

Scottish Working People's History Trust

Supporters' Newsletter, November 2021

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Chair, Siân Reynolds**

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Dear Friends

Welcome to the 2021 edition of the Scottish Working People's History Trust (SWPHT) Supporters' Newsletter.

It's been a difficult year for everyone as we all adjust to the restrictions imposed by the health pandemic. Inevitably, some of our activities have been affected but work continues on our publications and digitisation projects.

Over the summer months the Trust has been working with our colleagues in the Scottish Labour History Society and the National Library of Scotland (NLS) to plan an event to mark 60 years of working people's history research and study in Scotland, including the Trust's own forthcoming 30th birthday. Sadly, we are not able to meet in-person for this celebration but our colleagues in the NLS have stepped in to ensure we can get together by hosting the event on-line.

All members and friends of SWPHT are warmly invited to take part in the “**Hard Work, Ye Ken**” webinar which will be held on St Andrews Day 2021 at 5pm. Full details of the event and our speakers is included in this Newsletter. To book your place please follow the link here: [Hard Work, Ye Ken: The Past, Present, and Future of Scottish Labour History Tickets, Tue 30 Nov 2021 at 17:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Together with the Scottish Labour History Society and NLS and his family we have been exploring how we can best pay tribute to Ian MacDougall, who died last year. We will say more on this soon. Meantime, we're delighted to share a report on the Midlothian World History Society's recent event in memory of Ian.

Finally, Professor Siân Reynolds is stepping down as Chair after 13 years. We thank Siân most warmly for her brilliant leadership, commitment and friendship during a time of great change but also an enormously productive period in the Trust's 30 year history.

“Hard Work, Ye Ken”: The Past, Present and Future of Scottish Labour History, 30th November 2021 at 5pm

Webinar to celebrate 60 years of working people’s history research and study in Scotland

The SWPHT is delighted to be working with the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish Labour History Society to hold a webinar on 30th November 2021. **“Hard Work, Ye Ken”** will celebrate **60 years of working people’s history research and study in Scotland.**

Hamish Fraser and Ian S Wood will open the event by discussing the work of the Scottish Labour History Society and the Scottish Working People’s History Trust over the past 60 years. Following their presentations, historians **Ewan Gibbs, Caroline Milligan and Valerie Wright** will take part in a panel discussion exploring current aspects of labour history research and study in Scotland, and asking what the future holds for the history of working people.

The **Question and Answer Panel Discussion will be chaired by Dorothy Kidd**, Secretary and Trustee of the Scottish Working People’s History Trust, and for many years until her recent retirement Senior Curator in the Department of Scottish History and Archaeology at the National Museums of Scotland. The Scottish Life Archive in the National Museum’s Research Library holds many photographs capturing the lives of working people thanks to the work of Ian MacDougall and the Scottish Labour History Society.

Our Presenters

Hamish Fraser was formerly Professor of Modern History and Dean of Arts & Social Studies at the University of Strathclyde. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Labour History and on other aspects of Scottish social history. He was founding editor of the **Scottish Labour History Society Journal** and a member of the Scottish Working People’s History Trust from the mid-1990s.

Ewan Gibbs is a historian of industrial politics and protest with an interest in energy history. He has written journal articles on the poll tax non-payment campaign, the Caterpillar factory occupation and workforce responses to Scottish colliery closures as well as the memory and heritage of industrial employment. Ewan recently published his first book, **Coal Country: The Meaning and Memory of Deindustrialization in Postwar Scotland**. He is currently completing a new research project on workforce, community and environmental perspectives on the transition to oil, gas, nuclear and renewable energy generation during Britain’s long movement out of coal.

Caroline Milligan, an ethnologist with the European Ethnological Research Centre (EERC), University of Edinburgh, trains volunteer fieldworkers, supports the work of the EERC, and edits books. Her most recent publication as editor is **Going to the Berries: Voices of Perthshire and Angus Seasonal Workers** (2020). Caroline also works on the Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project (RESP) Archive within the Centre for Research

Collections at the University of Edinburgh which facilitates access to hundreds of hours of audio recordings collected by volunteer fieldworkers in their local areas under the RESP.

