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COMMUNIQUE

CWU
The communications union

UNION LEARNING REPS EVENT EDITION

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WELCOME TO CARDIFF

Once the beating heart of Wales' political uprisings, the capital city is now a centre for learning too



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THE REAL “BIG SOCIETY”

BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY

This issue of *Communique* will coincide with the CWU’s National ULR Networking Event, this year held in Cardiff. The workers of Wales have a proud history of trade union activism – among them was Aneurin Bevan.

One of 10 children born into a mining family in South Wales, he did poorly at school and went down the mines aged just 13. He joined the South Wales Miners’ Federation, who sponsored his scholarship to the Central Labour College, and while there he took to reciting William Morris, to help him overcome a persistent stammer. He was elected to Parliament in 1929 where he became an eloquent speaker and champion of the workers. In the 1945 Labour Government he was made Minister of Health,



overseeing a programme of social housing and, of course, creating the National Health Service – in the face of continued opposition from the Conservatives.

A man who was failed by his school education, improved himself with the help of his trade union – and his achievements live on to this day. That is what can be achieved.

In this issue of *Communique* you’ll meet people whose lives have been transformed by education, and ULRs whose imagination and perseverance maintain and improve learning opportunities when education, and many other public services, are paying the price for the casino banking of the free market. This is the real “Big Society” – something that has lived in trade union values since their inception and which still run through our veins and in our hearts.

Educate, agitate, organise

TRISH LAVELLE
HEAD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

By the time you read this issue of *Communique*, we will have a much clearer idea of what our funding future will hold. But as we go to print, news of the extent of the ConDem cuts in education is only beginning to filter through and we expect that CWU projects and services that were previously funded will either cease to be funded or will suffer significant cuts. Further, it is anticipated that those services in adult education that remain fully funded will be re-focused to meet the needs of a pro-employer agenda, and education or training that does not fit this narrow agenda will be a low priority.

Our recent regional learning committee officers meeting in Belfast, heard from our sister union in Ireland about the draconian cuts they have endured in education and how they are rising to this challenge. It was an enlightening and sobering exchange which shone a light on what we may expect to happen in the UK. However, I left Belfast feeling more inspired than dejected, because the trade unions in Dublin are working together to protect and deliver education through innovation, solidarity and re-invention. Those of us who remember life as a trade unionist under the last Tory administration will recall how we were forced to change the way we worked in order to challenge and circumnavigate the many anti trade union measures used to attack us. This does not mean that we danced to their tune – far from it. In fact, I doubt that the organising model of trade unionism would have come to the fore in the 1990s had we not been forced to re-assess the role of trade unions, listen to our members’ priorities and recognise the need to organise at grassroots level or die.

To be clear, nobody wants cuts; the CWU is far from complacent and will campaign hard against them, but sometimes adversity can be the mother of invention and we will use this challenge as an opportunity to define what education our members and activists need and how we are going to provide it in this new climate. Charles Darwin said: “It is not the biggest, the brightest or the best that will survive, but those who adapt the quickest”! As we face a new, harsher environment we will have to change and adapt our methods without sacrificing our principles. This won’t be easy, but I am confident that this union has the best organised learning activists and structures in the movement to prepare us for this. Never has the slogan ‘Educate, Agitate, Organise’ been more apt.

T. Lavelle



Jon delivers a first class service to his members

South East No3 branch lead ULR Jon Weeks has been integral in establishing learning schemes for his branch

[PROFILE]

"It's not about me, it's about the members," is the typically modest response from Jon when he's asked if we can use his story in *Communiqué*.

Jon Weeks, lead ULR for the South East No3 branch, has achieved a lot in a short space of time but is determined to do even more for his members.

"I'm not worried about egos, or who does what, as long as the members get the courses they want when they want them," he says.

"I only feel I have achieved something when the members

achieve their goals and fulfil their potential."

Jon, who also runs courses in his St. Leonards' mail centre, is currently running French and maths courses in Tonbridge after a successful learning event in July.

The French course is funded through the European Social Fund and is free of charge to the students, and the maths course is funded by SFL.

Jon, who is assisted in Tonbridge by Shirley Long, is determined to get learning going throughout his branch's area and in all the centres they represent.

Joe Showler, South East learning project

worker, said: "Jon devised a strategy to get learning established in Tonbridge by September, which he has achieved.

"Shirley has only been a ULR for about six months and is already an integral part of the branch's learning agenda."

He continued: "Both of them are extremely capable and competent ULRs whose enthusiasm for learning is proving very effective.

"However, both of them are very modest about their accomplishments."

Jon summarised his approach to learning: "The members are first and foremost in everything I do as a ULR. We are an inclusive union with everyone working together.

"If I can play a part in members' development and help them through my support as a ULR then that is reward enough for me."

