

Retired from work...
**BUT NOT THE
FIGHT!**



Unite Retired Members Newsletter Christmas 2025



From the editors



**Mike
McLoughlin**

**Irene
Graham**

**Joyce
Still**

✉ Get in touch: Retired.Members@unitetheunion.org

The winter of 2024/5 was a very difficult time for retired people as this Labour Government saw fit to target the people on the bottom of the pile and removed the winter fuel allowance. This measure adversely affected millions of pensioners who were already struggling to pay their way, many of them were pushed into poverty.

Unite responded by throwing in massive resources into the fight with a truly great response from our retired membership which resulted in a massive victory for pensioners, forcing the Government to do a U-turn.

All pensioners with an income less than £35,000 per annum will receive the winter fuel allowance in 2025. This victory could not have been won without the support of the retired

members and leadership of Unite which was virtually the only union supporting this campaign.

It is almost certain that with the attitude of the present Government that we will be forced to campaign again in 2026 on at least one major issue, whatever the issue might be. We are confident that with the fighting spirit of our members and the leadership from the Executive Council we will overcome.

It has been a great year for our retired members and we wish to thank you all for your wonderful support and offer you all our seasonal greetings and look forward to campaigning with you in 2026.

Mike McLoughlin
On behalf of the editorial team

Thank you to Jamie Max Cartoons for the cover art: info@jamie-maxcartoons.com

IN THIS EDITION

- **General Secretary message, p.3**
- **Gladys West, pioneer of GPS, p.4**
- **Executive Council report, p.8**
- **National Pensioners Convention, p.10**
- **Letters and obituaries, p.11**

Christmas message to Unite Retired Members from our General Secretary

First of all, I would like to thank you, our retired members for all you do for our Union.

For every picket line you have been on and every message of support.

2025 has been a significant year for Unite, especially for our retired members. Our fight together to push back against the cruel and unnecessary winter fuel cut was won. In June, the government announced its major U-turn on the Winter Fuel Payment cuts. Not a full reinstatement, but a significant reversal. Over three quarters of pensioners will now have their Winter Fuel Payments restored. This is hopefully providing some help to our retired members this winter.

I made sure that Unite was at the forefront of this fight. Standing shoulder to shoulder with our retired members, with unprecedented levels of resource into the campaign. A campaign led by Unite Retired Members, with our Unite for a Workers' Economy team. From passing our motion at Labour Party conference in defiance of the government, to lobbies of Westminster, the Senedd, Stormont and Holyrood, to a very significant legal challenge at the High Court.



This level of resource was made possible because Unite has stopped throwing money at politicians. "No more blank cheques" that previously would have gone to Labour Party headquarters. Our money is now being put into the union's own political campaigns for our members.

Under my leadership Unite will continue to fight for jobs, pay and conditions, for our retired members and our communities.

The rigged economy will also be challenged. Our new profiteering report into energy shows that many of the giant corporations are making billions in profit. All the while UK households and the industrial base pay some of the highest prices in the world. In fact for the average household, an eye watering £500 a year of their energy bill is pure profit.

The cost of greed crisis continues and Unite is leading from the front.

I look forward to working with you again on our fight for a fairer society in 2026.

Thank you again for all you do.

Happy Christmas and New Year.

Solidarity

Sharon Graham



Gladys West looks over data from the Global Positioning System in 1985

Features

Thank mathematician Gladys West on your next road trip!

Gladys West was born Gladys Mae Brown on October 27th, 1930, in Sutherland, rural Virginia, USA. Growing up, she spent much of her time helping to harvest crops on the family farm, an occupation she knew many of her peers would continue into adulthood. At school her talent for learning offered her a different path. As the highest performing student of her class, Gladys received a full scholarship to Virginia State College (now Virginia State University), the historically black college where she earned a degree in mathematics in 1952. She later returned for a master's

degree in mathematics, graduating in 1955. In 1956 she was hired as a mathematician by the U.S. Naval Proving Ground, a weapons laboratory in Dahlgren, Virginia, as only their fourth black employee. There she met Ira V. West, another black mathematician on the base. The couple married in 1957 and had three children.

