Network of Pubs Clubs and People, socialismnetwork@gmail.com

The Red Shed Players are a community theatre group, some say Wakefield's Premier Marxist-Leninist Panto group. Some say anarcho-syndicalists in daft hats.

We are based at The Red Shed Wakefield, aka Wakefield Labour Club. For 25 years we have entertained the masses (or tried to) with a quirky blend of agitprop, biting satire, surreal imagery, video, music, existentialist philosophy, Brechtian direction, Marxist-Leninist politics and a few carefully hidden jokes.

'They Walked on Water' is the first full length play by the Red Shed Players and is both serious and funny. To book the play contact us through our website (below) and if you want a preview it will be showing at the following venues in April and May:

7th April Stanley Rangers 7.30
21st April Wakefield Library 1.30
4th May Sharlston Rovers ARL Clubhouse 7.30
5th May Wakefield Labour Club 7.30
12th May Heritage Quay, Huddersfield 1.30
13th May Headingley evening ticket details TBA by Leeds RLFC

For more information go to <http://www.redshedplayers.co.uk>

