

Ian Bullock

Logie Barrow pays tribute to his fellow historian and collaborator, the late Ian Bullock.

Ian was a classic working-class “11-plus failure”, sufficiently combative to rescue himself as student and teacher in adult education (which is nowadays so threatened) and via Sussex University (ditto).

I first met Ian from the potentially hierarchical position of external examiner for his Sussex doctorate, which I found to be outstanding. As my apparently unpublishable research on the pre-1914 “Clarion” socialists had uncovered that weekly’s impatient spawning of what I dubbed a proto-rank-and-file movement of trade-unionists, Ian and I recognised that our areas were complementary. So, we collaborated on what became our “Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement 1880-1914” (Cambridge University Press, 1996).



As a collaborator, Ian was perfect: prompt, critical, concise, funny. By then, I was focussing on anti-vaccinationism and on what I now call active “stupefaction”. But Ian carried ‘our’ story on into the 1940s: he remained typically thorough and readable, hence tantalisingly crucial to current struggles and incoherences.

Rosemary Logan

The SHS is sorry to learn of the death of one of our longest-standing members, Rosemary Logan, on 10 March. Rosemary had been a close friend of Douglas Hyde (1911-1996), and would accompany him to SHS public meetings at Marx House in the society's early years. Following Douglas Hyde's death, Rosemary continued to be a regular and active attender at SHS meetings, and her contributions to the discussions were always well-considered and valuable. We send our condolences to her husband Pat on this sad occasion.

Francis King

**The Socialist History Society AGM will take place at the Marx Memorial Library
37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU, nearest station Farringdon
on Saturday 6 June at 1pm, This will be followed at 2pm by a talk by Donald Sassoon
on his new book *Revolutions: A New History***

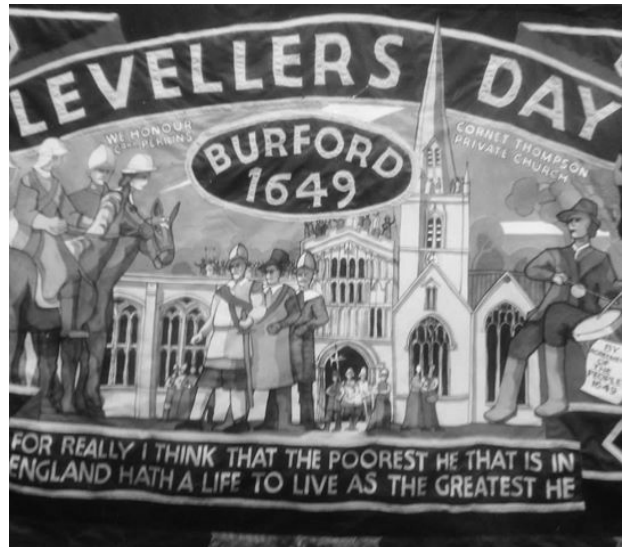
Levellers Day 2026

Saturday 9 May 2026, 10.30am to 4.30pm

Venue: Warwick Hall, Burford, OX18 4RY.

The full day event involves:

- Singing in the churchyard
- Commemoration led by the Reverend Canon Professor Mark Chapman
- Celtic folk rock band
- A march around Burford
- *Levellers Day walking tour*: Join historians Jonathan Healey (author, *The Blazing World*) and John Rees (*The Leveller Revolution: Radical Political Organisation in England, 1640-1650 and The Fiery Spirits: Popular Protest, Parliament and the English Revolution*) for a walking tour of Burford where you can see the location of the public house where the Levellers made their last stand, the birthplace of Civil War journalist Marchamont Nedham, and home of Speaker of the Long Parliament; ending up back in the churchyard where the Leveller martyrs met their fate.
- Levellers Day debate with John McDonnell MP
- Levellers conversation with Professor Mike Braddick, author of the recent biography of Christopher Hill.



See the link for more details:

<https://levellersday.wordpress.com/whats-happening-2026/>



1926 General Strike Centenary Open Day

The *People's History Museum* in Manchester is hosting a special open day to mark the centenary of the 1926 General Strike on the 9 May 2026.

Historians, activists, trade unionists, and heritage professionals will explore the 1926 General Strike through a range of papers and panels, and highlight rare archival material.