At Dahlgren, Gladys West was admired for her ability to solve complex mathematical equations by hand. She eventually transitioned from solving equations herself to programming computers to do it for

her. One of her first major projects was the Naval Ordinance Research Calculator (NORC), an award-winning programme designed – via 100 hours of computer calculations, which often had to be double-checked for errors by hand – to determine the movements of Pluto in relation to Neptune. In 1978 West was named Project Manager of Seasat, an experimental U.S. Ocean surveillance satellite designed to provide data on a wide array of oceanographic conditions and features, including wave height, water temperature, currents, winds, icebergs and coastal characteristics. It was the first project to demonstrate that satellites could be used to produce useful oceanographic data. From her work on Seasat came GEOSAT, a satellite programmed to create computer models of the Earth's surface. By teaching a computer to account for gravity, tides and other forces that act on the Earth's surface, West and her team created a programme that could precisely calculate the orbits of satellites. These calculations made it possible to determine a model for the exact shape of the Earth, known as a geoid. It is this model, and later updates that allows the GPS system to make accurate calculations of any place on Earth.

During her career on the naval base, West earned another master's degree in 1973, this time in Public Administration from University of Oklahoma. Gladys retired from the base in 1998 aged 68. In 2018 she was inducted into the Air Force Space and



Missile Pioneers Hall of Fame. Captain Godfrey Weekes paid tribute to Gladys saying 'she rose through the ranks... and contributed to the accuracy of GPS and the measurement of satellite data. As Gladys West started her career as a mathematician at Dahlgren in 1956, she likely had no idea that her work would impact on the world for decades to come'.

Most of us use GPS technology in one way or another on a regular basis, whether we are adding a location to social media posts or using the navigation system in our car to direct us to where we need to be – I'm sure most of us use it without even thinking about how the technology behind GPS was developed or by whom. We have all heard of Albert Einstein, and GPS wouldn't exist without him and his crucial theories of special and general relativity, but Gladys West is just as important. What an inspirational woman!

Joyce Still
National Retired Members
Committee, South East delegate



Campaigns and reports from across the union

50s women: Minister's poor response

The Glasgow Retired Members branch has been supporting and campaigning alongside the local WASPI campaigning group since 2014 on the lack of adequate notification of State Pension age changes which has affected our 50s born women members, and by extension their partners and families. The following is an edited version of a motion recently passed at our branch.

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman had investigated the communication of changes to Women's State Pension Age. They published their first report in 2021, which found DWP maladministration "led to a delay in DWP writing directly to women about changes in State

Pension age. If the maladministration had not happened, DWP would have begun writing to affected women by December 2006 at the latest, 28 months earlier than it did (in April 2009)... For women who were not aware of the changes, the opportunity that additional notice would have given them to adjust their retirement plans was lost." The Ombudsman can recommend a range of remedies including an apology, remedial action, or financial compensation.

Further to this, their subsequent reports laid out the recommended level of Compensation as a level 4 and unprecedentedly, that "Given the significant concerns we have that DWP will fail to remedy the injustice, the

50s women (cont.)

most expedient thing we can do is to move immediately to bringing matters to Parliament's attention. This is a rare decision, but we consider it necessary in the circumstances." Further adding, "We recognise the very significant cost to taxpayers of compensating all women affected by DWP's maladministration. Compensating all women born in the 1950s at the level 4 range would involve spending between around £3.5 billion and £10.5 billion of public funds, though we understand not all of them will have suffered injustice. Our Principles for Remedy acknowledge that public bodies need to balance responding appropriately to people's complaints and acting proportionately within available resources. But they also say finite resources should not be used as an excuse for failing to provide a fair remedy." However, Secretary of State Liz Kendall's oral report and the subsequent written statement issued by the DWP in response to the PHSO report stated that the Government has accepted the Ombudsman's finding of maladministration and has apologised. However, evidence showed that the great majority of 1950s-born women did know that the State Pension age was changing so for these and other reasons the government cannot justify paying compensation.

