

## Karl Marx's Grave Violated - Twice

**The two recent attacks on Karl Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery are proof of the enduring power of his ideas. They come at a time of renewed interest in Marx's evaluation and analysis of capitalism.**

The first attack was with a hammer and the second saw the desecration of the monument to Marx with red graffiti. Ian Dungavell, chief executive of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, called the attack "shocking and disappointing", but also said it was testament to the strength of Marx's legacy.

"It's a sign that Marx still means a lot today, if people are bothered to attack it. It's an example of how he is still relevant. People attack monuments that they believe have enduring power."

### Growing Interest

Paul Mason, left wing columnist at the New Statesman, said the act of vandalism occurred at a "significant moment", during a period of "growing interest in Marx the man".

"The hammer attack on Marx happened now ... because the ideals Marx fought for are achievable in this century." Mason wrote this before a second attack occurred some days later.



Marx spent much of his life in Britain and it was here that he produced his most important work 'Das Kapital.'

His tomb has become an important place of veneration for Marxists and other adherents to socialism from all over the world.

Each year, the Marx Memorial Library holds a ceremony at the tomb on the day of Marx's burial,

March 17. Minister Ma Hui from China's London Embassy will deliver the oration at next month's event.

### Solidarity

"Show your solidarity and support in the face of the recent act of vandalism against the grave of Karl Marx by joining us for our annual oration at the grave site," library staff wrote on social media.

Donations to help the restoration can be sent to: Marx Memorial Library  
37A Clerkenwell Green, Clerkenwell,  
London EC1R 0DU

## Taking Marx's Name in Vain

Anyone who reads books or goes to talks on late 19th century British socialist and/or feminist history will now often hear Marx's younger daughter Eleanor referred to as "Marx". This is confusing to anyone (most of us) who thinks of Marx as Karl Marx.

It is also ironic, as in life, despite not being legally married to her "partner", Dr Edward Aveling, Eleanor always insisted on being called "Mrs Aveling" or "Marx-Aveling".

And surely, we should use her self-identification and rather than confuse Eleanor with her father, we should call Eleanor, "Eleanor Marx-Aveling".

Some have argued that Eleanor reclaimed the name "Marx" when she died, as her death certificate lists her as Eleanor Marx, but like all other dead people, Eleanor did not give her own details to the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths. They were given to the registrar by Aveling, and it was he who chose to deny her the use of his name; but that is a longer as yet untold story.

*Deborah Lavin*

## Book Review

*Minnie Lansbury-Suffragette, Socialist, Rebel Councillor*, by Janine Booth (Five Leaves Publications 2018)

**This biography of East End campaigner, Minnie Lansbury, is another great read from the historian and activist Janine Booth. Booth made her mark in 2009 with her earlier work *Guilty and Proud of It*, the story of the Poplar councillors who were imprisoned in Brixton and Holloway goals for their refusal to pay over part of the Council's rates until their demand for the equalisation of the rates between rich and poor London borough's was agreed.**

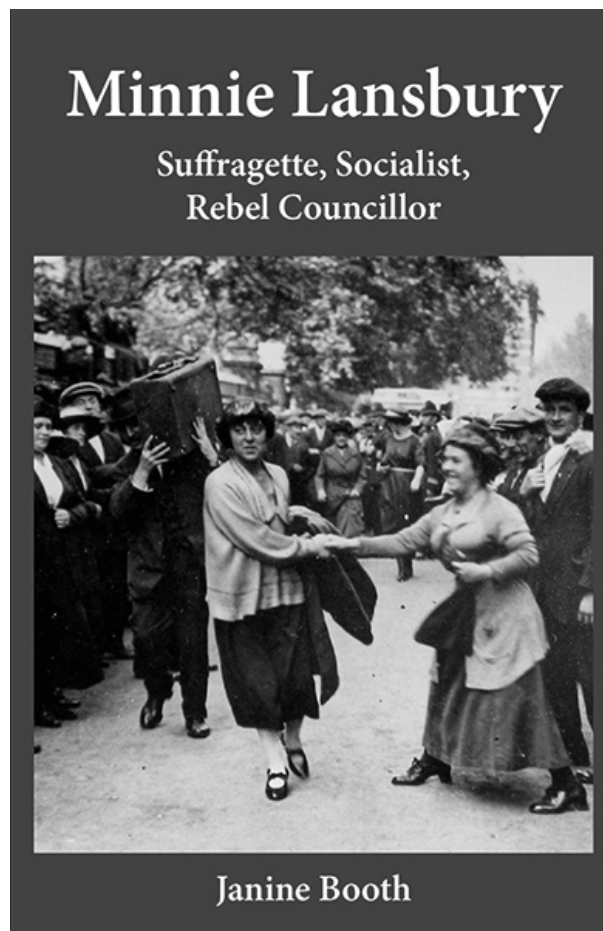
Minnie Lansbury was a member of Poplar Council at this time and one of those sentenced for refusing to comply with the court order. It was her spell in prison that weakened her and led to her early death from the Spanish flu epidemic which swept the world in the aftermath of the world war. The massive outpouring of grief from the East London poor at her death was a massive testament to her short but heroic struggle on behalf of her downtrodden fellow citizens.