The event is supported by the *Society for the Study of Labour History* and the result of a collaboration between the John Rylands Library, the National Co-operative Archive, the People's History Museum, and the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.

Programme for the day:

10.30am – 10.35am: Welcome – Jenny Mabbott, People's History Museum

10.35am – 11.15am: Keynote: Nine Days in May: The General Strike of 1926 – Dr Jonathan Schneer

11.15am – 12.15pm: Exploring the General Strike: Chair – Janette Martin, John Rylands Library

- Why do we call the General Strike a General Strike? – Professor Kevin Morgan
- Revolution, spies and fascist strikebreakers: The General Strike of 1926 – Dr Oliver Price
- The General Strike in Cumberland and Westmorland – Dr Joe Rigby

12.15pm – 1.15pm: Lunch break

1.15pm – 2.15pm: Women and the General Strike: Chair – Ali Ronan, Trailblazers! Women of Greater Manchester

- 'Abasing herself and her class': Susan Lawrence and General Strike – Richard Temple
- 'Red Ellen' and the Plebs: Interpreting the General Strike – Professor Mike Sanders
- 'Duty' and 'Service' in a 'National Emergency': Ex-Servicewomen and the General Strike, 1926 – Dr Jane Clarke

2.15pm – 3.00pm: Rowntree, the Co-op and the General Strike: Chair – Jane Donaldson, National Co-operative Archive

- The General Strike at Rowntree & Co – Nick Smith
- The Co-op and the general strike: a crisis for co-operation? – Professor Tony Taylor

3.00pm – 3.15pm: Tea/coffee break

3.15pm – 4.15pm: What is the legacy of the 1926 General Strike?

Chair – Belinda Scarlett, Working Class Movement Library

Panellists – Dr Jonathan Schneer, Professor Chris Godden, and Michael Agboh-Davison


For the full details see

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1926-general-strike-centenary-open-day-tickets-1983370916803>



Online meeting - Sunday 10 May 2.30pm

Leyton and the
General Strike
 of 1926



Speakers:
 Edd Mustill author of
Britain's Revolutionary Summer
 and
 Richard Price on the 'State of Terrorism'
 the strike brought to Leyton*

Zoom registration - <https://rebrand.ly/leyton-gs-26>

* Walthamstow, Leyton and Chingford Guardian, May 14, 1926

Christopher Hill: The Life of a Radical Historian

by Michael Braddick (Verso hb £35; pb £19.99)

Review by *Duncan Bowie*

I have sometimes questioned whether historians deserve biographies. An increasing trend, we have recently had biographies of A J P Taylor, Eric Hobsbawm and Raphael Samuel, among others. There are no doubt biographies of rightwing historians which have not come my way. Braddick is himself a historian of 17th century Britain and his study does validate this trend. Hill was at one time a communist (and onetime secretary of the Communist Party Historians Group) as well as an academic historian, and the sections in the book on the activities of the group are well worth reading, especially for those involved in writing and studying socialist history. Braddick provides a detailed study of all of Hill's voluminous writings and how his historical output developed over time from the somewhat uncritical study of Lenin and the Russian Revolution (a topic notably outside his specialist area) through his work on the intellectual origins of the English revolution and analysis of religious sects – *The World Turned Upside Down* was one of my favourite books when a student, despite the fact that I was taught by one of Hill's rivals, John Morrill and our textbook was from another of Hill's critics, Conrad Russell.

Hill had left the Communist Party, and his former comrades could be critical of Hill's increasing focus on religious groups rather than on economic context. Both Morrill and Russell instead concentrated on the national and regional political developments, which Hill largely ignored. Braddick is good on examining Hill's historical methodology, and contrasts that with that of his critics, which as a historian, I felt was of considerable interest. Braddick's study tracks Hill's personal life – an adolescent affair with his teacher in Soviet Russia, his friendship with Sheila Grant Duff (author of a 1938 Penguin Special on Europe and the Czechs) and his marriages to fellow communist journalist Inez Waugh and then to Bridget Mason (formerly wife of another Communist Party historian). Hill was first a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, the all dons college he disliked, then at Cardiff University, then a fellow of Balliol, Oxford, before becoming Master of Balliol. There is much in the book on college politics and how Hill as a progressive responded to student activism. It was odd to read of the political activities of students I knew at the time, including one who recently gave a talk to our society. Hill was mainly an academic researcher rather than militant activist. He apparently did attempt to join the International Brigade during the Spanish civil war and provided help for Basque refugees, while working in the government's political warfare department. He was more of a literary communist, as were many of his fellow intellectuals, though unlike some others, he never turned into an anti-communist. In his writings, he supported a range of progressive causes while in many ways he could be said to have become a member of 'the establishment'.