ON TRACK WITH THE CWU

The Key2learn centre in the Glasgow Mail Centre has introduced an academic preparation programme that supports learners in their bid to succeed in higher education.

Delivered free of charge, in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian

University, the On Track Project is for learners who wish to gain

the necessary skills required for Open University and university courses. Christina MacKinnon said: "The On Track course was really helpful. I enjoyed learning about how to do essays and the tutors were really good at explaining things to us. Going on the On Track course has made me want to take learning to the next level."

The introduction of the programme has helped most of the 34 learners take advantage of Open University openings at the Key2learn centre.



Glasgow learners get tips on accessing higher education



Shirley Long and Jon Weeks
Tonbridge LAW Day in July 2010



Paul Newsham ULR from North Lanc and Cumbria who took part in the convoy

CWU humanitarian convoy brings smiles to children

CHARITY WORK

It was full steam ahead for CWU Humanitarian Aid (CWUHA) convoy this year, when it visited Moldova.

Paul Newsham and Ray Atkinson, from the North Lancashire and Cumbria branch, were among the passengers, having already travelled on three of the last four convoys.

Because both members were involved in the union's education programme, they asked that the aid raised be put towards schools and educational institutions.

As Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, its schools are also in a bad state and, apart from furniture

and equipment, many other items were collected and distributed by the convoy, such as washing up liquid, shampoo, beds and mattresses, toothpaste and toothbrushes, sanitary towels, clothes, textbooks, toys, pencils, and whiteboards.

During their visit, and since their return, Paul and Ray have talked about the plight of the children and their schools and what could be done to continue to support them.

The most obvious solution is to support the continuation of education of the children up to 18, which would enable them to gain essential skills needed for them to

make their way in the community.

Paul and Ray reported that one of the schools had a couple of outbuildings that could be converted into classrooms, which could then be utilised to deliver these skills, but clearly it would need to be financed and managed properly in accordance with the country's or region's education guidelines.

The CWUHA have a number of ideas to raise money, but if any branch or learning centre would like to get involved please get in touch.

● If you would like to know more about the work carried out by CWUHA please look at our website www.cwuha.org

Never judge a book by its cover

PERSONAL STORY

Diane Hutchinson, lead ULR Darlington, makes regular trips to York for regional meetings and training, and a chance meeting on one of her trips made a big impression.

During those visits she has, on many occasions, passed a woman called Kathy and her dog.

Kathy was often to be found sitting reading a book, and Diane thought this would act as a great inspiration for people to read; if Kathy could read to escape her difficulties in life then everybody could. Kathy told Diane that just because of her situation she did not want people to think that she wasn't interested in bettering herself.

After meeting several times on her

route to the regional meetings, Diane took a photograph of Kathy (below) and entered it into a competition staged by the Workers Education Authority (WEA). She won first prize.

“Kathy was often to be found reading”

The WEA sent Diane book tokens to give to Kathy but Diane was unable to find her; she appeared to have moved on.

However, Diane was determined find her. Next door to the North East regional office was the Salvation Army and Diane wondered if anyone at the centre would recognise Kathy. They did; and told Diane that Kathy now lived in the area and arranged for her to collect the book tokens.



Alirio Garcia rallies the CWU Cyclo Sportive riders



CHARITY RIDE

Once again CWU activists showed fantastic support for international solidarity at the fourth Cyclo Sportive.

Whether cycling 29, 50 or 90 miles, all the riders set off at speed after an inspirational opening address by Colombian Agricultural Workers Union Leader Alirio Garcia.

Alirio described how Colombia is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a

trade unionist; since 2007, 166 Colombian trade unionists have been killed, and explained how important it was to keep the issue of human and trade union rights in the spotlight through awareness raising, and by trade unions putting pressure on governments.

CWU head of education Trish Lavelle paid tribute to the great courage that he and his comrades had shown in the face of such adversity.

"Alirio was imprisoned on false charges for almost a year and was only released in March after an international campaign," she said. "Right now his wife, Rosalba, who is also a union activist is also imprisoned without charge. Their crimes: to educate their members."

166 ...trade unionists killed in Colombia

She added: "We are free to meet here as trade unionists this morning but in Colombia just attending a union meeting risks imprisonment, abduction or even assassination. Today, we will cycle up the rolling hills of the

Cotswolds but in Colombia they have a mountain to climb for decent human rights. We have a duty to support them."

Along with members from National Clarion 1895 and cyclists from Unison, UCU and the GMB, the CWU team completed the ride and raised more than £1,000 for the CWU International Development Fund.

To make a donation to help support the IDF's work contact John Baldwin, email: jbaldwin@cwu.org.

