Knowsley Archives presents on behalf of **Don't Mourn, Organise!:**




# Exhibition Catalogue

Knowsley Council

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

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Vauxhall Community Law & Information Centre

Centre 63
First Choice for Informal Education

Made possible with Heritage Fund

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# About The Exhibition

Don’t Mourn, Organise! provides a people’s history of Kirkby Unemployed Centre (KUC), a much-loved community resource and unemployed activist hub that operated between 1981 and 2014.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported scheme was conceived by the Vauxhall Law Centre and delivered alongside an intergenerational group of Centre63 volunteers.

Using research material and oral testimonies collected from former staff and volunteers, this exhibition provides a social, political and cultural history of the KUC.

Alongside this display, our participants have coproduced a comic book, animated short, commemorative banner and educational resource pack.

For more information, please email our Project Coordinator: info@thepeoplesmarch.co.uk

Written by Dr Greig Campbell

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The origins of modern-day Kirkby date back to the post-war years, when Liverpool Council began constructing overspill estates in the then-Lancashire town. An entirely planned community, Kirkby was hailed as a ‘New Jerusalem’.

The first largescale development was Southdene in 1952. Back then, the local population was only 3,000. Within a decade, it had snowballed to 52,000.

Many of the newcomers were ‘transplants’ plucked from Liverpool’s crumbling Victorian slums. They were sold the dream of a new life. However, they were met with substandard housing, few public amenities and mass unemployment.

Written by Dr Greig Campbell




New housing being built on Digmoor Walk, Southdene, Kirkby.

**Collection:** GB1076.IMKB/7/4/2
**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** 1952

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This exhibition was a community project led by Dr Greig Campbell, volunteers at Vauxhall Law Centre and volunteers at Centre 63.

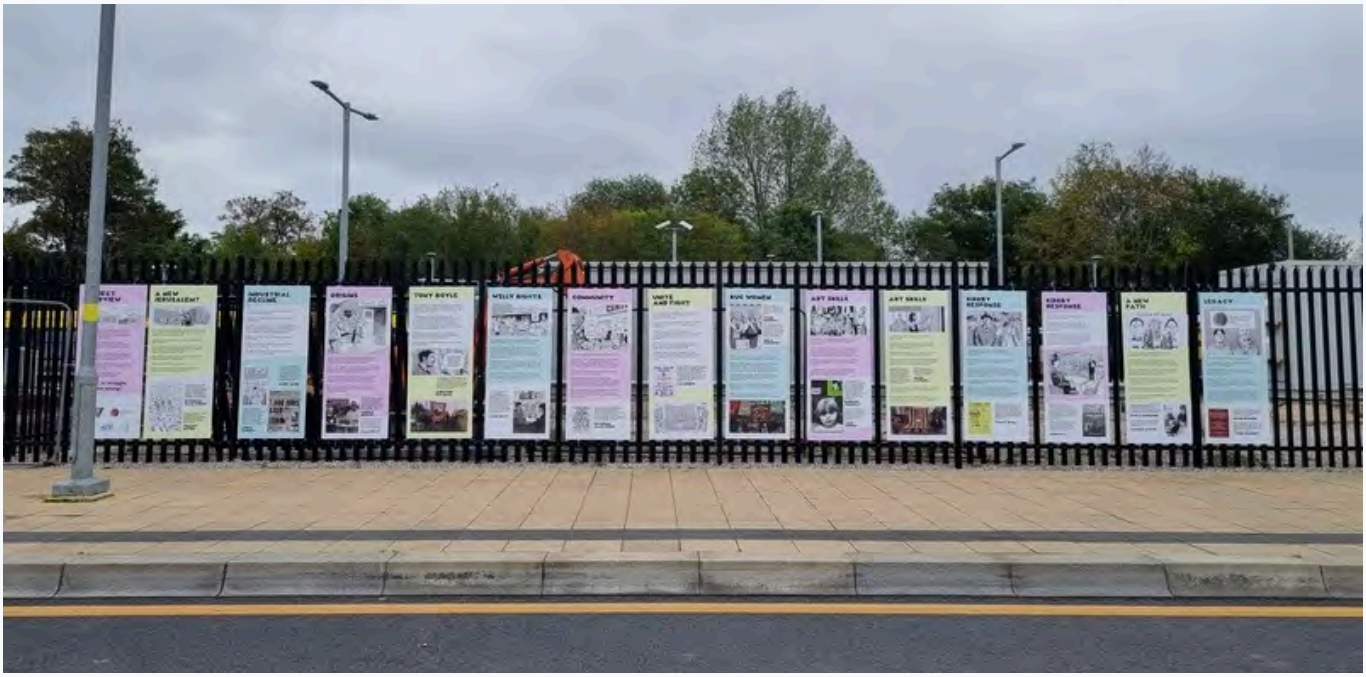
The exhibition was held through multiple shared spaces, the first being at Headbolt Lane Train Station, which featured illustrated information boards on the history of the Kirkby Unemployed Centre. Which are still available to view as of November 2026.

The second location was at Knowsley Archives, which featured never-before-seen historical items such as original documents, photographs, button badges and a commemorative mug.

The third location was at Kirkby Library, which featured three of the original banners and illustrated information boards on the timeline of the KUC.

# Headbolt Lane Train Station

Illustrated information boards featuring the history and the people of the Kirkby Unemployed Centre were located at Headbolt Lane train station in Kirkby.



The text from the information boards are featured within this catalogue.

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# Kirkby Library




Original commemorative banners were displayed throughout Kirkby Library.




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# Commemorative Banners




Commemorative banner for the Birds Eye Workers of Kirkby which was displayed at Kirkby Library.

# Commemorative Banners




Commemorative banner for the Kirkby Unemployed Centre with the motto, '*Employed and Unemployed Unite and Fight*'.

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# Commemorative Banners




Commemorative banner for the T&GWU Women Workers, hand painted by Barbara Connolly.

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# Space A




**Photograph of Space A**

# Glass Cabinet




A postcard, remembering the Peoples March for Jobs. In 1981, a historical march took place from Liverpool to London, protest the rise of unemployment across the United Kingdom.

**Material:** Postcard

**Date:** 1980s

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# Glass Cabinet




A commemorative mug for the *People's March for Jobs*, which started in Liverpool and ended in London. Featured on the mug are names of places in the United Kingdom, where the march travelled through before reaching its final destination at the heart of London.

**Material:** Cup

**Date:** 1980s

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# Glass Cabinet




A photograph of five men standing with bicycles waving at the camera.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

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# Glass Cabinet



**Tony Boyle's work is recognised**

TONY BOYLE, one of the founders of Kirkby Unemployed Centre, received a host of awards last month.

The ceremony, at The Flying Picket public house saw him presented with no less than eight awards from regional organisations. The Transport and General Workers Union and the National Graphical Association.

He also re-opened the public house on Hardman Street after refurbishments.

Tony, (pictured left), is regarded with a great deal of affection by his colleagues and friends in the Labour movement, and has earned the respect of many people he has come in contact with.

A key figure was Tony Boyle. After being made redundant at Massey Ferguson, the proud Kirkby native became an unemployed trade union activist, co-organising the 1981 People's March for Jobs.

He helped develop the KUC's campaigns arm. An accomplished public speaker and shrewd operator, Tony was a leader with a penchant for the theatrical.

His relentless energy, drive and personal magnetism commanded the loyalty of his many comrades, none more so than his beloved Doberman, Fred.

A newspaper article, featuring Tony Boyle receiving eight awards at a ceremony from many regional organisations for his work within the KUC

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping

**Date:** No Date

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# Glass Cabinet

Tony died in June 1990, aged 43. His funeral was a remarkable demonstration of working-class solidarity with hundreds of mourners in attendance.




The vast funeral procession for Tony Boyle, featuring many mourners, and a extensive variety of commemorative banners.

**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** 1990

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# Glass Cabinet

*"Tony was loyal to all who earned his trust. Clever. Mischievous. A man of action. Astute and intuitive. Quick thinking and full of energy. He was brilliant at inspiring, enabling and involving others. After he died, tributes included 'the most unselfish man I ever met' and 'a man of the people'."* - **Christine Davidson**




Funeral procession for Tony Boyle featuring mourners carrying a commemorative banner dedicated to the life of Boyle.

**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** 1990

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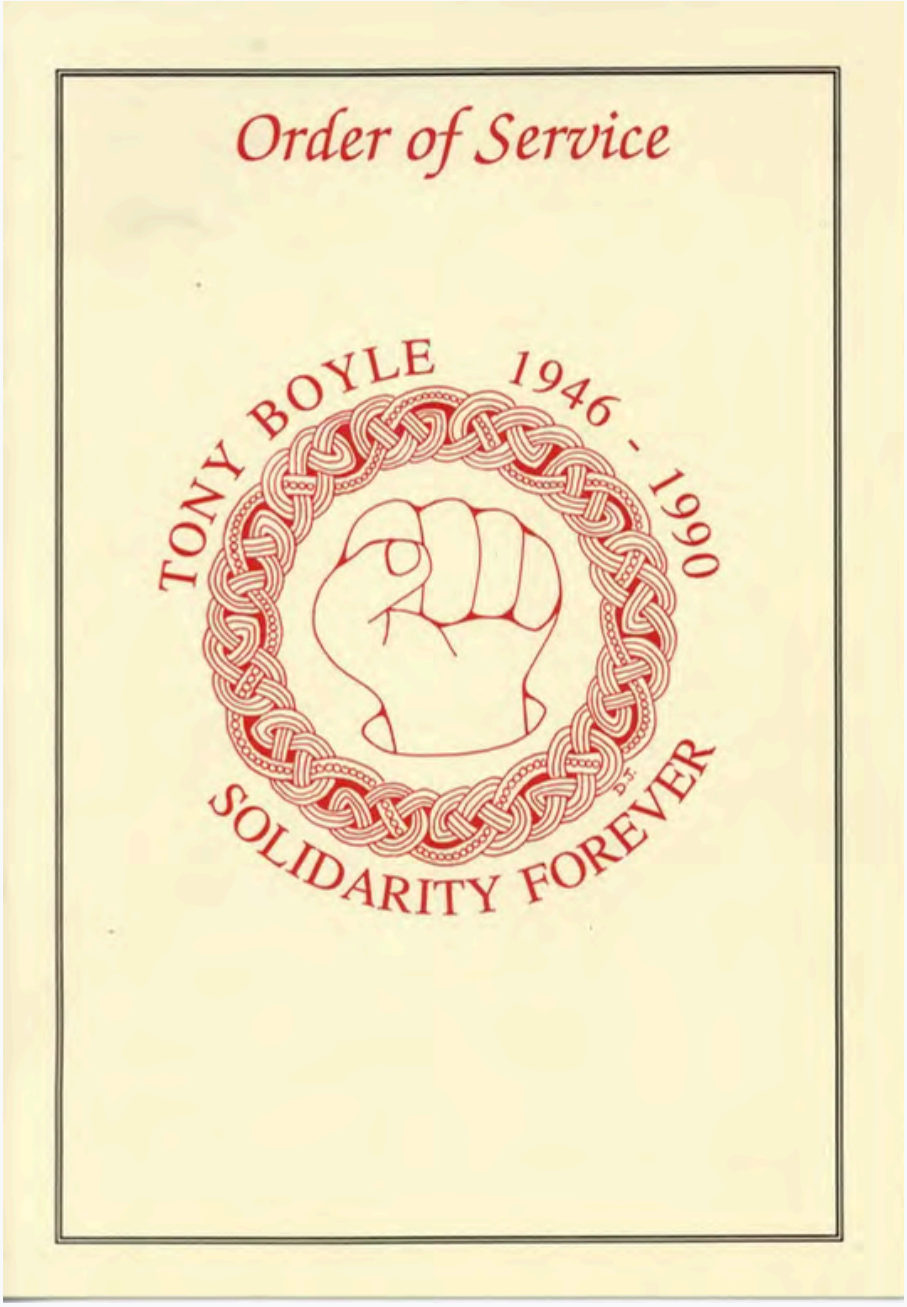
# Glass Cabinet

Boyle continued to inspire the work of the KUC long after his untimely death.

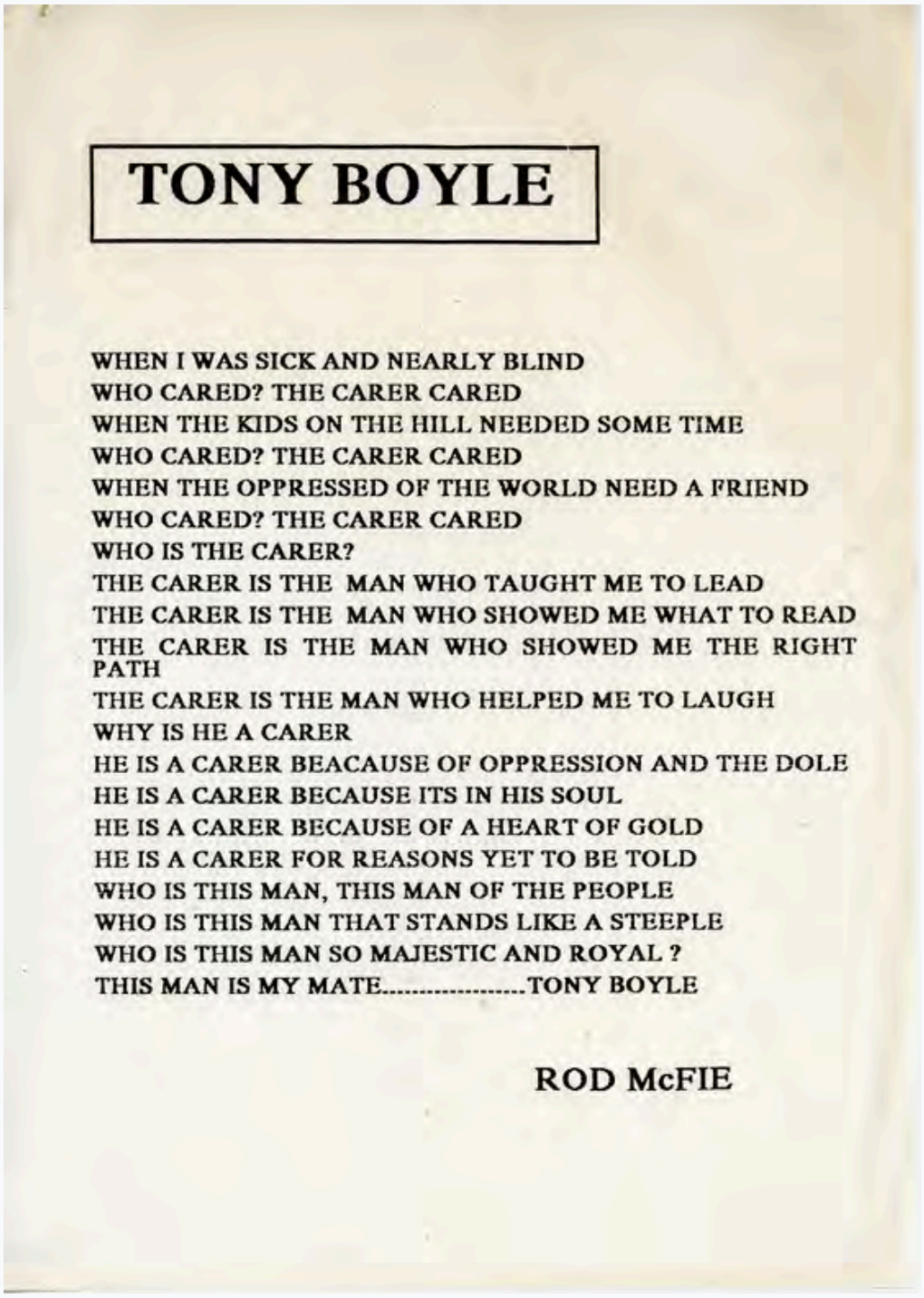



Order of Service for the funeral of Tony Boyle.

**Material:** Booklet

**Date:** 1990

# Glass Cabinet



**TONY BOYLE**

WHEN I WAS SICK AND NEARLY BLIND
WHO CARED? THE CARER CARED
WHEN THE KIDS ON THE HILL NEEDED SOME TIME
WHO CARED? THE CARER CARED
WHEN THE OPPRESSED OF THE WORLD NEED A FRIEND
WHO CARED? THE CARER CARED
WHO IS THE CARER?
THE CARER IS THE MAN WHO TAUGHT ME TO LEAD
THE CARER IS THE MAN WHO SHOWED ME WHAT TO READ
THE CARER IS THE MAN WHO SHOWED ME THE RIGHT PATH
THE CARER IS THE MAN WHO HELPED ME TO LAUGH
WHY IS HE A CARER
HE IS A CARER BEACAUSE OF OPPRESSION AND THE DOLE
HE IS A CARER BECAUSE ITS IN HIS SOUL
HE IS A CARER BECAUSE OF A HEART OF GOLD
HE IS A CARER FOR REASONS YET TO BE TOLD
WHO IS THIS MAN, THIS MAN OF THE PEOPLE
WHO IS THIS MAN THAT STANDS LIKE A STEEPLE
WHO IS THIS MAN SO MAJESTIC AND ROYAL ?
THIS MAN IS MY MATE.....TONY BOYLE

ROD McFIE

A touching tribute written about Tony Boyle by Rod McFie.

**Material:** Paper

**Date:** 1990s

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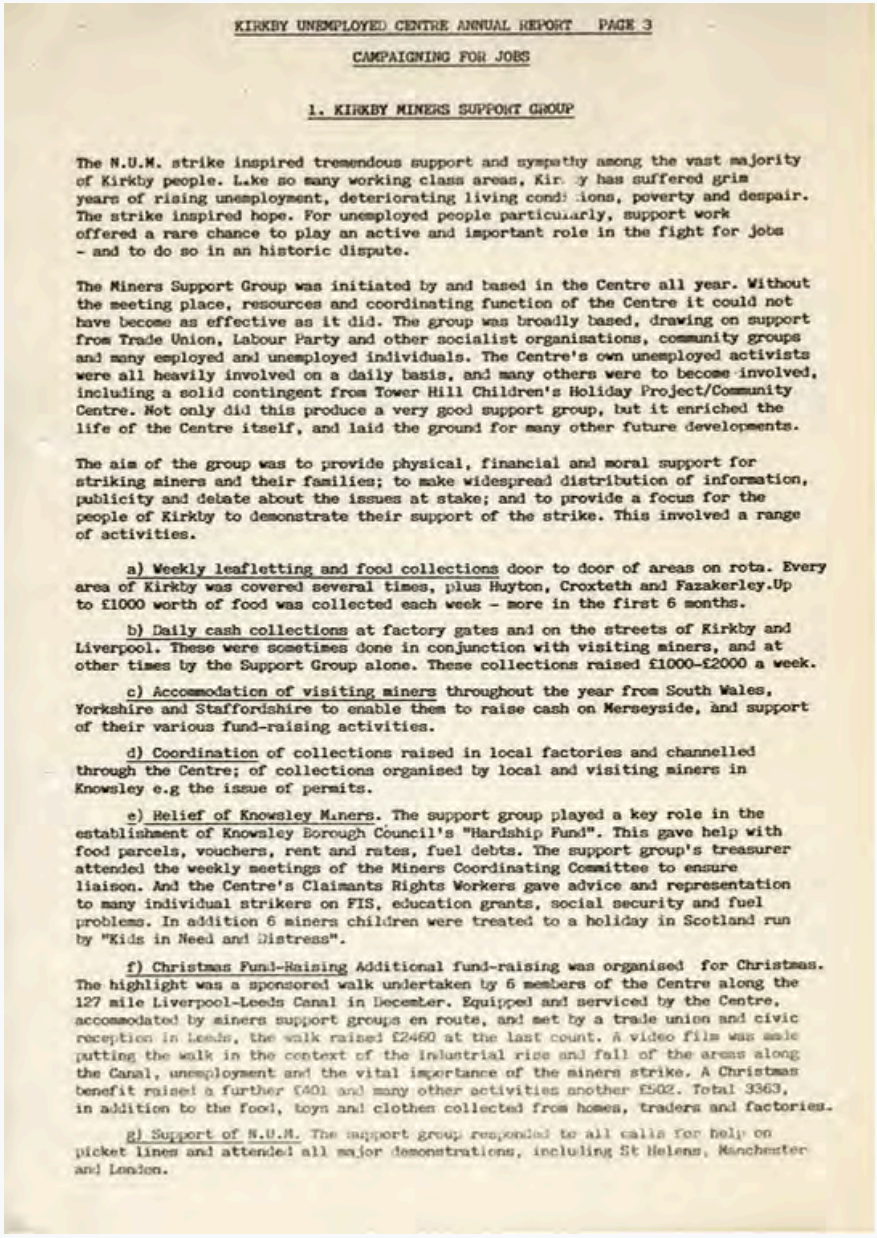
# Drawer One



KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT PAGE 3

CAMPAIGNING FOR JOBS

1. KIRKBY MINERS SUPPORT GROUP

The N.U.M. strike inspired tremendous support and sympathy among the vast majority of Kirkby people. Like so many working class areas, Kirkby has suffered grim years of rising unemployment, deteriorating living conditions, poverty and despair. The strike inspired hope. For unemployed people particularly, support work offered a rare chance to play an active and important role in the fight for jobs - and to do so in an historic dispute.