Local History

Radical and Socialist History in South London

While the Socialist History Society focuses on British and international Socialist History, it is also important to focus on the history of radicalism and socialism at a local level, while also drawing attention to the inter-relationships between local, national and international politics.

My own contributions to Socialist History and our Occasional Publications have sought to do just this, including articles on the links between 19th century London radicals and European republicans, and the role of the Metropolitan Radical Federation, which in the late 19th century brought together radicals from different areas of London. Four years I wrote a book on radicals, reformers, socialists and communists in the South London area of Dulwich, focusing not just on their local activities but on their national political activity and in many cases on their international roles, for example in international anarchism (namely Louise Michel), the Indian nationalist movement (Annie Besant and Alan Octavian Hume), anti-slavery campaigns and the League of Nations (John and Alice Harris) or in the self-governance of Britain's African colonies (Creech Jones).

Dulwich Society

I have given talks on these figures and other individuals through the local history group run by the Dulwich Society, at a lecture club based at a local church and the Southwark Pensioners' Centre and local libraries. These talks can draw 30-50 people – some on-line, some in person, with most talks then being posted on websites. I also act as guide to a series of three local history walks, which have been run as part of the Dulwich Festival for the last three years, with a further set planned for next May. These are always popular and often overbooked. They are a revelation to local residents, who are often unaware of these aspects of their local history, which often focuses on buildings and their architecture rather than on the people who lived in the area and their political activities. It is also important to move beyond the establishment figures who dominate so much local history.

I am not the only socialist historian in South London. The late Sean Creighton, who was one of our members, wrote on Battersea and Croydon, while another SHS member, Graham Taylor, has written on Bermondsey socialism and the late Terry Liddle, of the Freethought History research group, wrote on radicalism and republicanism in Greenwich. There, no doubt, will be others.

Other civic societies in the wider area also have local history websites. There is also Past Tense, a radical history group based near the Elephant and Castle which has published an extensive series of historical pamphlets and also organises historical walks.

Labour Heritage

At a national level, we have the Labour Heritage, who publish a bulletin with articles on local Labour party history. There are also numerous academic studies of Labour and socialism at a local level, including a history of radical and socialism in the city of Oxford which I published some years ago. I have just written a study of secularism in South London centred on the Walworth Freethought Institute in Southwark established in the 1870's by Harriet Law, the only woman on the General Council of the First International, which will hopefully be published in some format in the near future, as well as a pamphlet on trade unionists and socialists who were members of the London School Board between 1870 and 1904, which will be published by the SHS later this year.

Writing this kind of local history is a way of broadening our reach beyond the relatively small network of socialist history specialists to a much wider group of people interested in engaging in what happened in the past in the areas where they live.

Duncan Bowie

Local History in Salford and Manchester

While born and bred in Salford, it is only two years ago that I returned to live in my childhood village of Monton, Eccles, after a gap of forty years in London. I now reside directly across the street from the junior school that I attended in the 1960s; the school building is largely unchanged, but it now houses a private nursery; a sign of the times.

I don't need to stress the richness of Manchester and Salford's labour, industrial, cultural and radical history; the area is of course notable for Friedrich Engels, who lived here and wrote memorably about the harsh living conditions suffered by the working class, their cramped crowded housing, filthy narrow streets and polluted canals. Today, there is a social housing tower block called Engels House, in Eccles, which is within walking distance of my town centre. A



Emmeline Pankhurst

bizarre recent sculpture, the Engels Climbing Beard, was put up outside the University of Salford in 2016. A classic Soviet stone statue of Engels was brought from Ukraine in 2017 and now stands outside the HOME arts complex in Tony Wilson Place, near Deansgate. The statue became a focus of protests at the outbreak of the Ukraine war.

