



CONGRESS AWARDS 2011

**ANNUAL CONGRESS 2011
THE BRIGHTON CENTRE**

SUNDAY 5 JUNE 2011 - THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2011

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THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP AWARDS FOR EQUALITY 2011

MOST INSPIRATIONAL INDIVIDUAL ON EQUALITY

Award Winner: Sharon Harding, Birmingham & West Midlands Region

Sharon has been a GMB member since 1994. She is a member of the Regional Equality Forum and the National Equality Forum and she represents GMB on the TUC Race Relations Committee. Sharon is always encouraging, supportive and has driven the change from the old equality structures to the NEF.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL REGIONAL EQUALITY FORUM (REF)

Award Winner: Midland & East Coast Regional Equality Forum

Midland & East Coast Regional Equality Forum has progressed greatly and was instrumental in establishing the new NEF structures.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL EQUALITY PROJECT FOR ORGANISING

Award Winner: Gwylan Brinkworth, South Western Region

Gwylan works for South Wales Police. Since becoming Branch Secretary she has turned a dysfunctional branch into a prosperous one, resulting in growth in new members.

MOST INSPIRATIONAL PROJECT FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT WORK

Award Winner: Nicholas & Harris Learning Project

The Nicholas & Harris Learning Project has delivered innovative work related learning opportunities for migrant workers including ICT and ESOL. It is used by the TUC and National Apprenticeship Service as an exemplar.

THE DANIEL DENNIS HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD 2011

Winner: Aubrey Thompson, North West & Irish Region

Aubrey Thompson, North West Gas 173 Branch is involved in improving Health & Safety across British Gas, including new areas of business such as insulation and Smart Metering.

He has drawn up a development plan for all safety reps.

He has recruited in excess of 200 new members, and growing, by deliberately targeting new intake across the industry.

Runner-Up: Michael Kent, Northern Region

Michael Kent identified exposure to welding fumes, persuading his company to invest £60,000 to deal with this. Ergonomic issues were addressed by new height adjustable equipment, reducing manual handling processes. He helped establish English classes for Polish workers, better welfare facilities, regular H&S inspections and used workplace mapping for H&S issues leading to a more proactive approach from management.

His branch 252 Sunderland 9 branch increased by 15 new members as a result.

REGIONAL OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

Birmingham & West Midlands Region

Award Winner: Stacie Elson

Stacie was mentioned by the National Organising Team at the Public Service's conference held in Birmingham.

In the report received at Regional Council from Tamworth in the first 6 months of the academic year she recruited over 250 new members.

When representatives in Walsall enrolled on an Employment Law course, Stacie also enrolled but because of 2 Tupe Transfers and a massive restructure within SERCO (company that looks after education in Walsall) withdrew from attending college to focus on ensuring the GMB members were supported through the processes and completed the course in her own time and successfully passed it.

Stacie is always available to members no matter the time of day they need support.

She successfully facilitated equal pay and venues taking on over 70 claims.

She facilitated drop in sessions for members in her own time (weekend) across the borough of Walsall.

London Region

Award Winner: Evelyn Martin

Evelyn Martin, London Region CEC member has been awarded the Exceptional Person of Islington and winner of Employee of the Year for Housing and Adult Staff Awards for 2009/2010. Evelyn was also runner up in the Epic Awards 2010 Rewarding the Exceptional People of Islington Council, Employee of the Year Awards. These awards are in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Islington. The London Regional Committee were aware of Evelyn's continuous concerns and efforts towards the homeless and less fortunate in our Society.

Evelyn's caring nature, commitment and determination in fighting injustice, along with the voluntary time she gives to helping the vulnerable is second to none. Evelyn Martin is a woman of integrity and with her achievements have made the region so very proud.

Midland & East Coast Region

**Award Winner: East Midlands Ambulance Service (GMB EMAS Branch)
(award accepted by Annie Berry on behalf of the Branch)**

The EMAS success story, like many success stories, has come out of adversity.

Old EMAS (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire) was reconfigured to take in Northants, Lincolnshire and Rutland; making a huge geographical area in 2007. GMB Representatives were a bit thin on the ground, with two stalwarts of GMB, Trev Abrey and Dick Clark taking the lead roles.