● For more information on the CWU Cyclo Sportive or to sign up to receive information on future CWU cycling events please contact Trish Lavelle at: tlavelle@cwu.org. To find out more about the situation in Colombia and how you can help please visit www.justiceforcolombia.org

1st class learning centre to close

CLOSURE

Following the North West Mail Centre review, the Liverpool APC, at Copperas Hill, is set to close before the end of October.

The first class learning centre has been one of the outstanding successes of the learning agenda in the region. It has averaged more than 100 members a year, who have achieved qualifications in numeracy, literacy, ITQ, ECDL, ECDL Advanced, CLAIT, CLAIT + digital photography, among others.

In addition, it has seen ULRs achieve NVQ level 3 & 4 IAG, Adult Learner Support level 3 & 4, Dyslexia Support, English A level, Cert Ed (teaching qualification) and Teaching Certificate in Subject Specialism (Literacy).

The learning centre is going to be a loss to its members in Liverpool, and the CWU is looking at options in the city, but fortunately, all the ULRs will be moving to the new mail centre in Warrington and plans are in place to open a learning centre on site.

Showing Road Respect

CAMPAIGN

The Northumbrian police-backed Road Respect campaign visited the British Telecom centre in Longbenton recently, in an event that promoted safer driving.

Organised by Christine Carruthers, the event aimed to promote the

consequences of not driving safely. The BT centre employs 1,500 workers, a reasonable percentage of whom are young drivers. Indeed, the Road Respect van prompted some suspicion due to the fact it resembles a speed camera van but once the interactive simulator had been tried and



tested, word soon spread and a queue formed!

The simulator, suitable for both drivers and non-drivers, gave a fascinating insight into how driving

suffered under the influence of alcohol.

Comparisons were made with driving sober and driving while twice over the drink drive limit.

Andy goes to Holyrood to promote learning



Hugh Henry MSP, Cathie Craigie MSP, Graham Cross (PCS learner), Karen Whitefield MSP, Donna Brady (PCS learner), Andrew Gear (CWU) and Marlyn Glen MSP

LEARNING OPS

Trade union learners were invited to attend the Scottish Parliament recently to meet Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) to highlight the continuing learning

opportunities made available by having trade unions in the workplace.

Among those attending was CWU member Andrew Gear, from Edinburgh Mail Centre, who was representing a CWU group of

learners currently studying "Understanding Health" with the Open University, a course provided to learners through a joint OU and Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) initiative.

Since the courses

opened in 2006, Andrew has undertaken several learning opportunities at the mail centre's key learning centre.

"Taking part in my first learning opportunity since leaving school more than 25-years-ago has given me the confidence to carry on studying," he said. "As soon as I complete the Understanding Health course I intend to continue with another course.

"It's something I would never previously have

“It is great to see Andrew grow in confidence”

thought that I would either have the confidence to take part in, or think that I had the ability to do."

Edinburgh Mail Centre-based ULR Davy Moody said: "Andrew is a perfect example of how Union Learning can work for an individual. His commitment and determination to the courses have been a real tribute to him.

"From a personal point of view it is great to see Andrew grow in confidence as a direct result of the learning experiences provided."

Shropshire and Mid Wales are strictly come belly dancing

CLASSES

Members of the Shropshire and Mid Wales branch have been 'getting jiggy with it' thanks to new belly dancing classes.

ULR Sally Joyner set up the classes after discovering that a few of the ladies in her workplace wanted to some informal ways to learn and keep fit.

With seven members suggesting they would like to have a go, Sally got the ball rolling and arranged for the belly dancing tutor to come in at lunchtime. Tutor Jenna charged £3 per session, with each session lasting half an hour, and for a period of five weeks.

"Keeping the sessions short and not having to

commit to a long period proved to be a great way to get a taste for belly dancing," said Sally. "If someone didn't like it, they could simply arrange to not come to anymore sessions."

Sally said the novice dancers all started off not really knowing anything but quickly learned the basics, and Jenna gave the girls moves that they could practice at home.

"It was an enormous laugh, and in fact we spent an awful lot of time laughing rather than dancing," said Sally.

However, by the end of the second session the ladies were making up their own routines, and after the first five weeks they requested that the course carry on. After

completing the follow-up course, it's still going strong!



Learning Curve waves goodbye to Ron Evans

TRIBUTE

The re-organisation of mail centres in the North West has marked the loss of the Crewe APC learning centre.

The Learning Curve centre has been delivering courses for the last five years and has a good track record in helping members. Some of the courses included numeracy, literacy, Polish, British Sign Language, NVQs and digital photography.

Sadly, lead ULR Ron Evans has decided to leave the business rather than travel to Warrington each day. As a stalwart of the learning agenda, he has always been ready to try new initiatives; encouraging people on the digital photography course to set up their own photography club.