Manchester's revolutionary history is legendary. Harry Pollitt, the Communist Party general secretary for much of the 20th century, was born in Droylsden, a town in Greater Manchester. The Pankhursts founded the Women's Social and Political Union in the city. A splendid statue of Emmeline Pankhurst now stands in historic St Peter's Square, a few strides from the site of the Peterloo Massacre, where a monument now lies to those slain during that popular protest.

Hard Times

Charles Dickens located his novel, *Hard Times*, in Manchester, which he called Coketown, and vividly depicted the grim social conditions in the dirty factories and mills of the industrial North. Countless socialists and radicals have visited the city and delivered public lectures, including national figures like William Morris and John Ruskin, to name but two.

Salford is this year celebrating its hundred years as a city with a series of events, exhibitions and activities marking key moments in the last century and the leading figures who contributed towards making the place what it is today. Notables being remembered are playwright Shelagh Delaney, born in Broughton, the novelist Walter Greenwood famous for *Love on the Dole*, the classic thirties depression novel, and painter Harold Riley. Leading examples of working-class culture featured in Salford 100 are Ewan MacColl's urban folk song *Dirty Old Town* and the film version of *Love on the Dole* made in 1941.



Meanwhile, the horrors of the Blitz of 1940-41 are recalled with an exhibition of the destruction of the houses and other buildings in Ordsall, Pendleton and Salford Docks. Modern local cultural icons include Mark E Smith who formed cult punk rock band The Fall in the 1970s and whose lyrics make repeated reference to Salford. Likewise, The Smiths are celebrated for making Salford Lads Club a landmark that now attracts visitors from around the world. The redbrick club building was granted Grade II listed status in 1994.

The year 1987 saw the foundation of the Working Class Movement Library at Jubilee House on Salford Crescent, which houses a unique archive of books, pamphlets and manuscripts that began as the private library of socialist historians, Eddie and Ruth Frow. This remains a vital resource for labour studies and its work rightly forms part of the Salford 100 programme.

Other important recent developments being celebrated are the opening in 2000 of the Lowry arts centre, named in memory of local artist L S Lowry, followed by the Imperial War Museum North opening in 2002, and the relocation of the BBC studios to Media City in 2011. All these cultural institutions are clustered around the Salford Quays Development, the former Salford Docks on the Manchester Ship Canal.

While 2026 is an exceptional year for Salford's public activities marking the city's history and diverse heritage, the work of local historians and history societies carries on year after year. The Eccles & District History Society, which I joined two years ago, runs a lively programme of monthly talks on a broad range of topics and always attracts an audience of between forty to sixty people. Many members are engaged in their own research into local and family history, discoveries which they share at meetings.

Recent talks have covered the Lancashire Suffragist, Lydia Becker, local coal mining, the age of the steam railways, Victorian writer Harrison Ainsworth, domestic service in Georgian Manchester, a working-class family during the First World War and the archaeology of Roman Manchester. A very varied programme showing how local history demonstrates an extremely rich potential. I am sure that similar activities will be repeated in local history societies elsewhere. We would welcome any reports from members on what is going on in their own areas and their own involvement.

David Morgan

For further information see

Salford 100 - <https://www.salford100.org.uk/>

Eccles & District History Society - <https://edhs.chessck.co.uk/>



How I Became a Socialist

By Stuart King

Strangely I became a socialist via the Young Liberals in Worthing in the 1960s.

I was brought up in a single parent family with three brothers. My mother was a resourceful and hard-working woman who had been a tobacconist before she was married. Ours was a politically progressive household. We read the Daily Mirror and my mother would tell stories of throwing eggs at Oswald Mosley when he held a rally at the Dome Cinema in 1936. My grandmother, who lived with us, had a more adventurous life; civil servant, flapper, actress, “gangster’s moll”. At seventeen she ran away and married a Sikh trainee barrister, so my mother’s maiden name was Gill even though she was the product of a liaison with a theatre owner from Brighton.