Unfortunately, Trev's health caught up with him and he eventually retired from the service. Tragically and quite suddenly, Dick Clark became ill and sadly passed away in early 2008. GMB members were transferred to Mansfield Central Branch (M15) as in interim arrangement and Learoy Fox took on the role as lead GMB Representative on a temporary basis to help out. GMB at EMAS was at an all time low with membership below 200. We had lost two highly experienced and dedicated representatives and the small number of Representatives were left unorganised and isolated.

Regional office reorganised in June 2008 putting Colin Todd as the Officer responsible for the whole of EMAS. The first task was to hold a meeting inviting all the Representatives and to come to an agreement to build a structure of Representatives and a strategy to improve communications. GMB met with HR Management and gained full release for two Representatives, Alan Chetwynd and Dan Ackroyd. This was the key to developing the membership.

Following this we targeted the ambulance stations and systematically visited every station in EMAS; then did it again. Contributions from the Regional Recruitment Team, Branch activists and the EMAS representatives themselves produced immediate results; growth in membership but equally important, growth in representatives. Added to this was the merger of ASU into our ranks, which not only swelled our numbers but gave us some activists in Northants, where we previously had none.

We started to hold Bi-monthly Representatives meetings so issues could be resolved and shared, and promoted our driving ethos as a member-led organisation.

In 2009, Dan Ackroyd was replaced by Annie Berry. After the initial settling in period Annie took on the arduous task of creating a group email for GMB members in each of the five divisions in EMAS. This has been valuable in ensuring our communication with members is regular, relevant and up-to-date.

In April 2010, we signed off a new Partnership Agreement which cemented the facilities we had previously negotiated into it.

In February 2011, the membership moved out of Mansfield Central Branch into the newly formed GMB EMAS Branch, with Branch Officials elected from among the EMAS membership.

GMB membership currently stands at 777 members (April 2011) and we now have over 40 GMB representatives.

Northern Region

Award Winner: Carl Lewthwaite

Carl has been a member of the GMB at Sellafield for 10 years he is the "Disability Champion" for the whole of the Sellafield site, he has helped numerous GMB members with many problems to return to work, by either having a phased return to work or obtain a temporary move to more suitable work, he also advises management on making reasonable adjustments to the workload our members are expected to carry out.

North West & Irish Region

Award Winner: the late Colin Priest, Regional Organiser

Colin Priest was a totally dedicated Trade Union Officer and committed activist who worked tirelessly for his members and union and the labour movement.

Colin was taken ill and passed away suddenly whilst campaigning for a cause that he felt passionately about and amongst the friends and colleagues who will miss him dearly.

After demonstrating great potential as a steward in the Buxton Branch, Colin began his career as the youngest ever GMB officer in the old Lancashire Region. In addition to his commitment to the Trade Union movement he also gave a lot of his spare time to his local community and with the support of his wife Catherine he became very political active.

Colin had a passionate believe in social equality and justice and believed strongly that through effective campaigning we all could make a difference, but knowing full well to do so, would require sacrifices.

"All of us who knew Colin will have our own memories, of some act of kindness and consideration with which we remember Colin undertaking on our behalf, Colin will be greatly missed by us all and remembered always with love and affection, the GMB Union and its membership have lost a true friend, a supporter, advocate and employee, our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Catherine, his sons Mathew and Daniel"

GMB Scotland

Award Winner: Jackie Faulds

Jackie's commitment and dedication to his Union and in particular his members within the National Health Services is legendary.

Jackie has also been outstanding in his support for Scottish Labour during the recent Scottish Parliament election as he has done on every occasion.

This Award is a fitting tribute to a valued member of GMB Scotland's team of activists. To Jackie the GMB has been and continues to be his lifetimes work.

Southern Region

Award Winner: Roger (Podge) Eldridge

Podge joined GMB (GMWU) in January 1958 and immediately became actively involved. He worked for Southampton Borough Council and was the Convenor, Shop Steward.

He sat on the Mid Southern Provincial Council for a number of years, first taking up this position back in the 70's.

He was appointed to the Industrial Tribunal Panel in Southampton in 1989 and has been reappointed every 2 years since, and he encourages our members to seek appointment as it is very interesting and rewarding sitting on the bench.

In 1989, Podge was seconded to Hampshire County Council for the Competitive Tendering Exercise and he successfully secured all the in house tenders in Southampton.