The Miners Support Group was initiated by and based in the Centre all year. Without the meeting place, resources and coordinating function of the Centre it could not have become as effective as it did. The group was broadly based, drawing on support from Trade Union, Labour Party and other socialist organisations, community groups and many employed and unemployed individuals. The Centre's own unemployed activists were all heavily involved on a daily basis, and many others were to become involved, including a solid contingent from Tower Hill Children's Holiday Project/Community Centre. Not only did this produce a very good support group, but it enriched the life of the Centre itself, and laid the ground for many other future developments.

The aim of the group was to provide physical, financial and moral support for striking miners and their families; to make widespread distribution of information, publicity and debate about the issues at stake; and to provide a focus for the people of Kirkby to demonstrate their support of the strike. This involved a range of activities.

a) Weekly leafletting and food collections door to door of areas on rota. Every area of Kirkby was covered several times, plus Huyton, Croxteth and Fazakerley. Up to £1000 worth of food was collected each week - more in the first 6 months.

b) Daily cash collections at factory gates and on the streets of Kirkby and Liverpool. These were sometimes done in conjunction with visiting miners, and at other times by the Support Group alone. These collections raised £1000-£2000 a week.

c) Accommodation of visiting miners throughout the year from South Wales, Yorkshire and Staffordshire to enable them to raise cash on Merseyside, and support of their various fund-raising activities.

d) Coordination of collections raised in local factories and channelled through the Centre; of collections organised by local and visiting miners in Knowsley e.g the issue of permits.

e) Relief of Knowsley Miners. The support group played a key role in the establishment of Knowsley Borough Council's "Hardship Fund". This gave help with food parcels, vouchers, rent and rates, fuel debts. The support group's treasurer attended the weekly meetings of the Miners Coordinating Committee to ensure liaison. And the Centre's Claimants Rights Workers gave advice and representation to many individual strikers on FIS, education grants, social security and fuel problems. In addition 6 miners children were treated to a holiday in Scotland run by "Kids in Need and Distress".

f) Christmas Fund-Raising Additional fund-raising was organised for Christmas. The highlight was a sponsored walk undertaken by 6 members of the Centre along the 127 mile Liverpool-Leeds Canal in December. Equipped and serviced by the Centre, accommodated by miners support groups en route, and met by a trade union and civic reception in Leeds, the walk raised £2460 at the last count. A video film was made putting the walk in the context of the industrial rise and fall of the areas along the Canal, unemployment and the vital importance of the miners strike. A Christmas benefit raised a further £401 and many other activities another £502. Total 3363, in addition to the food, toys and clothes collected from homes, traders and factories.

g) Support of N.U.M. The support group responded to all calls for help on picket lines and attended all major demonstrations, including St Helens, Manchester and London.

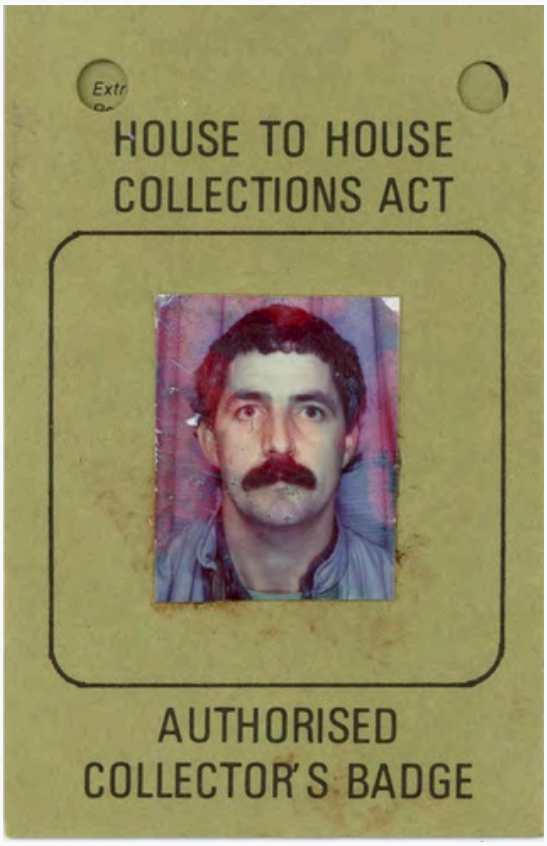
A page taken from the Kirkby Unemployed Centre Annual Report, discussing how the Miners Support Group has been providing support, physical and financial, to striking miners and their families. Also mentioned is how the group was drawing support from Trade Union, the Labour Party, community groups and mostly employed and unemployed individuals.

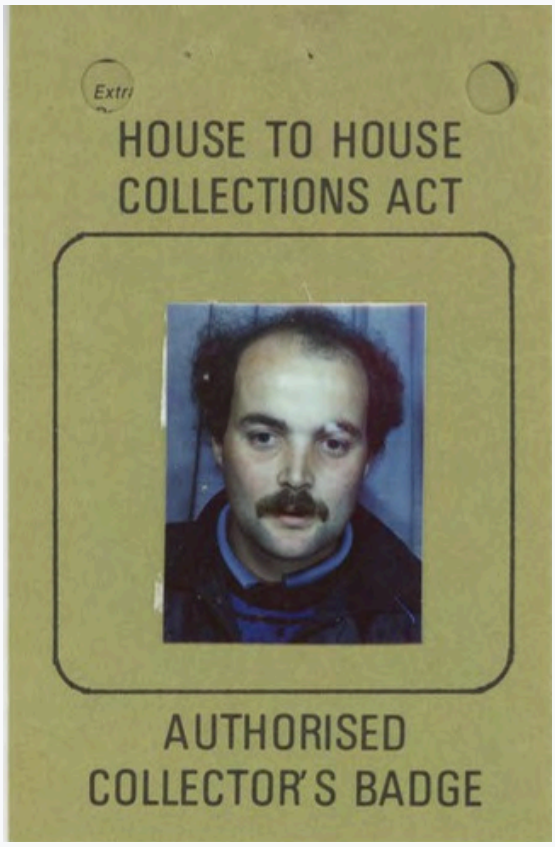
**Material:** Document

**Date:** No Date



# Drawer One




Collector's Certificate of Authority for two individuals. The owners of these badges were authorised to collect on behalf of the Kirkby Unemployed Centre.

**Material:** Photograph on card

**Date:** No Date

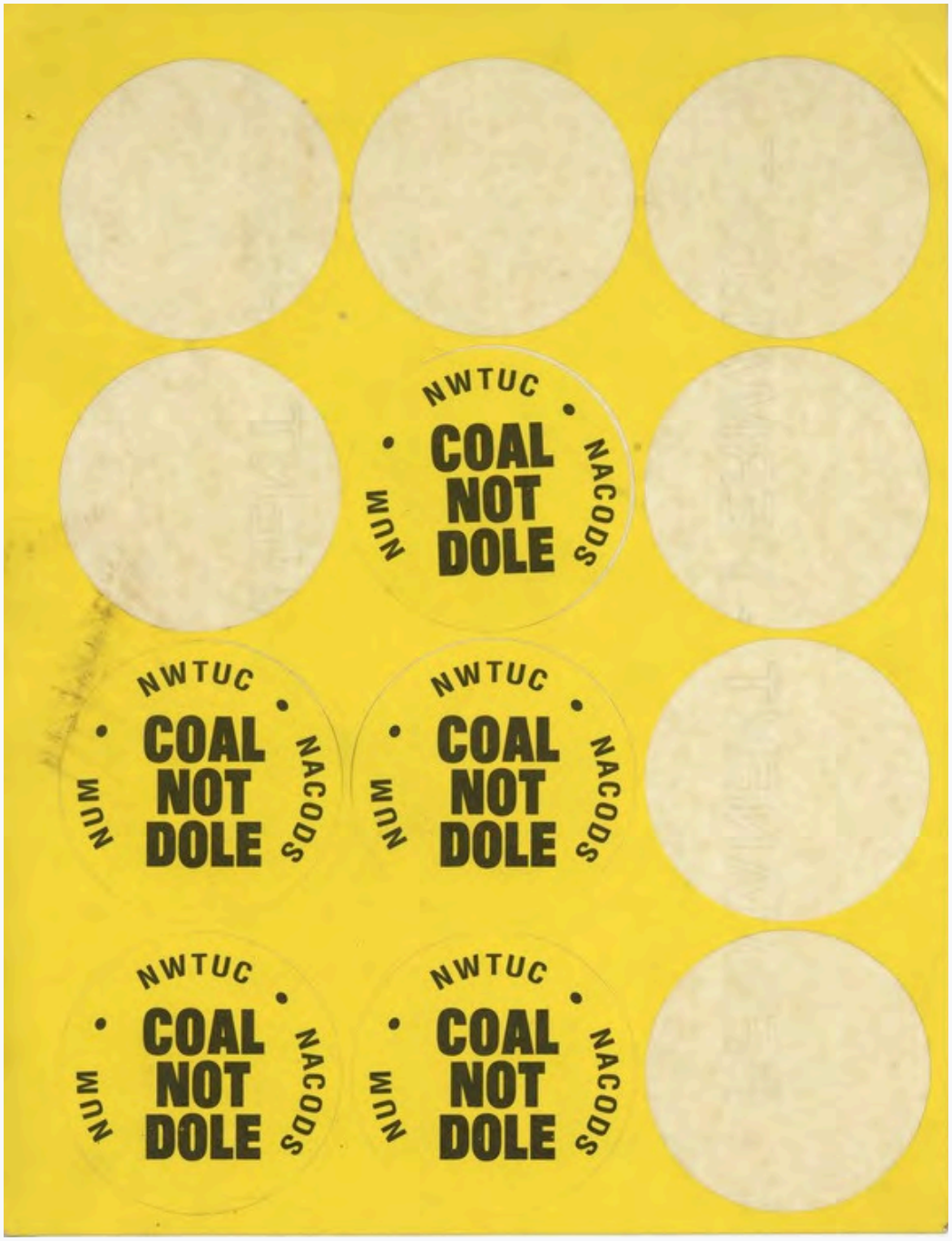
# Drawer One




A round button badge with the motto, '*Rule 51: Expel The Scabs*'.

**Material:** Round Button Badge
**Date:** No Date

# Drawer One




A sheet of stickers with the motto, '*Coal Not Dole*'. A few stickers have been previously removed.

**Material:** Stickers with transfer sheet

**Date:** No Date

# Drawer One




A sponsored walk in aid of the National Union of Mineworkers (N.U.M), from Liverpool to Leeds.

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** No Date

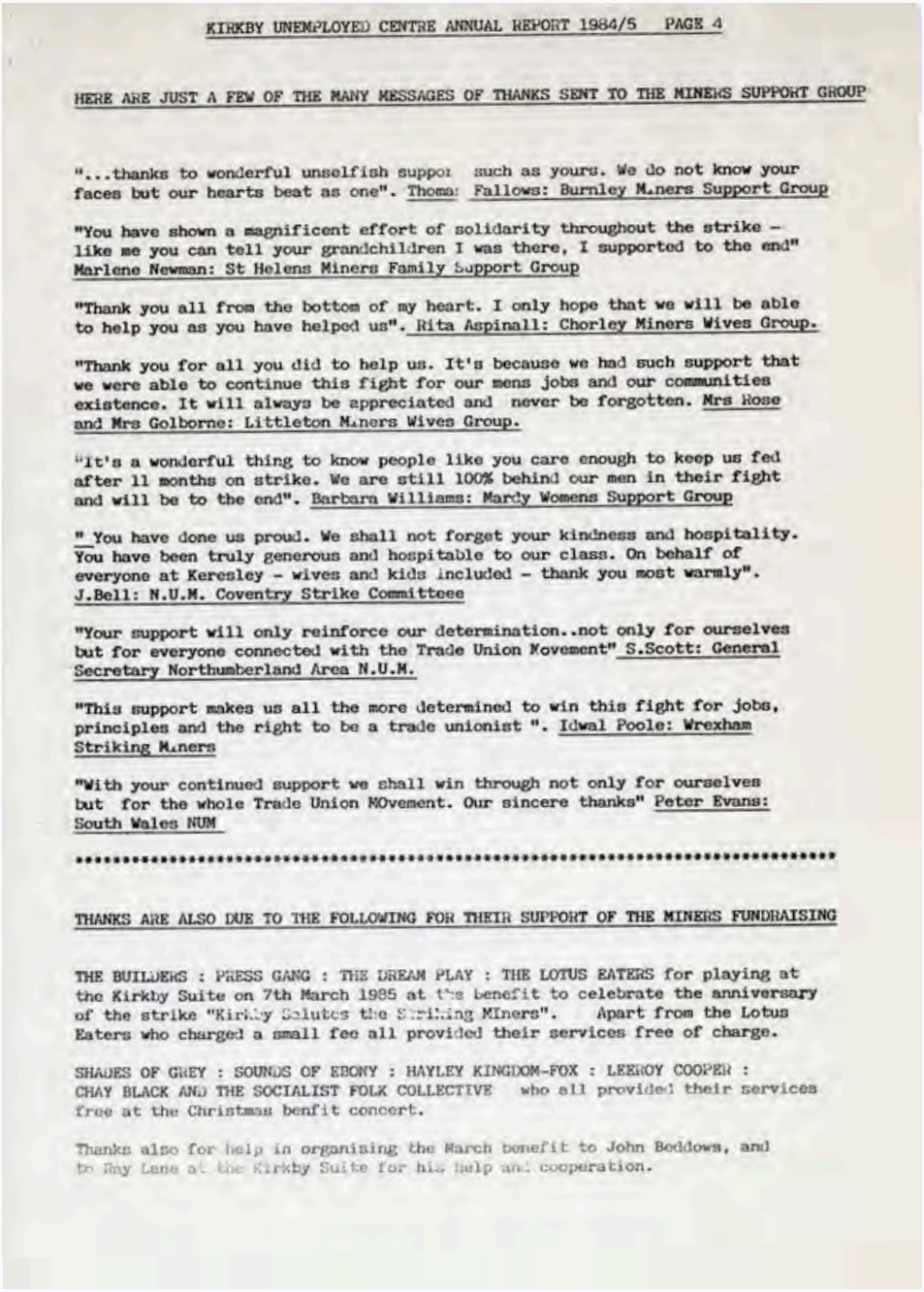
# Drawer One




A group of six men photographed after completing a sponsored walk of 127 miles.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** 14th December 1984

# Drawer One



KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 1984/5 PAGE 4

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY MESSAGES OF THANKS SENT TO THE MINERS SUPPORT GROUP

"...thanks to wonderful unselfish suppor such as yours. We do not know your faces but our hearts beat as one". Thomas Fallows: Burnley Miners Support Group

"You have shown a magnificent effort of solidarity throughout the strike - like me you can tell your grandchildren I was there, I supported to the end" Marlene Newman: St Helens Miners Family Support Group

"Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. I only hope that we will be able to help you as you have helped us". Rita Aspinall: Chorley Miners Wives Group.

"Thank you for all you did to help us. It's because we had such support that we were able to continue this fight for our mens jobs and our communities existence. It will always be appreciated and never be forgotten. Mrs Rose and Mrs Golborne: Littleton Miners Wives Group.

"It's a wonderful thing to know people like you care enough to keep us fed after 11 months on strike. We are still 100% behind our men in their fight and will be to the end". Barbara Williams: Mardy Womens Support Group

"You have done us proud. We shall not forget your kindness and hospitality. You have been truly generous and hospitable to our class. On behalf of everyone at Keresley - wives and kids included - thank you most warmly". J.Bell: N.U.M. Coventry Strike Committeee

"Your support will only reinforce our determination..not only for ourselves but for everyone connected with the Trade Union Movement" S.Scott: General Secretary Northumberland Area N.U.M.

"This support makes us all the more determined to win this fight for jobs, principles and the right to be a trade unionist ". Idwal Poole: Wrexham Striking Miners

"With your continued support we shall win through not only for ourselves but for the whole Trade Union MOvement. Our sincere thanks" Peter Evans: South Wales NUM

**********

THANKS ARE ALSO DUE TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE MINERS FUNDRAISING

THE BUILDERS : PRESS GANG : THE DREAM PLAY : THE LOTUS EATERS for playing at the Kirkby Suite on 7th March 1985 at the benefit to celebrate the anniversary of the strike "Kirkby Salutes the Striking MIners". Apart from the Lotus Eaters who charged a small fee all provided their services free of charge.

SHADES OF GREY : SOUNDS OF EBONY : HAYLEY KINGDOM-FOX : LEEROY COOPER : CHAY BLACK AND THE SOCIALIST FOLK COLLECTIVE who all provided their services free at the Christmas benfit concert.

Thanks also for help in organising the March benefit to John Beddows, and to Ray Lane at the Kirkby Suite for his help and cooperation.

Taken from the Kirkby Unemployed Centre Annual Report of 1984/85, featuring messages of thanks sent to the Miners Support Group.

**Material:** Document

**Date:** 1984/1985

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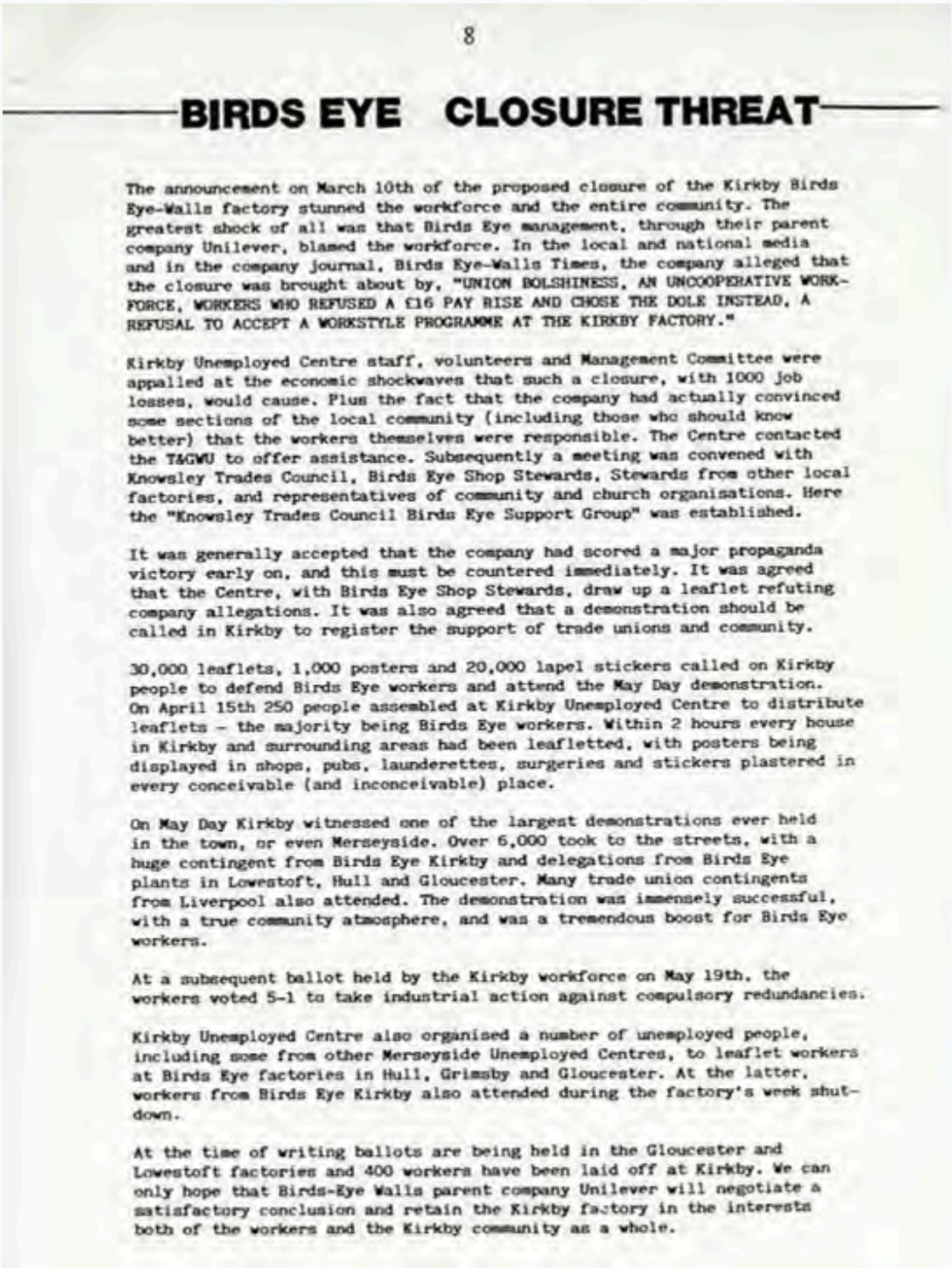
# Drawer Two



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## BIRDS EYE CLOSURE THREAT

The announcement on March 10th of the proposed closure of the Kirkby Birds Eye-Walls factory stunned the workforce and the entire community. The greatest shock of all was that Birds Eye management, through their parent company Unilever, blamed the workforce. In the local and national media and in the company journal, Birds Eye-Walls Times, the company alleged that the closure was brought about by, "UNION BOLSHINESS, AN UNCOOPERATIVE WORK-FORCE, WORKERS WHO REFUSED A £16 PAY RISE AND CHOSE THE DOLE INSTEAD, A REFUSAL TO ACCEPT A WORKSTYLE PROGRAMME AT THE KIRKBY FACTORY."