Ron was supported in the centre by two ULRs, Meryl Ridgeway and Graham Bebbington, and

between them all they did a great job for the members in Crewe and the wider branch area.

Our best wishes and thanks go to Ron, Meryl and

Graham and we wish Ron well in whatever he chooses to do in the future. We have a feeling we have not seen the last of him just yet!



Welcoming a different class of learning centre



Students of the Greater London combined branch receive certificates in computing

COMPUTING

Both Edmonton learning centre and the recently opened Ilford learning centre have become part of the newly formed Greater London combined branch.

The new Ilford learning centre, which is jointly supported by the CWU and BT, had an open day on September 16 where students were presented with certificates

for completing a 26-week Information Technology Qualification (ITQ) 3, which gave them the skills and confidence needed to use computers and software packages.

26 ...number of weeks on ITQ 3 course

The course used online tests to achieve passes for them to obtain a certificate from the British Computing Society, and the presentation of the certificates was done by a senior BT manager.

It's hoped a permanent learning centre may be established in Southwark, London, soon.

[[WWW.CWU.ORG](http://www.cwu.org)]

Learning funds for Scotland

CWU SCOTLAND

The CWU in Scotland has successfully gained funding from the Scottish Union Learning Development Fund for a one-year project that focuses on developing learning opportunities.

The project, which commences in April 2011, will support learning opportunities fully funded through the SUL ESF fund for learning.

The CWU's Learning@Work project will specifically focus on Royal Mail's three Mail Centres at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, six delivery offices in the West and East of Scotland, and on the BT ABH site and O2 Skypark site in Glasgow.

Additionally, the project can also work in other sites in the Lowlands area of Scotland to deliver fully funded learning to CWU learners.

This is the first time the CWU in Scotland will have access to considerable funds to provide free workplace courses for members.



WELCOME TO CARDIFF

Learning in Wales introduces its fabulous capital city and describes its multi-cultural learning policies

Caerdydd (Cardiff) derives from the Brythonic words meaning “the fort on the Taff”.

Archaeological evidence shows Neolithic people settled in the area 15,000 years before either Stonehenge or the Great Pyramid were completed, and throughout Welsh history, literature, language and culture combined with a sense of national identity and independence.

The Welsh heroic tradition of Taliesin, Aneirin and Arthur retains cultural potency to this day. *Cyfraith Hywel* (“the Law of Hywel”) gave legal status and property rights to women – which did not become part of English law for another 1,000 years.

William Salesbury, who published books on linguistics, proverbs, science, law and religion in both English and Welsh, wrote: “If you do not wish to be worse than animals . . . obtain learning in your own language.” Richard Price’s *Observation on the Nature of Civil Liberty* supported the American and French Revolutions and argued that all communities had the right

to govern themselves. David Williams’ *Letter on Political Liberty* argued for religious freedom, universal education and voting reform.

Gritty revolution

Coal and iron drove the development of Wales during the industrial revolution. Investment in the south was not shared in rural areas, and, for a time, immigration into South Wales was unmatched anywhere except in the United States.

Cardiff dock became the commercial centre for Wales, and Cardiff gained city status in 1905 and was proclaimed capital in 1955. Today, in addition to Welsh and English, 94 different languages are spoken in Cardiff.

In the 19th century South Wales became a centre of political activity. The Merthyr Rising is said to have seen the first use of the Red Flag in Britain. Lord Melbourne called South Wales “the most formidable district in the kingdom”.

In 1839, more than 5,000 Chartists marched on Newport where troops shot into the crowds, killing and wounding many. The Taff

Above: Redeveloped Cardiff Bay has become a political and cultural tour de force

Above middle: Cardiff Millennium Stadium plays host to international rugby tournaments and major music concerts

Vale dispute saw the courts support the employer against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in a move that could have bankrupted the unions. The South Wales Miners’ Federation formed an alliance with the Labour Party that saw Keir Hardie elected as MP for Merthyr Tydfil.

“ Lord Melbourne called South Wales ‘the most formidable district in the kingdom’ ”

Under this political pressure David Lloyd George’s Liberals supported reforms such as shorter working weeks, acknowledging trade unions in collective bargaining, legislation reversing the Taff Vale judgement, old age pensions and National Insurance.

Despite this, workers still died in totally preventable accidents at work; the explosion at Senghennydd killed 439 miners, and during the Tonypany dispute Winston Churchill, sent in troops against strikers.

94

The number of different languages spoken in Cardiff



Learners from CWU Learning Centre Newport (BT) receiving their OCN Certificates for Welsh. John Griffiths AM (Assembly Member) presented the certificates

Welsh workers increasingly identified with the Labour Party. By 1922, Labour held half the Welsh seats and Welsh influence on the Labour Party has remained strong.