Our branch disputes the rationale employed by the Minister in issuing this statement. The surveys quoted are spurious at best, while a vague

notion of State Pension Age changes existed, these were not at the 90% level cherry-picked by the minister, nor did it reflect how individuals knew how they personally would be affected.

Second, ignoring the findings of the Parliamentary Ombudsman undermines our rights as citizens to call Government departments to account for maladministration and to seek redress.

Third, while we welcome procedures to ensure that an injustice of this scale, affecting the Contributory benefits of 3.8 million women, should not be repeated, we feel the apology issued was not heartfelt and was motivated by budgetary concerns.

Our motion calls on the Unite to back the call for a full Parliamentary debate on the issue and also to be represented at any future negotiations with the government on behalf of our 1950s born women members, past and present, as a State Pension is dependent on the contributions made during their working life, and the majority of our members are taxpayers in retirement. We also call on Unite to use whatever facilities are in its gift and to use its research and legal facilities to examine the Government response for its accuracy and legitimacy, and to continue to back their local 1950s born Women's Pension campaigns, which has been so appreciated to date.

Rosie Dickson

Monica Taylor's Executive Council Report



Looking back on 2025, it has been a momentous year for Unite and for Retired Members in particular. We played a major role in pushing back against the cuts to Winter Fuel Payments, ultimately securing a u-turn. Payments are being restored for the majority of pensioners although this was not a complete victory.

I will continue to work with the General Secretary (GS) and the Executive Council (EC) to ensure the full weight of the union continues to be behind our Retired Members.

At the most recent EC meeting, our General Secretary Sharon Graham highlighted the Budget: another example of the wrong people being asked to pay. We saw stealth taxes for workers while billionaires and profit-eers were basically left untouched. The budget will drag more than 1.7 million workers into either paying tax for the first time or into a higher band, and of course pensioners will soon begin paying tax on our state pension.

The inquiries into allegations of historical corruption within the union were discussed. The reports from the inquiries as part of the clean-up of the Union are still with the Serious Fraud Office. The separate five-year long investigation into bribery, fraud and money laundering by HMRC and South Wales Police is also still ongoing. *Read*

the interim report, published this summer, [here \(link\)](#).

Despite having to impair our accounts by £67 million because of the historic misreporting of the value of Birmingham development, we are now in good shape. The union's balance sheet has been stable throughout the year and shows ample levels of both reserves and liquidity with zero debt.

The blacklisting inquiry is also still ongoing. Further information has now come in which has unfortunately delayed the report.

Funeral Benefit: the EC recently approved a change to funeral benefit where any member on Retired Member Plus who previously did not qualify for funeral benefit would receive £100 if they died on or after 11th March 2024. Up to the end of September 2025 we have paid 178 claims.

New Retired Member Plus membership forms are now ready and being sent out to regional offices and branch secretaries shortly.

Monica Taylor

Retired Member Campaigns in 2026

This was a big year for retired members in Unite. Our campaigning was a major factor in the government's U-turn on Winter Fuel Payments. Sharon Graham's clarity of message in the media, our mass mobilisations across all four nations and our legal action in the courts—these all mattered. It is a shame that this was a victory against the first Labour government in 14 years. But Unite has been clear: first and foremost, we will fight for our members.

We are not resting on our laurels. Preparations are already underway for the next major campaign for retired members. The National Retired Members Committee has identified three priorities to consider for a campaign: the state pension, social care, and income tax thresholds. It will shortly decide which to prioritise.