Kirkby Unemployed Centre staff, volunteers and Management Committee were appalled at the economic shockwaves that such a closure, with 1000 job losses, would cause. Plus the fact that the company had actually convinced some sections of the local community (including those who should know better) that the workers themselves were responsible. The Centre contacted the T&GWU to offer assistance. Subsequently a meeting was convened with Knowsley Trades Council, Birds Eye Shop Stewards, Stewards from other local factories, and representatives of community and church organisations. Here the "Knowsley Trades Council Birds Eye Support Group" was established.

It was generally accepted that the company had scored a major propaganda victory early on, and this must be countered immediately. It was agreed that the Centre, with Birds Eye Shop Stewards, draw up a leaflet refuting company allegations. It was also agreed that a demonstration should be called in Kirkby to register the support of trade unions and community.

30,000 leaflets, 1,000 posters and 20,000 lapel stickers called on Kirkby people to defend Birds Eye workers and attend the May Day demonstration. On April 15th 250 people assembled at Kirkby Unemployed Centre to distribute leaflets - the majority being Birds Eye workers. Within 2 hours every house in Kirkby and surrounding areas had been leafletted, with posters being displayed in shops, pubs, launderettes, surgeries and stickers plastered in every conceivable (and inconceivable) place.

On May Day Kirkby witnessed one of the largest demonstrations ever held in the town, or even Merseyside. Over 6,000 took to the streets, with a huge contingent from Birds Eye Kirkby and delegations from Birds Eye plants in Lowestoft, Hull and Gloucester. Many trade union contingents from Liverpool also attended. The demonstration was immensely successful, with a true community atmosphere, and was a tremendous boost for Birds Eye workers.

At a subsequent ballot held by the Kirkby workforce on May 19th, the workers voted 5-1 to take industrial action against compulsory redundancies.

Kirkby Unemployed Centre also organised a number of unemployed people, including some from other Merseyside Unemployed Centres, to leaflet workers at Birds Eye factories in Hull, Grimsby and Gloucester. At the latter, workers from Birds Eye Kirkby also attended during the factory's week shut-down.

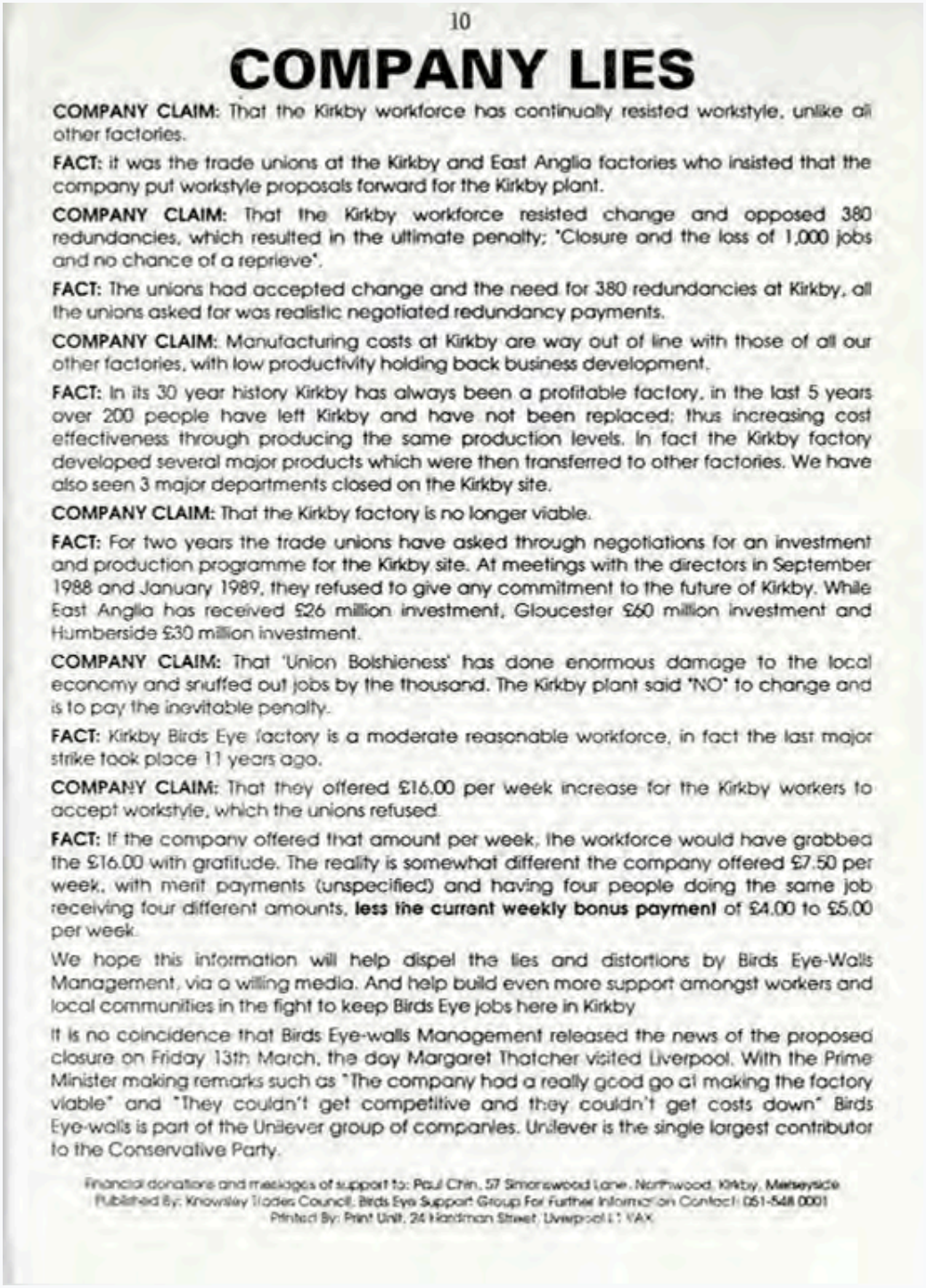
At the time of writing ballots are being held in the Gloucester and Lowestoft factories and 400 workers have been laid off at Kirkby. We can only hope that Birds-Eye Walls parent company Unilever will negotiate a satisfactory conclusion and retain the Kirkby factory in the interests both of the workers and the Kirkby community as a whole.

A document which discusses the proposed closure of the Kirkby Birds Eye-Walls factory.

**Material:** Document

**Date:** No Date

# Drawer Two



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## COMPANY LIES

**COMPANY CLAIM:** That the Kirkby workforce has continually resisted workstyle, unlike all other factories.

**FACT:** it was the trade unions at the Kirkby and East Anglia factories who insisted that the company put workstyle proposals forward for the Kirkby plant.

**COMPANY CLAIM:** That the Kirkby workforce resisted change and opposed 380 redundancies, which resulted in the ultimate penalty; "Closure and the loss of 1,000 jobs and no chance of a reprieve".

**FACT:** The unions had accepted change and the need for 380 redundancies at Kirkby, all the unions asked for was realistic negotiated redundancy payments.

**COMPANY CLAIM:** Manufacturing costs at Kirkby are way out of line with those of all our other factories, with low productivity holding back business development.

**FACT:** In its 30 year history Kirkby has always been a profitable factory, in the last 5 years over 200 people have left Kirkby and have not been replaced; thus increasing cost effectiveness through producing the same production levels. In fact the Kirkby factory developed several major products which were then transferred to other factories. We have also seen 3 major departments closed on the Kirkby site.

**COMPANY CLAIM:** That the Kirkby factory is no longer viable.

**FACT:** For two years the trade unions have asked through negotiations for an investment and production programme for the Kirkby site. At meetings with the directors in September 1988 and January 1989, they refused to give any commitment to the future of Kirkby. While East Anglia has received £26 million investment, Gloucester £60 million investment and Humberside £30 million investment.

**COMPANY CLAIM:** That 'Union Bolshieness' has done enormous damage to the local economy and snuffed out jobs by the thousand. The Kirkby plant said "NO" to change and is to pay the inevitable penalty.

**FACT:** Kirkby Birds Eye factory is a moderate reasonable workforce, in fact the last major strike took place 11 years ago.

**COMPANY CLAIM:** That they offered £16.00 per week increase for the Kirkby workers to accept workstyle, which the unions refused.

**FACT:** If the company offered that amount per week, the workforce would have grabbed the £16.00 with gratitude. The reality is somewhat different the company offered £7.50 per week, with merit payments (unspecified) and having four people doing the same job receiving four different amounts, **less the current weekly bonus payment** of £4.00 to £5.00 per week.

We hope this information will help dispel the lies and distortions by Birds Eye-Walls Management, via a willing media. And help build even more support amongst workers and local communities in the fight to keep Birds Eye jobs here in Kirkby

It is no coincidence that Birds Eye-walls Management released the news of the proposed closure on Friday 13th March, the day Margaret Thatcher visited Liverpool. With the Prime Minister making remarks such as "The company had a really good go at making the factory viable" and "They couldn't get competitive and they couldn't get costs down" Birds Eye-walls is part of the Unilever group of companies. Unilever is the single largest contributor to the Conservative Party.

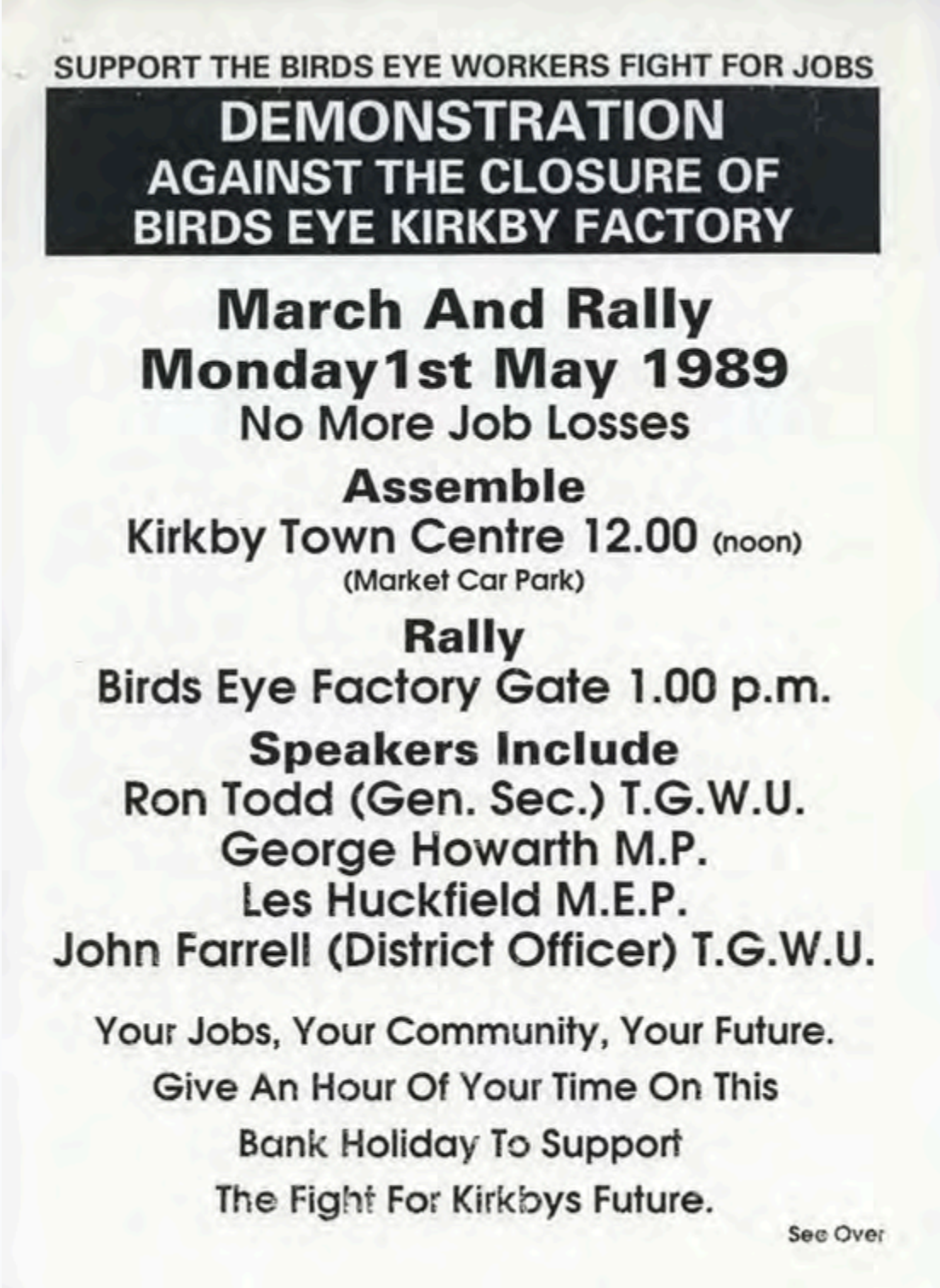
Financial donations and messages of support to: Paul Chin, 57 Simonswood Lane, Northwood, Kirkby, Merseyside
Published By: Knowsley Trades Council, Birds Eye Support Group For Further Information Contact: 051-548 0001
Printed By: Print Unit, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool L1 9AX

A document addressing claims made by Birds Eye-Walls, with facts proposed from the trade unions.

**Material:** Document

**Date:** No Date

# Drawer Two


SUPPORT THE BIRDS EYE WORKERS FIGHT FOR JOBS

DEMONSTRATION
AGAINST THE CLOSURE OF
BIRDS EYE KIRKBY FACTORY

**March And Rally**
**Monday1st May 1989**
No More Job Losses

**Assemble**
Kirkby Town Centre 12.00 (noon)
(Market Car Park)

**Rally**
Birds Eye Factory Gate 1.00 p.m.

**Speakers Include**
Ron Todd (Gen. Sec.) T.G.W.U.
George Howarth M.P.
Les Huckfield M.E.P.
John Farrell (District Officer) T.G.W.U.

Your Jobs, Your Community, Your Future.
Give An Hour Of Your Time On This
Bank Holiday To Support
The Fight For Kirkbys Future.

See Over

A double sided flyer for a proposed demonstration, a march and rally against the closure of Birds Eye Kirkby Factory.

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** 1st May 1989

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# Drawer Two



# Inter-union feud blows up on Birds Eye closure

DAILY POST 4/4/89

OFFICERS of the Transport and General Workers' Union on Merseyside last night stood accused of not warning their members that bosses intended closing the Birds Eye factory in Kirkby, if new working practices were not introduced.

The claim was made by the Electronic Electrical Telecommunications and Plumbing Trades Union, who blasted the TGWU's tactics as "irresponsible."

It was as a direct result of the new operational methods called Workstyle not being accepted that Birds Eye chairman Allan Price announced his "irreversible" decision to shut the plant this September with the loss of almost 1,000 jobs.

The EETPU's charge is that senior management met privately with two Mersey TGWU officers at last September's TUC congress in Bournemouth and the union men were told bluntly: "Accept Workstyle and the factory stays open; reject it and we shut you down."

The Workstyle package would have involved pruning 380 jobs, a 13pc pay increase, and much greater flexibility from staff involving a degree of self-supervision.

Yesterday, neither of the two Liverpool-based TGWU officers, John Farrell and Eddie Roberts, was available

But yesterday Eileen Gallagher, area official with the EETPU, said: "This union is extremely concerned that the background to the closure is one in which as early as September last year the company had a private meeting with regional officer of the TGWU when it was spelt out that unless there was acceptance of the workstyle by TGWU members it was inevitable that the factory would close.

"As far as we are aware this was never relayed or discussed by the TGWU members on site.

She emphasised that the other unions – the EETPU, the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the white collar Manufacturing Science and Finance union – had all accepted Workstyle in principle.

She said: "We had accepted the principle, philosophy and practicality of what they wanted."

Workstyle has been accepted at Birds Eye's other works in Lowestoft, Grimsby, Hull and Gloucester.

A newspaper clipping from the Daily Post, reporting on inter-union feuding between multiple unions, such as the Electronic Electrical Telecommunications and Pluming Trades Union (EETPU) and the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&GWU).

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping
**Date:** 4th April 1989

# Drawer Two



# Bird's eye view of a Mersey tragedy

## The day red noses were replaced by red eyes . . .



A newspaper clipping from the Liverpool Echo, featuring the story of Birds Eye Worker, Doreen Nield, who had recently lost her husband and had now lost her job.

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping
**Date:** 13th March 1989

Knowsley Council
DON'T MOURN, ORGANISE!
ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley
- 30 -

# Drawer Three



Birds Eye unions reject closure

WE'LL FIGHT TO SAVE OUR JOBS

Mrs T pops round for tea at Maureen's!

An Echo for Maggie

A newspaper clipping from the Liverpool Echo, featuring a story regarding the Union leaders holding a crisis meeting to plan a campaign to fight the closure of the Birds Eye plant.

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping

**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council




ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Drawer Three




**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** No Date

The KUC was also at the forefront of the local fight for jobs, supporting anti-closure struggles at Birds Eye (1989) and Pendleton's Ice Cream (1992).

In October 1994, they worked alongside local trade unionists and community leaders to prevent the planned closure of Kirkby's AC Delco factory, saving hundreds of jobs.

# Drawer Three




A double sided flyer for a march and rally for the planned closure of Delco Electronics in Kirkby, which was then being relocated to Neston, Wirral.

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** 12th November 1994

# Drawer Three




A photograph men, women and children carrying signs for the Delco Don't Go Campaign.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

*"During the Miners' Strike, we started off by adopting Littleton and Maerdy; supporting them financially and with food parcels. We would leaflet an area of Kirkby, asking residents to put anything they could afford to donate in a carrier bag and leave it on their doorstep. The response was phenomenal. People had nothing but were giving what they could."* - **Ian Morris**

# Drawer Three



DELCO DEAL: Company to build new plant in Kirkby after two-month battle

WE'RE SAVED!

'Talks with union pave way for agreement'

By Neal Saunders

TODAY'S decision ends a two-month battle to keep Delco in Kirkby.

October 20: Delco announces it is eyeing Kirkby for a site on the Wirral, believed to be the future Vauxhall factory in Neston.

The decision is made despite Knowsley Council assembling a £2m-plus grant package for Delco to stay in Kirkby.

Unions withdraw goodwill, which includes working the following three-day holiday period.

October 25: Knowsley North MP George Howarth calls for a campaign to persuade the General Motors-owned car components manufacturer to stay in the town.

Mr Howarth tables a motion in the House of Commons, claiming the move is a "cover" to weaken workers' terms and conditions. It is signed by five other Merseyside MPs.

Campaign

October 27: Delco staff go to work on the Sunday morning as the union rejects the decision to withdraw goodwill, after a promise from Delco's US headquarters that company world president Gary Hoberman will meet union and council representatives.

October 28: Mass meeting of workers leads to the Delco Don't Go campaign being started.

November 2: Delco European chief Jon Helm meets union and council representatives, plus Mr Howarth. Mr Helm says afterwards that the decision to move to Neston is not definite.

November 12: Thousands march through Kirkby and attend a rally.

November 22: Mr Helm returns for talks with union officials.

November 30: Mr Dickinson meets union leaders for talks. Confirms that a new plant will be built in Kirkby if a new labour agreement can be reached.

December 1: Unions hear Delco's proposals.

The largest union, AEEU, agrees to plans for a no-strike deal. White-collar union Apex supports plans to downgrade it.

December 8: Talks end with a draft labour agreement.

The demand for a no-strike guarantee is abandoned. Apex and Delco to decide the union's status.

December 12: Delco board votes to build new Kirkby plant.

Delco jobs are saved

From Page One

Mr Pilkington said the company had first considered leaving Kirkby a year ago.

But the combination of local opinion, a £2m-plus grant package from Knowsley Council and discussions with local MPs and union officials convinced bosses otherwise.

The decision to stay in Kirkby was officially made by Delco's board late last night.

Mr Pilkington said: "We realised more than a year ago that we had to change our current situation. The present facility is unsuitable for the continuing manufacture of high technology products."

Appreciation

"I am pleased to inform everyone that the solution is for us to build a new facility on the existing site.

"I would also like to express my appreciation to the leadership of Knowsley Council, local members of Parliament, both European and British, to representatives of the civic and church communities and to the AEEU for their leadership in helping us maintain operations in Kirkby.

"Above all, I would like to thank our employees for their co-operation and patience."

Joy day ... workers celebrate as Tony Pilkington, MD of the firm's overseas organisation, (right), announces the decision

Step to better future



George Howarth ... bright future

KNOWSLEY North MP George Howarth welcomed the decision as the first step towards a brighter future for Kirkby.

He told the ECHO: "This is first class news.

"It is a credit to the workers, to Knowsley Council — who made it all possible — and to the whole community.

Marvellous

"Kirkby has now turned the corner and this could be the first step along the road to a new economy and a new prosperity for the town.

"It is a marvellous day for everyone connected with the campaign to keep Delco in the area."

'A lovely Christmas now'

TODAY'S decision was greeted with delight throughout Kirkby.

Knowsley Council chief executive David Houlihan said: "The outcome is a credit to the workforce, the unions and its officers and the general public of Kirkby, who all put their effort into keeping Delco here."

