

The Activist

GMB News From Around The Region



Pictured with Mary are Ricky Tomlinson and Amanda Burley from Leeds Civic branch receiving the Daniel Dennis Award for Health & Safety in 2014

MARY TURNER TRIBUTE

Mary had been a trade union activist for over 60 years and was a much loved and hugely respected member of GMB. Born in Tipperary, Mary moved to the North of England as a child before finally settling in Kilburn, London. She was a trade unionist from the day she started work. First joining the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union (a union that would go on to join GMB). Mary worked at Jackson's Tailors on Oxford Street, then went on to serve as Mother of Chapel in the print industry before taking time off to raise her children.

As a trade unionist, Mary was a trailblazer who never took no for an answer. When she returned to work part-time in 1970, she started work as a dinner lady in Brent and quickly set about organising the female workers who were poorly paid, untrained and treated badly. It was also during this time that Mary developed a lifelong passion that she would campaign on for decades to come; free school meals. Having seen hungry kids and the stigma of those who had to queue separately for free school meals, Mary could not let that stand and she was instrumental in ensuring free school meals for kids became Labour Party policy.

From feeding 600 young marchers during the People's March for Jobs in the 1980s, to fighting the National Front and leading, recruiting and supporting thousands of low paid workers, Mary has led our movement. In recognition of her incredible work, Mary was elected to GMB's executive where upon her election she served as the only woman out of 40 members. In 1997 Mary was elected as President of GMB, a position she has been re-elected into every year since. She has served on the Labour Party National Executive Committee, chairing the Party in 2004. In 2010, Mary was awarded an MBE which was followed by a CBE in 2017.

Sadly, Mary passed away on the 19th July 2017, after a short illness and was laid to rest on the 9th August 2017, at St Mary's Cemetery, London.

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Mary Turner House

As a tribute and in memory of Mary, GMB has named our national office at Euston, Mary Turner House. This will be a lasting legacy to Mary and it will ensure that her commitment to the trade union movement and lifetime of achievements and values live on.

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EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL FEES

Following a legal challenge, the Supreme Court has ruled that employment tribunal fees are unlawful because they price workers out of accessing justice and discriminate against women. This means that from the 26th July, employment tribunal fees no longer apply and that all previous fees that have been paid will have to be repaid. Fees were first imposed in the Employment Tribunal (ET) and the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) by the Coalition Government in July 2013. The principal purposes of the Fees Order were to:

- Transfer some of the costs burden of operating ETs and the EAT to those who use the system;
- Incentivising earlier settlement of claims;
- Disincentivising the bringing of weak or vexatious claims.

The Supreme Court unanimously upheld each of the arguments against employment tribunal fees. As the Supreme Court said, "Fees must be affordable not in a theoretical sense, but in the sense that they can reasonably be afforded. Where households on low to middle incomes can only afford fees by forgoing an acceptable standard of living, the fees cannot be regarded as affordable." As the Supreme Court said, *"The Fees Order is indirectly discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010 because the higher fees for type B claims put women at a particular disadvantage because a higher proportion of women bring type B than bring type A claims."*

At the general election in June 2017, there was some cross-party support for the abolition of the Fees Order. Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and the SNP all pledged that fees should be scrapped. The Conservatives mentioned nothing in its manifesto about fees, but the Government has admitted that the fall in claims was greater than was originally envisaged when the Fees Order was implemented.

The Government's voting partner, the DUP, was also silent on fees as the Fees Order did not apply to Northern Ireland.

As previously stated, the immediate effect of this decision is that fees cease to be payable in the ET and appeals to the EAT and fees paid in the past, amounting to £32 million, must be reimbursed by the Government. It is highly likely that the number of claims in the ET and the EAT will increase without the barrier of fees, particularly at a time of economic uncertainty.

Notwithstanding the above, there remains a number of unanswered questions:

- It's unclear how claimants who have already paid fees since July 2013 will recover their fees.
- Employers ordered to pay costs? Will the employer be refunded by the Government? Or will employers have to seek refunds from claimants once those claimants have been given their refunds?
- Claimants who paid the fee, but then settled their claims? If they receive a refund will the employer who settled be able to recover the portion of the settlement representing the fee?
- Can claimants who were considered to have been unlawfully denied access to justice be able to sue the Government for the losses caused by their inability to bring a claim? Will they be able to submit late applications to the Employment Tribunal?

Simply put, the Supreme Court in its judgment determined that where access to justice is blocked, society loses out. In the employment context, when barriers are erected to enforcing workers' rights, such rights are effectively worthless, and when employers know that claimants are unable or unwilling to bring claims, the whole system of employment protection is undermined. This ruling is one of the most important employment law judgments that enforces working people's rights in decades.