Minnie Lansbury encapsulated the East End which was a melting pot for people from every corner of the globe. She was born near Brick Lane in 1889, an area that had previously been predominantly Irish but now was home to a new wave of Jewish immigrants, mainly from Russia and Eastern Europe.

### Jewish neighbours

Minnie Glasser was born into a not particularly orthodox Jewish family. They were Yiddish speaking like all of their Jewish neighbours, something frowned upon by the rich 'West End Jews' who were contemptuous of their recently arrived poorer coreligionists. She flourished at school, won a scholarship and became a teacher. She got her first job in 1911.

Although the National Union of Teachers at



the time opposed equal pay for men and women teachers, Minnie joined and became an activist in the union.

Although reared in a Jewish neighbourhood, Yiddish speaking, and attending initially the Jewish Free School, Minnie was not particularly religious. This is evidenced by her marriage to George Lansbury's son Edgar in 1914. It was a simple ceremony carried out at Poplar Registrar's Office.

A few months after her marriage Britain declared war on Germany and the struggle for female suffrage led by the Pankhursts collapsed.

Minnie, along with the renegade Pankhurst daughter, Sylvia, continued the fight and formed the anti-war East End Federation of Suffragettes. For much of the war the ELFS carried on campaigning both for equal voting rights for men and women, and for an end to the war. It was an uphill and often dangerous fight against the war fever that prevailed. In 1915 Minnie gave up her teaching post to devote herself full time to the work of the ELFS.

### Poplar Council

The Russian Revolution in 1917 was welcomed by socialists everywhere and the victory of the Bolsheviks led to the ending of the war a year later. Minnie and Edgar both joined the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920. For the next two years her work revolved

around Poplar Council, won for the first time by Labour in 1919.

The story of the Poplar councillors who went to prison in 1921 to secure equalisation of the rates in London is now legend. Minnie Lansbury was one of those who were imprisoned. I will not repeat the story here. Suffice to say that Booth in 2009 and Noreen Branson before her have both written about this remarkable episode.

The imprisoned councillors won. The rates were equalised between the poorer and the richer London boroughs, yet in the wake of that victory, the Labour movement lost one of its promising stars.

Young Minnie Lansbury, on 1 January 1922 succumbed to pneumonia brought on by prison hardship and the Spanish flue. She was just 32 years old.

### **Prison Hardship**

This is a wonderful work of working-class history in which Janine Booth brings the East End alive. She successfully intertwines the varying strands of Minnie Lansbury's short but effective life: her Jewish roots, her internationalism, her revolutionary ardour, coupled with her painstaking work at grassroots level to bring about meaningful reform.

It is a life paid tribute to in a glowing foreword by Clive Lewis MP, who rightly draws parallels to today. This book should be on the shelves of all those with an interest in labour, women's and migrant history.

*Mike Squires*



*Minnie, with Edgar and Geroge Lansbury*

### **John Ruskin's Museum for the Workers of Sheffield Comes to London**

In 1875, the art critic John Ruskin opened a museum in Walkley, Sheffield, to give the city's workers an opportunity to experience the beauty of art and the natural world that inspired human creativity. The museum was located on top of a hill outside the city to encourage factory workers to venture out into the countryside.

### **Power of Seeing**

Visitors to the museum would see an amazingly diverse collection of valuable objects, not simply paintings, all collected by Ruskin himself with the aim of educating the eye and inspiring the "power of seeing". Workers and artisans were given a unique access to works of art that would only be available to the wealthy elite who visited the commercial galleries of London and travelled to places like Venice. One such early visitor to the new Sheffield museum was a young knife grinder named Ben Creswick, who, with Ruskin's help, became a professional sculptor and ended up as a professor of art.