Cath Speyer of the engineering union AEEU, was delighted when the ECHO broke the news to her.

She said: "Now it will be a lovely Christmas for people working here."

One relieved worker said: "It is so good to finally know what is happening. The atmosphere has been absolutely electric in here today.

"As soon as the news came out there was one hell of a scramble for the phones. I've had my wife waiting by the phone all morning.

"It was great to be able to ring her and tell her there would still be money coming into the house."



David Houlihan praises

SAVE UP TO 50% ON OUR LEATHER JACKET SALE

NOW AT THE LEATHER CENTRE

LIVERPOOL
32 WHITECHAPEL 051 709 4495

CHESTER
6 EASTGATE STREET 0244 342579

OPEN 7 DAYS

A newspaper cutting from the Liverpool Echo, featuring the story that the Delco factory will not be moving to Neston and a new plant will be built in Kirkby.

**Material:** Newspaper Cutting

**Date:** 14th December 1994

# Space B




**Photograph of Space B**

# Cabinet One

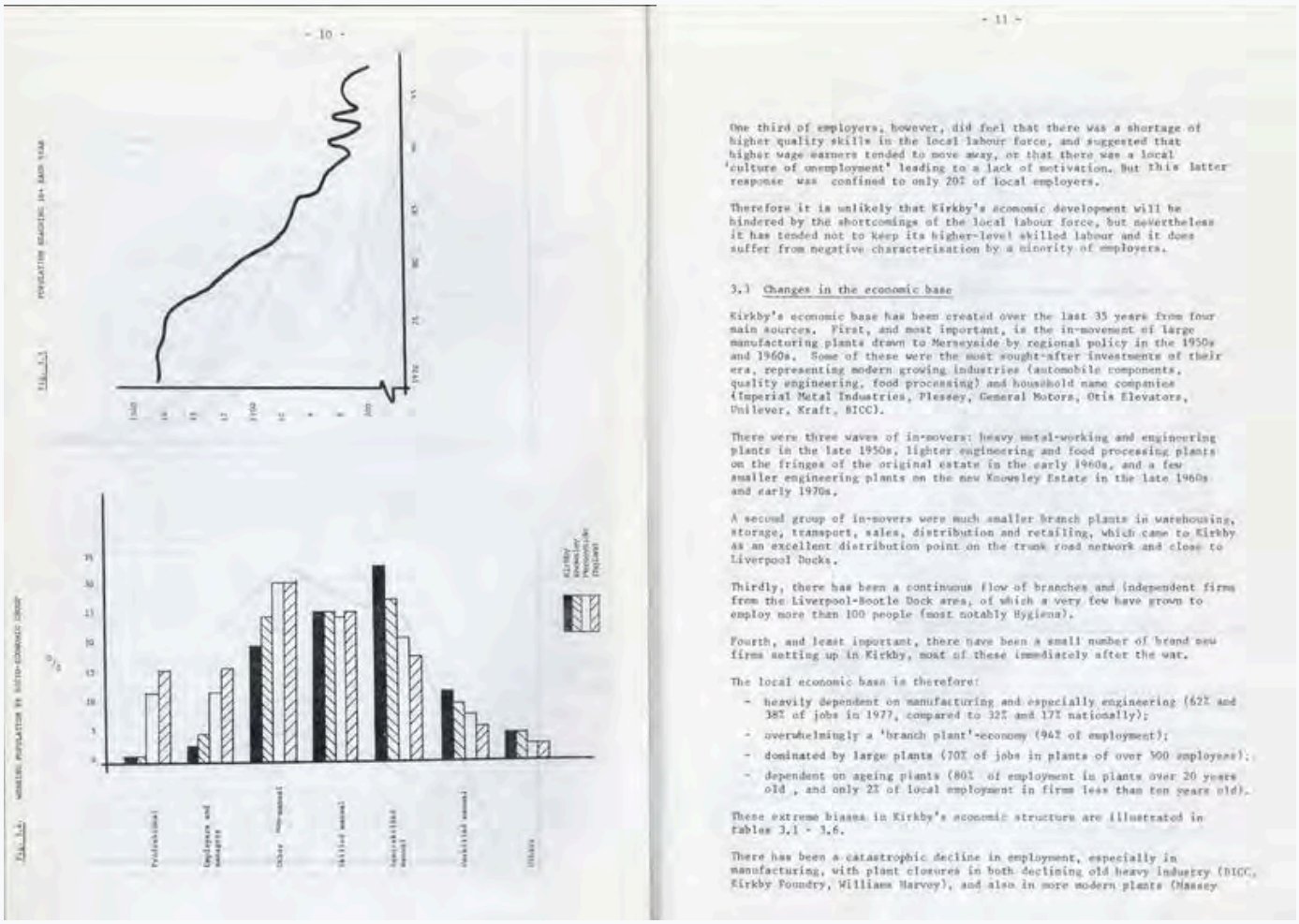



**Material:** Postcard

**Date:** No Date

*"The benefits system has always been complex. From the establishment's perspective, there's always been the deserving poor and the undeserving poor. If you lived in Kirkby, you were the latter. There was never any real assistance provided by the state to support people claim the benefits they were entitled to. That was one of the gaps that the KUC filled."* - **Alan Kelly**

# Cabinet One



- 10 -





- 11 -

One third of employers, however, did feel that there was a shortage of higher quality skills in the local labour force, and suggested that higher wage earners tended to move away, or that there was a local 'culture of unemployment' leading to a lack of motivation. But this latter response was confined to only 20% of local employers.

Therefore it is unlikely that Kirkby's economic development will be hindered by the shortcomings of the local labour force, but nevertheless it has tended not to keep its higher-level skilled labour and it does suffer from negative characterisation by a minority of employers.

3.3 Changes in the economic base

Kirkby's economic base has been created over the last 35 years from four main sources. First, and most important, is the in-movement of large manufacturing plants drawn to Merseyside by regional policy in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of these were the most sought-after investments of their era, representing modern growing industries (automobile components, quality engineering, food processing) and household name companies (Imperial Metal Industries, Plessey, General Motors, Otis Elevators, Unilever, Kraft, BICC).

There were three waves of in-movers: heavy metal-working and engineering plants in the late 1950s, lighter engineering and food processing plants on the fringes of the original estate in the early 1960s, and a few smaller engineering plants on the new Knowsley Estate in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

A second group of in-movers were much smaller branch plants in warehousing, storage, transport, sales, distribution and retailing, which came to Kirkby as an excellent distribution point on the trunk road network and close to Liverpool Docks.

Thirdly, there has been a continuous flow of branches and independent firms from the Liverpool-Bootle Dock area, of which a very few have grown to employ more than 100 people (most notably Hygiena).

Fourth, and least important, there have been a small number of brand new firms setting up in Kirkby, most of these immediately after the war.

The local economic base is therefore:

- heavily dependent on manufacturing and especially engineering (62% and 38% of jobs in 1977, compared to 32% and 17% nationally);
- overwhelmingly a 'branch plant'-economy (94% of employment);
- dominated by large plants (70% of jobs in plants of over 500 employees);
- dependent on ageing plants (80% of employment in plants over 20 years old, and only 2% of local employment in firms less than ten years old).

These extreme biases in Kirkby's economic structure are illustrated in Tables 3.1 - 3.6.

There has been a catastrophic decline in employment, especially in manufacturing, with plant closures in both declining old heavy industry (BICC, Kirkby Foundry, Williams Harvey), and also in more modern plants (Massey

The final report of the Kirkby Joint Study, open on pages 10 & 11, discussing the changes in Kirkby's economic base over the past thirty years.

**Material:** Book - Kirkby: An Outer Estate. Final report of the Kirkby Joint Study by KMBC and MMBC - R301.51
**Date:** 1982

# Cabinet One



Liverpool ECHO

4PM FINAL

FRIDAY MARCH 10, 1989

Birds Eye pulls out of Kirkby

1,000 JOBS AXED

STATISTICS TO WIPE THE SMILE OFF THATCHER'S FACE

BIRDS EYE

On the day the rest of the nation is laughing, another bitter blow for Britain's poorest borough – and that makes Maggie's Mersey visit just so much comic relief

A THOUSAND Merseyside workers lost their jobs today as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher paid a surprise visit to boost the local economy.

Cold comfort . . . Mrs Thatcher awaiting through in Liverpool today

For Doris and her husband, the sack means life on the breadline and selling up the house they struggled to buy

Mrs Thatcher says:

It would be nice if this had not happened. There's always training available. The Albert Dock will be a lovely building!

THE STORY IN FULL: PAGE 3

ENJOY FRESH AIR MOTORING COURTESY OF TOM ENGLAND

COME DOWN & SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT MAKES US THE BEST!!

FREE UNLEADED PETROL FOR 6 MONTHS

GOLF OR JETTA

MOOR LANE, THORNTON

A newspaper clipping from the Liverpool Echo, reporting on the loss of jobs at the Birds Eye Factory after they pulled out of Kirkby.

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping

**Date:** 10th March 1989




Knowsley Council

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Two



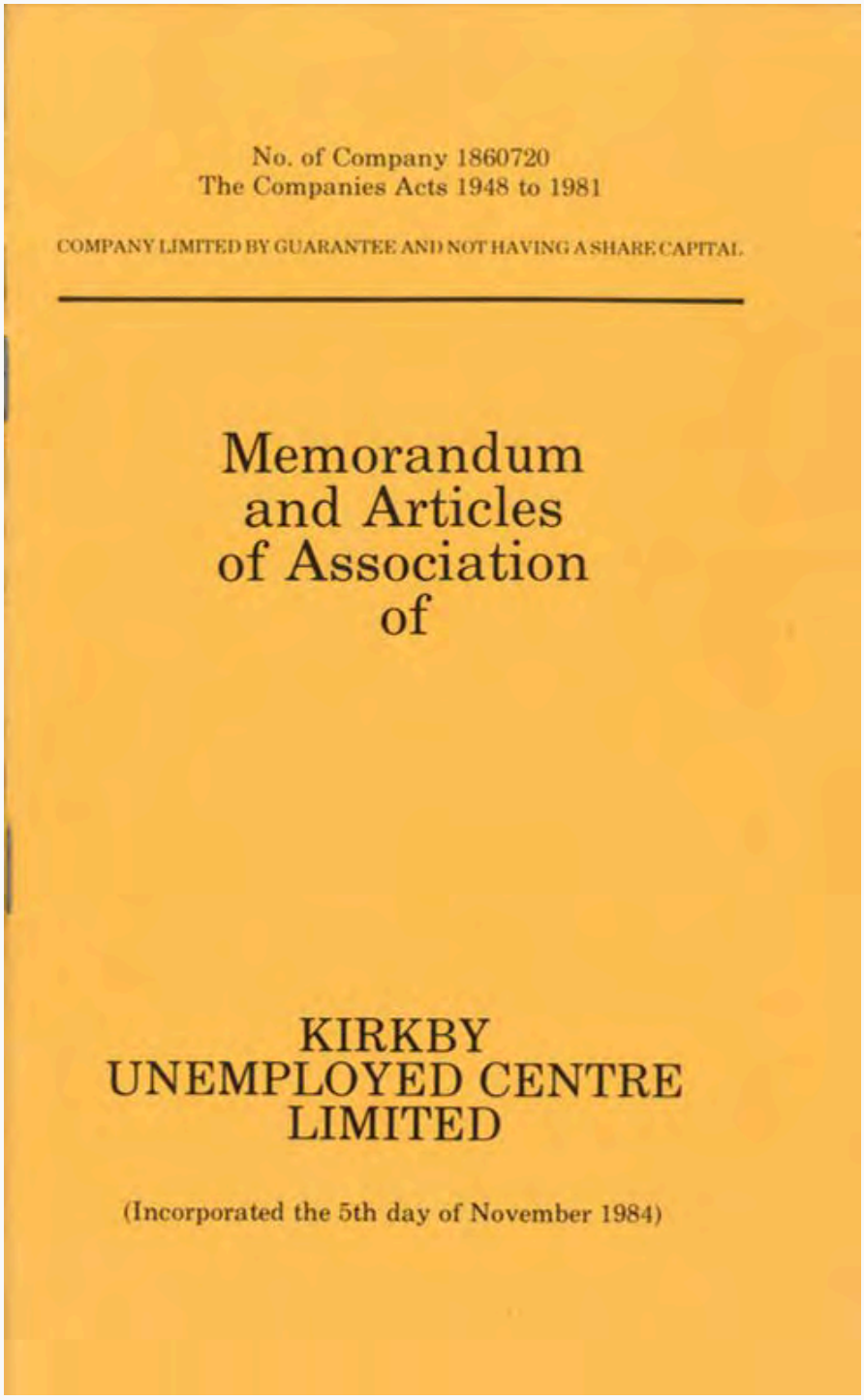

Photograph of signage for the Kirkby Unemployed Centre.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

As unemployment soared, the government intentionally made the benefits system more difficult to navigate. The KUC's industrious 'welly rights' team provided free confidential advice to unemployed residents. When claimants were sanctioned, Centre staff provided legal representation at tribunals.

Advisors taught clients how to assess their own claims. Coordinating regular 'Take Up' campaigns, the Centre secured millions of pounds in untapped benefits on behalf of Kirkby's most vulnerable residents. This provided a vital boost to the local economy. With demand growing, in June 1986 the KUC was forced to move to a larger facility at the abandoned Sacred Heart school building on Westhead Avenue, Northwood.

# Cabinet Two


No. of Company 1860720
The Companies Acts 1948 to 1981

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL

Memorandum
and Articles
of Association
of

KIRKBY
UNEMPLOYED CENTRE
LIMITED

(Incorporated the 5th day of November 1984)

A booklet for the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Kirkby Unemployed Centre Limited.

**Material:** Booklet

**Date:** 1984

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Two



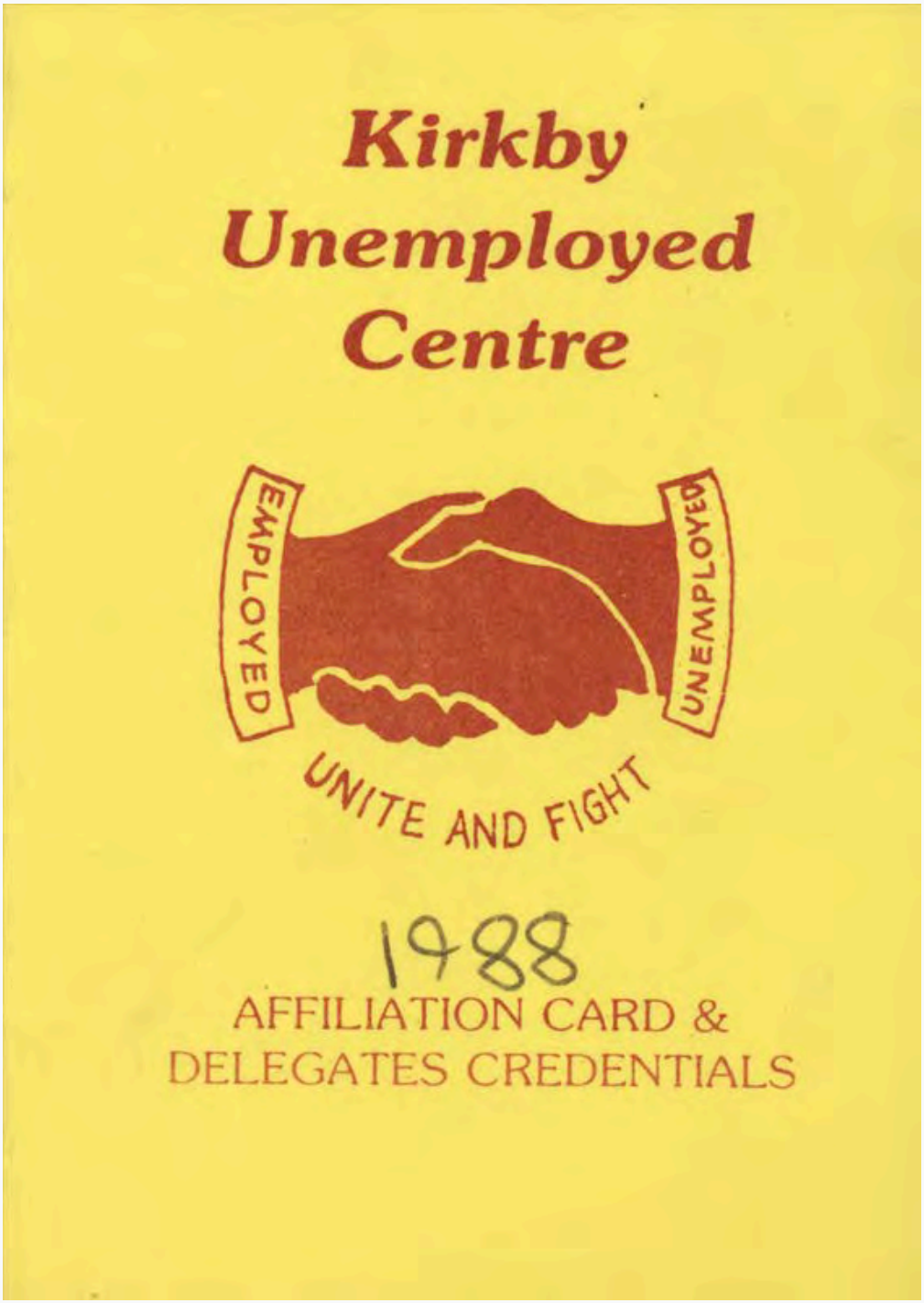

A collection of three round button badges.

**Material:** Round Button Badge
**Date:** No Date

The KUC also had a distinct community campaigning role.

In September 1985, activists blocked the arrival of the Super Snoopers – government agents tasked with sanctioning benefits claimants. Under constant scrutiny, the Snoopers were forced to leave Kirkby prematurely.

# Cabinet Two




A booklet for KUC members, complete with the '*Employed and Unemployed, Unite and Fight*' motto.

**Material:** Booklet

**Date:** 1988

# Cabinet Two

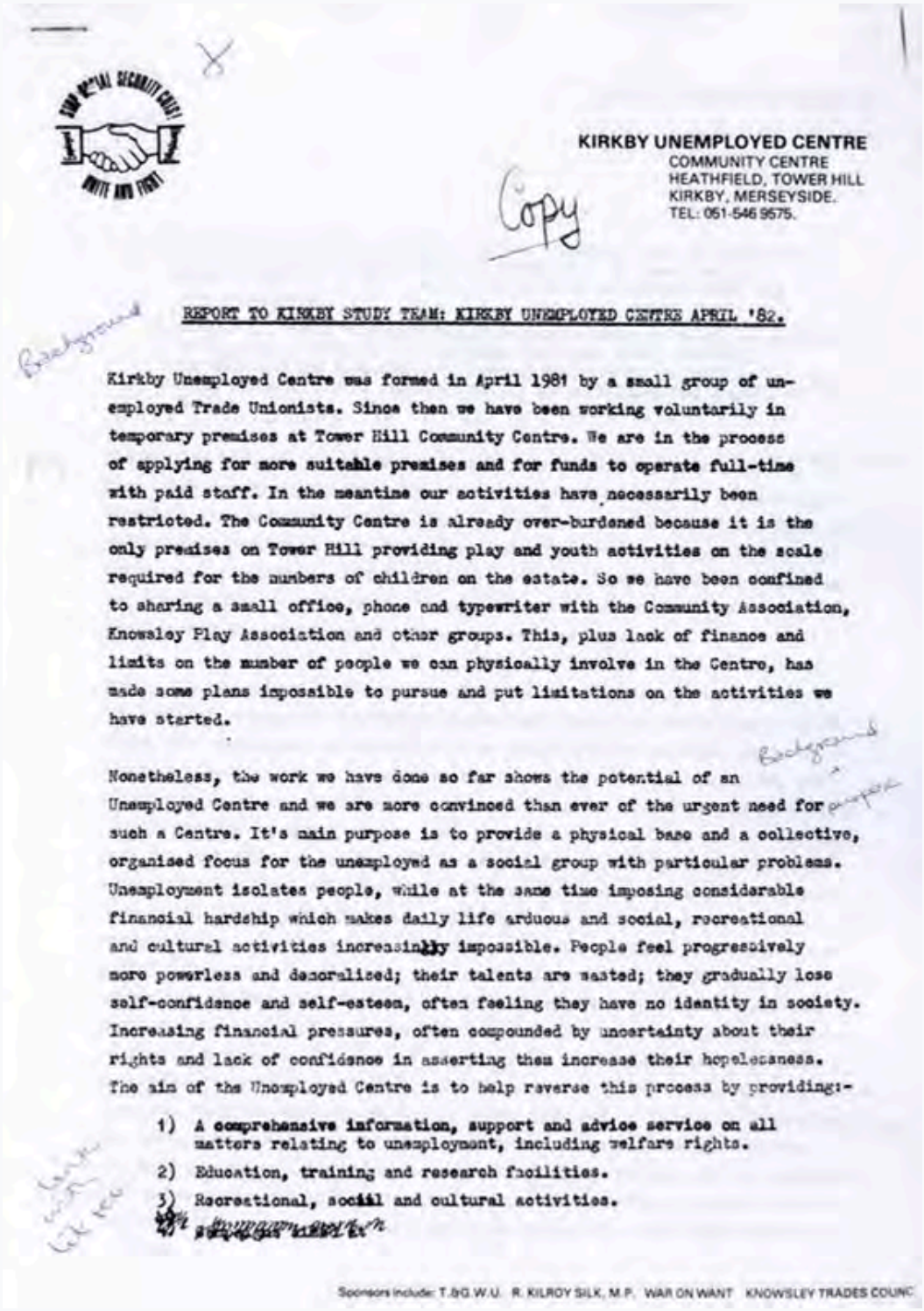



**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** No Date

*"The first day the Super Snoopers arrived, I remember the KUC people going off to block the East Lancs Road. I was so impressed by the organisation. There was a real commitment to preventing the Snoopers doing their job. I just thought, 'This is how you do things. This is real politics.' It was about defending local people."* - **Reverend Alan Green**

# Cabinet Two



KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE
COMMUNITY CENTRE
HEATHFIELD, TOWER HILL
KIRKBY, MERSEYSIDE.
TEL: 051-546 9575.

