

Vol.3 Issue 1  
Spring 2024



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### Special Events

- Thursday 21st March**  
Guided Heritage Walk:  
National Mining Museum
- Saturday 23rd March**  
Graham Pirt - *The Last Shift*
- Wednesday 27th March**  
*Still the Enemy Within*: film  
screening, Q&A, and discussion
- Saturday 27th April**  
Benefit concert with *Bakerfield*
- Saturday 4th-Sunday 5th May**  
May Day Events: Look for  
announcements about this annual  
weekend at the club

### Regular Events

- 1st Monday Reading Group: 8pm**
  - 2nd Monday Poetry Reading  
Group: 8pm**
  - Tuesday (Alt) : Creative Writing  
Group**
  - Every Tuesday: Folk Club, 8pm**
  - Every Wednesday: Gamers**
  - 2nd Thursday: Record Club 8pm**
  - 3rd Thursday: Stitch Sisters 8pm**
  - Every Friday: Club Night (snug)  
7pm-9pm: Board games (snug)  
9pm-11pm Folk music (main room)**
  - 2nd Saturday: Repair Café, 11-1pm**
  - 1st Sunday: Film Night, 7.30pm**
  - 2nd Sunday: Quiz, 7.30pm**
  - 4th Sunday: Michelle's Music  
Night, 8pm**
- [glossoplabourclub.org.uk](http://glossoplabourclub.org.uk)

**Letter from the Chair : Derek Clarke reflects on how the Labour Club has always been at the forefront of solidarity campaigns, from the miners' strike of 40 years ago, to the situation in Gaza today.**



Dear Comrades and Friends,  
2024 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the most important industrial disputes since the General Strike of 1926. Miners from across the country went on strike to save their industry from the threatened mass closures of pits. Many working-class communities across the country, both in and outside the coalfields, rallied to their side. Glossop was no exception and the Club played a central role in supporting striking miners and their families with food, clothing and monies through the long and bitter struggle.

As part of the anniversary celebrations the Club are organising a series of events which will be posted on the Club's website and Face Book pages. We hope that those involved in the solidarity movement at the time, from Glossop, will come along and talk about their experiences.

Solidarity with those facing oppression is something the Club has always played their part in and the ongoing conflict in Gaza is an example of that at an international level and for that reason the Committee have agreed to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS), which aims to put political and economic pressure on Israel.

The goal is to push Israel to recognize the rights of Palestinian citizens currently living in Israel; to allow Palestinian refugees, who were driven out of the country as early as 1948 when Israel was created, to return to their homes; and to withdraw from all land that it seized after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, including the occupied West Bank, which is claimed by the Palestinians.

In addition, to article inside about Club's involvement in this campaign, there are a host of other articles which we think will be of interest to members. Thanks to all the contributors and especially to Margaret to pulling it all together in this latest Newsletter.

*A Luta Continua...*

Derek Clarke - Chair

### The Miner's Strike 40 years on.

In 1984, Glossop Labour Club was active in solidarity with the striking miners, and we plan to play our part in this anniversary year in commemorating and reflecting on those events. There are many opportunities to join in the events at the Labour Club.