In addition to Keir Hardy, party leaders Ramsay MacDonald, James Callaghan, Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock were elected from Welsh constituencies. And of course Anurin Bevan was the great architect of the NHS. In 1999, the Labour government passed legislation forming the Welsh National Assembly, now based in Cardiff Bay. Among other things, the assembly is responsible for education and manages the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF).

Dysgu yn Cymru – Learning In Wales

The multi-cultural population of Wales is reflected in the learning required and the way it is delivered. Language courses offered include Spanish and French, British Sign Language, Q'oranic Arabic – and, of course, Welsh.

Learning in Wales offers courses in both

the north and south with approximately 150 members currently enrolled. Members have gained qualifications in digital photography, basic IT, CLAIT and ECDL. We also offer e-learning through Learndirect and The P@ce, providing flexible delivery where numbers or attendance patterns make traditional courses difficult.

Courses such as floristry, pottery, netball coaching and deer stalking prove how flexible and imaginative Welsh ULRs can be.

The most recent project, *Ymlaen Gilan Gilydd* (Forward Together), is working towards achieving sustainability, and Wales National Learning Committee (WNLC) and a strong network of active ULRs are developing themselves to ensure they can deliver the best learning opportunities to members.

Below: Learners from Penarth Road Learning Centre Cardiff (RM) receiving their CLAIt certificates



Learning goals

Qualifications members have achieved or are working towards:

- Joanne Deans, Secretary of the WNLC – Certificate in Learner Support.
- Sally Joyner, Chair of the WNLC – Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS), NVQ in Information Advice & Guidance (IAG), Dyslexia Awareness and Guidance and British Sign Language.
- Barbara Morgan, South Wales – PTLLS, Certificate in Learner Support and Cert Ed.
- David James, South East Wales Amal – Certificate in Learning Support.
- Sammy Singh, South East Wales Amal – IT Practitioner and ECDL.
- Martin McNally, North Wales and the Marches – IAG, Certificate in Learner Support, ECDL & ECDL Advanced.
- James Mulligan, North Wales and the Marches – IAG, PTLLS and ECDL.
- Ady Prins, North Wales and the Marches – IAG, ECDL & ECDL Advanced, Cert Ed – working towards BA.

LEARNING TAKES OFF AT HEATHROW

South East No5 branch lead ULR **Parminder Kaur** and her students celebrate passing their ECDL level 1 course at a Langley certificate presentation event

A presentation event for the high-achieving students of the South East No5 branch was very well attended.

Students from the branch and West Thames College, as well as members of Royal Mail management, were welcomed to the event – held at Heathrow World Distribution Centre (HDWC) Langley on April 26 – by HDWC Head of International Communications Bob Lawrence.

Terry Jackson, the CWU South East regional secretary, and Dave Cunningham, International Operations Director for Royal Mail, presented the students with their certificates as well as a goody bag that included £20 in vouchers (£10 each from the CWU and Royal Mail) and a memory stick from West Thames College.

Shining example

In his opening speech, Terry Jackson said: “This is a tremendous success story and Parminder deserves a huge round of applause for all her hard work.

It is great to work with Royal Mail in making the courses here so successful.”

In his welcome

speech, Dave Cunningham said: “It is a privilege to be here at this event. It is a great example of three organisations (CWU, Royal Mail and West Thames College) working together, and the support received from local reps and the CWU has been superb.”

When Parminder took on her role as lead ULR in HWDC, the learning project had stalled, however, she worked tirelessly to get courses and learning for her members, and built wonderful relationships with not only her members but with the local Royal Mail management and her learning provider.

Joe Showler, South East learning project worker, was full of praise for Parminder.

“Parminder is very passionate about learning and has been extremely effective and dedicated in her approach. She has broken down so many barriers to achieve something very wonderful here,” he said. “Despite all this success, Parminder is very modest about her efforts and achievements. She is a great example of how a ULR can change perceptions about union learning and address the skills needs and aspirations of our members.”

Parminder was also one of the 53 members who



Above: The team that made it happen included, far left, tutor Pal Singh and, fourth from left, Lead ULR Parminder Kaur

passed the course, which ran over Tuesdays and Wednesdays with many of the students coming in early before shifts or staying on after their shifts.

Effective learning

A follow-on course, ECDL Level 2, has already begun, as has a new ECDL Level 1 – such is the thirst for learning in Langley.

Parminder said: “Since I started working with the CWU, I have realised how effective unions can be! Unions are organisations that really help people.

“When somebody talks to me about their learning needs, I try my hardest to help and signpost them to colleges if we can’t provide the course ourselves. I am confident in the future we will bring even more varied courses that everyone will benefit from. Being a ULR is hard work but extremely rewarding!”

