

# Shelf Life



The Newsletter of the Working Class Movement Library

Issue No. 24 Autumn 2009

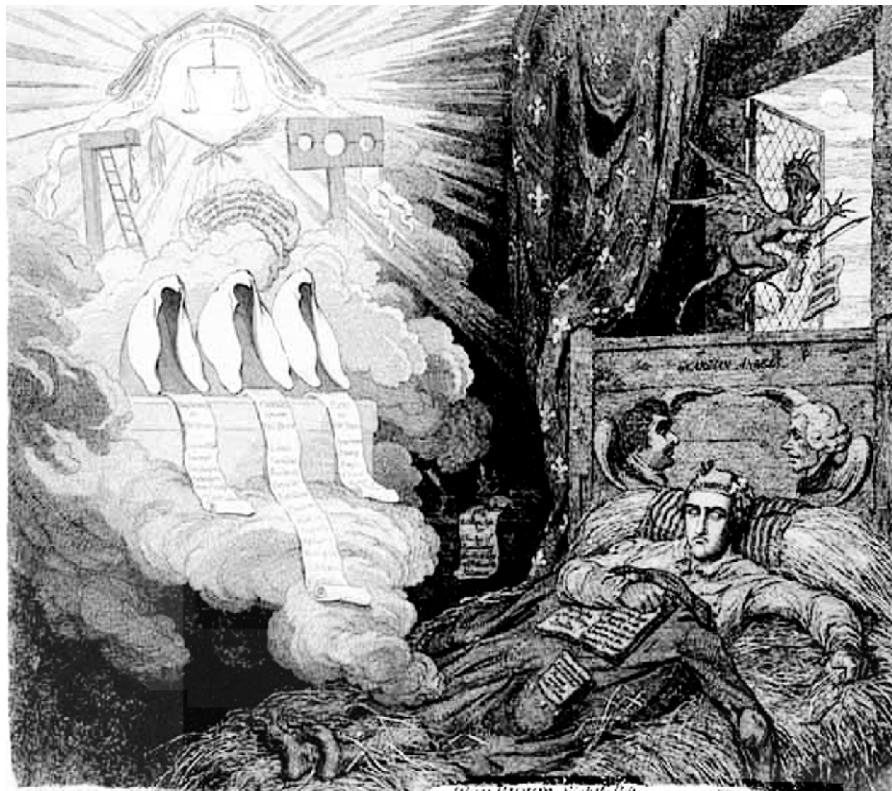
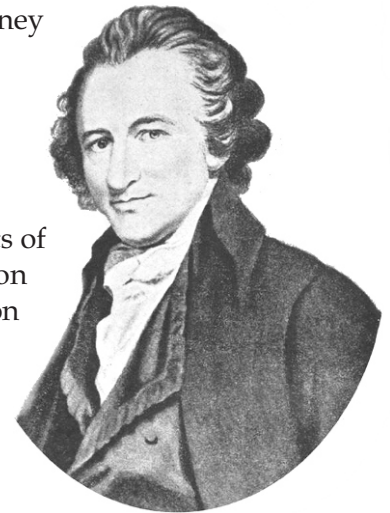
## Thomas Paine's Life Celebrated

### 200th Anniversary

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the death of one of Britain's most important political activists. Thomas Paine was born in Thetford in 1737 and died in New York 72 years later. During his lifetime he became one of the greatest ever radicals, being a major influence on ideas in this country and being actively involved in both the American and French revolutions. The importance of his writings has not diminished and they are still as relevant today as the day they were written.

The library has what the Thomas Paine Society has referred to as 'the finest private collection of books by and on Paine in Britain' so it was incumbent on us not to miss this landmark in radical history. The library is showing a major exhibition of Paine's life, his writings, and ideas in Salford Art Gallery and Museum, just across the road from Jubilee House. The exhibition started on 15 August and runs until 22 November. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to get here.

We know, however, that for many of you Salford will be too far away to make that special journey so for those who can't make it we've included a few snippets of the exhibition in this edition of Shelf Life.



### Thanks to Father and Son Brunel

Our Thomas Paine collection was assembled by Adrian and Christopher Brunel over a period of some fifty years and bequeathed to the library in 1989. It consists of books, pamphlets, prints, tokens and ephemera. More details can be viewed on our website. The books are not only by and about Paine but also reflect the contemporary scene of the 1790s in America, France and Britain. The collection reflects the polemics and controversies of the time.