The museum, which was run by Ruskin's Guild of St George, contained copies of Renaissance art, engravings, prints, coins, rocks and minerals, illustrated books, architectural designs, sculpture and plaster casts; thousands of items which Ruskin donated to Sheffield and which still remain part of the city's art collection.

### **Bicentenary**

It is just a small sample of these objects that are now on display in a new exhibition in London organised to celebrate the bicentenary year of Ruskin's birth. This is an entirely free exhibition and totally lives up to its title, *The Power of Seeing*, in the range of its truly stunning artefacts that should inspire today's visitors just like they did in the 19th century. The exhibition is on at Two Temple Place until 22 April 2019. Well worth a visit.

<https://twotempleplace.org/exhibitions/john-ruskin/>

*David Morgan*

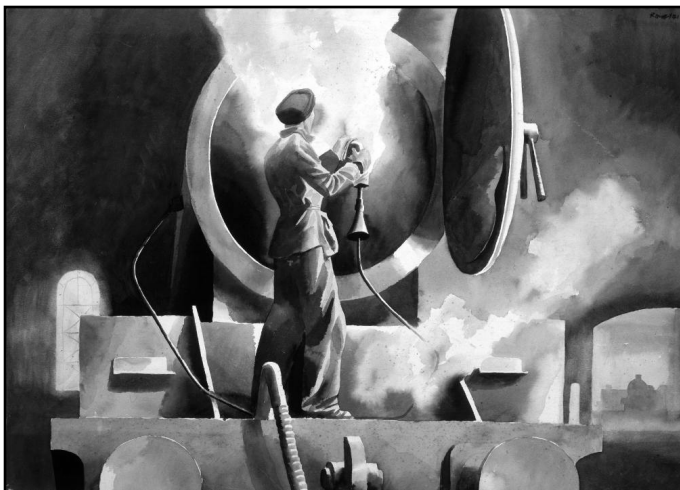
## "Art for All" proved an inspiring talk in January

January can often be a quiet month but our first meeting of 2019 was exceptionally well attended with over 40 people joining us for an excellent talk by Christine Lindey, who is perhaps best known as a writer on art for the Morning Star.

Greta Sykes introduced Lindey as the author of five books on British artists and the politics of the left; her latest, "Art for All, British Socially Committed Art from the 1930s to the Cold War", formed the subject of her very illuminating talk.

The aim of the book was to reclaim the many largely forgotten painters and illustrators who were politically active and many of whom were of a working class background.

Tracing the roots of these socially committed artists to the momentous decade of the 1930s, Christine explained how their work had been dismissed by the traditional art history establishment.



Cliff Rowe, *Woman Cleaning a Locomotive*, 1942

### Social

She felt that it was vital to emphasise the social circumstances experienced by the artists; many were not well off and so had to take up other work in order to survive.

Illustrating her talk with many examples of the art they produced, much of it held in private collections and rarely seen in public, Lindey revealed how artists were politicised by events such as the rise of fascism, the Spanish Civil War, the Great Depression and the Wall Street Crash.

Many of the artists, such as Cliff Rowe, James Boswell, Clive Branson and Percy Horton, wanted to combat the barbarism of fascism by

employing their talents to produce anonymous public political art like banners and posters that were used on rallies and demonstrations.

### Political

Many were associated with Cliff Rowe who began to organise British artists after he had visited the USSR and become inspired by the social activism of Soviet artists.

Lindey examined how political artists had to confront the dilemma of producing saleable art for the market and choosing to create political works that might be less commercially popular.

From listening to Lindey's inspiring talk and reading her excellent book, *Art for All*, it is clear that artists made a vital contribution to the labour movement and its politics. As the speaker ably argued, the work of these political painters has the capacity to inspire future generations.

Their work not only has a central place in British art history, it is invaluable for understanding the richness and vitality of working class life. We should be grateful to Lindey for her commitment to recovering the work of so many too often neglected artists. The talk provoked a lively discussion. If you missed it, get the book.