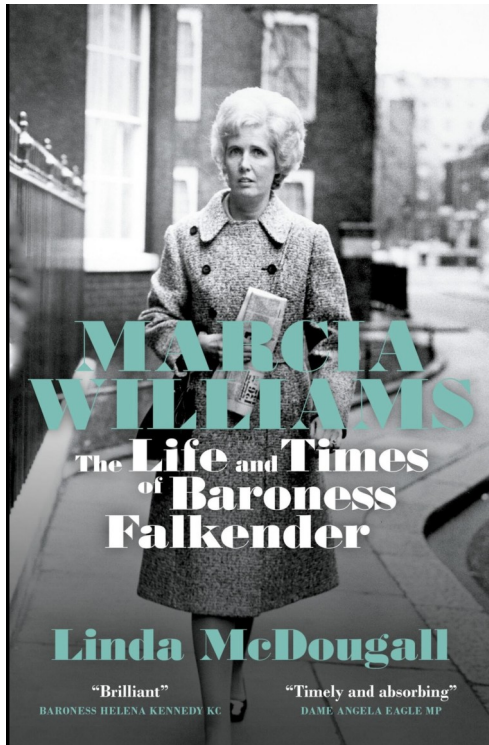
**Thursday 21st March:** Guided Heritage Walk at National Mining Museum. A volunteer guide (a former miner) will take the group around the site and explore the features of the external landscape. The tour starts at 10.00 am and lasts for two hours. There is no charge, though we will be car-sharing, so be prepared to make a contribution to petrol and parking costs. Numbers are limited to 20, and also dependant on available cars and drivers.

**Saturday 23rd March:** Graham Pirt, a Newcastle-born singer descended from generations of coal miners, presents the multi-media show, 'The Last Shift' on the history of the Miners' Union, featuring songs and readings from the earliest time of mining through to the death of the industry. Graham has a wealth of stories, including those of his own relatives, one killed in a pit disaster, and another becoming a miners' union leader in the USA, and illustrates his talk with pictures, engravings and videos of the events. Originally created to support the Miners' Strike in 1984, 'The Last Shift' has been updated and performed many times at folk festivals around the UK. *The Morning Star* wrote: 'Graham's presentation delves back into the history of the industry right up to the tumultuous industrial struggles of the 20th century, and the final demise of coal mining. It's a touring show and well worth seeing.'

**Wednesday 27th March:** *Still the Enemy Within*: film screening. As part of our regular series of monthly Political and Social Wednesday events we will be showing this documentary, followed by a Q&A and discussion led by one of the film's producers. *Still the Enemy Within* provides a unique insight into the dramatic events of the 1984-85 British Miners' Strike. No experts, no politicians, just the raw first-hand experience of those who lived through Britain's longest strike. Follow the highs and lows of that life-changing year, forty years on.

For further information about these events, please contact Ray Collins, Campaigns and Solidarity Secretary, at [glossoplabourclub.org.uk](http://glossoplabourclub.org.uk).





## 'Marcia Williams: The Life and Times of Baroness Falkender' by Linda McDougall (2023)

*Peter Allen reviews a fascinating new book*

The author is clear about her intention. She seeks "to rescue Marcia – a simply brilliant tactician and politician – from the patronising, misogynistic and dismissive verdicts of various male enemies and to suggest a more nuanced context to and understanding of her actions and reactions". In her view, "there is a strong argument that Harold Wilson's political successes were a direct result of his recognition and acceptance that he needed the support that Marcia's practical and organisational skills and active and acute political antennae offered. It was a genuine and enduring partnership between a man and a woman at the top of the political ladder, never seen before or since in British politics"

The widow of maverick MP and TV presenter Austin Mitchell, who knew Marcia and interviewed her, McDougall makes a strong case in defence of Marcia's reputation. A grammar school girl who had an unprivileged upbringing, she obtained employment as a secretary at Labour Party HQ in the mid 1950's, when Harold Wilson's parliamentary career was beginning to take off. Initially his secret ally, sending him anonymous notes warning of plots against him by more right wing members of the party, they then became friends and almost certainly (in the opinion of the author) lovers. Their romantic relationship was probably brief, but their professional and political relationship endured for the duration of Wilson's political career and beyond.