Out of this heterogeneous, matriarchal household I became increasingly political – joining the League Against Cruel Sports at 13 and being told off for putting posters up at my secondary modern school. I was an avid reader and Worthing had a good Central Library. I would cycle there once a fortnight to return with several books, mostly on wildlife or science fiction. I remember reading *The Midwich Cuckoos*, *The Day of the Triffids*, *Lord of the Flies*, 1984 and *Animal Farm*.

The Young Liberals were a radical bunch in the 1960’s, referred to as “Jo Grimond’s Red Guards”. By 1967 we were active in the anti-Vietnam war movement. With a school friend I went up with the Worthing Young Liberal banner to the huge March 1968 protest. I remember the amazing atmosphere in Trafalgar Square; the fountains turned red with dye, a sea of Vietnamese NLF flags, policeman’s helmets flung up in the air to great cheers, Vanessa Redgrave in her headband speaking from the platform outside the National Gallery. We lost our banner that day somewhere in the melee outside the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square and got roundly told off for it at our next YL meeting.

In July 1968 I was part of a very loose YL delegation to the 9th International Youth Festival in Sofia, Bulgaria. Flying from Gatwick to Budapest in a Tupalev we were taken on a very early morning coach tour of the city. All I can really remember was seeing bullet holes in the facades of buildings from the 1956 invasion which had yet to be repaired. On to Sofia by train I was in a compartment with four members of Woodcraft Folk from east London, all Jewish and ferociously anti-zionist. As a supporter of Israel in the 1967 Six Day War their arguments came as something of a revelation and by the end of a several hour journey I too had become an anti-zionist.

The festival was as exciting as anything I had ever been to; I was 18 and had never been abroad. Tens of thousands of youths from all over the world were billeted in one

small city discussing politics and having fun. It was in the middle of the Sino-Soviet split so the Chinese had been banned; the Czech YCL youth were given a hard time because of the Prague Spring; and the Latin Americans marched with huge banners of Che Guevara and Castro - it must have been a nightmare for the pro-Moscow organisers.

I went on a large unofficial anti-Vietnam demonstration which ended in a rally outside the US Embassy. At the point where an Iranian student was translating into Russian for the benefit of onlookers, hundreds of not-so-youthful Bulgarian YCL'ers carrying NLF flags cleared the square and gently dispersed the demonstration. Later, permission had been given to hold an unofficial teach-in on "Students and the Working Class" led by the German SDS. Outrageously one of the SDS leaders, Karl Deitrich Wolff, was likened by a Bulgarian speaker in the debate to Goebbels. This resulted in Wolff racing to the front and being wrestled to the ground and given a good pummelling. The following uproar led to the translations being ended and the lights turned off and the "teach-in" abandoned.

Almost as soon as we were back in Britain, Russia launched its invasion of Czechoslovakia leading to widespread protests. At one point we tried to deliver a protest letter to a Soviet cargo ship in Shoreham harbour; once the captain had learned what the letter was about, he threw it over the side and asked us to leave. The night before the big London demonstration I got my mother to run up a Czechoslovak flag on her sewing machine which I proudly carried on the demonstration and to the Soviet Embassy, all of us shouting in support of Dubcek, the Czech Prime Minister then under arrest.

By 1969 I was doing a year of A levels at Worthing FE college, and we organised a debate over the sit-in strike at the LSE, where the students had torn down the security gates put up by the director to control the students and stop sit-ins. Two LSE students, Ed Davoren, a Maoist, and a Young Liberal whose name I forget, debated the action. In the vote I sided with the direct-action Maoist and the rest is history. At Birmingham University in 1969 I immediately joined the Socialist Society which was big and lively. I said goodbye to liberalism and started reading Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lukacs and Lenin.

Fifty-seven years later I'm still a socialist and chair of Lambeth Your Party. What made me become a radical and then a socialist? A sense of outrage at the Vietnam war and imperialist oppression and the movement itself, with all its quirks and divisions but above all its comradeship.

This is a response to an article in the previous issue of the Newsletter. We welcome your contributions to this or any other topics of interest.

Why Rosa Luxemburg remains a beacon for today

All socialists should read the writings of Rosa Luxemburg. This Polish, Jewish, revolutionary socialist remains a beacon for all of us. She was murdered by right-wing ex-soliders in January 1919, at the age of 48, in the wake of the failure of the Spartacist uprising in Germany after the First World War.

