

Shelf Life

The Newsletter of the Working Class Movement Library

Issue No. 40 Autumn 2013



Explore the Past, Change the Future

There's an exciting new space opening up at the Library, thanks to a generous donation from former T&GWU Chloride 6/153 branch. The Front Room is designed for visitors who've never been here before. It gives a glimpse of what the Library holds, to welcome people who may not be familiar with the sort of topics we cover, aiming to give them a way in to finding books and objects that will interest them.

Next time you're at the Library you'll spot the phrase 'Explore the past, change the future' in large letters on the ground floor windows, to tantalise passers-by and encourage them in. There's also a large QR code on the window (and below right) which directs passing smartphone users to more information about us. For those of you wondering what QR codes are, they are increasingly being used on billboards and other publicity material as a shortcut to more information. If

you have access to this new technology you can scan in this code to see how we're trying to use it to encourage people to ring the doorbell.

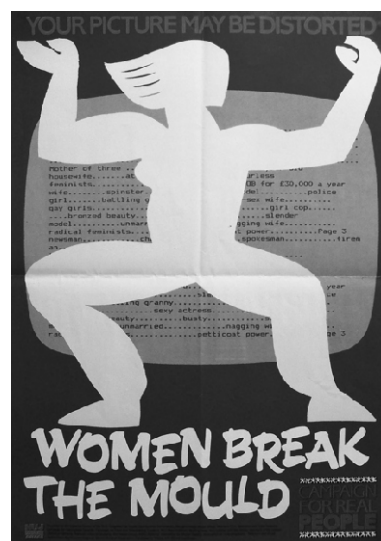
In the room itself we've deliberately gone for a visual, 'image'-led style as a route in to the more 'information'-led style of the existing hall exhibition. The image boards, produced for us by our graphic artist Mike Carter with his usual creative flair, are large and very striking. There are lots of fantastic photographed examples from our collection of different ways in which people have expressed the struggle for a better, fairer way of life: banners, posters, cartoons, music... Pop in and see how many of the images you recognise we bet you'll find something you never knew the Library had.

Alongside the boards are box-shaped book shelves containing a selection of relevant reading, plus a couple of comfy chairs in order to create a browsing atmosphere for visitors to enjoy while sipping a brew.

We've also been extremely lucky in getting a young media student volunteer from Winstanley College in Wigan, Megan Olivier, involved in

the project. She has produced a stylish ten-minute dvd to run in the Front Room space. We were so impressed by how, in a very short space of time, Megan created a piece of work which captures splendidly the enthusiasm of the Library volunteers whom she filmed. She added many creative touches which enhanced the finished product, with which we're absolutely delighted. This young woman will go far.

The Front Room will have a formal opening shortly, when we'll be able to say thanks to the Chloride T&GWU members and everyone else who has enabled this project to happen. In the meantime, do come and have a nose!



From The Collection

Something completely different from the norm this time. Readers will be aware that the Library has occasional exhibitions displaying themes from our very comprehensive collection.

The Library's latest exhibition, 'Knowledge, Work and Workers: Science and the Working Class', opened to coincide with the 24th International Congress of History of Science, Technology and Medicine, which was held at the University of Manchester, echoing its theme "Knowledge at Work". It highlights topics such as the contributions that scientists have made to the peace movement, campaigns to improve public health and the struggles that trade unions and others have undertaken to make

the workplace a safer place.

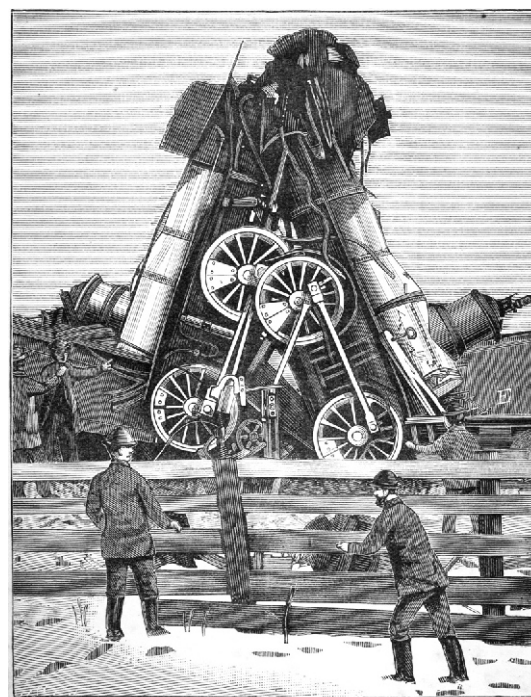
The exhibition celebrates working people such as the whitesmith Samuel Gibson who, although his formal education was limited to Sunday School, became a respected

