

organised an unsuccessful strike ballot, I felt that as the Convenor there was a danger that I would become a liability to the union if I stayed on much longer. I also had some personal commitments which were incompatible with working 7 days a week at the hospital. I decided to move on and explore other avenues.

New broom

Mike agreed to go full time as the Convenor so I knew that another trade unionist would carry on. On reflection when I left the post there was a rudimentary steward structure which was capable of supporting the membership and kept an eye on any moves management made. The level of membership had increased, and despite some setbacks we had increased our level of influence during a period of great upheaval in a first wave NHS Trust.

Union stalwarts

Many trade union activists still work at the hospital which now has a healthy UNISON branch. Others have left or retired such as; Stewart McKinley, Samantha Facey, Sarah Hannan, Neil Morrison, Brian, Tony our catering steward, Mick McConnell the portering steward, along with Colin also a portering steward; Mary Kline who is no longer with us, Syd from Bed Bureau (ex GLC and proud of it), Betty Allayne (now retired in Barbados) the Paediatrics steward and NUPE enforcer, Sean Dowling who became a male midwife; Sara, the Chartered Society Physiotherapists rep, John Witthread, and many more.

After NMH

I am now engaged in another part of the trade union movement but my first experience of organised trade union activity taught me many things. Mainly that it is only by acting together that workers can defend themselves. Unions are the only means by which most workers can do this. It may not be possible to win every fight, but for a worker, even if the union cannot prevent change or cuts, the end result will usually be better than if the union had not been around.

Spurs Against the Nazis

Richard Buckwell



Leaflets given out at White Hart Lane

Richard Buckwell was an anti-racist activist in Tottenham in the 1970s. He was one of the founder members of Spurs Against the Nazis and worked full-time for Football Fans Against the Nazis. Dave Renion interviewed him in Nottingham in 1998. He is currently working as a teacher.

After I finished my degree, I worked for a time as a student architect at the GLC. I was living all over North London, first in Tower Hamlets, then Hackney, then Tottenham. I was also working at the Socialist Workers' Party centre, giving full-time clerical help in the national office. It was quite a busy time, with the Anti-Nazi League. Membership increased dramatically. Often, we were getting over one hundred enquiries a week. I remember taking part in different anti-racist campaigns, against Robert Relf, and a racist landlord in Bow. We occupied schools in east London and I also remember Imperial Typewriters. Anti-racism was quite a major thing for us from about 1973-4 onwards.

I remember the (1977) demo at Wood Green. People weren't prepared for an angry demo. All the shops had all their shoes outside. Someone had the wit to set off a colourful smoke bomb, there were loads of Turkish, Greek and Black kids fighting against the Nazis, throwing shoes. It was a riot of fun. They were quite heavily attacked. Their meeting was somewhere in the depths of Bounds Green. Afterwards though, they did get back at us, when the Nazis attacked people going home on the train.

In the run up to the big demo at Lewisham, we had lots of arguments with the CARFs (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism) and the Communist Party. But Lewisham itself was a real success. It was exhilarating and frightening. It really made the Nazis look like the rubble they are. I was working at the centre on membership with Cliff. The number of letters, real letters coming in was amazing. And after that there was the first Carnival - I was flabbergasted. I expected ten or twenty thousand people, but there were even more.

I wasn't a punk, I had an afro, but I enjoyed the music. I used to read Temporary Hoardings, and I liked it. It was a hark back to 1960s hippiedom. I even remember selling copies at the dole office. There was a really brilliant atmosphere. We went really overboard. Loads of comrades became punks. I remember a Jewish comrade with a skull cap and a mohican. While RAR (Rock against Racism) was going on, the paper became also more populist. On the one hand, it was good, we did get a fantastic number of people involved, but we over-emphasised how politicised they were.