The group was named after Spartacus, the slave who led a revolt against the Roman Empire. The uprising was put down with great brutality by the German Social Democrat-led government. The murder of Luxemburg and her fellow revolutionary, Karl Liebknecht, was never forgotten by the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) and contributed to the German communists reluctance to form a United Front with Social Democrats to fight the rise of Hitler's nazi party.

Luxemburg's views on achieving socialism differed from what was happening in Russia in 1917. She did not believe that socialism was possible without the active participation of the masses. Luxemburg opposed the idea that the new society could be created by a small vanguard. She was an admirer of Lenin and Trotsky, the two leaders of the Bolshevik revolution, and praised their seizure of power:

Thus it is clear that in every revolution only that party which is capable of seizing the leadership and power which has the courage to issue the appropriate watch-words for driving the revolution ahead, and the courage to draw all the necessary conclusions from the situation.....The party of Lenin was the only one which grasped the mandate and duty of a truly revolutionary party and by the slogan -'All power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry' ensured the continued development of the revolution ¹

Supportive, but also critical, she had her own ideas about how the revolution should develop. She challenged Trotsky in her article, 'The Russian Revolution' published posthumously in 1922.

Trotsky had stated, "We have never been idol-worshippers of formal democracy." Luxemburg's reaction was sharp:

Socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of a socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the destruction of class rule and of the construction of socialism. It begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yes, dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination.... ²

1 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*: p. 227 in *Socialism or Barbarism. The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*. Edited by Paul Le Blanc and Helen C Scott.

2 Ibid, p 235

For Luxemburg the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' meant the further refinement of democracy, not its curtailment. This is at complete variance with many modern interpretations of this term. Luxemburg would have fundamentally opposed the idea of a one party state.

Luxemburg disagreed with Lenin and Trotsky over the dissolution of the Russian Constituent Assembly, supported initially by the two Bolshevik leaders and asked why they had changed their minds.

Trotsky says in his interesting pamphlet, 'From October to Brest-Litovsk', that the October Revolution represented "the salvation of the Constituent Assembly" as well as of the revolution as a whole.....And then, after these declarations, Lenin's first step after the October Revolution was the dissolution of the same Constituent Assembly.³

The working class, she believed, needed to overcome generations of degradation by class society.

Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquer all suffering.⁴

She praised Lenin for realising this, but deplored the methods he was employing in the new Soviet state:

No one knows this better, describes it more penetratingly, repeats it more stubbornly, than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconian penalties, rule by terror-all these things are but palliatives. The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralises.⁵

She was also a critic of restrictions on freedom that were being introduced by the Bolsheviks and their reliance on the soviets as a sole means of government. For Luxemburg, the broadest possible democracy was the only way the revolution could survive:

Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only true representation of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of the press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously - at bottom then, a clique affair - a

3 Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed by Mary-Alice Waters, p. 508

4 Ibid, p 517

5 Ibid, p 517

dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians.⁶

She was also a strong critic of banning opposition parties. Freedom for Luxemburg was non-negotiable and meant the unrestricted right to oppose and organise:

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party - however numerous they may be - is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of 'justice' but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when 'freedom' becomes a special privilege.⁷

For Rosa Luxemburg democracy could only flourish with socialism. Democracy was stunted by capitalism:

The public life of countries with limited freedom is so poverty stricken, so miserable, so rigid, so unfruitful, precisely because through the exclusion of democracy, it cuts off the living sources of all spiritual riches and progress.⁸

Luxemburg took exception to the view of some Bolshevik leaders that the Russian Revolution was a model for all socialist revolutions:

The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is, unfortunately - or perhaps fortunately - not the case.⁹

Sadly, Luxemburg's advice would go unheeded and the Soviet model was espoused by communist and socialist movements throughout the 20th century. It is a great tragedy that Luxemburg was murdered before she could comment on the unfolding developments in Russia. She would surely have been appalled at the degeneration of state power into rule by a small group around one individual, in this case Joseph Stalin.

