

Somerset County Branch 1914 to 2014 100 years of Trade Unionism



NEWSLETTER

In 1965 the Branch reported that progress was being made in building the new County Offices, a careful watch was being kept on the working conditions and facilities which were to be provided. Doubts were expressed about the adequacy of car parking spaces.



The Ladies' Sub-Committee organised a number of talks and demonstrations for the lady members of the County Council staff, on a variety of subjects: floral art, safe driving in winter weather, cookery, dress and accessories.

In 1967- All members please note that next year's Dance will be held at the County Ballroom, Taunton...we have booked the Ken Birch Orchestra of the Winter Garden Pavilion, Weston-super-Mare. This is an extremely good dance orchestra and should make for one of the most enjoyable nights out for a very long time.

In 1968 in accordance with national policy we affiliated the Branch, on a non-political basis, to the Taunton and Wellington District Trades Councils

1969, Skittles. "The Cowlshaw Cup Competition once again provided many evenings of enjoyable entertainment. 18 teams were entered and in the final the Thermites (Gas) team defeated a team from Electricity."

In 1969 the Branch Executive Committee at last completed their period of negotiations with the County Council for the provision of a staff sports and social club. It was reported that, *"The Mountfields premises have been purchased by the County Council and our employers have indeed generously provided the staff with a facility which has all the potential to be made into a first class club"*.

In October 1970 we held a Barbecue, *"about 30 members washed down charcoal blackened chicken, sausage and bacon with beer and cider – singing round the fire afterwards was led by John Hinton (Planning) a nifty operator on the guitar"*.

1970 to 1974

Somerset Heritage Centre holds copies of Somerset Scribbles which must have been deposited for safe keeping.

Any attractive young ladies in your department?

Yes!

Well why not chat them into proving how right you are by getting them to compete for the title of:- Miss Wyvern 1972. Judging conducted by a small panel and marks will be awarded for dress, deportment, hair, face, figure and personality.

- 1st Prize Miss Wyvern 1972 £7 and trophy
- 2nd Prize Deputy Miss Wyvern £3
- 3rd Prize £1

Judging and prize giving to take place at The Sports Day Dance 9.30pm Saturday 12th August at the Club.

Dress Optional!

1970's Vigor**Operation LEO**

LEO stands for three crucial stages in recruiting members

L stands for Locating the eligible non-member

E stands for Engage him or her personally or in writing

O stands for Overcoming any 'sales' resistance.

1971 the committee agreed to hire a colour television for the entertainment of the Wyvern Club members.

In March 1972 the Business Men's Fitness Clinic was arranged, *"Many men, leading busy but predominantly sedentary lives are becoming increasingly aware of the need for regular exercise. This eight week course has been arranged to help the inactive person raise and maintain his fitness levels. Venue Castle School, Taunton. 8 Tuesdays commencing 25th April 1972 6.30-7.30pm £2.50"*

Issue of the day (1)

1972 also saw discussions on flexible working. It was reported, *"The staff side have been considering the possible introduction of flexible working hours in doing examined schemes such as "Flexitime". Some disadvantages were apparent in the schemes which the staff side felt would make them unacceptable to the majority of members"*.



Ode to Job Devaluation

“The time has come”, the Council said, “to talk of many things,

Like questionnaires and interviews and other curious things.

We really feel we’d like to know how all our staff compare:

Planners, chemists, architects, must surely think that’s fair?

For after all, the gap’s not wide twixt typist and the chief,

Not more than 9 grades, that’s for sure (or so is our belief).

So now we’ll press without a pause – the outcome may be funny;

But one thing we must emphasise, we’re not out to save money.”

Well now the news is published – it’s all over County Hall.

Staff up-in-arms and tempers frayed, Chief Officers and all.

Those of you down-graded must certainly raise hell

And those of us who stayed the same will have a go as well!

For, after all, the work will wait, as all the ratepayers know.

We’re doing someone a favour by being reassessed.

Just think of all the work we generate – that’s right, you guessed!

Some people (most unfairly) said they’d feathered their own nests;

Still, to a casual observer, the experts came off best. Anon

Somerset Scribbles records the scene

Editorial by Tom Manns, April 1972:-

“I always like to think that there is a pattern to this magazine. That it not only reports the facts but that it forecasts some of the facts to come. That in the future someone will pick up an old copy and say to himself, “H’m well that turned out to be right” or “So that’s what they were up to then, was it.”

“We would like our magazine to be a sort of serialisation of Branch history and its members. In the years to come one ought to be able to start at number one and read on. Not that it will be easy reading. Because all will be before ‘they’ carved up and reallocated local government. Before ‘they’ gave us Industrial Relations Act. Before we had a new Superannuation Act for our declining years. A time when big unions were amalgamating with big unions.”

July 1973 Somerset Scribbles reported:- *“One hundred and fifty delegates out of two thousand was a serious under representation of women at Scarborough and was the complaint made in a sparkling debate on the need to encourage and better female involvement in NALGO’s affairs. The petticoat argument showed that women must make their own efforts to make themselves heard.”*

January 1974 Somerset Scribbles reported:- *“When the editor sits down in the year 2000 to write this leader I do not suppose that for one moment he will have read any of the present day ‘Somerset Scribbles’ but perhaps on some future NALGO history book he or she will have read about the years of change which we are living through now and wonder how we survived.”*

Issue of the day (2)

Last month the newly built **Wyvern Club buildings** were officially opened by the Chairman of the County Council and Club President, Mr George Wyndham when he unveiled a plaque there. When one remembers that it was only on the night of the 31st May 1972 that the old buildings were burned down one appreciates with what speed and hard work on the part of everyone this new...