Valerie Wright is a historian of modern Scotland with particular expertise in gender, social and political history. She is currently a Research Associate in History at the University of Glasgow. She is the co-author of **Glasgow: High-Rise Homes, Estates and Communities in the Post-War Period** (Routledge: London, 2020) and **Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy in Scotland since 1955** (forthcoming, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2021).

Ian S Wood is the author of a biography of the Scottish Socialist John Wheatley, as well as publications on Ireland and also Winston Churchill. A former lecturer in History at Napier University and tutor with the Open University, Ian was for many years the editor of the **Scottish Labour History Society Journal** and continues to be a member of the Scottish Labour History Society.

Peeblesshire Textile Workers Interviews to be published

Thanks to our colleagues Caroline Milligan and Mark Mulhern at Edinburgh University's European Ethnological Research Centre, work is well underway to publish a volume of interviews with Peeblesshire Textile Workers carried out by the Trust's Researcher, Ian MacDougall. The interviews will be published as part of the University's popular Flashbacks series. [Flashbacks | The University of Edinburgh](#)

This new publication will also include a chapter commemorating Ian MacDougall including interviews with some of his friends and colleagues.

Flooring the World – Social History project gets underway

As reported in our previous newsletter, Fife Cultural Trust is working on an exciting new industrial and social history project. **Flooring the World** sets out to engage people with the fascinating story of the linoleum industry of Kirkcaldy, as well as the floor covering factories based in Falkland and Newburgh, Fife.

The project has been delayed by the COVID health pandemic and will now get underway in early 2022. Plans over the next 2 years will include oral history and engaging with linoleum workers past and present.

In the build up to the launch curators have been collecting some new material from the linoleum industry to add the items held. In the summer a great deal of public interest was generated by stories in the press about a sample of floor covering from Paul McCartney's childhood home held in the collection of Kirkcaldy Galleries.

If anyone would like to find out more or get involved please contact Gavin Grant, Collections Team Leader, On Fife. Email: Gavin.Grant@onfife.com

Remembering Ian MacDougall at the Midlothian World History Society by Siân Reynolds

On 14 September 2021, the first meeting of the season of the Midlothian World History Society (MWHS) was held in Dalkeith, and dedicated to the memory of Ian MacDougall, the Society's founder, who died in April 2020.

This was MWHS's first in-person occasion for some time: socially distanced, masks obligatory, but wine and refreshments were also served - a new experience for most of us. There was a large and appreciative attendance: people from many periods of Ian's life: friends, family, colleagues, former students from Newbattle Abbey, and especially Ian's wife, Sandra, who had brought some of Ian's books for distribution. A collection was taken and Sandra has generously donated this to the Trust.



There were three invited speakers, reflecting three different initiatives of Ian's, and the meeting was chaired by the Trust's own Alan Reid, as chairperson of the MWHS.

The first speaker was Professor Robert Anderson, University of Edinburgh, an expert on both French and Scottish history. He described the beginnings of the MWHS in 1989, the year marking the Bicentennial of the French Revolution. Ian MacDougall was determined to see that this was appropriately marked in Scotland and set about this energetically. He organized lectures on the Revolution of 1789 by experts from Scottish and other universities, and also prompted the planting of Trees of Liberty throughout Midlothian. This widely appreciated start, on which Robert had been an adviser, was the inspiration for setting up the Society, with a remit of providing speakers on any country in the world, an example of Ian's wide views. The MWHS has been meeting for over twenty years, often in different parts of Midlothian, now regularly in Dalkeith. Robert reflected on this unusual record, when local history societies are more often the norm.

As outgoing chair of the Scottish Working People's History Trust, I was invited to speak about Ian's foundation of the Trust, and its early days. I explained how the aim in 1991 was to provide resources to save and make accessible "source materials of the history of working people throughout Scotland - letters, minutes, diaries, reports, photographs . . . etc." As an experienced oral historian, Ian also wanted to ensure the collection of working people's memories throughout Scotland, at a time of rapid de-industrialization, when many trades were disappearing. He persuaded various prominent and appropriate people (directors of libraries and archives, councillors, trade unionists, academics) to join the Trust, originally chaired by former Lord Provost of Edinburgh, John Mackay. Members and Friends of the Trust will know that in the following years, Ian, first as secretary, then as the Trust's research worker, carried out the interviews leading to the Trust's numerous publications. Ian retired as research worker in 2013, but was a patron until his death.