Copy

REPORT TO KIRKBY STUDY TEAM: KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE APRIL '82.

Kirkby Unemployed Centre was formed in April 1981 by a small group of unemployed Trade Unionists. Since then we have been working voluntarily in temporary premises at Tower Hill Community Centre. We are in the process of applying for more suitable premises and for funds to operate full-time with paid staff. In the meantime our activities have necessarily been restricted. The Community Centre is already over-burdened because it is the only premises on Tower Hill providing play and youth activities on the scale required for the numbers of children on the estate. So we have been confined to sharing a small office, phone and typewriter with the Community Association, Knowsley Play Association and other groups. This, plus lack of finance and limits on the number of people we can physically involve in the Centre, has made some plans impossible to pursue and put limitations on the activities we have started.

Nonetheless, the work we have done so far shows the potential of an Unemployed Centre and we are more convinced than ever of the urgent need for such a Centre. It's main purpose is to provide a physical base and a collective, organised focus for the unemployed as a social group with particular problems. Unemployment isolates people, while at the same time imposing considerable financial hardship which makes daily life arduous and social, recreational and cultural activities increasingly impossible. People feel progressively more powerless and demoralised; their talents are wasted; they gradually lose self-confidence and self-esteem, often feeling they have no identity in society. Increasing financial pressures, often compounded by uncertainty about their rights and lack of confidence in asserting them increase their hopelessness. The aim of the Unemployed Centre is to help reverse this process by providing:-

1) A comprehensive information, support and advice service on all matters relating to unemployment, including welfare rights.
2) Education, training and research facilities.
3) Recreational, social and cultural activities.

Sponsors include: T.&G.W.U. R. KILROY SILK, M.P. WAR ON WANT KNOWSLEY TRADES COUNC

A document which appears to be the first page of a report, to the Kirkby Study Team from the Kirkby Unemployed Centre.

**Material:** Document

**Date:** April 1982

# Cabinet Two

# Centre for the benefit of all

BENEFIT claimants have been known to give up to £100 donations to Kirkby Unemployed Centre, so grateful are they to staff for advising them on their entitlements.

Christine Davidson, centre co-ordinator, told how these donations formed a small but important part of funding for the centre, the oldest and most developed in Merseyside.

She said: "Claimants sometimes give £20, £50 or even £100, particularly people getting back-dated benefit, which in some cases can be up to £4,000."

The centre's main funding comes from Knowsley Council, the Merseyside network of unemployed centres' One Fund For All, and from the Kirkby community.



Christine Davidson

In return the centre estimates to have obtained well over £4 million in unclaimed benefits for local people since it was set up seven years ago with £500 from War On Want.

With one in four unemployed and around 80 per cent claiming housing benefit in the town, the work is never-ending for the busy unemployed centre.

Up to 100 people a day go through the doors of the converted school in Westhead Avenue, Northwood, to seek help from its four benefit advice workers.

The centre, with a total staff of seven plus help from volunteers, also offers advice on a wide range of issues, from fuel disconnections to industrial tribunals, and is a base for community groups such as playgroups, a toy library for the handicapped, writers and drama groups, and Morris Dancing troupes.

Said Ms Davidson: "Right from the start we had a very clear idea of what we wanted to establish. Despite what some people say, we are totally non-political and non-sectarian. Our doors are open to anyone. We always said that was vitally important if we wanted to be community-based and get the community to use the centre.

"We've had a lot of support from local trade unions, the community is also very supportive, and we're very lucky in the quality of people we have attracted to work here."

# of Kirkby

Newspaper cutting, featuring an article on Christine Davidson, co-ordinator at the Kirkby Unemployed Centre.

**Material:** Newspaper Cutting

**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Three




**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** No Date

The Centre's new headquarters was home to several grassroots community organisations. Westhead Housing Co-operative helped tackle discrimination in the housing market – building affordable social homes for local residents. Northwood Credit Union provided a lifeline to residents targeted by loan sharks.

# Cabinet Three

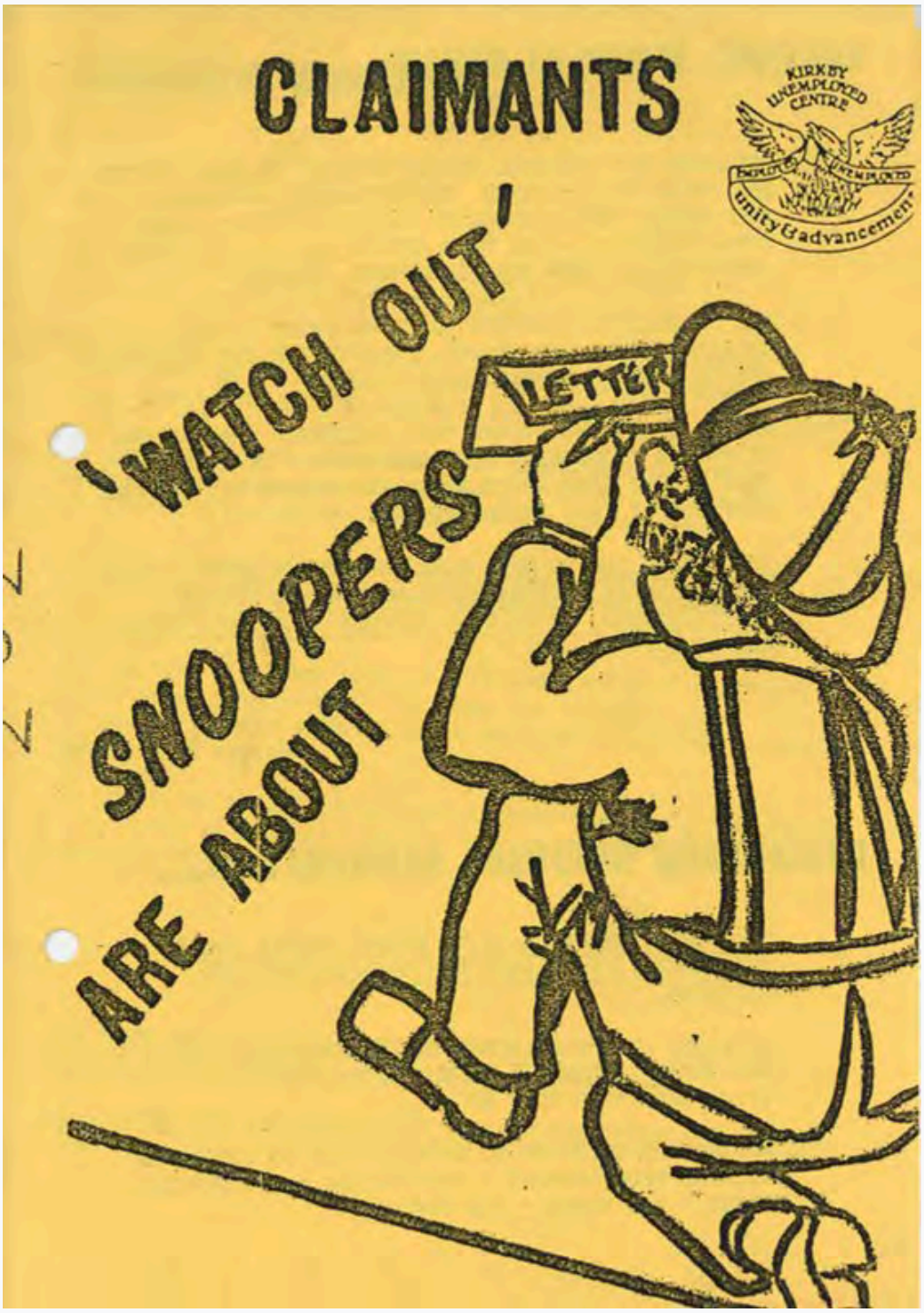



A collection of two round button badges.

**Material:** Round Button Badge
**Date:** No Date

KUC activists lent their organising expertise to Kirkby Against Poisons and Incinerator Toxins, a pressure group formed to block the installation of incinerators near residential areas.

# Cabinet Three

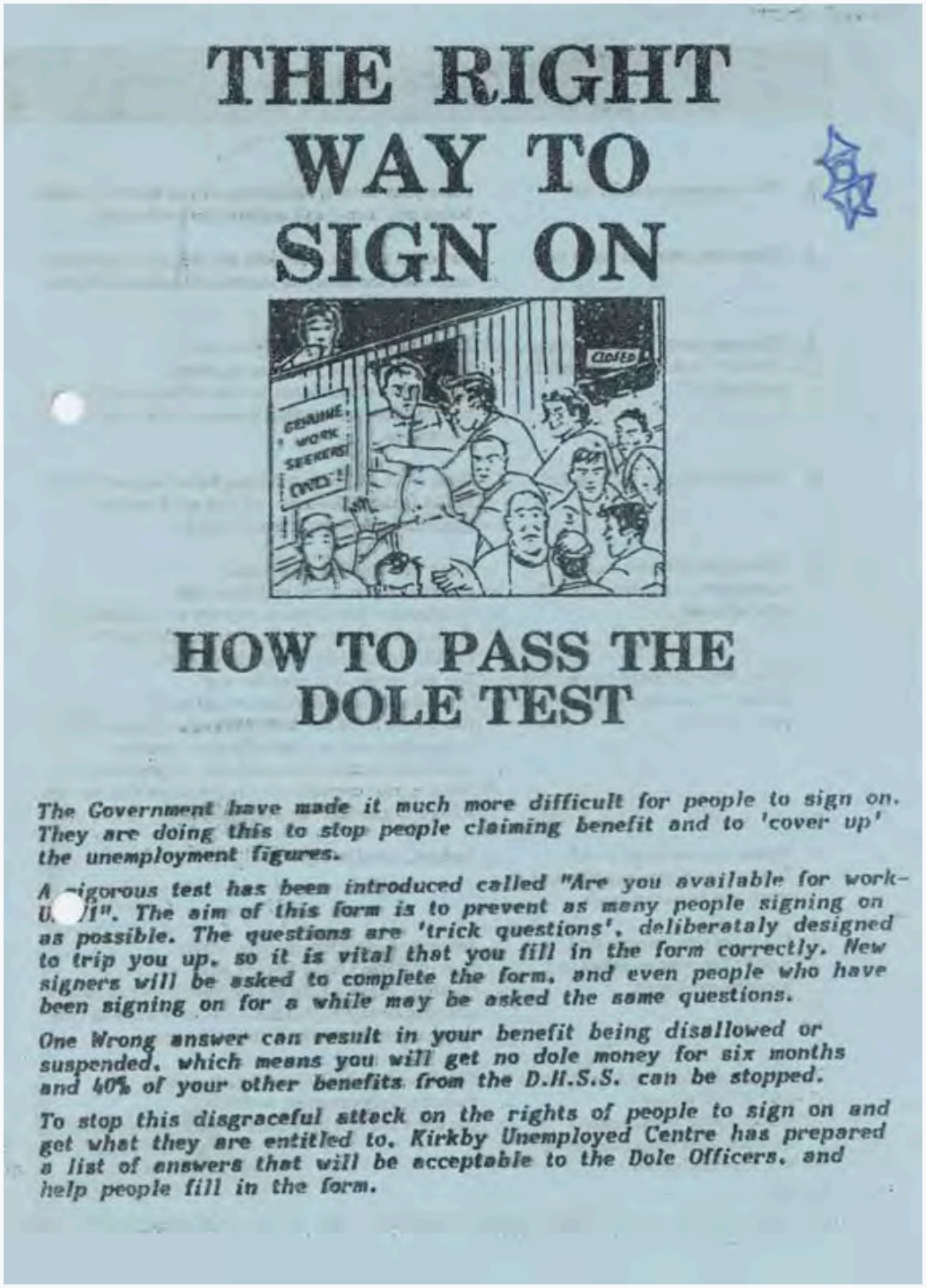



A flyer that would have been handed out to claimants, warning them about 'snoopers' about in the area.

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Three



THE RIGHT WAY TO SIGN ON




HOW TO PASS THE DOLE TEST

*The Government have made it much more difficult for people to sign on. They are doing this to stop people claiming benefit and to 'cover up' the unemployment figures.*

*A rigorous test has been introduced called "Are you available for work-U.B.71". The aim of this form is to prevent as many people signing on as possible. The questions are 'trick questions', deliberataly designed to trip you up, so it is vital that you fill in the form correctly. New signers will be asked to complete the form, and even people who have been signing on for a while may be asked the same questions.*

*One Wrong answer can result in your benefit being disallowed or suspended, which means you will get no dole money for six months and 40% of your other benefits from the D.H.S.S. can be stopped.*

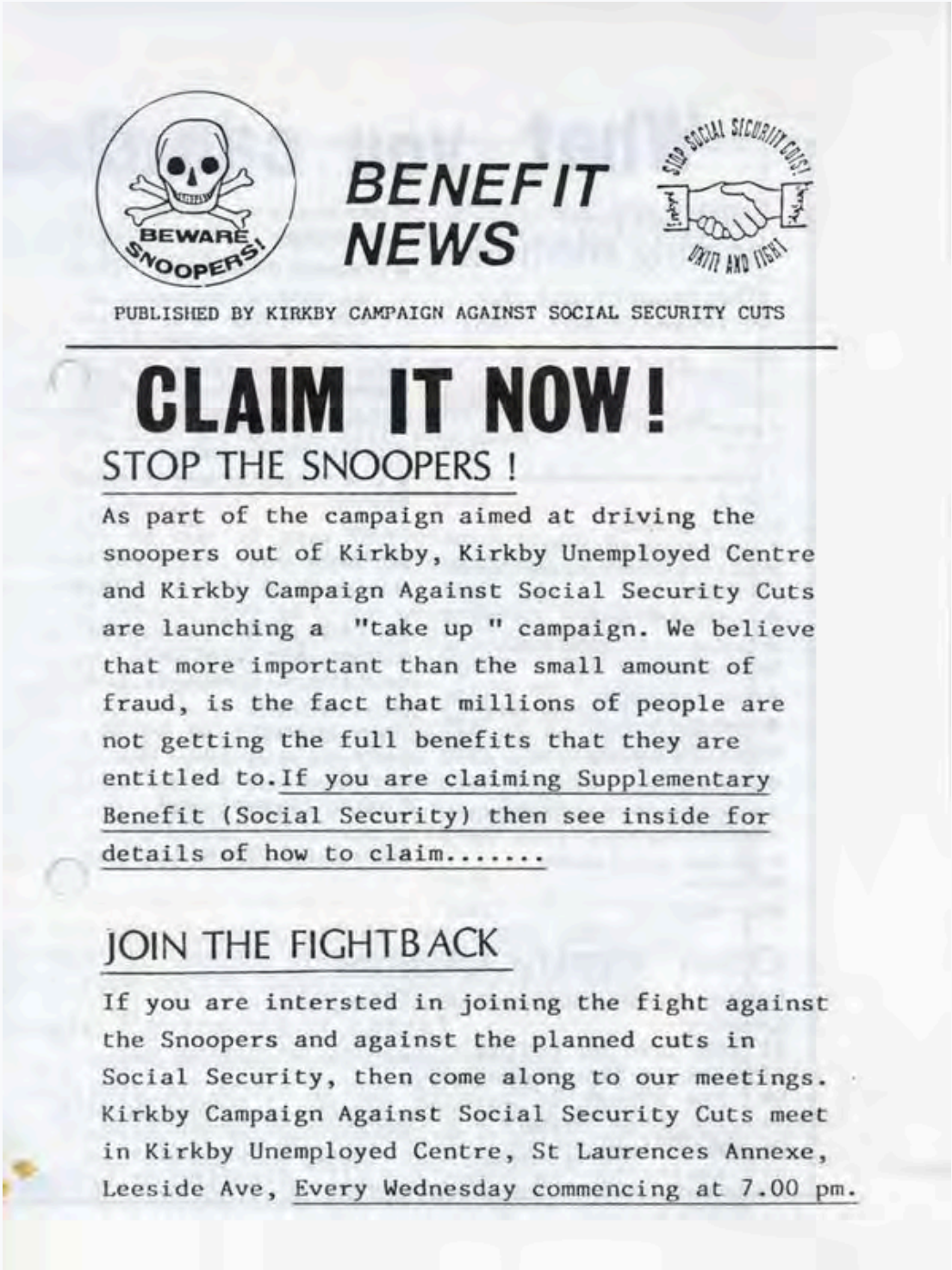
*To stop this disgraceful attack on the rights of people to sign on and get what they are entitled to, Kirkby Unemployed Centre has prepared a list of answers that will be acceptable to the Dole Officers, and help people fill in the form.*

A double-sided information flyer, on how the KUC can help people to fill in signing on forms with the correct answers and avoid falling for the 'trick questions'.

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Three



BENEFIT NEWS

PUBLISHED BY KIRKBY CAMPAIGN AGAINST SOCIAL SECURITY CUTS

## CLAIM IT NOW!

### STOP THE SNOOPERS !

As part of the campaign aimed at driving the snoopers out of Kirkby, Kirkby Unemployed Centre and Kirkby Campaign Against Social Security Cuts are launching a "take up " campaign. We believe that more important than the small amount of fraud, is the fact that millions of people are not getting the full benefits that they are entitled to.If you are claiming Supplementary Benefit (Social Security) then see inside for details of how to claim.....

### JOIN THE FIGHTBACK

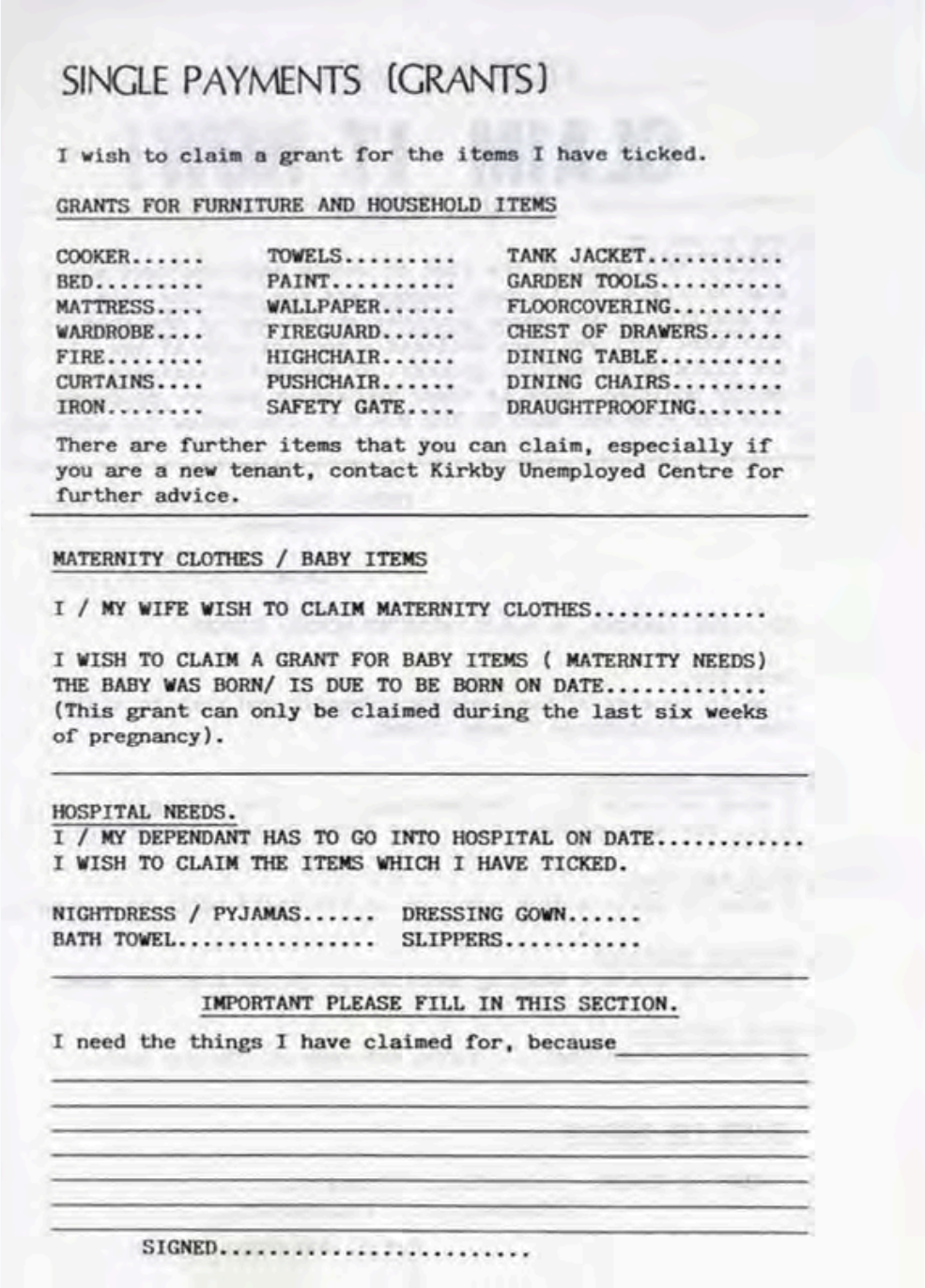
If you are intersted in joining the fight against the Snoopers and against the planned cuts in Social Security, then come along to our meetings. Kirkby Campaign Against Social Security Cuts meet in Kirkby Unemployed Centre, St Laurences Annexe, Leeside Ave, Every Wednesday commencing at 7.00 pm.