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# From The Exhibiti

## A Special Thanks

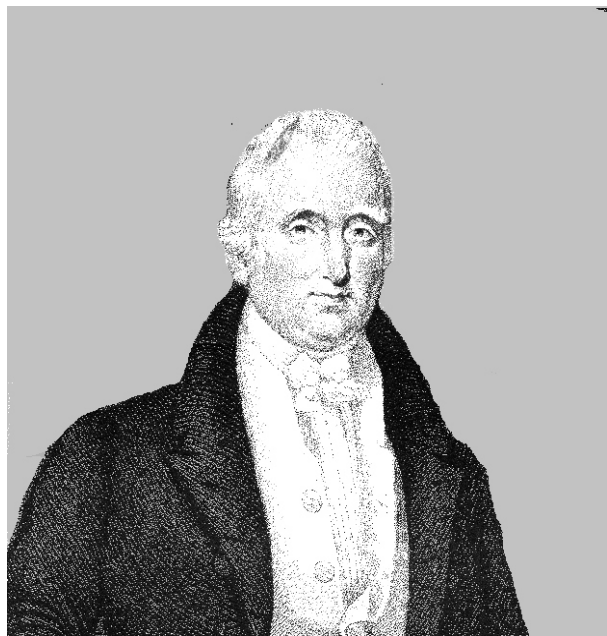
As you can imagine a lot of work went into putting together the exhibition. We would like to say a special thanks to volunteers Chris Clayton, John Percy, Mary Steeds and Veronica Trick. Much of the design work has been the work of Mike Carter, who readers may recall is with us courtesy of Stocks Solicitors, so many thanks also to him and them.

Stocks SOLICITORS



This hostile portrayal of Paine by James Gillray draws on his early life as a corset maker and depicts him tugging in the female Britannia

## How Thomas Paine Nearly Visited the Library



William Cobbett

Readers may not be aware that some 10 years after Paine's death, William Cobbett secretly exhumed Tom's remains from his New Rochelle grave and brought them to England, docking at Liverpool in November 1819. On revealing his baggage contents to the customs officers Cobbett declared 'Here are the mortal remains of the immortal Thomas Paine'. The plan was to give Tom a heroic burial in England but the authorities refused it and so the bones were still among Cobbett's effects when he died 20 years later.

It was Cobbett's intention to take the remains through Manchester but the establishment, still very nervous so soon after the tragic events of Peterloo on 16th August refused him passage beyond Irlam, about 10 miles from the old Salford boundary.

So, if Cobbett's passage had not been obstructed, and Jubilee House had been built at the time, Thomas Paine would have passed by the Working Class Movement Library and no doubt would have called in for a cup of tea.



# Film Project

*RIGHTS OF MAN:*  
BEING AN  
ANSWER TO MR. BURKE'S ATTACK  
ON THE  
*FRENCH REVOLUTION.*

BY  
**THOMAS PAINE,**  
SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONGRESS IN THE  
AMERICAN WAR, AND  
AUTHOR OF THE WORKS INTITLED "COMMON SENSE,"  
AND "A LETTER TO THE ABBE RAYNAL."

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR J. S. JORDAN, No. 166, FLEET-STREET.  
M,DCC,XCII.

Thanks to a £8,820 grant from 'Awards for All' our Community Learning Co-ordinator Caroline Hunt and artist, and friend of the library, Aidan Jolly have been working on a film making project that has enabled musician Aidan and film maker Bryan Dixon to work with students from two secondary schools and one sixth form college in Salford, Trafford and Tameside. The students involved are studying media, politics or citizenship.

The voices of young people today are often lost in media hype

over hoodies and bad behaviour, but they have strong ideas about community and governance, and these films reflect how Thomas Paine's ideas can be relevant and inspiring to young people today.

The workshops in the schools started in June, and the short films are being shown within the exhibition.



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



The late 18th century London Corresponding Society depicted as demons by Gillray. Note the Tom Paine poster on the far wall.

## Coming Events at the Library

**Saturday 31 October 2pm**

**Professor Tony Kushner speaks on**

### Remembering Refugees

Tony is Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Southampton. He has written many books including *Remembering refugees: then and now*, *The Jewish heritage in British history*, and *Refugees in an age of genocide*.