I think it was in 1976-7 that Spurs were relegated to the old second division. There seemed to be a lot of racism around the ground. I think it was John Deason who said we should do something, he was a big Spurs fan. Loads of comrades were Spurs fans. Anyway, Spurs went back up, and signed Ardiles and Villa from Argentina and there was lots of fuss about it in the press. So we bought out a leaflet, saying 'They're welcome here.'

The first time we leafleted the High Street in Tottenham, and only then did we try outside the Spurs ground. None of us had done anything like this before, and most people were nervous about what might happen. The first time we showed up, there was a group of NF leafleting outside the ground as well, and there were a lot more of them than there were of us. We had all these old Jewish men walk up to us, and say 'You're doing a really good job, lads', and then walk off.' It was all worrying until we saw a crowd of about fifty teenagers, quite young, they were running towards us. We were really

scared. But they ran right past us, charged into the NF lot, and kicked them off their pitch. After that, it was fine.

We held a public meeting to launch Spurs Against the Nazis. About 60 people showed up, including some of the kids from outside the ground. Kim Gordon's father, I think it was him, edited the Hornsey Journal, he was friendly, and he wrote up our activities in the paper. We leafleted home games, and set off balloons. One time, the Spurs directors even tried to sue us for using the club symbol. But we soon forced them to back down.

We also organised a five-a-side football competition, in October 1978, which involved fifty teams. There was one from the band Aswad, while Peter Cook and Bill Oddie were referees. Different workplaces were represented, and it was won by a group of workers from Tottenham Bus garage. There were lots of arguments there - some players were accused of racism, and teams were argued with.



Out of the success of Spurs Against the Nazis we tried to set up Football Fans Against the Nazis. There were eleven groups, including Leyton Orient and Partick Thistle.

Even the Communist Party backed Football Fans Against the Nazis, and we got good publicity in the Morning Star.

Everything was linked. It wasn't just about football. The Anti-Nazi League had a massive impact on youth culture at the time. Our slogan was 'NF = No Fun', it was all based around that. There weren't so many groups, but I do think we helped to turn racist football hooligans into anti-capitalist football hooligans.

Football Fans Against the Nazis was just one group among many which were set up to mobilise against racist organisations alongside the Anti-Nazi League.

I left the centre just before the election and went back to the GLC. I'd just been there too long. Later on I read *Beating Time*, and it made me think about the whole period. Dave Widgery was a tremendous inspiration, but I don't know if he got everything right. It wasn't just the style which made it work, it was also political. It was important that there was something to it, which there was.

The legacy of the ANL is that when the fascists do appear, it's much easier to bring together a mass organisation of working-class people locally. That's something we did - a tradition which we created.

Early days in the furniture workers union in Tottenham

Peter Jones

Peter Jones has spent a life time in the furniture workers union as a member, officer and more recently as a full time official. He began in the piano industry and went onto the general trade. As a FTO in the union that took over the old FTAT, previously NUFTO, he now works with others occupations. He has been in the Labour Party since 1962 and is currently a Haringey Councillor and Chair of Governors of a local school.



He looks at the early days of the union in Tottenham in particular and speaks of his union work over the years. In particular, he comments on the decline of the industry.

In the beginning

I left school at 14 and began work in Hermitage Road. I was too young even to be in the union but apparently the duty of the youngest apprentice was to collect the union subs for the shop and take them out to the union branch, which I did. The meeting was held in the Ferry Boat Inn. The secretary said he would test if I had a steady hand, I was to order and carry up the stairs 10 pints of Red Barrel bitter ! I passed this test !

In those days in the piano industry it was a seven year apprenticeship, which covered everything. I went to Tottenham Tech and Haberdashers Street where I learnt most. It was still the situation that in 1956 you could select any one of a number of jobs. Even though I had not been particularly well educated at Page Green, I could have worked at Markfield Road and so on but I went to Hermitage Road in the end. The workers did 44 hours and that meant Saturday working. People had to put away half a crown or five shillings, in old money, for tools every week (see note 1 on page 36).

Industrial base

This area was a major base for the furniture industry, with Lebus and at least twenty factories in Tottenham alone. There were sites all the way