“DEAR SIR”

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hands in it up to your
wrists,

Pull them out – and the hole that
remains, Is the measure of how
you’ll be missed.

The morale of this is quite simple;
Do the best that you can when you
can. Be proud of yourself, but
remember. There is no
indispensable man.

October 1973

TEAR-OFF STRIP

Remember 1974?

When the Government and miners
went to war

Oil was cut, and so was power,

TV closed down at an early hour,

But what were these blows we had
to face

When compared with the great Bog
Paper chase!

Prices went up and stocks went
down

The lights went out all over town

The TUC said “What a cheek”!

When industry went on a three day
week

But the greatest threat to the human
race

Was the nationwide Bog Paper
chase!

Contributed from the South Western
Road Construction Unit.

...club building was designed and put up. What is more
“We never closed” said Mr Arthur Fisher, Club Chairman.

More from the Branch records; *“During July 1974 this
year we became aware that major differences had arisen
between the Chief Executive and certain members of the
Council which appeared to cast doubt on the continued
employment of Mr Gaffney by the Council. “*

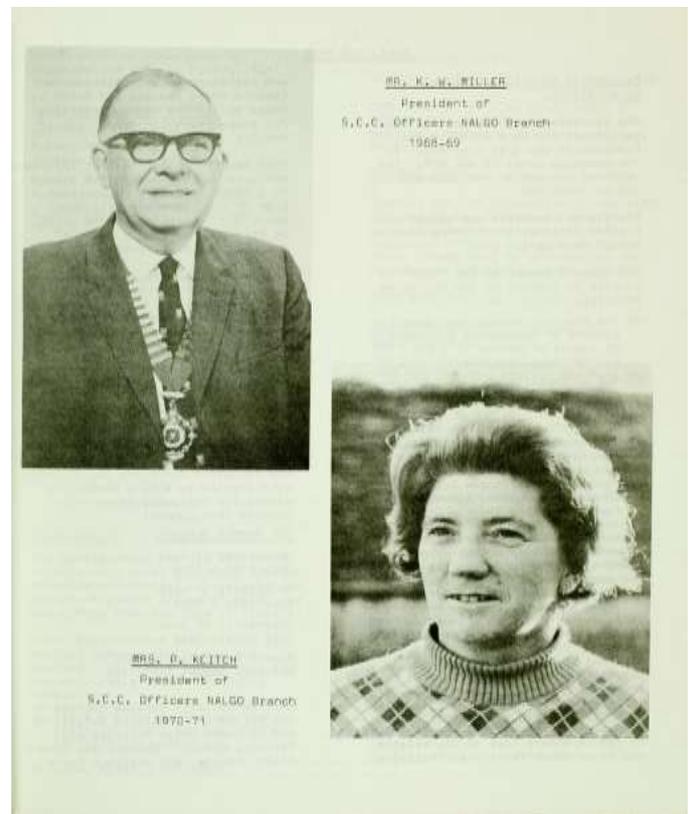
1976 Public Expenditure Cuts

The campaign organised to protest against cuts in public
expenditure was launched at national level early in
January.

*Mr KW Miller
1968-1969.*

*Mrs P Keitch
1970-1971.*

*Presidents of the
SCC Officers
NALGO Branch*



Heating of County Hall. *“At our meeting in May 1977
we decided that in view of the apparent lack of progress
dealing with the unsatisfactory heating of County Hall a
letter should be sent to the Chief Executive requesting
that satisfactory arrangements be made by the 1st
September 1977.”*

WYVERN SKITTLES LEAGUE CUPWINNERS 1977



"THE COMPUTER BOYS: (left to right) John Groves, Chris Payne, Mike Perry, Bill Gully, Alan Webb, Mike Holmes, Phil Summers, Alan Thorne, Martin Burge.

Issue of the day (3)

In 1978 it is reported that, "Somerset County Council recognise their responsibility under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act... The Branch has a good working relationship with the officers of the authority on health and safety".

The medieval banquet, pantomime and canal trip were all cancelled due to lack of support, but the disco held on the 5th July 1979 was a success. (It is the winter of discontent 1978/79).

1979 The Personnel and Management Services unit were actively considering the introduction of word processing machines... talks were being held between Chief Officers to determine the best method of implementation.

In 1980, NALGO repeatedly stressed that there is no fat left to trim from the Somerset County Council carcass.

The lobby at Shire Hall on the 10th December 1980 was supported by 500-600 NALGO members and described as the largest demonstration for many years.



SCOOP April 1981:- *“When you become a safety rep you change. You acquire a new set of eyes, and a thick skin, and to some it appears horns as well! What to one person appears as a glaring hazard seems a minor risk to another, so one needs tact, too! Persistence pays off, and as with the Chinese water torture, results can be won! Even small improvements are better than none.”*

1982 saw NALGO discussions concerning the categorisation of elderly persons’ homes to enable staff to receive the pay scale appropriate to the work they do.

The Branch is still sporting!

For the first time in the memory of the District Sports Secretary, two teams from the same branch have managed to reach the netball final of one of the South-West district sports events. The A team won the final in 1983.



(Back row, from the left) Jane Erskine (Personnel & Management Services Unit.); Molly Gay (Education); Anne Millard (Treasurer’s); Eileen Knight (Education); (Front row, from the left) Frances Bridger (Probation); Teri Colverwell (Education); Pauline Bargery (Department of Transport).

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