The third speaker was the historian, Ian S. Wood, who had known Ian as a fellow-student and friend at Edinburgh University. In particular, Wood (I'll use surnames to distinguish them) had actively participated in the birth of the Scottish Labour History Society. Originally floated by MacDougall as an idea, this started in 1961, took official form in 1966, and launched its journal to concentrate on Scottish labour history - not well covered by fellow-societies and journals edited from England. As Wood reminded us, waving an early example, the journal was first produced in samizdat form: typed and stapled. Pressed into editorship by MacDougall in the 1970s, Wood was responsible for overseeing everything in those early issues. Like all the speakers, he testified to MacDougall's irresistible powers of persuasion, and as close associate over the years that Ian MacDougall served as secretary of the Society, Ian Wood also entertained us with some anecdotes. The journal is now well-established in more solid published form, but still with the impressive mix of academic articles, sources, memoirs, reviews, reports and obituaries.

During the Q & A session, several people in the audience gave their own vivid reminiscences of Ian: for instance, MWHS member Bob Proudfoot recalled seeing Ian as "a TV star", being interviewed at the Scottish Mining Museum. Sandra MacDougall, speaking at the end, said that Ian would have been amazed at all these tributes. He was a truly modest man, who achieved an incredible amount in his life. This meeting, organized by the MWHS's secretary, Neil MacVicar, was a warm and often humorous occasion, but at the same time tinged with much sadness, as Ian is greatly missed by all of us.

Tribute to Siân Reynolds, Retiring Chair of the SWPHT by Janet McBain

Professor Emerita Siân Reynolds is stepping down as Chair of the SWPHT at the end of 2021 after thirteen years in the role. A long standing Trustee she succeeded Ian D McGowan as Chair in 2008.

Siân's period of office was marked by the effective retirement of the late Ian MacDougall as Research Worker. This inevitably meant that the ability of the Trust to undertake field work and proactively record oral testimony was reduced. (Ian had very generously been working on a voluntary basis for a number of years prior to his retirement.) Without his active input into the creation of new recordings the Trust's focus shifted and entered into a phase of consolidation, preservation and making the existing collection of oral history recordings that Ian had created over the preceding 2 decades (some 600 plus interviews) accessible. There was also a parallel strategic shift from the delivery of access through print media into digital access.



On Siân's watch the Trust undertook, with the help of the School of Scottish Studies, a programme of digitising for preservation the original analogue interview tapes and in developing a relationship with SCRAN to institute a project for the digital dissemination of interviews online. Traditional publication in print continued. During Siân's period as Chair the Trust published edited transcripts of **Scottish Journalists** and **Librarians** and has a volume in preparation on the **Peeblesshire Textile Workers**.

Siân's first love as an historian may be the 18th century, but hers was a valuable contribution to the preservation of 20th century working life through her work with Trust, and in particular with her singular contribution to the Bartholomew Project at the National Library of Scotland (NLS) undertaking interviews with around 20 former employees of the Edinburgh based firm of map engravers, printers and publishers, John Bartholomew & Son Ltd. A subject perhaps engaging with an earlier youthful ambition.

“At school I wanted to be a journalist. Later I thought of being a printer/compositor and went to night school to learn hand-setting.”

From an interview for the French History Society, 2015.

French Historians under the spotlight: Prof Siân Reynolds

FRENCH HISTORY NETWORK BLOG (frenchhistorysociety.co.uk)

The NLS acknowledges her contribution to the Bartholomew Archive: “As a result we now have an incredibly rich oral record that adds depth and meaning to the written archive. Between them, the interviewees spanned over 60 years of Bartholomew history from diverse backgrounds which included the drawing and colourist offices, lithographic work, the printing floor and the library. This constitutes an exciting new resource for researchers. An unexpected and welcome outcome of the oral history project was the donation of a set of lithographic tools to NLS by former employee, Alex Coventry.”

Siân has been a delightful Chair to work alongside, diligent and diplomatic. She has been a fantastic representative of the Trust, maintaining good relationships with sister agencies in the promotion and interpretation of labour and oral history in Scotland. Hers will be a large and individual pair of shoes to fill. We are delighted that she will remain a Trustee of the SWPHT and we can continue to benefit from her involvement in our work.

The Scottish Working People's History Trust, 2021

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