JOINT EVENT
BEARS FRUIT
28th Sept 2010



Plymouth ULRs bring learning and organising together in a unique learning event

CWU achieve number of firsts in providing education opportunities for Orange workers in the city

ORANGE TUESDAYS

After several months of planning, Tuesday 28th September saw a hive of activity in the centre of Plymouth. The final preparations were being made to welcome CWU members and other colleagues from the Orange call centre at Language, Plymouth, to an event at the offices of Achievement Training.

Key strategy

This event, organised between CWU Education & Training and Organising departments, was the first union learning event organised by the Orange Committee at their site in Plymouth. Heads of Department, Trish Lavelle and John East, were both keen to see the impact that could be made by using learning as a key part of the organising strategy, in a company where the CWU does not yet have recognition. This event saw the departments join forces, sharing

skills and resources with local reps on a project to raise awareness of the CWU.

Working with on-site reps from the Orange Committee, Kaz Jones and ULR Caroline Rowe, considerable thought and planning had to go into the event. Simply getting the dates and venue, the learning partners and transport right to suit the changing shift patterns of the workforce was the first task. A venue at Language Business Park was not possible, so alternatives were considered until Steve Kerswill at Achievement Training kindly offered their offices in central Plymouth.

Positive results

Working with one of the CWU's existing learning partners, City of Plymouth College, the list of contributors was soon finalised and a date duly set. Due to the office's remote position, funds had to be sourced to



ULRs Caroline Rowe (right) and Alison Lawrence

provide a taxi service but Michelle Daykin, CWU South West Regional Organiser, said the event was a huge success,

"The event was widely attended by both members and non-members who all got the opportunity to meet local education and training providers as well as try out some taster courses," she said.

Caroline Rowe agreed: "It was really positive to see so many colleagues taking full advantage of the link our union provides them in terms of accessing education,

we hope to be able to run more events in the near future closer to our call centre so that even more colleagues can come along".

Better prepared

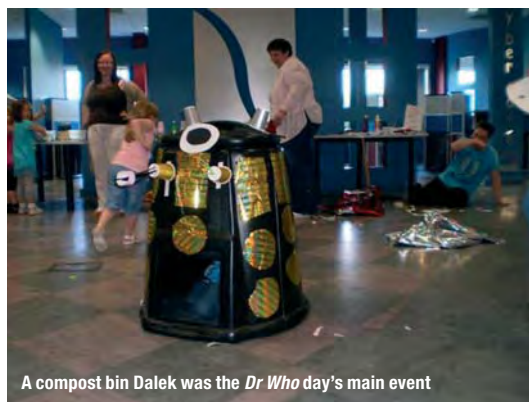
Such events would build on the CWU's traditions of using organising and education to place its members at the forefront of the employment market. A better educated and organised membership is essential to face the rigours of the changes in the workplace yet to come as the recession tightens.

DR WHO DAY

Time travelling families have fun with the Daleks at learning event

DALEKS INVADE BT CALL CENTRE

Plastic cups and compost bins were among the creative tools used by families in Longbenton as they made Daleks and monsters at a Dr Who-themed learning event that promoted important green messages about recycling and not 'exterminating' the planet



A compost bin Dalek was the Dr Who day's main event

A family learning event in Longbenton suffered an attack of the Daleks this summer – but members had their glue guns at the ready!

Doctor Who was the theme for a family learning event held at the BT centre, with many members bringing their children along to participate in the event.

Creative talents

Lead ULR Christine Carruthers, who organised the event – which unintentionally coincided with the opening of the *Doctor Who* event at the Centre for Life – said: "It was encouraging to see fathers, aunts, grandparents, siblings

“The family learning *Doctor Who* Day was about families learning and having fun”

as well as employees attending on their day off.”

Children and adults showed their creative talents by making mini Daleks, flying Daleks, girlie Daleks and Daleks with extra special powers, out of plastic cups.

The centre piece of the event was a large (compost bin) Dalek, decorated by the children who then took turns to climb inside and bring it to

life, moving and talking, Dalek-style, and generally having a lot of fun.

All those who attended the event were entered into a free prize draw to win either the much-prized finished Dalek, or a family ticket to the *Doctor Who* exhibition.

Green message

Jo Knight, the family learning tutor, said: "The family learning *Doctor Who* Day was about families learning and having fun together.

"The family learning team use subjects such as arts, crafts and textiles, dance, cookery, science and sport and languages incorporated with popular culture as a method to engage families and encourage them to learn together.

"The theme of *Doctor Who* was based around arts and craft activities with a recycling and environmental message."

Do not exterminate

Jo said families also experimented with non-Newtonian fluid recipes (also known as gloop or ectoplasm) to make the inside of the Dalek, as well as *Doctor Who*-style 'weeping angels' out of pegs and paper.