She probably would not have been surprised when the USSR eventually collapsed. She argued that socialism was not possible without the elementary guarantees of freedom of expression, a free press and the right to dissent. Her analysis of what might occur if freedom was denied was to prove correct when the USSR collapsed in 1991 after such inspiring beginnings. Its demise went unlamented by the majority of the USSR's three hundred million citizens.

Given that Luxemburg believed, like Marx and Engels, that "no ruling class gives up power without a struggle", she would not have been surprised at the lack of response by the

6 Ibid, p 234

7 Ibid, p 515

8 Ibid, p 517

9 Ibid, p 516

Soviet proletariat to the state's dissolution. The workers were clearly not that ruling class after all.

In conclusion, we can learn a lot from Rosa Luxemburg. For her, democracy was integral to the emancipation of the working class. She was fearless in debate and felt that this was indispensable both for the overthrow of capitalism and for the achievement of socialism.

Mike Squires

The author is a former Secretary and Co-Chair of the Socialist History Society.

Left on the Shelf

A message from Left on the Shelf (LOTS),

If you want to come and see me in person, most months I am in Liverpool at the monthly Book Market held at the beautiful Bluecoat (School Lane, L1 3BX): I will be here on:

- May Friday 29th & Saturday 30th
- June Friday 19th & Saturday 20th
- July Friday 17th & Saturday 18th

Doors open at 11am. It would be lovely to see you, and it's a great Fair, so do pop along if you are nearby.

CPGB collection

Over the past three decades, Dave Cope has pulled together what we believe is one of the most complete privately held collections in the world of materials published by and related to the Communist Party of Great Britain – hundreds of astonishing and rare items (you can dig deeper by reading Dave's wonderful *Bibliography of the Communist Part of Great Britain.*) We want to sell the collection in its entirety – most probably to an institutional buyer. If you know anyone, via your networks of friends and comrades, who might be interested in the CBGB collection – or who might know or work in an institution that may be interested – please do let us know.

How can you help LOTS continue thrive?

PLEASE get at least one book-loving friend to subscribe to our newsletter (and follow us on the Socials, if that's their thing). Thank you so much for your continuing support.

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Visit the website <https://www.leftontheshelfbooks.co.uk/>

The General Strike by Harry Wicks

First published in 1976 in the Workers League paper *Workers News* and then as a pamphlet, Harry Wicks' account of the 1926 General Strike is being republished under the *Revolutionary History* imprint for the strike's centenary, with the addition of a glossary providing background information for the contemporary reader.

To order copies at £4.00 + P&P (£1 for UK 2nd class) email
harry.wicks.gs@btinternet.com

Forthcoming meetings

Radicals: The Working Classes and the Making of Modern Britain

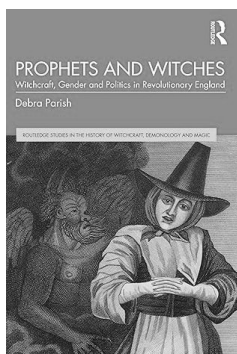
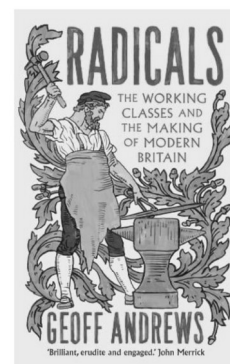
A Socialist History Society on-line Meeting

Thursday 14 May at 7pm

All welcome, but you will need to register in advance:

<https://www.socialisthistorysociety.co.uk/?p=1926>

Speaker: **Geoff Andrews** who will speak about his new book, an authoritative and original history of the working classes and the British Left



Prophets and Witches: Witchcraft, Gender and Politics in Revolutionary England

On-line talk from the Socialist History Society Speaker: Debra Parish

2 June 2026 at 7pm London time

<https://ucl.zoom.us/meeting/register/SqRq1QBkTQCUfAA0xtkNPw>

An exploration of female prophecy and witchcraft during the political and religious upheavals of the English Revolutionary period.

SHS AGM and Talk

The Socialist History Society AGM will take place on Saturday 6 June at 1pm, at the Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU, nearest station Farringdon

This meeting will be in-person only, all welcome.

This will be followed at 2pm by a talk by **Donald Sassoon** on his new book *Revolutions: A New History*