geologist, botanist and entomologist, and middle class supporters of working class movements such as Alfred Russel Wallace. He was the joint originator with Charles Darwin of the theory of evolution by the means of natural selection, and this year is the centenary of his death.

Putting together any exhibition, but particularly one slightly outside our normal 'political comfort zone' isn't an easy thing to do so we thought we'd share with you the thoughts of the volunteers who put the exhibition together.

'There was a sense of acute anxiety when it was suggested that we produce an exhibition based on the Library's collection. We have quite a good working knowledge of the collection but did not see it as an obvious source for science history. However, as we began to exchange a few ideas it looked more and more hopeful. Eventually the problem was more what to leave out than what to put in. The development of safety procedures in the workplace and the Health Service needed to be included and the contribution that scientists have made to the peace movement.

It would also be good to find scientists from working class backgrounds too. There were a small number of scientists, such as Dalton and Faraday, from the humblest of backgrounds who



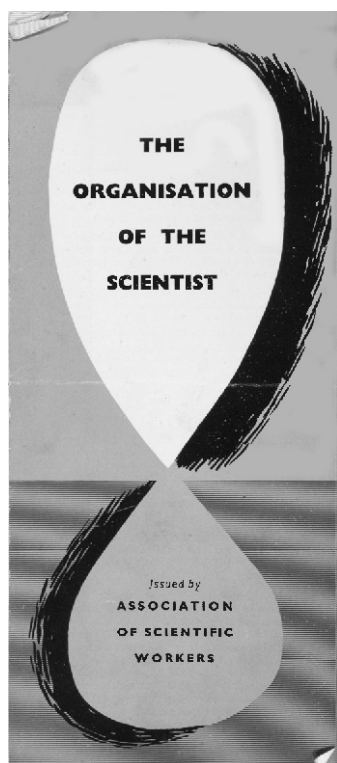
THE RESULTS OF A MISTAKE.
"EQUAL TO EACH OTHER IN EVERY RESPECT, THE ENGINES MET AND STOOD ERECT, AS IF TO WRESTLE, THEIR DRIVING-WHEELS WEDGED TOGETHER, AND MACHINERY ALMOST COMPLETELY STRIPPED FROM THE BOILERS."—(See p. xii.)

became eminent members of the Royal Society.

It struck us suddenly that women were barely visible and so we began to look for them. We found several women from the past who were not only eminent in science but prominent in radical campaigns such as the abolition of slavery or the peace movement. We found one, very special, nineteenth century woman scientist, Mary Anning, the self taught daughter of a carpenter who went on to become an eminent palaeontologist. Men usually claimed her finds and her insights as their own but the British Museum is currently in the process of adding her name to the huge number of fossils which rightly were hers.

In bringing the gender imbalance to the attention of visitors we hope that parents and teachers will be prompted to use stories such as Mary's as exemplars to encourage more girls to choose science.'

Knowledge, work and workers can be viewed Wednesdays to Fridays 1-5pm, and runs until 26 September.



Media Centre

We may have Media City a couple of miles down the road at Salford Quays but here at the Library we are rapidly developing our own Media Centre. We have always tried to promote a theatrical dimension to our educational and cultural work, and the media has been aware of the importance of our collection when researching

historical productions, but things seem to have really mushroomed recently.

Many of you will have seen Ken Loach's recent film 'The Spirit



of '45', a documentary about the consequences of the enormous will to change that gripped the UK after the Second World War and the improvements to the lives of working class people through social housing, welfare and the birth of the National Health Service.

What you may not be aware of is that some of the research and, indeed, some of the filming was carried out in the Library.