"The message was to encourage people to think about recycling and energy use and, ultimately, not to exterminate the planet!"

You know Who?

We sort the *Doctor Who* facts from the science fiction:

- *Doctor Who* went on air in 1963. The Guinness World Records has named it as the longest-running sci-fi series.
- The Tardis, which stands for 'Time and Relative Dimensions In Space', cost more than £4,300 to build.
- The original special effects department used sink plungers to create the Dalek's ray guns.
- 11 actors have played the Doctor; the first was William Hartnell and the latest is Matt Smith.

[COMMUNITY]

A TOURIST ATTRACTION?

Belfast's 'interfaces' were built as temporary structures during the sectarian conflict but now these peace walls have become a wall to peace and progress

Regional Learning Committees recently met in Belfast as part of the ongoing strategy for learning sustainability within the CWU. During the visit, delegates were given the opportunity to participate in an educational site visit arranged by the Northern Ireland Combined and Engineering Branches, of key areas of the city.

This tour of the historic city took in a visit to one of the 20 peace walls, (interfaces) which exist in Belfast. Many of these walls were built as temporary structures in the early 1970s to separate Catholic and Protestant areas at the height of very serious intercommunal violence. These structures were deemed to be a temporary measure at the time and yet, 40 years later, they are still there!

In your face

The Good Friday agreement was signed in 1998 and was supposed to herald a new beginning for all the people of Northern Ireland and yet 15 minutes after signing the agreement the then secretary of state authorised the building of a new interface, one of several built since then.

Some of these walls have stood 12 years longer than the Berlin wall with little likelihood of them coming down soon and as a

result this city is more polarised now than at any time during the conflict.

Strange attraction

These walls have become something of a tourist attraction with the likes of Bill Clinton and the Dalai Lama visiting them. However; people of the city would like to see tourists coming to visit a more positive Belfast where walls are relegated to our past.

With the signing of the Good Friday agreement the communities which co exists along these peace walls had a genuine expectation they and their children would benefit from the so called peace dividend. The reality is they were passed by - no money ever materialised for the investment which was required. It was and still is deemed by the powers to be that these areas are too difficult to work out a solution for, so best to leave them alone. Today these communities are suffering some of the highest levels of social, economic and educational deprivation to be found within Northern Ireland.

This is where the CWU comes in. We have members living within these divided communities who have a strong commitment to assist in whatever way



Above: The so-called 'peace' walls have divided and disadvantaged the Belfast community

they can the creation of a stable, inclusive and holistic society which hopefully will see the removal of these symbols of division.

Our life long learning project is working to address the educational deficit in these areas. To date we have successfully provide courses in Literacy and Numeracy for single parents from across the community divide.

We hope these single parents will become peer leaders within their own community and we are working to encourage them to consider starting a degree course through the Open University.

This is what our union is working towards, the social, economic, educational and physical regeneration of disadvantaged and divided communities.



HOW TO ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE INTO LEARNING

Informal learning



Union learning rep Martin Norton tells of his experiences of informal learning

Offer people informal classes at your learning centre and you could get greater numbers through the doors

FULL STEAM AHEAD

Every learning centre goes through peaks and troughs of activity.

Often, these ups and downs can be put down to the cuts imposed on funding to colleges, but no matter what the reason: we need a way of keeping interest high and activity ongoing in our centres.

Gap in the market

Informal learning is one way of doing this. I recently had a period of inactivity in the learning centre, so I set about planning some informal learning workshops.

Based around what people had said they wanted from a basic IT course, and what the college could deliver, I began planning a six-week workshop, covering subjects such as keyboard and mouse skills, internet and emails, internet security firewalls and antivirus software.

Though it might

sound basic, lots of people are still unable to use computers in this way and often colleges can't or won't provide these types of courses.

I have found that the course has filled a gap in my members' needs and has actively proven to the membership that we are there to support them in what they need.

The best thing is that some students who took the workshop had been unwilling to sign-up for a course because of their lack of experience with a computer, but now, they are actively asking to join other courses.

“Finding new ways to get colleges more actively involved is something that concerns ULRs”

Multi-skilled members

If you have a retired members' section in your branch it might be his type of learning they will most actively engage in. Quite

often, we forget that retired members can engage in our learning centres too. If the employer objects, give them the positive spin of any publicity that it can generate for them.

As ULRs we may also forget the skills we have outside the learning centre. We might know all there is to know about photography; how to use Photoshop; we may be able to build a website in 10 seconds flat – and all of this knowledge is something we can pass on to our members.

Sustaining interest and finding new ways to get colleges more actively involved is something that constantly concerns ULRs.

In the current economic climate, a college may want to provide but might be



unable to do so due to funding issues. As ULRs, we may be able to bridge gaps in certain areas.