A booklet titled, Benefit News, published by the KUC as part of the 'Take Up' campaign against Social Security Cuts.

**Material:** Booklet

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Three



SINGLE PAYMENTS (GRANTS)

I wish to claim a grant for the items I have ticked.

GRANTS FOR FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| COOKER..... | TOWELS..... | TANK JACKET..... |
| BED..... | PAINT..... | GARDEN TOOLS..... |
| MATTRESS.... | WALLPAPER..... | FLOORCOVERING..... |
| WARDROBE.... | FIREGUARD..... | CHEST OF DRAWERS..... |
| FIRE..... | HIGHCHAIR..... | DINING TABLE..... |
| CURTAINS.... | PUSHCHAIR..... | DINING CHAIRS..... |
| IRON..... | SAFETY GATE.... | DRAUGHTPROOFING..... |

There are further items that you can claim, especially if you are a new tenant, contact Kirkby Unemployed Centre for further advice.

MATERNITY CLOTHES / BABY ITEMS

I / MY WIFE WISH TO CLAIM MATERNITY CLOTHES.....

I WISH TO CLAIM A GRANT FOR BABY ITEMS ( MATERNITY NEEDS)
THE BABY WAS BORN/ IS DUE TO BE BORN ON DATE.....
(This grant can only be claimed during the last six weeks of pregnancy).

HOSPITAL NEEDS.
I / MY DEPENDANT HAS TO GO INTO HOSPITAL ON DATE.....
I WISH TO CLAIM THE ITEMS WHICH I HAVE TICKED.

| | |
|---|---|
| NIGHTDRESS / PYJAMAS..... | DRESSING GOWN..... |
| BATH TOWEL..... | SLIPPERS..... |

IMPORTANT PLEASE FILL IN THIS SECTION.

I need the things I have claimed for, because_____

SIGNED.....

Back page of the booklet, Benefit News, which features a form for Single Payment Grants for claimants to complete with the assistance of the KUC staff.

**Material:** Booklet

**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Three



Road protest chaos on 'snoop'

A PROTEST against the arrival of social security "snooper squads" brought chaos to the East Lancashire Road.

About 40 demonstrators halted traffic on the road.

Banners publicising the protest organised by the Kirkby Unemployed Centre and the Merseyside Campaign against Social Security Cuts were strung out across both carriageways.

Eight people, including five from the Kirkby centre, were convicted yesterday of obstruction.

Kirkby magistrates also ordered them to pay £5 costs each.

The court was told the protest followed a lobby and demonstration outside the DHSS office in Kirkby and a megaphone motorcade around the town on September 23.

The defendants claimed they intended a roadside protest.

But when part of the demo spilled onto the road, it was decided a complete blockade would be safer.

The eight were: Brian John Owen (38), of Heathfield; Christine Davidson (39), of Ravenscroft, and Christopher Mooney (39), of Ullswater Close, all Tower Hill, Kirkby; John Gavin Parish (27), Dorothy Quirk (42), both Mottram Close, and William Bradshaw (39), of Warrenhouse Road, all Northwood, Kirkby; Alan John Kelly (29), of Hall Drive, Westvale, Kirkby, and Paul Cosgrove (29), of Twickenham Street, Anfield.

Kelly, Davidson, Quirk, Mooney and Cosgrove are all employed at the Kirkby Unemployed Centre.

Resistance to 'snoop squad'

KIRKBY becomes one of the main targets for the Merseyside Campaign Against Social Security Cuts today in response to the arrival of a so-called "super snooper" DHSS squad.

By John Shaughnessy

A picket line was being set up early this morning to greeet ordinary staff and ask them to adhere to official CPSA union policy of non co-operation with the special claims control unit reportedly starting a three-month purge in the area.

Demonstrators were also planning to move inside the DHSS offices to offer advice and the representation of claimants as they arrived.

Kirkby Unemployed Centre worker Tony Boyle claimed that one-parent families and the semi-skilled unemployed would be the main targets for the super-snooper squad activity in Kirkby, where the current out-of-work figure is a massive 29 per cent.

A newspaper article reporting on a demonstration that took place outside the DHSS office in Kirkby. Also reported are the names of eight individuals who were convicted of obstruction.

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping

**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Three




A stainless steel seal embosser, featuring the logo for the Kirkby Unemployed Centre. Included is an example on card.

**Material:** Stainless Steel
**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Four




An original sign for ‘Unemployed Activists’ from the KUC.

**Material:** Plastic Sign
**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Four



Liverpool Echo, Wednesday October 7, 1987 9

## 'Army' jobs plan lashed

By Anne Harrison

KIRKBY Unemployed Centre workers staged a military-style protest to warn that the Government's new job training scheme was like "Army conscription."

They donned Army uniforms to deliver leaflets about the scheme — now being introduced in Knowsley — outside Kirkby JobCentre.

The unemployed centre workers say the JTS is a Government weapon to cut unemployed figures and to make youngsters work for their dole.

They fear the Government could force youngsters to sign up for a JTS by threatening them with loss of benefit.

The scheme, aimed at 18 to 25-year-olds, pays a training allowance equivalent to trainees' benefit entitlements, plus travelling expenses.

Unemployed centre worker Mike Maguire warned: "Youngsters could have their benefit stopped for up to 13 weeks if they don't go on the scheme. It's like conscription."

Unemployed centre workers also think the training will not lead to proper jobs, that JTS youngsters might not be properly insured, and could have no recourse in instances of race or sex discrimination.

● Four of the protestors are pictured outside the JobCentre.

A newspaper clipping from the Liverpool Echo reporting on members of the KUC taking part in a 'military-style protest', outside a Job Centre regarding the Government's new job training scheme.

**Material:** Newspaper Clipping

**Date:** 7th October 1987

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Four




A group of four women standing together holding various picket signs relating to T&GWU and supporting Bar Staff.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Four

As members of an “organisation of the unemployed against unemployment”, Centre activists were keen to support workers in struggle.



A photograph of five men having a discussion in a carpark.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Four




A collection of three round button badges and one pin badge.

**Material:** Round Button Badge

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Four

During the 1984/85 national Miners' Strike, the KUC provided "physical, financial and moral" support to several pit communities.

Under the banner 'Organised! Employed and Unemployed. Unity is Strength', the Centre's 6/538 union branch assisted non-unionised workers in exploitative industries.




A photograph of a man hand painting the TGWU Organised banner.

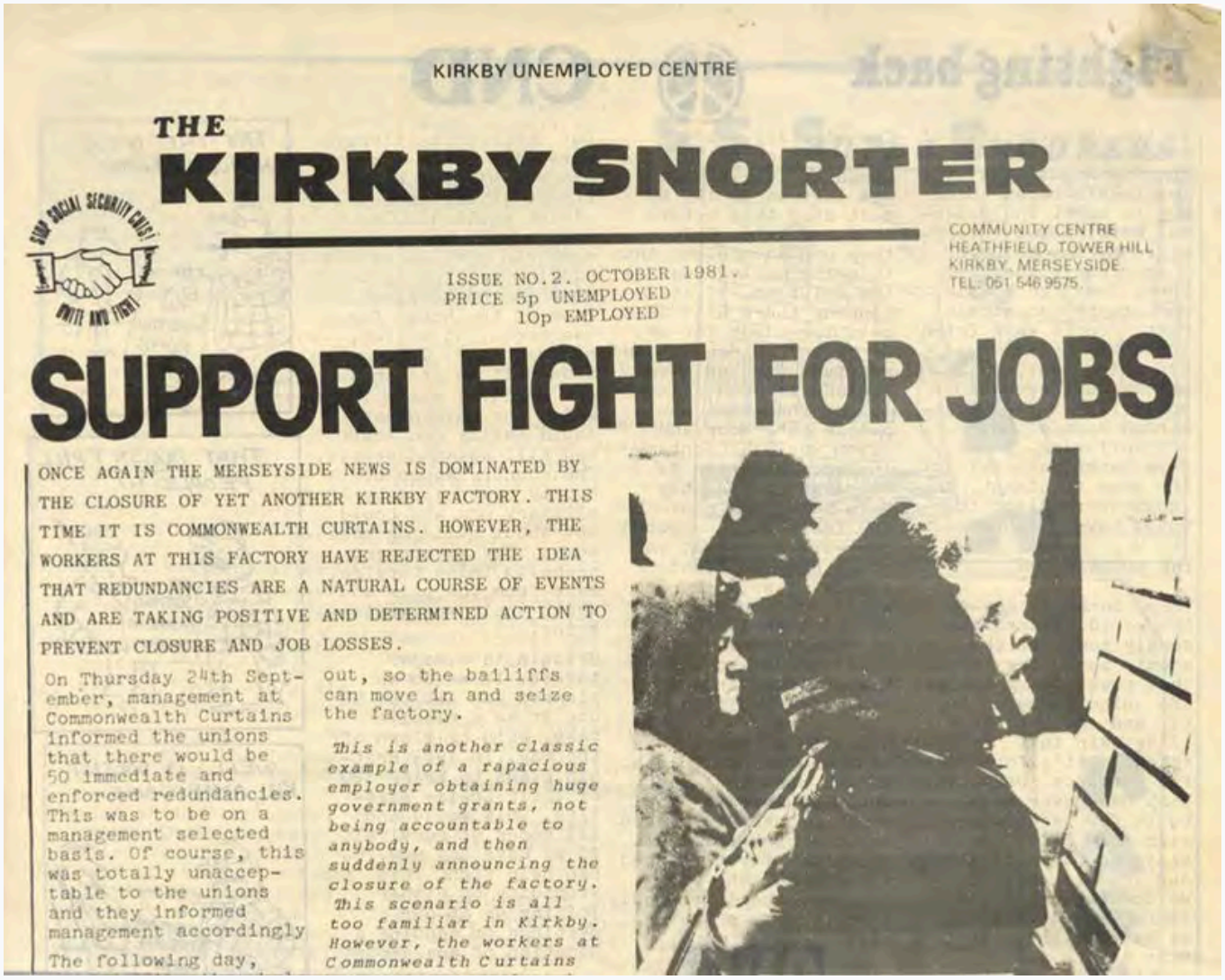
**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Four



KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE

THE
KIRKBY SNORTER

COMMUNITY CENTRE
HEATHFIELD, TOWER HILL
KIRKBY, MERSEYSIDE
TEL: 051 546 9575

ISSUE NO.2. OCTOBER 1981.
PRICE 5p UNEMPLOYED
10p EMPLOYED

SUPPORT FIGHT FOR JOBS

ONCE AGAIN THE MERSEYSIDE NEWS IS DOMINATED BY THE CLOSURE OF YET ANOTHER KIRKBY FACTORY. THIS TIME IT IS COMMONWEALTH CURTAINS. HOWEVER, THE WORKERS AT THIS FACTORY HAVE REJECTED THE IDEA THAT REDUNDANCIES ARE A NATURAL COURSE OF EVENTS AND ARE TAKING POSITIVE AND DETERMINED ACTION TO PREVENT CLOSURE AND JOB LOSSES.

On Thursday 24th September, management at Commonwealth Curtains informed the unions that there would be 50 immediate and enforced redundancies. This was to be on a management selected basis. Of course, this was totally unacceptable to the unions and they informed management accordingly

The following day, out, so the bailiffs can move in and seize the factory.

*This is another classic example of a rapacious employer obtaining huge government grants, not being accountable to anybody, and then suddenly announcing the closure of the factory. This scenario is all too familiar in Kirkby. However, the workers at Commonwealth Curtains*

The front folded page of *The Kirkby Snorter* Issue 2, reporting on the closure of another factory based in Kirkby. The paper is priced as 5p for Unemployed and 10p Employed.

**Material:** Newspaper
**Date:** October 1981

KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE

# THE KIRKBY SNORTER

ISSUE NO.2. OCTOBER 1981.
PRICE 5p UNEMPLOYED
10p EMPLOYED

COMMUNITY CENTRE
HEATHFIELD TOWNSHIPS
KIRKBY MERSEYSIDE

# SUPPORT FIGHT FOR JOBS

ONCE AGAIN THE MERSEYSIDE NEWS IS DOMINATED BY THE CLOSURE OF YET ANOTHER KIRKBY FACTORY. THIS TIME IT IS COMMONWEALTH CURTAINS. HOWEVER, THE WORKERS AT THIS FACTORY HAVE REJECTED THE IDEA THAT REDUNDANCIES ARE A NATURAL COURSE OF EVENTS AND ARE TAKING POSITIVE AND DETERMINED ACTION TO PREVENT CLOSURE AND JOB LOSSES.

On Thursday 17th September, management at Commonwealth Curtains informed the unions that there would be 57 immediate and enforced redundancies. This was to be on a management selected basis. Of course, this was totally unacceptable to the unions and they informed management accordingly.

The following day, Friday 25th, the whole workforce was made redundant.

*The workers received absolutely no payment. No week's wages, no holiday pay, no week in hand, no redundancy money and no pay in lieu of notice. To add insult to injury, the workers have since discovered that management have not paid in the workers' subscriptions to the union for the last 6 months. (The workforce are on a deduction from wages scheme.)*

On Monday 5th October, the workers went to the County Court to put their case for the continued occupation of the factory. At this hearing they won a one week adjournment. This was purely on the basis of a technicality. They will shortly be going back before the court to put their case to the Lord Chancellor.

At this hearing there is no doubt that Commonwealth Curtains will ensure they have a watertight case. They will also make sure that all technicalities will be ironed out, so the bailiffs can move in and seize the factory.

*This is another classic example of a rapacious employer obtaining huge government grants, not being accountable to anybody, and then suddenly announcing the closure of the factory. This scenario is all too familiar in Kirkby. However, the workers at Commonwealth Curtains are not prepared to be thrown on the scrap heap and are determined to fight the closure.*

**WHY?**

The workers are mostly women. Many of them are the breadwinners for their families. Consequently, we have not got the slightest doubt that these women will fight to th bitter end in defence of their jobs. We firmly believe that these women should be fully supported in this very important fight for the retention of jobs in Kirkby.

We are calling on all sections of the labour movement to support the workers at Commonwealth Curtains. This can be done by providing financial and moral support, assisting with the 24 hour occupation, and above all by helping to mobilise for a mass picket in the event of the bailiffs moving in.

For further information and donations contact:- Josie Hart, 38 Pine Close, Kirkby, Merseyside. Tel: 548-8360 (work) 489-4824 (home).



THIS LIFE NOT FOR US

Out Women at Commonwealth Curtains.

TO ALL Y.O.P.TRAINEES:

ARE YOU HAPPY ON YOP ?
ARE YOU WELL PAID ?
FAIRLY TREATED ?
LEARNING A SKILL ?
GETTING A PROPER JOB AT THE END OF YOUR SCHEME ?

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH-
ORGANISE TO IMPROVE...

THE TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS UNION HAS A SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO WORK WITH TRAINEES. WE ARE DEMANDING:-

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION DAVE McCALL 227 3388 TONY BOYLE 546 9575

DEMONSTRATION AND PROTEST AGAINST TORY GOVERNMENT UNEMPLOYMENT POLICIES

LABOUR AND TORY PARTY CONFERENCE, WINTER GARDENS, BLACKPOOL. OCTOBER 16th 1981.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT MERSEY-SIDE TRADES COUNCIL. Tel: 236-1778.

OUR PRESS AS WE WENT TO PRESS THE WORKERS HAD BEEN SUMMONED TO APPEAR IN COURT 9/9/1981

The full front page of The Kirkby Snorter Issue 2.

**Material:** Newspaper

**Date:** October 1981

# Space C




**Photograph of Space C**

# Cabinet Five

Women were central to the success of the KUC, taking leading roles in both the welly rights and campaigns teams.




Photograph of a march taking place along a high street, featuring commemorative banners from the KUC.

**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Five

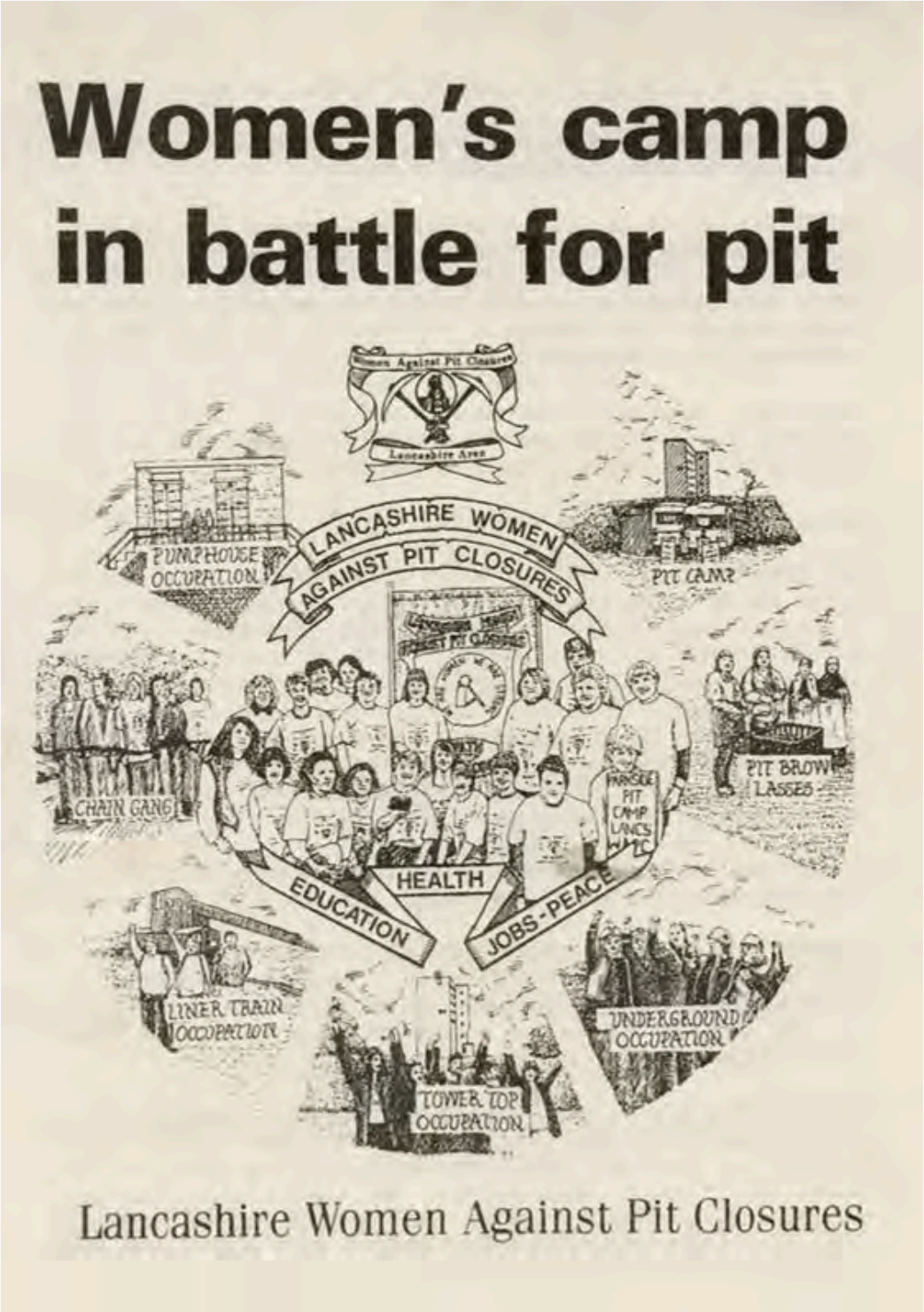
In October 1986, a group of female activists including Christine Davidson, Carole Austin, Dot Quirk and Mary Vickers dressed up as Suffragettes and chained themselves to the Labour Party headquarters in London.




They were protesting leader Neil Kinnock's undemocratic choice of electoral candidate for the Knowsley North Constituency Party. Among the KUC's most formidable campaigners was May Stone, a trade unionist, community activist and welly rights advisor. One of a remarkable generation of activists, she spearheaded some of the Centre's most famous struggles.



# Cabinet Five




A double sided flyer titled, 'Women's Camp In Battle For Pit', supporting Lancashire Women against the closure of mining pits.