**Saturday 21 November 2.30pm**

### The Miners Strike 1984-1985

An event to mark 25 years since the Miners' Strike, one of the most important industrial disputes of the 20th century in Britain.

Speakers ; Granville Williams, editor of *Shafted: the media, the miners' strike and the aftermath* (2009) Representative from the Miners' Wives Support Groups.

# Trade Union Support



We are especially grateful to the GMB for their continuing commitment to making a significant contribution towards our energy bill (which these days is no small item). Their half yearly donation is thankfully

received.

We have also had donations from the national executives of PCS, UCATT and URTU. Trade union branches continue to show their support for the

library with support coming in from ASLEF, GMB, NUJ, RMT, UNISON and Unite. We have also received donations from two trades councils.

What's really nice is that we are getting support from all over the country as branches recognise the national importance of this working class collection.

## Living Library Hosting

We have always said that we would like to work with trade unions on educational projects, not just receive donations from them. The WCML is therefore pleased to be hosting a 'Living Library' event on 21st November. A UNISON initiative, the event gives members of the public the opportunity to sit down and listen to a range of storytellers, who will share their experiences to 'readers' of life as active trade unionists.

This is a drop in event where a range of 'books' will be available to choose from, and the tales promise to be inspiring and captivating. Sit and listen to stories in small groups for up to 20 minutes, and have the opportunity to ask questions too.

This event is one of a variety of new partnerships, with the aim of encouraging new audiences to find and make use of the library.

21st November, 11am to 2.30pm  
(the last stories will be at 2pm)

If readers would like to learn more about the UNISON 'Living Library' project they should visit <http://www.unisonnw.org.uk/news/newsitem.asp?ID=131>

## Book Launch Success

The launch of the booklet '*From Manchester to Spain*' by Bernard Barry in July was attended by over 70 people, including family, old comrades and friends of Bernard. Three children of Sam Wild, one of the International Brigade volunteers, made contributions. Hilary Jones read greetings from Marlene Sidaway, secretary of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, Dolores Long recited Dolores Ibarruri (La Passionaria)'s farewell address to the International Brigade on their departure from Spain in

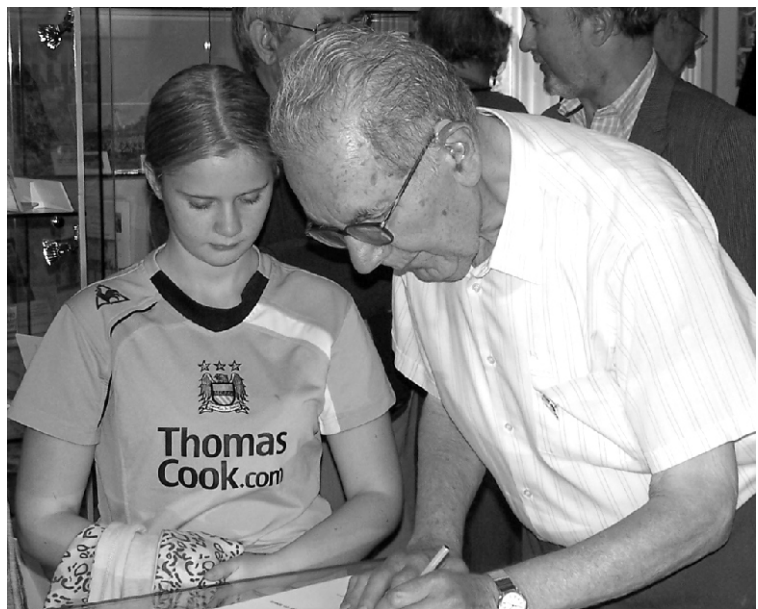
1938, and Mike Wild sang the song 'Our Open Eyes Could See No Other Way' which he had specially written to the memory of the IB.

Bernard spoke about his recollections and also the need for the continuing high profile fight against fascism.

The afternoon ended with a rendering of the Internationale.

### Copies Available

Copies of the booklet can always be obtained from the library price £5.00 plus £1.50 post and Packing (UK)



Bernard Barry signing a copy of his book for one of the next generation of campaigners