Podge served a period of time on Regional Council in the 1970's, and was again re-elected to Council in 1995, remaining on Council up until his resignation/retirement earlier this year.

He became Branch Secretary of the S37 Southampton Branch in 2004, only recently stepping down from this position.

Podge sat on the Southern Regional Committee from 2005 until 2009, when he decided to wind down ready for retirement.

Podge has always been politically active, and was on the Executive of the Southampton Trades Council and has been the GMB delegate to the Southampton West CLP for many years. He had always assisted in the arrangements for providing food and refreshments for GMB members attending the Tolpuddle Festival each year, but when Podge became Branch Secretary of the S37 Southampton Branch in 2004, he took over the role of being the main organiser for the Southern Region. Finally, he is also a School/College governor for the last 17 years a position from where he can help our members in schools and Local Authorities.

South Western Region

Award Winner: Phil Hughes

Bro. Phil Hughes commenced employment with Ifor Williams Trailers in April 1994 as a welder and first became involved with the GMB in 2000 when the Union recruited the employees into membership; Phil became the first GMB Shop Steward.

Phil went on to become Branch Secretary in 2005 and has dealt with most issues and problems that can arise from TUPE, redundancies, pensions, applications for derecognition and countless attempts to undermine the Union.

The last attempt at deregulation was in 2009 when a small number of employees made an application to the CAC for deregulation. As soon as this was brought to Phil's attention he organised a petition around the workforce in support of the Union and over 50% signed in less than an hour, stopping the derecognition application at the first step.

Phil and his fellow Trade Unionists are a credit to the GMB and he fully deserves the Regional Outstanding Achievement Award on behalf of the South Western Region.

Well done Phil!

Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

**Award Winners: Eric Batty, Lee Simpson and Amanda Horsman
Rotherham MBC Convenor Team, R62 Rotherham General**

Campaigning

Although the branch is primarily a local authority branch, wherever possible the private sector membership are encouraged to have a claim on the table with their employer in every workplace. Details of the regular campaigns are put on the branch website and sent out to members by text. Whenever an issue is identified it is rigorously and enthusiastically followed up at every opportunity. At least four times a year, depending on the time of year, the branch have a theme supported by posters, e.g. a Christmas Scrooge campaign which is aligned to whatever is happening in the authority and elsewhere.

Communications

The branch convenors and workplace organisers have purchased and wear corporate clothing with GMB logos at every opportunity so no-one is in any doubt who they are when visiting members and workplaces which consists of suits, polo shirts and outerwear. The branch were also one of the first in the region to set up and run their own website at <http://www.gmb-rotherham.org/index.php> which lists all current campaigns. Together with a mass text messaging facility there is no doubt that

GMB members are kept well informed, usually well ahead of other organisations much to their despair.

Contact

On every visit to a workplace, employees are approached and engaged in conversation about the union's work with a view to recruiting non members, encouraging new workplace organisers who then map the workplace and identify workplace issues. Convenors regularly receive a list of starters and leavers from the authority which is actively followed up by appropriate and innovative recruitment and retention initiatives. There is a branch office with voicemail when they are out and about and emails have a unique out of office response.

Credibility

As much servicing of members as possible is done at local level with training given to new workplace organisers. Members know who to contact where they work by way of regular newsletters, up to date notice boards and the branch website and text messaging service.

Commitment

Every visit to a workplace is followed up with mapping leading to a local action plan worked on by the convenor team. The names of Eric, Lee and Amanda, along with all GMB reps is well known within the authority. Regular road shows are put on around the patch utilising a GMB branded gazebo equipped with a full range of GMB promo material supported by Eric's infamous GMB liveried camper van. Potential members know exactly what they can expect from the branch, where GMB stand on the issues and regularly ask what they can do to assist.

Summary

Online joining can be achieved through the branch website which can be monitored at a touch to see when and where people are joining from. This enables convenors to identify hotspots and so be proactive. The website also has a members' area only page full of information.

As a result of all the above, the convenor team supported by the branch are steadily increasing membership despite the austerity measures. 388 new members were recruited during 2010 together with 10 new workplace organisers. The convenor team have visited other branches and regional council to outline what works for them and have generously offered to help and assist colleagues where they can.

Without doubt, the convenor team lead the way in promoting GMB@Work in the region and are fully deserving of this nomination.