UNIONLINE

YOUR TRADE UNION LAW FIRM

0300 333 0303

www.unionline.co.uk

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GMB MOVES TO INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT AT DONCASTER CARE HOMES

GMB has been left with no other option but to move to an industrial action ballot after talks failed with one of the UK's fastest growing care providers, Runwood Homes. Runwood Homes announced in April 2017, to all staff who transferred over from Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), a proposal which will see pay, terms and conditions slashed to almost statutory minimum after only being transferred out from DMBC less than two years ago. DMBC made the decision to sell off its last remaining council run homes to Runwood Homes in a bid to retain services to the community through a cost cutting exercise, as a result of both national and local government spending cuts within adult social care.

GMB has drafted an alternative proposal - and issued a call for support.

Deanne Ferguson, GMB Organiser, said: **"The proposed changes to pay, terms and conditions are some of the most brutal attacks I have seen on already low paid workers across Doncaster. Members face losing between £300 and £400 per month with the most affected losing £900 per month once a 24% reduction in pay is implemented. My members who are mainly women working within the care sector would never have considered taking industrial action, however they simply cannot afford to live decently if these cuts are implemented. This is a very difficult and delicate situation, one which I am working on with my members to ensure we have the full support of the residents' families and communities where these homes reside. I have also written out to all MPs, Labour councillors and Ros Jones as Mayor calling for urgent support. We hope Runwood Homes will reconsider its proposal."**



POLITICS OF HOPE

More than 30 delegates from across the region came together at GMB's regional office in Wakefield for what was an interesting and interactive workshop based on the Labour Party's manifesto.

It became apparent during the general election that Labour's programme of policies had captured the public's imagination and the aim of the workshop was to maintain the momentum of support for Labour's leadership and policy pledges.

Led by Neil Derrick, Regional Secretary, Tracy Brabin MP for Batley & Spen and Colin Burgon, the workshop looked at what Labour pledged to deliver in government and how this would benefit GMB membership and the country as a whole.

Neil Derrick, Regional Secretary, said: **"I wanted to ensure that our reps and members both fully understand what Labour's programme for government is and how politics in this country could be if we had a Labour government."**

"The workshop went down really well with our reps and the feedback was great. If there is demand we will run these workshops over the coming months to ensure that we spread the message as far as possible and that we are ready should a further general election be called."



Tracy Brabin MP addresses the workshop

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The Activist@PRIDE



THE PRIDE OF YORKSHIRE

GMB was once again at the heart of Pride events across the region, including Leeds and Wakefield Pride which were held over the last two weekends. In Leeds GMB activists came together to join with members from Leeds General branch who had commissioned an open top bus decorated in GMB splendour so that it could take part in the glitzy parade around the centre of Leeds. The event, which is in its 11th year, is a flamboyant extravaganza that celebrates the diversity of Leeds' Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community (LGBT) and has grown into one of the biggest events held in the city with more than 40,000 people attending this year.

The main event was on the Sunday with 2 hours of entertainment in Millennium Square, followed by a parade through the city centre with over 60 floats and 5 hours of entertainment on Lower Briggate to finish off an incredible weekend. Headline acts included Heather Small from M People, Marcus Collins X Factor runner-up and Sonia who topped the charts with 'You'll Never Stop Me From Loving You'.

Lou Foster-Wilson, GMB Equality Officer, said: **"It is very important that GMB has a presence at Pride events and it's a fantastic opportunity for us to be part of an amazing celebration of sexual diversity and the promotion of dignity and equal rights for the LGBT community. It made it more poignant to be at this year's events as it was the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK."**

If you would like to find out more about the work GMB does on equal rights then please contact Lou Foster-Wilson, Equality Officer on 0345 337 7777 or email her at louise.foster-wilson@gmb.org.uk



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Roseann Fields enjoying a past PRIDE

GMB SAYS FAREWELL TO AN ICON

It is with regret that we announce the passing of Roseann Fields, longstanding GMB member and representative from Leeds, who sadly passed away on Monday, 17th July 2017 following a brave battle with cancer. Roseann joined GMB almost two decades ago and became a workplace rep in 2008, holding a number of branch positions since that time.

Roseann was also a long-term Leeds Pride supporter and had been heavily involved in it since it began in 2006. Also a regular on the gay scene for over 20 years, she was said to be the life and soul of the party and a pal to everyone.

Her friends described her as fabulous and glamorous and someone who always had time for other people. Roseann will be missed by all who knew her but her legend will go on. Our sympathies go to Roseann's husband Steven and her family.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Suicide Prevention Day
10th September 2017

Branch Saturday
Sheffield, 16th September 2017
Brighouse, 30th September 2017.