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Five

*"Women were paramount. You wouldn't have the Centre without them – they were the ones who got things moving quickly. The women just got on with it."* - **Lynne Dempsey**




A collection of four round button badges.

**Material:** Round Button Badge
**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Five

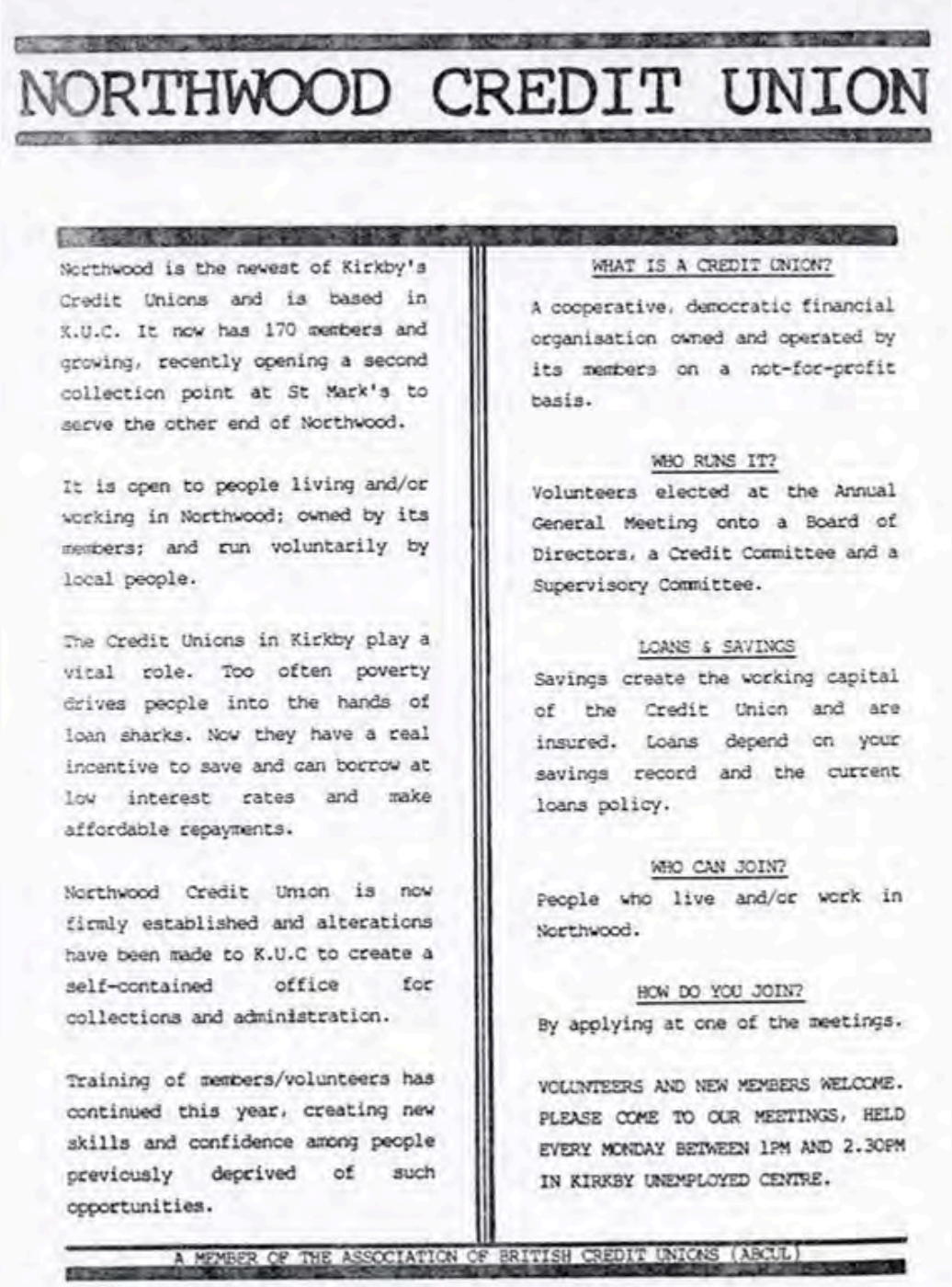
Among the KUC's most formidable campaigners was May Stone, a trade unionist, community activist and welly rights advisor. One of a remarkable generation of activists, she spearheaded some of the Centre's most famous struggles.




Photograph of May Stone, wearing a t-shirt with the motto, '*T&G Women Are Well Hard*'.

"*May was a pocket rocket. The funniest, hardest, kindest person I've ever met. A real advocate for women's rights. She wasn't scared of anyone. Had incredible drive. Always wanted to help people. I learned a lot from May*". - **Paula Murawski**

# Cabinet Six



NORTHWOOD CREDIT UNION

Northwood is the newest of Kirkby's Credit Unions and is based in K.U.C. It now has 170 members and growing, recently opening a second collection point at St Mark's to serve the other end of Northwood.

It is open to people living and/or working in Northwood; owned by its members; and run voluntarily by local people.

The Credit Unions in Kirkby play a vital role. Too often poverty drives people into the hands of loan sharks. Now they have a real incentive to save and can borrow at low interest rates and make affordable repayments.

Northwood Credit Union is now firmly established and alterations have been made to K.U.C to create a self-contained office for collections and administration.

Training of members/volunteers has continued this year, creating new skills and confidence among people previously deprived of such opportunities.

WHAT IS A CREDIT UNION?

A cooperative, democratic financial organisation owned and operated by its members on a not-for-profit basis.

WHO RUNS IT?

Volunteers elected at the Annual General Meeting onto a Board of Directors, a Credit Committee and a Supervisory Committee.

LOANS & SAVINGS

Savings create the working capital of the Credit Union and are insured. Loans depend on your savings record and the current loans policy.

WHO CAN JOIN?

People who live and/or work in Northwood.

HOW DO YOU JOIN?

By applying at one of the meetings.

VOLUNTEERS AND NEW MEMBERS WELCOME. PLEASE COME TO OUR MEETINGS, HELD EVERY MONDAY BETWEEN 1PM AND 2.30PM IN KIRKBY UNEMPLOYED CENTRE.

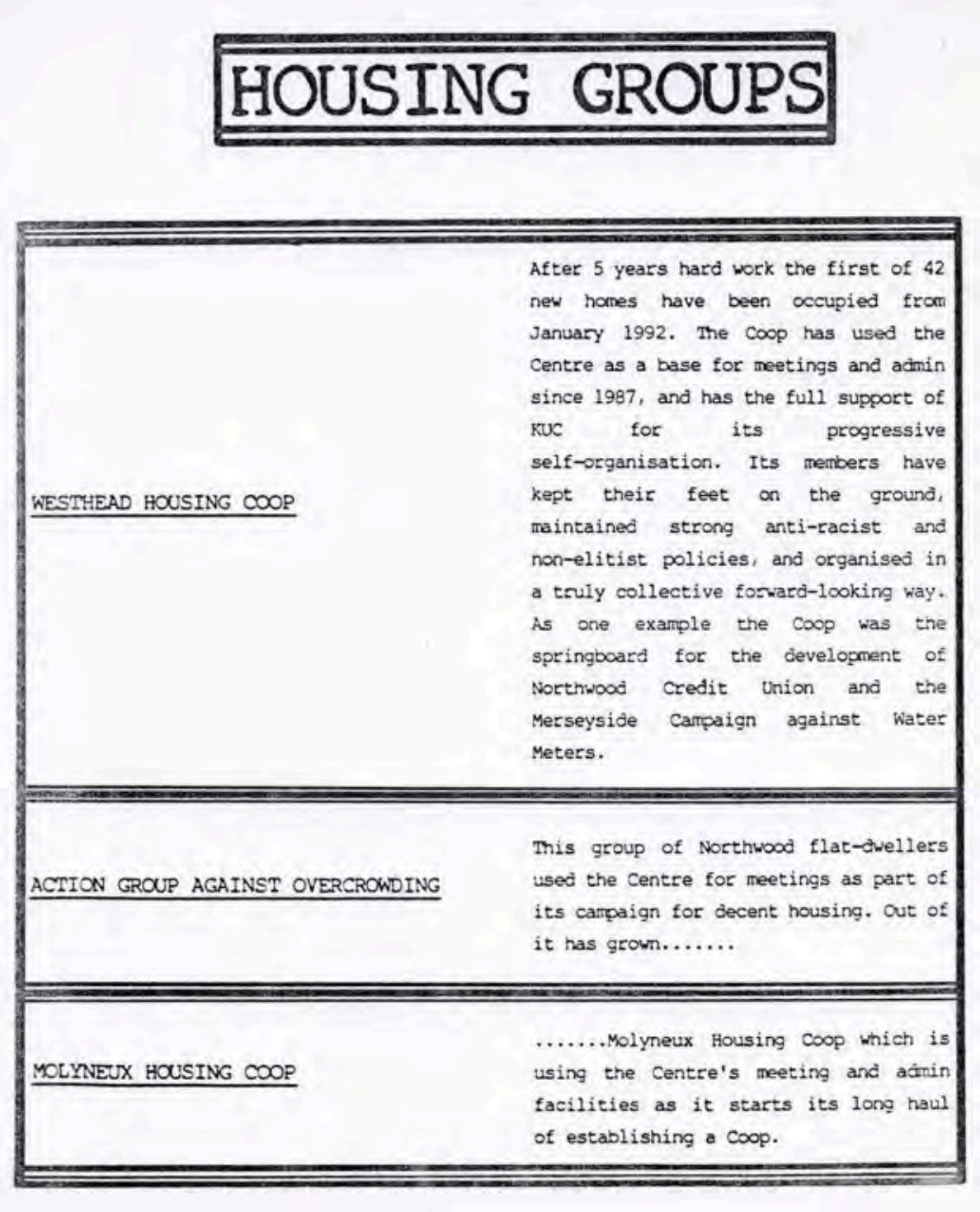
A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH CREDIT UNIONS (ABCUL)

A document/poster, discussing the new Northwood Credit Union service based in the KUC, open to people who live and work in Northwood.

**Material:** Document/Poster

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Six



HOUSING GROUPS

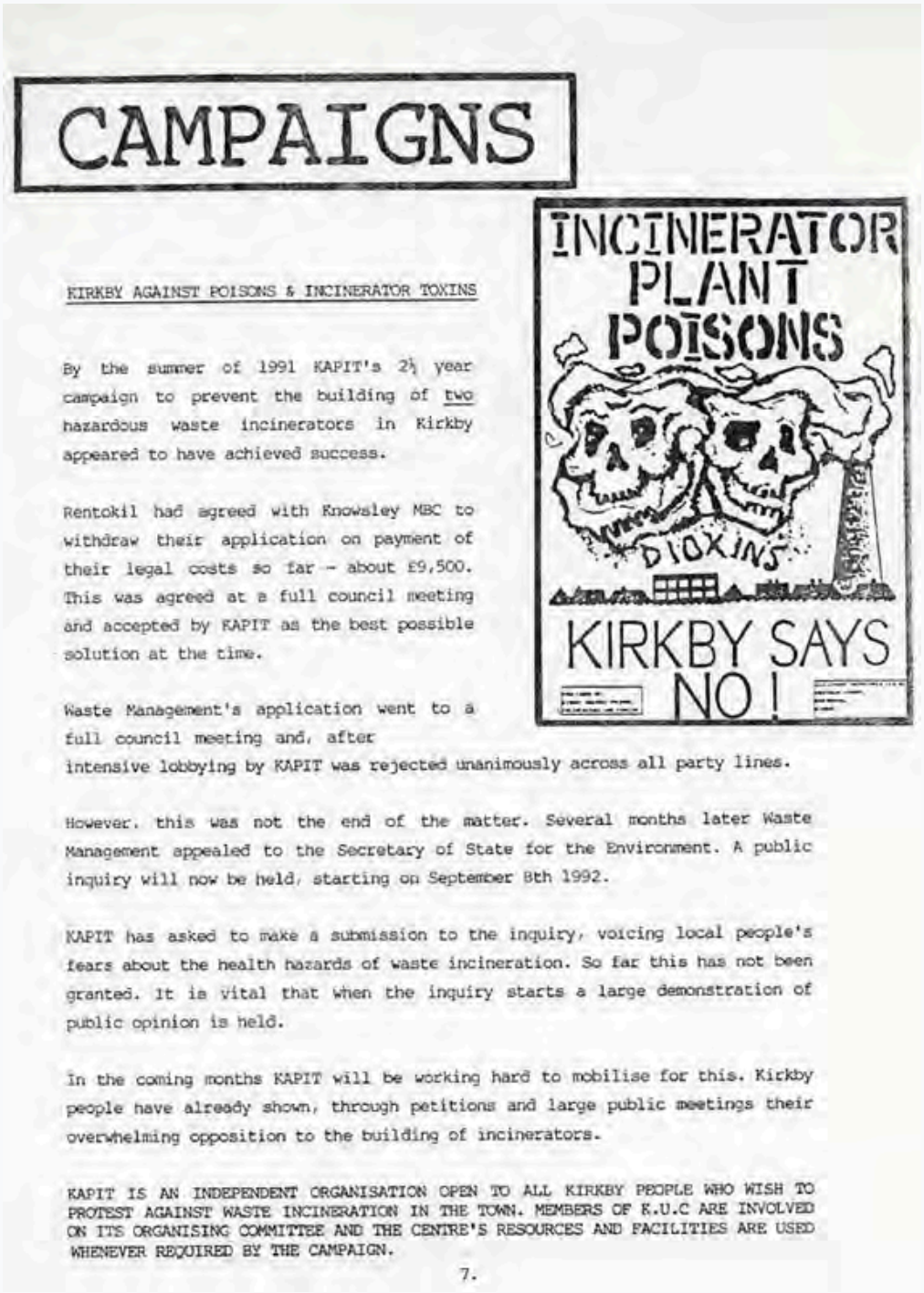
| | |
|---|---|
| WESTHEAD HOUSING COOP | After 5 years hard work the first of 42 new homes have been occupied from January 1992. The Coop has used the Centre as a base for meetings and admin since 1987, and has the full support of KUC for its progressive self-organisation. Its members have kept their feet on the ground, maintained strong anti-racist and non-elitist policies, and organised in a truly collective forward-looking way. As one example the Coop was the springboard for the development of Northwood Credit Union and the Merseyside Campaign against Water Meters. |
| ACTION GROUP AGAINST OVERCROWDING | This group of Northwood flat-dwellers used the Centre for meetings as part of its campaign for decent housing. Out of it has grown..... |
| MOLYNEUX HOUSING COOP | .....Molyneux Housing Coop which is using the Centre's meeting and admin facilities as it starts its long haul of establishing a Coop. |

A document/poster, listing three housing groups who used the KUC for their base and the work they undertook.

**Material:** Document/Poster

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Six



CAMPAIGNS




KIRKBY AGAINST POISONS & INCINERATOR TOXINS

By the summer of 1991 KAPIT's 2½ year campaign to prevent the building of two hazardous waste incinerators in Kirkby appeared to have achieved success.

Rentokil had agreed with Knowsley MBC to withdraw their application on payment of their legal costs so far - about £9,500. This was agreed at a full council meeting and accepted by KAPIT as the best possible solution at the time.

Waste Management's application went to a full council meeting and, after intensive lobbying by KAPIT was rejected unanimously across all party lines.

However, this was not the end of the matter. Several months later Waste Management appealed to the Secretary of State for the Environment. A public inquiry will now be held, starting on September 8th 1992.

KAPIT has asked to make a submission to the inquiry, voicing local people's fears about the health hazards of waste incineration. So far this has not been granted. It is vital that when the inquiry starts a large demonstration of public opinion is held.

In the coming months KAPIT will be working hard to mobilise for this. Kirkby people have already shown, through petitions and large public meetings their overwhelming opposition to the building of incinerators.

KAPIT IS AN INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION OPEN TO ALL KIRKBY PEOPLE WHO WISH TO PROTEST AGAINST WASTE INCINERATION IN THE TOWN. MEMBERS OF K.U.C ARE INVOLVED ON ITS ORGANISING COMMITTEE AND THE CENTRE'S RESOURCES AND FACILITIES ARE USED WHENEVER REQUIRED BY THE CAMPAIGN.

7.

A document on Kirkby Against Poisons & Incinerator Toxins (KAPIT), a campaign against the building of two hazardous waste incinerators in Kirkby.

**Material:** Document

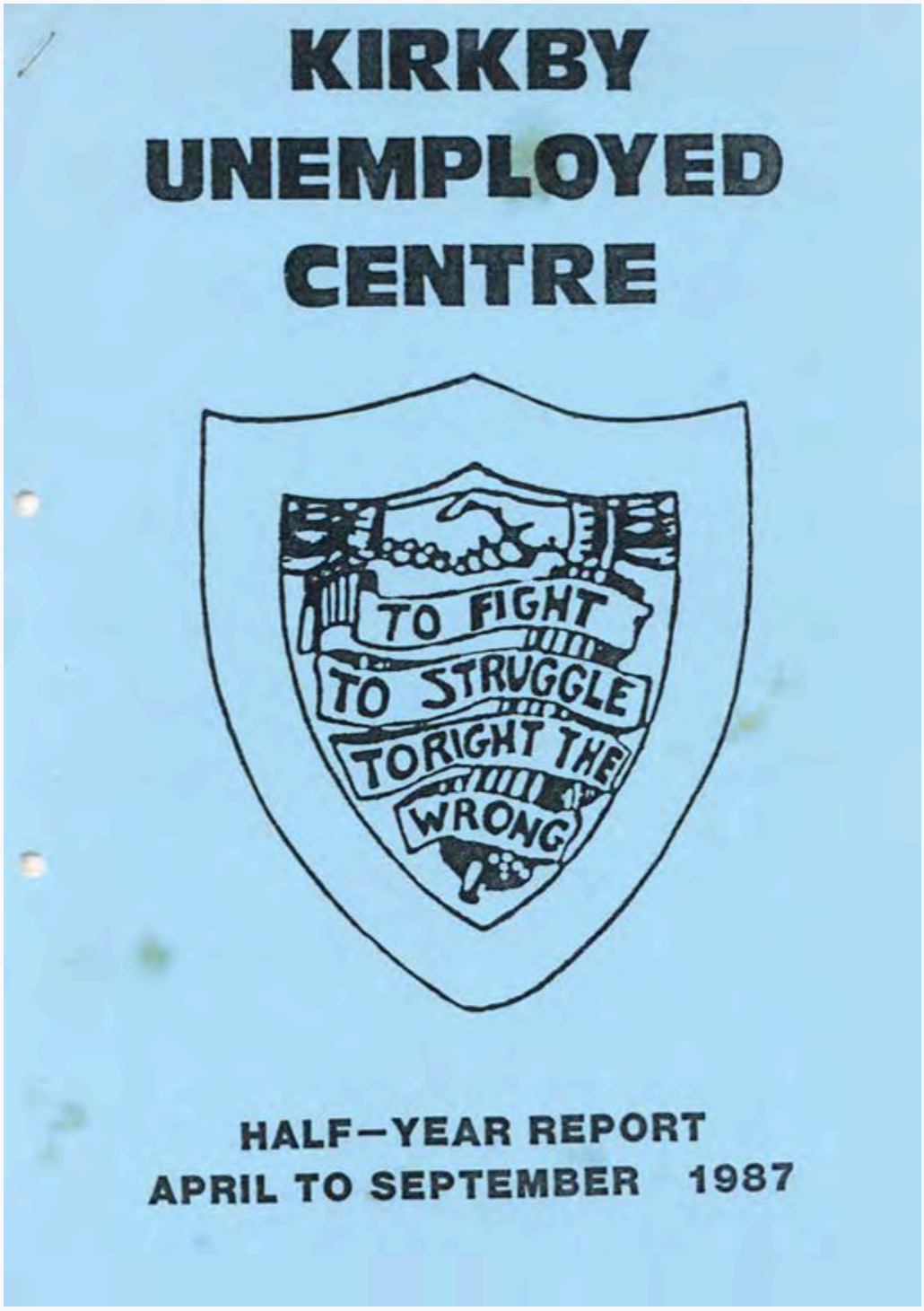
**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council




ARK
Archive Resource for Knowsley

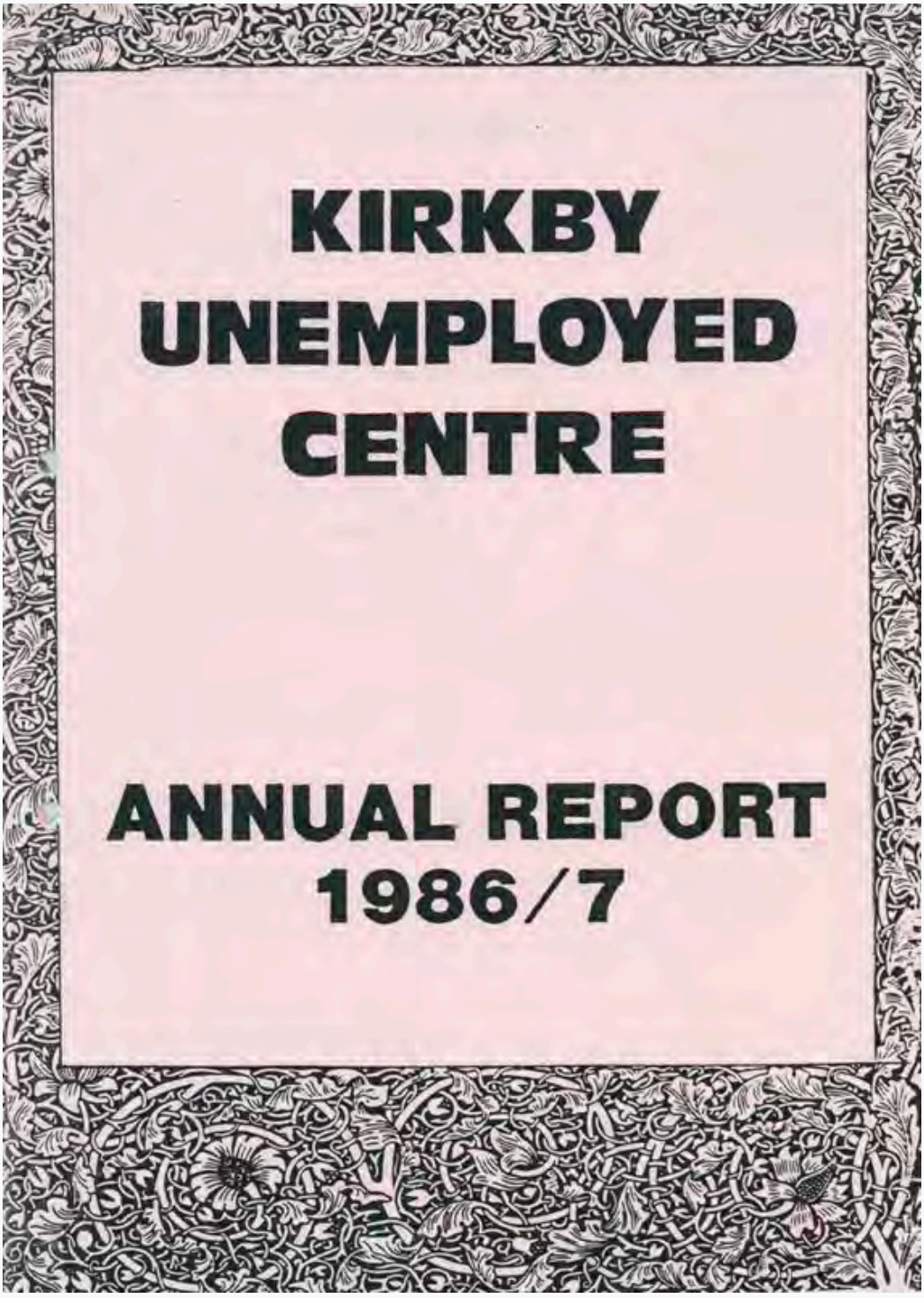
# Cabinet Six




The front cover of the half-year report, from April to September in 1987, featuring a logo with the motto, '*To Fight, To Struggle, To Right the Wrong*'.