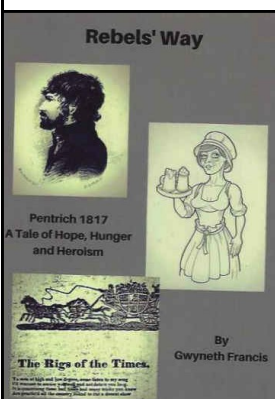
The book is light on detail about Marcia's political views but describes many examples of her political skills. Among other things, she appears to have been among the first in the political arena to recognise the importance of the media, and of TV in particular. My favourite anecdote in the book is her spotting that *Steptoe and Son*, with over 20 million viewers, many of them Labour voters, was allotted a prime time spot on polling day in 1964. This might have cost Labour crucial votes, in an era before catch-up or even video recorders. She persuaded Wilson to contact the Director General of the BBC to have it removed from the schedule, which he duly did: an action which may have won him the election in a very tight race, as he later acknowledged.

Marcia combined her political career with being a mother, and there is a truly jaw-dropping explanation of how she managed this, which is alone worth reading the book for. She had a Glossop connection, with the 1939 census recording that she lived on Norfolk St. as a seven year old girl! How long she lived in the town is unclear. By the time she went to grammar school she was living in Northampton.

In truth, the book rather fizzles out towards the end, with transcripts of interviews and a focus on Wilson's rather sordid resignation honours list - for which Marcia was, rightly or wrongly, held largely responsible. A disappointing end to a book which starts so positively - like Marcia and Harold's political careers perhaps?

Thanks to *The Big Issue* (on sale in Glossopdale and beyond) for bringing this book to my attention.

## A talk on 'Rebels' Way', by Gwyneth Francis



Glossop BookFest organised a well attended 'Meet the Author' event at the Labour Club, at which Gwyneth Francis gave us an interesting insight into the background to her 2011 book, *Rebels' Way*. The book focuses on historical events surrounding the Pentrich Rising of 1817, which occurred in a village in Derbyshire, located between Belper and Alfreton. In 1817, many of villagers were stocking-makers, who faced poverty as times were very hard. The country had been plunged into recession as a result of the Corn Laws, and people were desperate for reform and the vote.

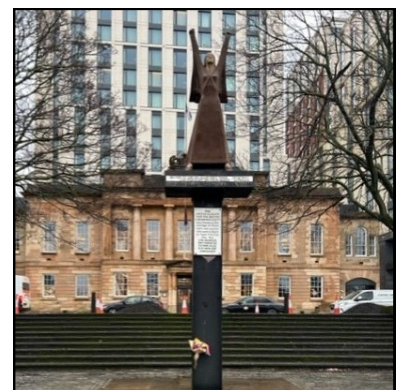
Gwyneth has taken events from this time and woven a story around them. Many of her characters were real, and involved in the rising, but the story is told through the eyes of Meg, a fictional 13-year-old ballad singer who travels through England with her grandfather. The narrative races along as we follow the marchers from Pentrich to South Wingfield as they plan to take their grievances to London. They are betrayed by a government spy who is feeding them 'fake news' about others who will join them on the march.

The book is recommended for young adults, but I found it to be a fascinating insight into events from our history where the lack of a right to protest could end in execution, or transportation to Australia.

*Margaret Peters*

## Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to...

**Glasgow:** where Eddie Picton spotted this stunning tribute to the Scottish volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War. The figure represents Dolores Ibárruri - 'La Pasionaria' - heroine of the Spanish Republican movement, who said: "Better to die on your feet than live forever on your knees".





## Michelle Holding: Brian Peters remembers



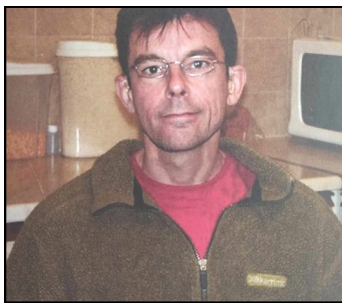
We were very sad to hear shortly after Christmas that a great friend of the club, Michelle Holding, had passed away, after years facing serious illness with staggering bravery. Michelle took over the running of the monthly Sunday folk music sessions at the club from Joe Brindley in 2021, assisted by her musical duo partner Bonz Barnes. She also held several parties here, which contributed significantly to our bar takings, and attracted several new members.