Informal learning is simply another tool in our tool box. Give it a go and I'm sure you'll be surprised at how well it's received, and how much support you have around you in your regions to help you set up a workshop. I'm not saying it's for everyone, but it's one way of keeping up a full head of steam.

[REPORT]

A 'PIONEERING' CENTRE OF LEARNING

The Castleford Community Learning Centre was born out of adversity but over 25 years it has helped more than 50,000 people. The WEA has called it a pioneer

Until the mid-1980s, 10,000 workers were employed in the 11 pits around Castleford.

When the pits were closed in the 1980s, the result was unemployment, social deprivation and the breakdown of many marriages.

After the 1984-85 miners' strike, local members of Women Against Pit Closures sought to provide rights awareness, victim support and confidence-building courses for miners' wives. With the support of the NUM and TASS, the women set up a stall selling mining memorabilia, which, with a grant from the local authority, eventually raised the funds to establish the Castleford Women's Centre in 1986.

Building bridges

A sense of community spirit was central to the centre's success. It utilised local community links to promote its work. A free crèche was provided within the centre, allowing mothers to attend courses without having to arrange childminding.

The centre provided courses from basic skills and cake decorating to IT and degree-level programs. It used links with local providers to find tutors, while other tutors started off as learners themselves.

Leeds Metropolitan University even provided degree-level psychology at the centre, which led to the expansion of the university's community education programs.

In 1995, the centre changed its name to the Castleford Community Learning Centre (CCLC) and expanded to welcome all those out of work in the area. Word-of-mouth was instrumental in encouraging others to enrol. Today, virtually everyone in Castleford knows someone who has taken courses there.

Ideal platform

In 2006, a change in the system resulted in CCLC losing funding. However, the local WEA and Unionlearn found it an ideal place to provide courses for union reps. Unionlearn provided Learndirect ICT training to union members, while Unite opened a regional union learning centre within the CCLC. The provision of Skills for Life and union rep courses brought in other unions and allowed the centre to operate at full capacity.

Union-provided learning was also promoted to the large number of younger people

50k

The number of people helped by the CCLC in the past 25 years

around Castleford. Although mining has largely disappeared in the area, the NUM also delivers its Mining Education Project through CCLC, giving new skills to active and retired members and their families.

Access to learning

The CWU has worked with CCLC to provide learning to members that do not have access to a workplace centre, particularly postal workers in the small towns around Castleford, and there are hundreds of CWU members in the region that would not have been able to get access to learning were it not for community centres like CCLC. Recently, the centre has been recognised by Yorkshire and Humber Unionlearn for Outstanding Achievement in Education.

The CCLC has helped maintain community cohesion in an area that has experienced profound economic problems, and aided revitalisation in a former stronghold of trade unionism. Unions have provided CCLC with a secure foundation for the future, while the centre has given unions a positive platform from which to engage with the community.

Below: CCLC provides courses from basic IT skills to cake decorating



LETTER OF THE MONTH



Learning and the environment

From July 5 to July 9, I took part in the CWU environmental awareness course at Alvescot Lodge. This course was designed to give an understanding of environmental issues both in the workplace and beyond.

The course was very informative and one thing that I soon became aware of is that learning and the environment fit very well together.

Environmental issues are a great opportunity for the engagement of a whole new group of learners, and with the CWU conference policy of setting up networks of environment reps it is also a way of gaining new activists.

Environmental issues also fit very well into informal learning with a number of voluntary organisations offering experience and opportunities in the wider community.

I would recommend this course to any ULRs or any other reps within the CWU.

Graeme Brinded, ULR Eastern No3

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:

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We reserve the right to edit letters sent anonymously, but will withhold names and addresses if asked. Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor or the CWU

DARREN CHALLIS – THE LEARNING JOURNEY SO FAR



The Open University

Darren left school at the age of 16 with no qualifications and joined the Post Office in Peterborough as a cadet.

Fourteen years later, at the age of 30, Darren decided to embark on a six-year educational

journey, and more than eight years later he is still continuing his education.

Darren started his journey by attending evening school to get GCSEs in English and Maths before starting an Open University degree in Social Sciences so that he could still work while studying.

His degree covered a lot of childhood modules such as History and Geography that made it relevant for primary teaching, and finished with a BSc in Social Science 2:2. Towards the end, Darren took his required GCSE in Science (at evening school again) and got an A grade.

Darren has now embarked on a one year PGCE Masters in Education at Anglia Ruskin College in Peterborough, while on sabbatical.

Darren said: "After being failed by the school system earlier in my life, my learning journey has taken a long time to achieve and still continues today.

"Through a combination of evening school and Open University I feel that I have learned so much and would encourage everybody to follow their dreams. If I can do it then so can you!"