*David Morgan*



## BOOK REVIEW

*Crashed — How a decade of financial crises changed the world*

by Adam Tooze, Allen Lane, 2018

**Economics has been described as the 'dismal science' and most books on the subject are hardly suitable for bedside reading. But the economic factor in politics cannot be ignored and it is essential to understand the workings of the modern economy. The 'crash' of 2008 affected the entire world and Adam Tooze's book is as good as we are likely to get on the subject.**

The causes of the crash can be summed up in one word — 'greed'. After the Wall Street Crash of 1929, it was said, 'this must not be allowed to happen again', but the lessons of the 1930s were forgotten or ignored as bankers and investors took advantage of the relaxation of state control on their activities to pursue higher profits. Risks were taken in financial markets and a boom in property prices got out of hand.

### A Global Crash

Tooze makes the important point that although the crisis started in the USA with the collapse of Lehman Brothers, it spread across the world. All countries now operate in a global economy.

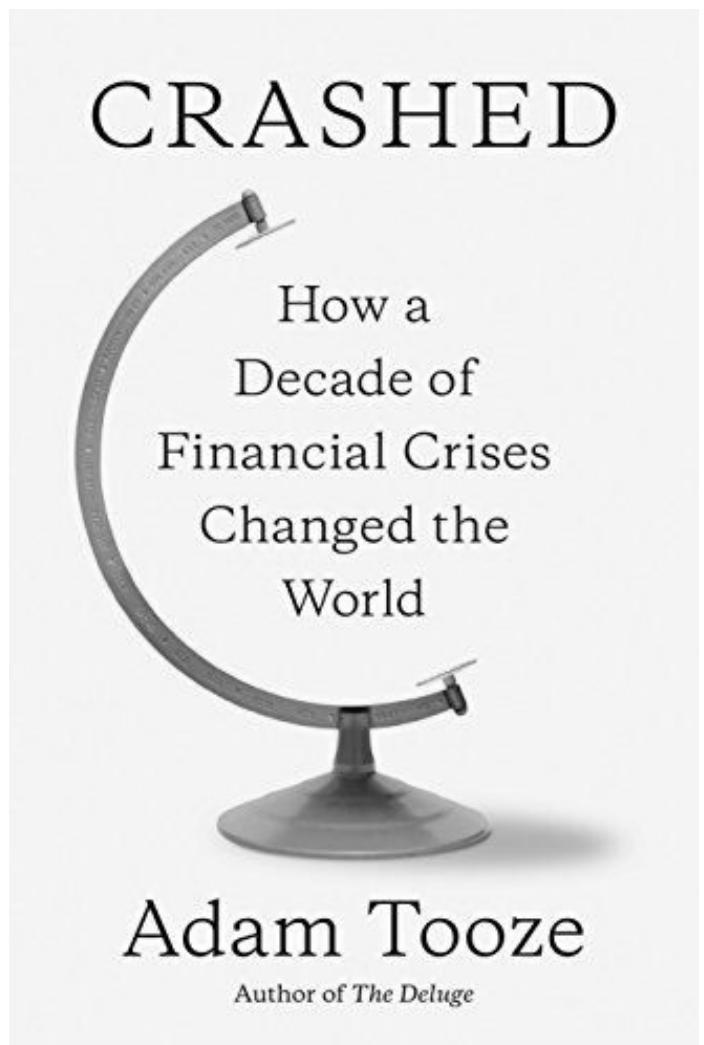
New Labour's economic policy was to encourage 'The City' to make higher profits by relaxing state controls. The profits were taxed to provide the money to finance higher public expenditure. This was very much Gordon Brown's economic policy and it worked until the 2008 crash. To Brown's credit when the crash came he saw the need for prompt action if a world slump was to be avoided. He gave a lead and persuaded governments to pour state money into their economies to shore up the banks. The price was paid, not by the bankers and investors responsible for the crisis, but by those who have suffered years of unemployment, wage restraint and cuts in welfare services.

### The Future

Adam Tooze explains this very clearly in much detail. Can it happen again? The answer is 'yes', although the economic circumstances are likely to be different next time. Tooze quotes the case of the once booming economy of Japan. Lower

interest rates, pump priming by the government, and every other stimulus known to Japanese economists have failed to lift the the country's economy out of recession. Recovery cannot be taken for granted, although the world economy is now recovering from recession after a decade of austerity measures. The world depression of 1929-33 brought Adolf Hitler to power in Germany, and in the aftermath of the 2008 crash Donald Trump was elected President of the USA. The omens are not good.

Archie Potts



## Book review

### ***Uncovering the West Country's rebellious past: Wiltshire's Radical History***

Published by *White Horse (Wiltshire) Trades Union Council*.