If you were unfortunate enough to miss the film in the cinemas it is now available on DVD if you are interested.

More recently still, in July, following on the back of trustee Maxine Peake's performance of Shelley's 'Masque of Anarchy' during Manchester's International Festival the BBC did an edition of its Culture Show about the poem and the performance. Thanks to Maxine much of the programme was filmed in the Library and very well it looked too. A number of people have already visited us for the first time after seeing the programme on TV.

If that was not enough to be going on with we have just hosted a 'Living History'

performance on the theme of Peterloo as part of our joint project with the People's History Museum, Unlocking Ideas.



Maxine, project worker Chris Burgess & Miranda Sawyer

The audience was older people from all over Manchester and the performance was part of a council scheme to encourage older people to engage with culture. It was a PHM suggestion that the performance be held in the Library and shows the growing working relationship between the two bodies. All for the good of raising the profile of working class history.

If you want to follow us on social media we're on [Twitter@wcmlibrary](https://twitter.com/wcmlibrary) and facebook.com/wcmlibrary.

Cartoon Corner



Trade Union Support

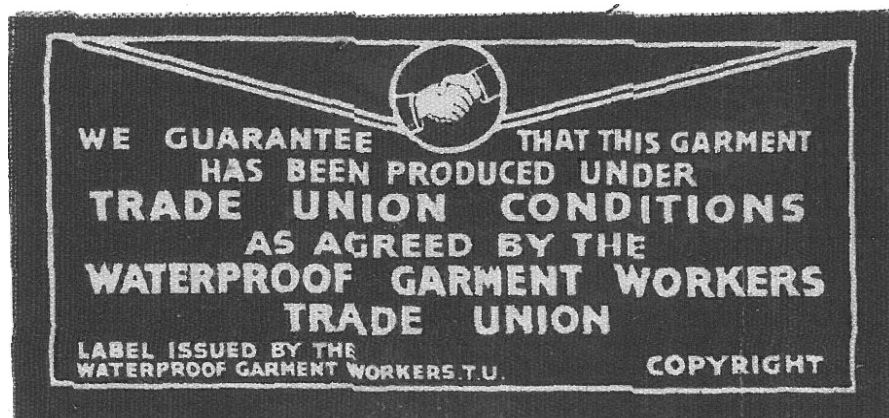


A massive almost £9,000 worth of support from the trade union movement in the last three months. Pride of place has to go to the GMB for their very generous continuing covering of our ever increasing energy bills. Once again we can assure them that we are keeping the costs down by turning the lights off whenever possible. We are also considering buying sweaters for the staff so we can keep the boiler off for a little longer. We have also received cheques

from PCS and the NUM. At regional or branch level we have had support from CWU, GMB, NUT, UNISON and Unite. These have been joined by four trades councils.

In June we had a stall at the UNISON annual conference and met many friends. Don't forget, if your conference is within the North West we'll be only too happy to have a stall.

Once again many thanks to you all.



Those were the days. The Waterproof Garment Workers clearly made their presence

felt. We are grateful to Derek Cattell for the kind donation brought in in the last few weeks.

Bye Bye Tara



Many of you who come into contact with the Library will recognise Tara as the frontline help desk who guides you on your way. We're disappointed to have to report that Tara has left us for full time employment with Manchester University in their Study and Learning Centre. Sad for us but great for Tara because it's a full time job. Tara had mixed feelings about going saying that she'd never worked anywhere like it before 'so friendly and welcoming, a good learning experience.'

We wish her well for the future, and are in the process of seeking a replacement.

Publisher's Support



Northern Grove Publishing Project is a not for profit organisation whose mission is to publish the works of writers

interested in the history of the working people of Britain and Ireland, both fictional and historical. They publish the works of ordinary people, who otherwise would not be published and republic works by writers out of copyright whose works are of historical importance.

They publish in paper back and in eBook form. All books are a good read and perhaps help you to discover something about the past you were unaware of.

What's more surpluses from book sales are donated to the Library. So why not visit the website at www.malcsbooks.com and see if anything whets your appetite, giving yourself a good read and ourselves a helping hand.