The focus of any campaign around the state pension would be to raise it to a liveable level and eliminate the two tiers. The UK's state pension is one of the least generous among developed countries, though this is not the impression you get from reading most papers. It is likely that the triple lock will come under increasing pressure over the next few years. A campaign to raise the state pension will face significant opposition, but would also be an opportunity for us to put forward a positive case for the state pension, rather than the defensive position we are forced to adopt each year when the triple lock comes under

attack.

Social care, currently, is in a deep crisis with ramifications for hospitals and the NHS. Any campaign would need to be led by our members working in social care, but retired members have a major stake in this too. And it would focus on ending the precarious working conditions in the sector and ending the market in social care, the main beneficiaries of which are the private equity firms.

Finally, a campaign around income tax thresholds would need to encompass the entire union. The Tory policy of stealth taxes, delivered through a freeze on income tax thresholds and continued by this Labour government, will soon drag even those pensioners who rely solely on the state pension into paying tax. Lobbying for the state pension to be carved out of the income tax system will not work, however. It follows from our argument that the state pension is deferred wages, and not a benefit, that it should not be taxed. Seeking special protections will undermine this argument. Instead, we should be making the case that the threshold for the basic rate of income tax is too low and should be raised.

The Organising Department will be drawing up draft plans for each issue for the National Retired Members Committee to decide on at its next meeting, in January. One priority campaign will be chosen.

Josh Berlyne, Organiser

National Pensioners Convention: a brief update on its future

The NPC has been struggling financially for many years and has made a loss in seven years out of the last 10 ten years; the financial struggle has been caused mainly by the amalgamation of trade unions over many years which has resulted in fewer affiliations. The result is that our bank balance has been reduced each year, as our savings had to be used to balance the books. In February 2025 (after consultation with the NEC) the NPC, recognising that we were in potential financial difficulty, took the decision to set up the Company Limited by Guarantee (CLBG), in the hope that it would enable us to attract more financial support.

However, in 2025 we realised that we were going to run out of money by January 2026, and as we are not legally allowed to continue to operate if insolvent, the NPC officers were forced to make some very hard decisions which included making the staff redundant. After considerable consultation with them, they will leave the NPC on January 30th, 2026. This was a step that none of us wished to take but there was no other option open to us. Accepting legal advice that we could not allow the NPC to operate if insolvent, we took the decision that the NPC would need to be closed and its assets would eventually be transferred across to

the CLBG.

These issues were put to the NPC Executive Council on November 25th, when it was decided that a special Executive meeting would be held on January 20th for a decision to be made on the dissolution of the NPC, and to hold a special delegate meeting on February 24th to transfer NPC assets to the CLBG. The NPC carried out a consultation on the possible democratic structure of the CLBG and we have had a tremendous response to the Consultation with some strong contributions and, as you would expect from a consultation with a 63-page response, there were a few negative points of view expressed too.

The present NPC officers are confident that the NPC, as a CLBG, will rise from the ashes as a true democratic reflection of Jack Jones' heritage and will campaign on behalf of the nations' retired members. The NPC was the creation of Jack Jones after he retired as General Secretary of the T&G (forerunner of Unite the union) because unions were not looking after their retired members, and in his view, pensioners required an organisation to fight for their interests. In our view, an umbrella organization like the NPC is as much needed today as it was when it was set up 47 years ago.

Mike McLoughlin
NPC Vice-President



Letters and obituaries

James Osborne Ray, 27th June 1934 to 14th October 2025

Jim joined the union in 1951, soon after beginning his working life. He'd begun his first employment with Mulliners as a Coach Builder and Coach Trimming, which soon became his trade in the years to come. After completing his National Service in 1954 he returned to work and joined Pressed Steel Fisher. The company, part of which eventually merged with BMW, saw many changes over the years. His interest in supporting his colleagues grew with time, as the impact of change affected the people he worked so closely with. From working practices, industrial illness, work force accidents, pay and poverty and the general wellbeing of the people he worked with and felt so strongly about; fair play for all was his goal.