World Mental Health Day
10th October 2017

European Health & Safety Week
23rd - 29th October 2017

Regional Council
28th October 2017



L to R GMB's Steve Morris, Lee Parkinson, Desiree Wilburn and Bob McNeill

GMB@SOUTH YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL

GMB was back for the annual summer event at Wortley Hall. South Yorkshire Festival, which is part sponsored by GMB, brings the community together for a day of fun and free activities. There is everything from gift, craft and garden stalls to a BBQ. The programme of free entertainment includes live music, dancers, donkey rides, bouncy castles, kids rides and much more.

Hosted in the grounds of Wortley Hall, this event is held every year to promote the workers' stately home throughout the county.

GMB representatives Martin Jackson from Barnsley Hospital and Sarah Young from Sheffield Children's Hospital were invited to speak at the event.

Commenting, Desiree Wilburn, said: **"The event is great for bringing Wortley Hall to the attention of people who might otherwise not be aware of what the trade union and wider labour movement owned Hall has to offer. The Hall's magnificent backdrop makes it a really popular venue for weddings and its training and conference facilities are really exceptional."**



Martin Jackson



Sarah Young

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L to R: Joanne Johns, Kate Jones, John Innes, Stephanie Dix, Rachel Harrison, Liz Robinson, Rachel Dix, Monica Griffiths, Ann Cruse-Stoddart and Kath Owen.

GMB YOUNG MEMBERS@LATITUDE
 A team of 10 GMB reps and activists worked at Latitude Festival this year to raise money for the GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Young Members' campaign funds. Allocated to work on the bar in the main music arena meant long, hard and busy shifts. But that didn't stop the team having fun and making the most of their spare time, watching bands such as Mumford & Sons, the 1975 and Fatboy Slim. The weather was mainly dry and glitter was the theme of the week! If you're interested in getting more involved with young members' campaigns and activities and possibly volunteering at one of next year's summer festivals email rachel.harrison@gmb.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS SURVEY
 The GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Young Members' Mental Health Matters Campaign continues and we want you to be involved. We would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete the survey using the link below. Please complete this by no later than Friday 1st September 2017.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7NRSKVX>



Latest Inflation - July 2017
 Consumer Prices Index (CPI) - **2.6%**
 Headline Inflation Rate (RPI All items) - **3.6%**

 GMB Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Region
 @GMBCampaigns



THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT
 GMB young members and activists from across the region gathered at GMB regional office in July to discuss their on-going campaigns and the launch of new ones. There was a packed agenda with lots to discuss whilst enjoying pizza! We were joined by Neil Derrick, Regional Secretary, who placed on record his thanks and continued support for the region's Young Members' Committee for everything they have done and achieved so far.

Up for discussion was the next steps in our Congress Award Winning Mental Health Matters Campaign:

#MentalHealthMatters / @gmbmentalhealth

Plans were also put in place to launch campaigns in support of Suicide Prevention Day on 10th September 2017 and World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2017. We will also shortly be launching a campaign around apprenticeships and supporting the Regional Equality Forum in their campaigns during Pride Season and events during Dyslexia Awareness Week in October.

The committee also pledged its support to the GMB Pay Pinch Campaign which is campaigning for the removal of the 1% pay cap on public sector workers.

If any of the above campaigns sound like something you want to be involved in then get in touch, follow us on social media and help make a difference. Or, if you have any ideas for future campaigns let us know.

Twitter: @gmbyoungyorks
Facebook: GMB Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Young Members

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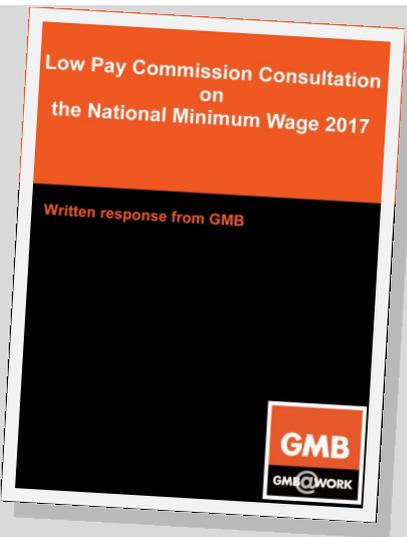
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GMB YOUNG MEMBERS TELL LOW PAY COMMISSION IT'S TIME TO PAY FAIR

Well done to GMB's young members in the region who played an instrumental part in contributing to GMB's written response to the Low Pay Commission Consultation on the National Minimum Wage. Our response covers a number of general points but this year we focused on the impact of low pay on young workers. In particular, the removal of age related rates which has been used by some unscrupulous employers to discriminate in recruitment on grounds of age and a move towards paying a National Minimum Wage rate to reflect a true 'living wage' of £10 an hour where workers can live without state support.