Michelle was a remarkably talented musician. She was originally a guitarist, but picked up the banjo and mastered the American claw hammer style to a high degree of skill, before learning to play the technically even more demanding 'classic banjo' style, in which she amazed audiences with finger-busting instrumentals. Michelle was also an excellent singer and always eclectic in her choice of songs, from traditional folk ballads, to American old-time country, to blues, to modern songwriter compositions and even some Lancashire dialect material. She also enjoyed singing political songs like 'Tom Paine's Bones' and 'Friends are Few When Folk Are Poor'.

Michelle was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014, at the age of 31. A double mastectomy and multiple courses of treatment slowed the progress of the disease, but it became apparent during 2023 that it couldn't be held at bay for much longer. Despite excellent palliative care from the NHS, she had to battle through increasing levels of pain - although she put on such a brave face that people who didn't know her well would never have realised it. She and Bonz finished a triumphant main stage spot at Whitby Folk Festival with 'Sylvia's Mother', the kind of song no-one else would have dared perform at such a traditional festival, but Michelle got the audience singing along.

As it became apparent over the summer that she was fast running out of time, she brought forward her 41st birthday party from October to September, and packed the Labour Club with many friends and some of the best musicians from the local folk scene. Then, as October found her lust for life undiminished, she went ahead with a second party on the original date, which again was a huge success. In late November, against all medical predictions, she was still determined to go ahead with her last concert, at the Globe, turning in a memorable show for one last time. Michelle was accepted at Dr. Kershaw's Hospice in Royton in December, where after spending Christmas with her family she spent her last days being serenaded around the clock by some of her illustrious musical friends. After years of fundraising for Cancer charities and being involved with the trials of new drugs, it was not surprising that Michelle decided to donate her body to science.

There was a packed memorial service in January at Stalybridge Labour Club, preferred to Glossop only because more people could be fitted in. Many reminiscences of Michelle were shared that day, and everyone there knew that we were saying farewell to a real one-off, a free spirit whose determination to extract every last drop from her life was an example to us all. Michelle is already sorely missed.



### Anne Robinson pays tribute to Robert O'Connor

On 20 January we were shocked and saddened to hear of Rob's death, and it is impossible here to fully express the extent of the love for him around the Club and our sense of loss. Rob had a long association with

the Club over decades and it seemed fitting that his family asked to hold his wake here. Many of us came together on 14 February to join the family in marking his passing and to remember his life and his distinctive personality. He was a recognisable character around Glossop and the variety of people at the wake showed the huge range of projects and activities that he was connected with, although he was typically modest about his involvements.

Rob appreciated the Club as a social place where he found - and gave others - care and company. Over the years he came walking, to the reading group, poetry evenings and latterly was on the committee as 'green champion', working on the environmental issues so close to his heart. But, in reality, his connection with the Club was not about organised activities, but coming in for a drink and playing scrabble and other games. We found him warm, wise and with a wicked dry sense of humour. He will be sadly missed.



### Suffragette Walk: Saturday 2 March

This route in the 'Five Mile Walkers' programme took us from the People's History Museum in Manchester through parts of the old city and down Oxford Road to the Pankhurst Centre, where the suffragette movement held its first meetings. En route we stopped at the statue of Emmeline Pankhurst in St Peter's Square, and expressed solidarity with the Palestine protest that was taking place at the same time. We visited the People's History Museum, where we looked at the display of suffragette artefacts, which, pleasingly, highlight Hannah Mitchell, who spent part of her life in Glossop. At the end of the walk we called into the Whitworth Gallery for refreshments, taking in the Muslim Women's Arts Festival and admiring the exhibition of embroidery from Palestine. I will certainly go back before the Material Power exhibit ends on April 7th, and recommend it to everyone who has not already been.