**This wonderful addition to local labour history is the direct product of a day school organised by the White Horse Trade Union Council, the TUC for Wiltshire. The school was a second such venture organised by trade unionists in the area.**

Wiltshire's Radical History is a collection of essays dealing with different aspects of the West Country's rebellious past. There is in the collection a significant input from amateur historians who make up the bulk of the authors. It is good to see such a mix of part-time historians along with the professionals.

One interesting contribution, more a reminiscence, is that from Jeremy Corbyn who relates his early experiences of growing up in Chippenham.

Rosie MacGregor, a Unison member and chair of the trades council, brings to life the story of Angela Tuckett, a communist from an early age who managed to combine her party membership with both being a member of the England Hockey Team and the first female solicitor in Bristol. She also distinguished herself by being dropped from the England team after refusing to give the Nazi salute when the team toured Germany in 1935.

#### **Aid to Spain**

Angela Tuckett had an extraordinary life that covered both Europe and America. Active in Bristol on behalf of the Aid to Spain movement she carried on with these activities when moving to America with her new husband. She came back to Britain in the early part of the war after the marriage failed and for the next thirty years or so her activities confined her to London. She was solicitor and legal advisor to the *Daily Worker* and after that worked on *Labour Monthly* as a sub editor.

The last part of her life was spent back in the West Country in Swindon where she and her new husband were active in the lo-

cal Communist party. She was also a singer and wrote several books on trade union history.

#### **Hanging**

The opening essay by Professor Steve Poole, of the University of the West of England, relates the practice of hanging at the scene of

the crime; a little-known exercise that had in part the purpose of frightening the rural poor. The convicted felon was taken back to where the crime was committed and then hung without a 'drop' until dying a slow and painful death at the end of the rope. Invariably a large local crowd would gather to watch the event, a bit like, 'I'm a celebrity get me out of here' with the death. It was hoped by the rural establishment that such tortuous methods would keep the rural poor in their place. This barbaric

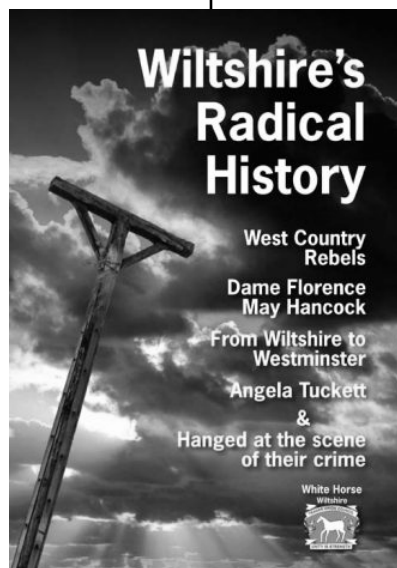
practice was discontinued in 1832.

West Country Rebels by Nigel Costley, the Regional Secretary of the South West TUC, another non-academic historian, gives us some fascinating vignettes of 'trouble makers' in his part of the world. One rebellion against the imposition of the English prayer book in the 16th century also highlighted the importance of the Cornish language which was still widely spoken at that time.

#### **Press Gang**

Struggles against the press gangs were very important in the South West peninsular and Costley reminds us of the constant battles against them that took place on and off for almost a century.

Another resident of Chippenham, apart from Jeremy Corbyn, was Florence May Hancock whose life is chronicled by Melissa Barnett, the Curator of Chippenham Museum. Han-



## Emergency Action on Venezuela

Set up at short notice an emergency meeting on the threat to Venezuela took place at the former NUT headquarters in Mabledon Place opposite the British Library in London, on 31st January; the venue is now the offices of the National Education Union (NEU).

Called by Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC) and hosted by the NEU, supporters included Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America, London Young Labour, trade unions such as Unite and the GFTU, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Caribbean Labour Solidarity, Liberation, the Morning Star and Stop the War Coalition.

Historically, Venezuela has always been at the heart of US interventions in their so-called 'backyard' due to the fact that the country possesses the largest oil and gas reserves in the world. Venezuela also owns gold, which, amongst other assets, has been blocked by the Bank of England from being moved. Over the past 20 years the US has endeavoured to destabilise Venezuela with economic warfare and a financial blockade in an attempt to assert its influence and grab control of the oil, gold and mineral-rich country. These actions, which clearly violate international law, now culminate in the recognition of an unelected opposition leader as president of the country – effectively a foreign backed right wing coup attempt.