Jim eventually joined Jaguar, Coventry, where he continued his support of the people he worked with, ensuring that their mental health and working conditions were met to a high standard. He spoke up for workers' rights at many conferences held in



Brighton and Eastbourne and enjoyed the social aspect of these events where he gained valuable information and met new friends and colleagues. After many years supporting the union, Jim received an award for over 70 years of service working with the trade union movement.

When Jim retired, he joined the retired workers sector of the union and fought for pension and welfare rights alongside older people, ensuring their integrity and respect were at the forefront of his campaign for improved living conditions and financial needs. Sadly, with age, Jim's life finally ended, but he never gave up the challenge of achieving a better life for all.

Submitted by Monica Taylor

BBC under fire for cross-editing Trump speech... but still silence on Miners Strike cross-editing

Dear Editor,

Greetings Bros and Sisters. I Just heard that Trump would sue the BBC for cross editing two news clips of him. This has resulted up to now in three resignations from the BBC news team. Our TUC should now be pushing as hard as possible for an inquiry into the same type of cross editing by the BBC that took place in the Miners' Strike 1984 where miners were filmed throwing objects at the police and

then the police retaliating by charging the Miners. Resulting in injuries to the Miners. The reverse was the case, where the police attacked the Miners pickets first and then the Miners were forced to defend themselves. The footage was cross edited by the right-wing BBC news team of that time, putting the Miners in a bad light with some viewers. Are we ever going to get a Labour party to hold an enquiry into this? I doubt it.

Ian Edge

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign was set up in 2012 to campaign for an inquiry into the police riot at Orgreave on 18 June 1984 during the 1984/5 Miners' strike. This is an injustice that is now over 41 years old and the Government and police have never been held to account for what the Tory government planned and the police did. Our attempts to get the government to hold an inquiry have been turned down by all Tory Home Secretaries since 2016. We have been ignored and treated disgracefully by 7 Tory Home Secretaries, so we were delighted when we finally had a commitment in 2017 by the Labour Party that a future Labour government would order an inquiry once in power.

When a Statutory Inquiry was announced by the Home Secretary in July of this year, we were aware of

what a historic and momentous announcement this was. The Miners, their families and communities and our campaign had waited a long time for that day and the campaign was cautiously optimistic that the truth about the Tory government's direct involvement in the violent policing of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike would now finally be acknowledged and exposed.

However, our work is not over! We still have not been given a start date for the Inquiry and still need to see exactly how the inquiry will work. Rest assured we will continue to campaign until the Miners and our Communities get the Truth and Justice they deserve. Keep up to date with the Campaign here: <https://otjc.org.uk/>

Joe Rollin, founding member of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign

Windrush Day, 22nd June 2025

The Windrush Generation came to Great Britain with hope, resilience and a belief in building a better future, but it was not an easy welcome as they faced overt racism and exclusion. The contribution they made to the NHS, railways, steelworks and in many walks of life cannot be underestimated or forgotten, but the dark chapter in British immigration history came to light in 2018 with many being wrongly detained, denied healthcare, lost employment or even facing deportation despite their legal right to reside in the United Kingdom. This was due to failures by the Home Office who made the decision in 2009 to destroy

the landing cards of this generation which documented their legal status. Many of these pioneers are now senior citizens, many have passed away, but let us not only remember the struggles that they endured but also celebrate what they left behind. The legacy is not just a story of the past, but a call to each of us to keep building, keep serving and never forget those who have paved the way.

Monica Taylor

The editors would like to apologise for the late inclusion of this letter. It should have been included in the Autumn edition.

Do you wish to contribute to the debate?



Get in touch: **Retired.Members@unitetheunion.org**

Letters to the editor should be kept as brief as possible and deal with just one subject. Articles and reports should not normally be more than 500 words and please enclose a photograph, if possible.