The Five Mile Walk group goes out on the first and third Saturdays of each month for a varied programme of walks, most with a point of social, political or other interest. The next walk on March 16th will be at the 'plague village' of Eyam. If you'd like to know more, contact Anne Robinson:



[margannerobinson@btinternet.com](mailto:margannerobinson@btinternet.com)

## Our treasurer, Anne Robinson, gives an update from the Labour Club bar ...

It's that time of year where we are notified of price rises by many of our suppliers. We have recently transferred to organic FairTrade wine, and in line with our BDS policy have substituted Coke with Karma Cola. These and other new products offer higher quality and more ethical choices too!

A small group of bar and cellar volunteers are reviewing prices and, from the beginning of April, you will see changes. We have tried to limit the increases where we can, bearing in mind that the bar represents the biggest source of income for the Club and is critical not just to its continued existence but to its ability to grow and develop. After review, your own favourite drink may not cost you more, but please bear with us if you find that it does.

If you have any questions or comments about the prices and products on the bar, please contact me on:  
margannerobinson@btinternet.com



## Cultural Visits from the Labour Club

Apart from the club programme, there are many other events accessible from Glossop that members might like to link with, as well as interesting places to visit. We are starting an informal group to coordinate what we are calling 'cultural visits' each month. All members can join the outings, and they will add an extra element to what the club already offers.

The first of these is a 'heritage walk' above ground at the National Coal Mining Museum on Thursday March 21st You'll find further details on page 1: reserve your place quickly as numbers are limited.

The second visit is to the RHS Urban Show in the afternoon of Thursday April 18th at the Mayfield Depot, just below Piccadilly station. You'll need to book your own tickets: you can find details of the show and how to book on this link or via the RHS website. Please advise us you have booked and want to be part of the group by emailing glossoplourclub@gmail.com marking your email RHS Urban Show.

Future visits will include the People's History Museum, and other ideas are welcome. So watch out for more news about the cultural visits as they develop.....



## Social Sundays

Every Sunday since the beginning of December, the Labour Club has opened its doors to provide a social space for people of all ages who'd like to join in with craft activities, or just sit and read the Sunday papers. We provide a home-cooked hot meal using unclaimed vegetables donated by Whitfield Food Club, in keeping with our campaign to cut food waste. Our chefs have had to be inventive with recipes but have provided a varied menu, for which our guests have given us great feedback. Particular favourites have been olive bread and lime drizzle cake.

Kasey Carver, who leads the craft workshops, says: 'It's great seeing a table with four generations around, it deep in concentration, while doing amazing things like pouring acrylics!' Along with a team of willing volunteers, she is delighted with the way things have gone: 'Social Sundays have become really vibrant, and we get lots of returners who make themselves at home in the club. I think we can say that the sessions have lived up to the name.'

Social Sundays, originally an offshoot from the 'Warm Spaces' scheme, will finish for the season at the end of March, but the team hope to be back next winter. In the meantime, the cookery team are planning to publish a book of recipes based on what they have learned from the challenge of creating tasty meals from surplus vegetables, inspired by ideas from the pressure group 'Love Food, Hate Waste' Look out for the 'International Day of Food Awareness and Waste' in September, where members of the club will meet for the second year running to work on ways in which we can avoid squandering the Earth's food supplies.



## Room Hire

The Labour Club is a wonderful space for local groups to meet on a regular or ad-hoc basis.  
To book, contact Mary Moss:

bookings.glossoplourclub@gmail.com

## Benefit Concert for The Chernobyl Children's Project

On **Saturday April 27th** there will be a special concert at the club to remember two of the project's dearest friends, Ken and Mags Whiting, who passed away recently. Special guests are the highly entertaining duo, **Bakerfield**, who perform a goodtime mixture of Bluegrass, Folk and Americana, supported by local heroes **Bonz & Brian**. All the artists have donated their time to this event, and all proceeds will go to the charity. Ticket details to be announced shortly through Facebook and mailing list.

## Write an Article for the Newsletter!

If you'd like to write an article for the newsletter, please send it to Margaret Peters at margaret.peters@live.co.uk