Speakers at the rally included Tariq Ali, writer, Lindsey German, STWC, Tony Burke, Unite, Doug Nicholls, GFTU, Christine Blower, NEU, Kate Hudson, CND, Huda Elmi, Labour NEC & Momentum member, Paul Maskey, Sinn Fein MP, and Colin Burgon, Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America.

The packed meeting of approximately 200 people was treated to some excellent and inspiring speeches. Tariq Ali outlined the history of US campaigns to overthrow governments they did not like and compared the current Venezuela action to previous ones, such as Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and Syria. He pointed to how constant anti-Russian

### Uncovering the West Country's rebellious past

cock was a product of late 19th century Chippenham and was reared in a poverty-stricken area of the town.

Her family were radicals and Hancock was political from an early age. She worked in a local factory and after a successful strike slowly rose to prominence in the trade union movement. She reached her pinnacle in 1947 when she became only the second woman president of the TUC.

This well produced booklet is forty-seven pages of engaging history and should serve as an inspiration to other trade union organisations to uncover their own local history and champions.

As Nigel Costley says in his opening paragraph,

*'One of the reasons that I was so compelled to produce a digest of West Country Rebels was that actually the more you dig into history the more emerges. I don't claim to do justice to the stories that are still out there that still need to be written.'*

Let's uncover more of those stories.

Mike Squires

smears were used to drum up support for American policies of intervention while they also accused Russia of similar actions. He observed that the US campaigns had slightly changed over time. Formerly, they simply overthrew the existing leadership of a country they didn't like, such as occurred in Chile, whereas now they applied tactics that depended on undermining national organisations and destroying the country from the inside.

Doug Nicholls, GFTU, compared the election results of Macron, Theresa May, and Donald Trump with Maduro's election results, illustrating how much more popular Maduro was in his country than any of these other heads of government. Yet, it is asserted by the opposition that he has not got the support of the people. Surely we must all stand firm in the belief that the future of Venezuela is a matter for Venezuelans themselves alone to determine.

Greta Sykes



## Thomas Frederick Worrall

The work of Thomas Frederick Worrall is being highlighted by his great granddaughter, Dr Rachael Jones, a historical researcher at Leicester University, who has been looking into the life of her forebear.

Thomas Worrall lived in Lancashire at the beginning of the twentieth century and married a local woman, Martha Green. Their daughter- Dr Jones's grandmother- was born in 1906. "He was a labourer in a cotton mill," said Dr Jones, "and became interested in Socialism following the American tariff imposed on cloth in 1890. He became very left-wing." Representing the Independent Labour Party, he travelled to Wales in 1910 to speak about trade unionism. The *Aberdare Leader* reported how he caused a riot at a political meeting where an opposing activist was speaking. (Wild disorder', *Aberdare Leader*, 25 June 1910).

Later, when Worrall was living permanently in Wales, he stood as the Labour Party candidate for the Llandaff and Barry constituency in the 1923 general election. Although he received nearly 8,000 votes, he came in third. As well as his political activities, working in the Aberthaw cement works and collecting subscriptions for the



Cooperative Society, he was a keen watercolour painter of local scenes and he also travelled overseas to paint. "I am distributing some of his pieces to libraries and archives. Some have gone to collections in the United States and Canada, but others are closer to home including Gwent Archives and Oystermouth Library," said Dr Jones.

Dr Jones has created a Wikipedia page about her great grandfather which can be found on the internet at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Frederick\\_Worrall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Frederick_Worrall).

The page includes a list of his artworks that are in public collections.



*Hebden Bridge*

## Future Socialist History Society Meetings

***The Living Wage and the pursuit of a 'Revolutionary Policy'. The ILP between the wars; before and after disaffiliation***

Speaker: Ian Bullock

2pm Saturday 16th March

### ***Soviet Communes***

Speaker: Andy Willimott

Author of "Living the Revolution: Urban Communes & Soviet Socialism, 1917-1932" (2016)

2pm, Saturday 18th May - The AGM will be held at 1pm.

### ***John Ruskin, For and Against***

2pm, Saturday 21st September

*David Morgan and Duncan Bowie debate the pros and cons of John Ruskin's ideas, their relevance for today and his influence for good or ill on the labour movement.*

All events will be held at: **Red Lion Hall, Basement, Tresham House, Red Lion Square**, entrance via Lamb's Conduit Passage by Conway Hall, Holborn, WC1R 4RE