There was also a call from this region to ensure an increase to the apprentice rate in line with inflation and that the qualifications offered are 'real' and lead to increased skills. Other areas highlighted in the submission included campaigns run by our young members which included the GMB Living Wage, Wages Not Based on Ages and £10 Now campaigns.

We have offered to work more closely with the Low Pay Commission on the impact low pay is having on young people and will keep you updated on developments.

"Because of my age the Government say I can live on £5.55 an hour whilst my colleague earns £7.20 an hour for doing exactly the same job. Rent and living expenses are exactly the same, so why aren't the wages?"

Quote from a GMB Young Member

GMB young member Joe Wheatley



JOE'S BLOG

I have just finished two weeks paid work experience with GMB, working at the Brighthouse and Wakefield offices. It has been a fantastic experience and I was lucky enough to have shadowed GMB Organisers and the Legal Officer. I also had the opportunity to help out with the design of leaflets for various GMB campaigns and reconnoitred a workplace for a potential gate job and much more.

This work experience with GMB has given me a brief insight into all the extraordinary hard work and dedication of those who work for the members. As a law student it has been even more beneficial to me having shadowed Organisers and learning how members cases are handled. It has been a worthwhile experience all round.



DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE ANY EMPLOYMENT VACANCIES?

If so, then please share them with us so we can pass them on to other GMB members. Any vacant positions should be sent to maria.ford@gmb.org.uk and they will be posted on our website at:

<http://www.gmbyorkshire.org.uk/job-vacancies>

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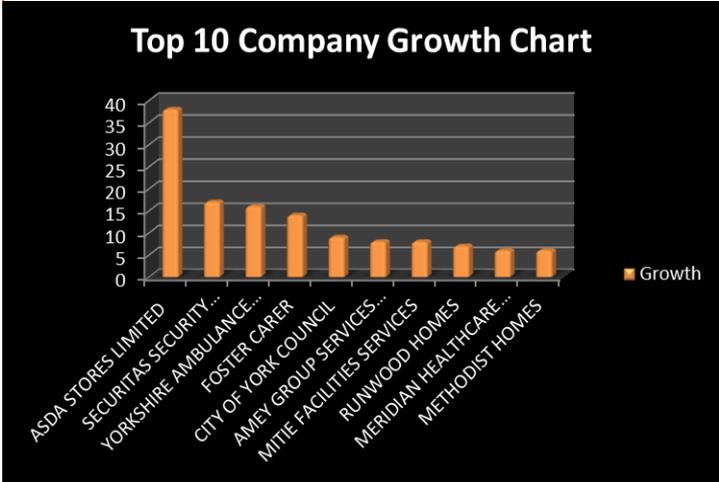
L to R Bill Chard, Cathy Scott, Cath Pinder (Branch Secretary) and Christina Simpkin (Paddock Community Trust)

TRAIN TO GAIN

GMB Organising Branch activists met with Christina Simpkin, Training & Quality Manager from Paddock Community Trust, at the Cleckheaton Activist Centre. The Trust provides an extensive range of community services, training and employment support.

The branch is hoping to organise free English courses for speakers of other languages and specifically for Polish workers at two of its target companies, Kober and Tangerine. It is hoped that the free provision of these courses through Paddock Community Trust will help to recruit new members to GMB, at the same time helping both the members and the companies concerned. A real win, win situation.

We are also working with Paddock Community Trust to provide support for our unemployed branch members with a range of services designed to help and guide them back into the workplace.



REC... COMING TO A WORKPLACE NEAR YOU SOON

The GMB's Regional Executive Committee was once again on the road to continue with its monthly workplace visits. On Wednesday, 12th July 2017, the REC held its meeting at Bidfood in Wakefield. The REC met with GMB reps and members and were given a tour of the site. If you would like a visit from the REC to your workplace contact your GMB Organiser.



LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK?

We will be shortly revamping the GMB national website with lots of new functionality and content. But before we begin the work we want to know what you, our GMB representatives and members, want from 'their' national website. We know it's important to have a site that will encourage and enthuse new members and give a sense of who GMB is and what we offer, but it should also act as a tool for you to help and support you in your day to day role as a GMB representative.

So don't hold back... tell us what you do or do not like about the current site (www.gmb.org.uk), but more importantly, tell us what you think would improve things for you. It can be anything from being able to update your personal details in a secure section of the site to taking part in online surveys and making better use of social media. Please email your feedback to caroline.jones@gmb.org.uk

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