**Material:** Report

**Date:** 1987




The front cover of the annual report, from 1986 to 1987, for the KUC.

**Material:** Report

**Date:** 1986 to 1987

# Cabinet Six




The front cover of the annual report, from 1988 to 1989, for the KUC, featuring an illustration of a group of people supporting each other.

**Material:** Report

**Date:** 1988 to 1989

# Cabinet Seven

The KUC also hosted cultural organisations such as Art Skills, a community art project that launched in February 1987. The brainchild of Alex Corina, this groundbreaking scheme promoted broader access to the creative arts. Organisers worked closely with vulnerable teens, the unemployed, and people with special educational needs.



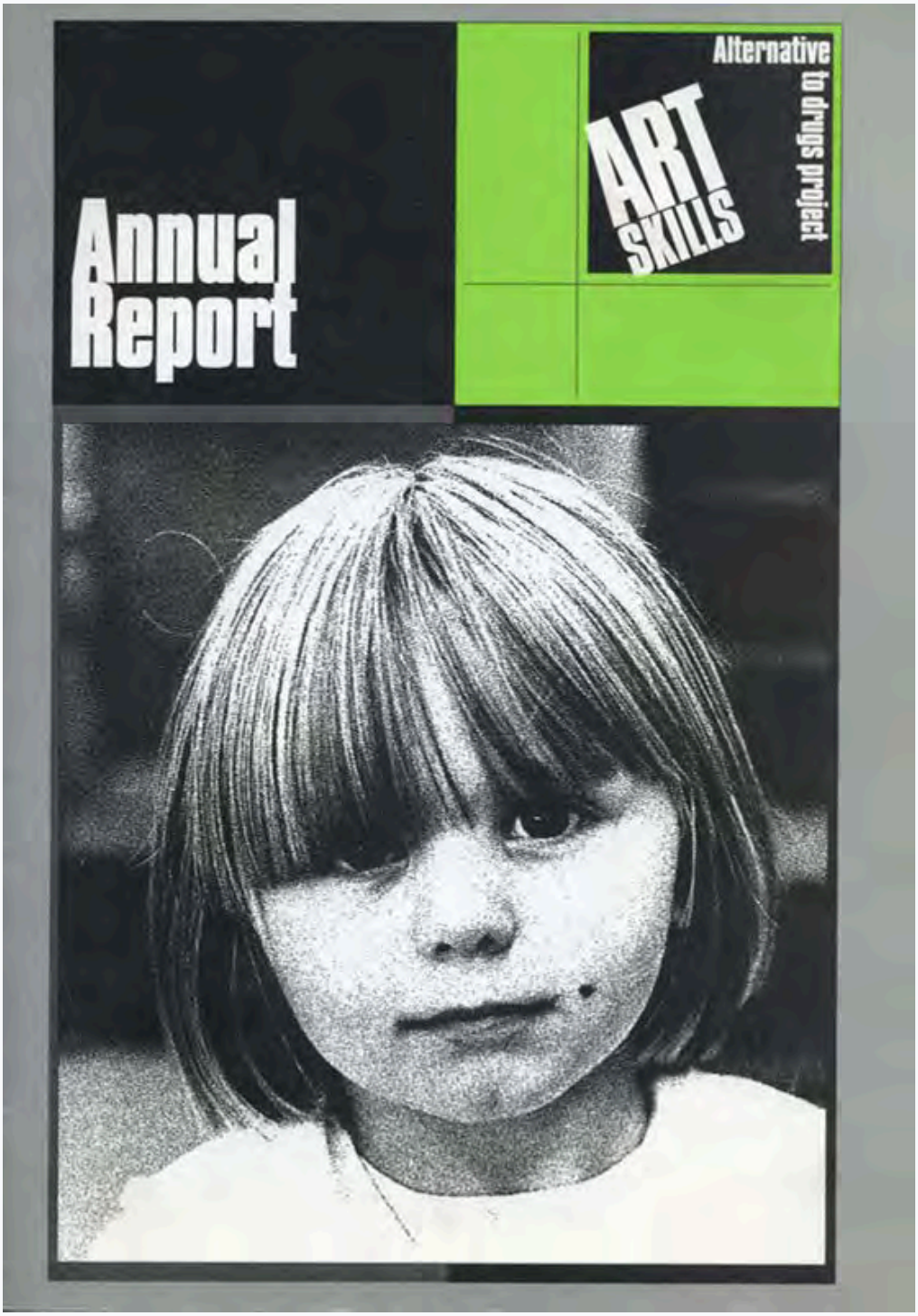

**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** No Date

Participants experimented in various art forms, including ceramics, photography, life drawing, banner-making and graffiti. Art Skills adopted a non-punitive, non-judgemental approach and was entirely participant-led, reflecting the KUC's philosophy of self-empowerment.

# Cabinet Seven

*"It was a project for the wider community. An alternative art college that was sensitive and responsive to the community, while complimenting the services provided elsewhere in the KUC"*. - **Alex Corina**




**Material:** Report

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Seven




**Material:** Leaflet
**Date:** March 1991

The Kirkby Response was a critically acclaimed working-class theatre company founded at the Centre in October 1987. Adopting an open-door policy, the largely unemployed membership trained in various aspects of theatre production.

Inspired by radical playwright John McGrath, Response made theatre fully accessible. Organisers charged reduced admission fees and performed in non-traditional community spaces like churches and pubs.

The company delivered original in-house works produced by local budding writers.

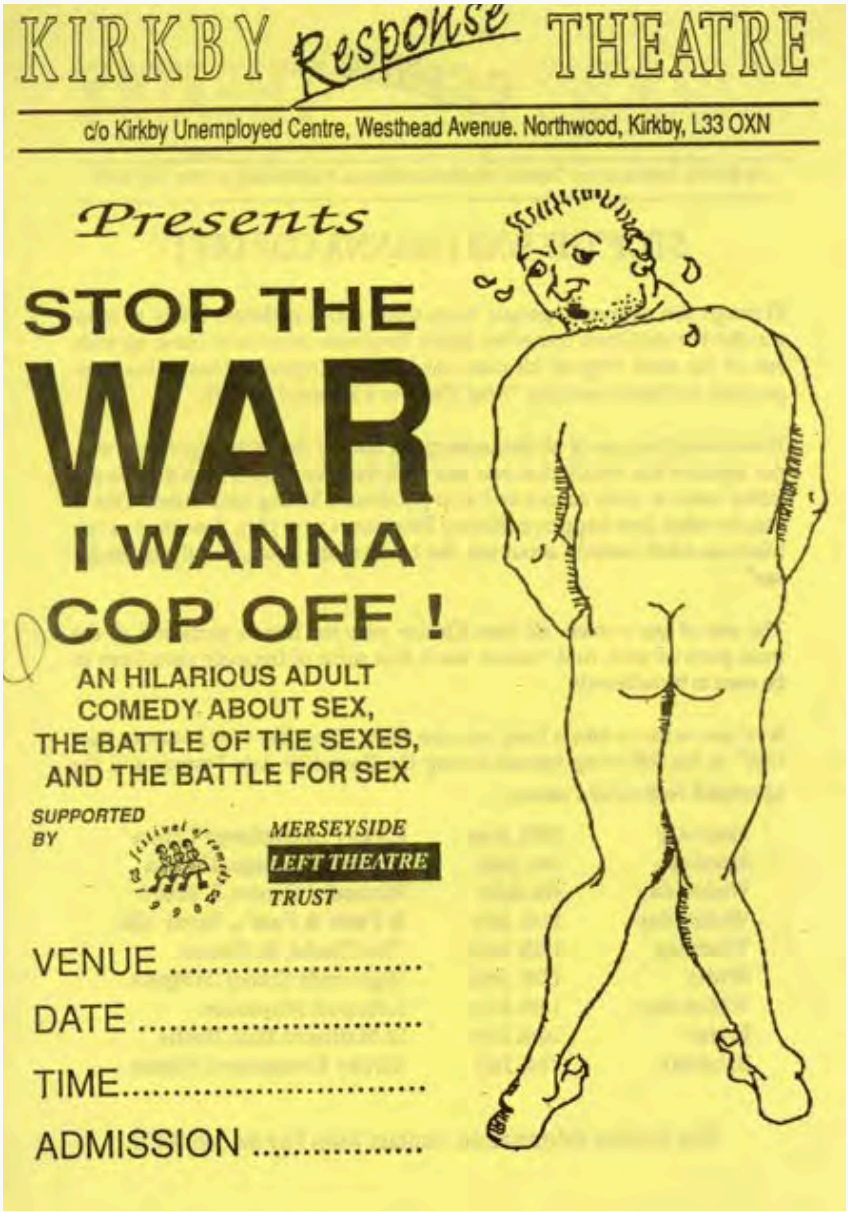
*"If you're unemployed, on a low wage or life's not brilliant at home, you can come and do your rehearsals and be part of a production. Get your name in a programme. Perform to your family and friends. It gave people self-confidence, raised self-esteem and expanded their social circle. It provided an outlet for their creativity."* - **Tracy Ryan**

# Cabinet Seven

*Stop the War, I Wanna Cop Off* was an adaption of a classic Greek comedy about the battle of the sexes. Featuring an all-female cast, it was written and directed by John Fay, one of the creative forces behind Response.

*"It was completely unique. It was empowering. You could see the change in individuals and how much they enjoyed the environment.*

*Everyone had enough space and tons of materials. There was no preciousness about what you could use. People loved coming to Art Skills. It was really special."* - **Barbara Connolly**



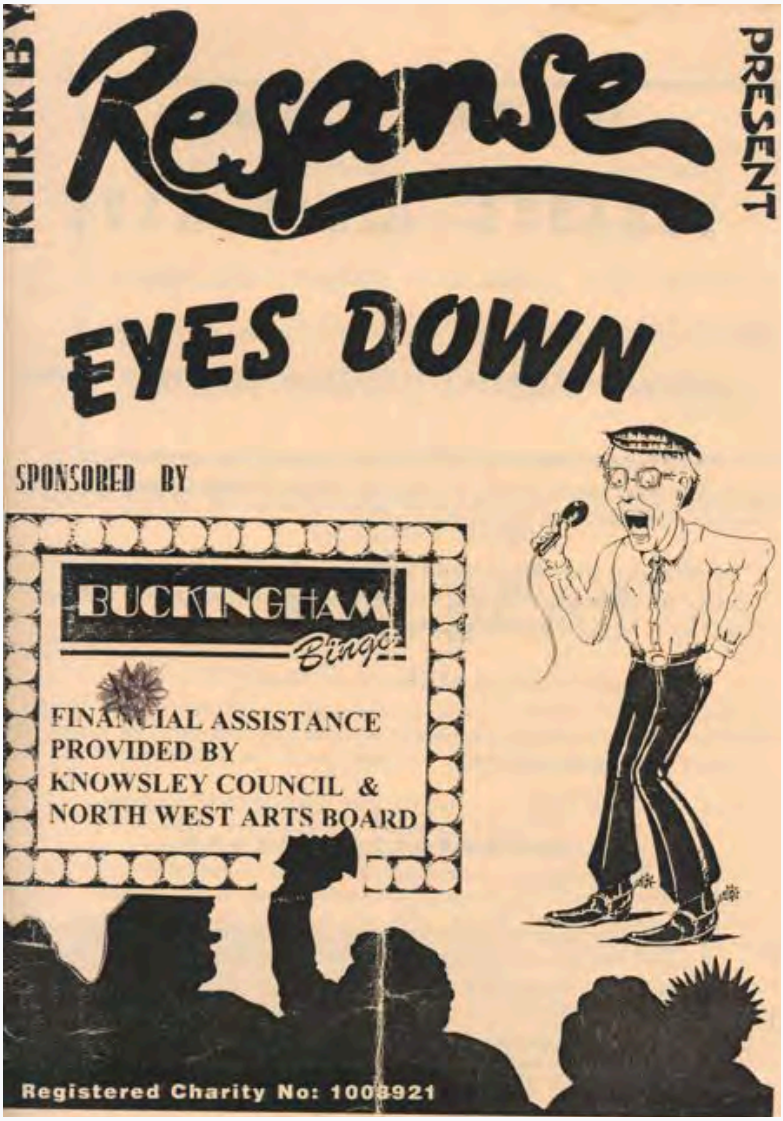

**Material:** Flyer

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Seven

Paul ‘Cozzie’ Cosgrove and Carol Cullington were also key members.

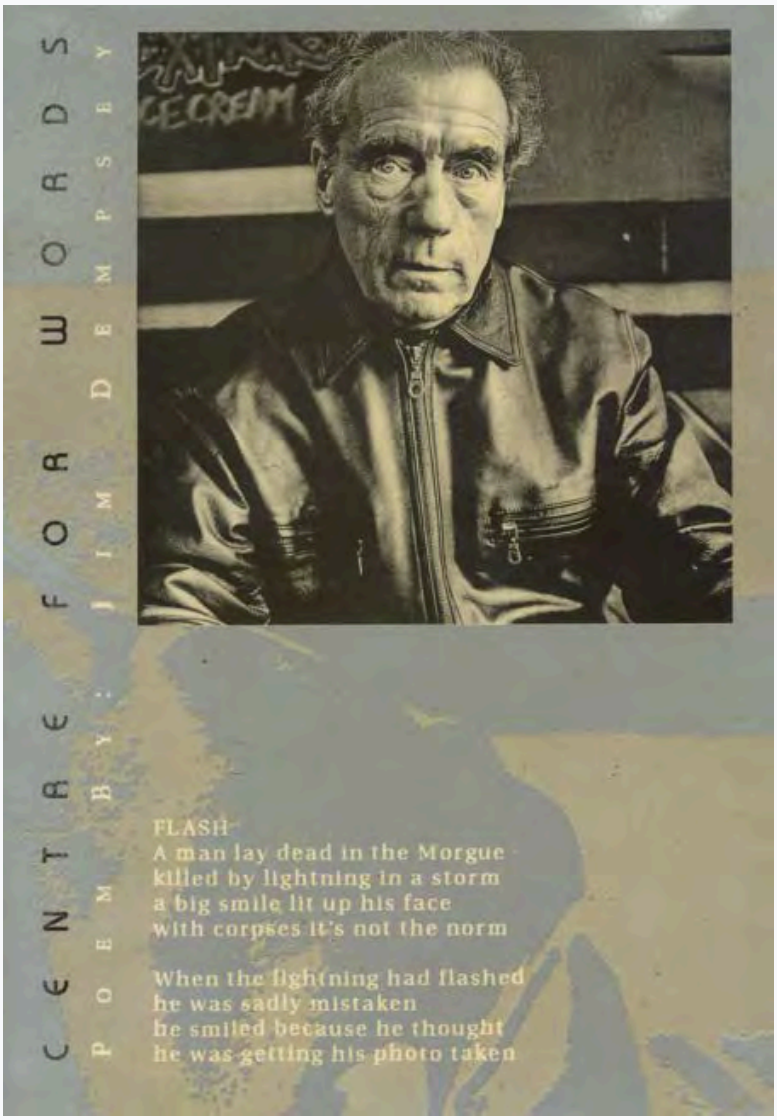
As talented writers and actors, they were part of Response’s Urban Guerrilla Poetry Squad, a troupe that delivered impromptu performances in public spaces.




*“Cozzie’s one of the most inspiring people I’ve ever met. A great communicator. You could never shut him up. As a welfare rights advisor, he was an important link between the Response and the Centre. Cozzie was a very important part of Response and my life. A lot of our best ideas came from him. He’s a renaissance man...Carol is central to this story. She was the mother of Kirkby Response. Very funny. She has that natural Kirkby warmth and exuberance. Genuinely Kirkby born and bred. Her roots were absolutely in the community.”* - **John Fay**

# Cabinet Eight

The company was wound down in the late 1990s but returned to the Centre in 2003 with the musical satire *Dead Fish & Chipboard*. A socially engaged production, it looked at the impact industrial pollutants were having on local residents.




A double-side flyer with a photograph of a man alongside a poem.

**Material:** Photograph Double-sided Flyer

**Date:** No Date

Knowsley Council

DON'T MOURN. ORGANISE!

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley

# Cabinet Eight

After Art Skills departed in September 1993, the Centre continued to host grassroots arts initiatives such as the Centre for Words. In April 1998, Fred Brown conceived 'Kirkby-on-Sea', a groundbreaking community festival that highlighted the threat of global warming.




**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** No Date

# Cabinet Eight







An original stick of rock from the project, '*Kirkby-on-Sea*', a community festival.

**Material:** Boiled Sugar Sweet
**Date:** No Date

The Centre was also home to artist-in-residence David Jacques. His early work celebrated the history of the working-class movement, often drawing inspiration from the KUC's unemployed activists.

David produced banners for trade union branches and local workers embroiled in anti-closure struggles. He set aside time to help nurture the talents of budding artists like Barbara Connolly, who he guided through the creation of her iconic 'Women Workers' banner.

# Cabinet Eight




**Material:** Photograph

**Date:** No Date

*"In conjunction with the Centre, I set-up an informal artist-in-residency. I started producing large paintings on the socio-political history of Liverpool. It helped me develop as an artist. It was an open studio, so it demystified how artwork emerges....This was the Left Bank of Kirkby. A real hub of cultural activity. We were linking it to a working-class experience."* - **David Jacques**

# A New Path

The Centre adapted to new political and economic landscapes in the 1990s and 2000s.

European funding was secured to refurbish the aging Sacred Heart building and to deliver innovative schemes that improved the employment prospects of local residents.

*"What do unemployed people need in this community. Do they want to get a job? Do they want to set their own business up? It was about seeing what people wanted and giving them the resources to achieve that."* - **Paula Murawski**

The Kirkby Employment & Education Project provided free impartial careers advice and training workshops in a purpose-built state-of-the-art learning centre.

The Business Advice Team supported new start-ups, and a Credit Union Development scheme brought together Kirkby's existing credit unions.

A new generation of residents were trained as advisors, enabling the welly rights department to flourish. Centre activists continued to campaign on various local and international issues.

*"The Centre grew to employing 50 people. In just one year, we claimed back £3.5m in benefits for Kirkby people. That's an achievement*. - **Carole Austin**

# Cabinet Eight

Though the Centre shut in 2014, its spirit lives on.

Former members continue to spearhead social justice campaigns across Merseyside.



**Material:** Photograph
**Date:** No Date

Unemployed activist Dave Kelly is the cofounder of Fans Supporting Foodbanks, a charity tackling the enduring problem of food poverty.

Founding KUC member Alan Kelly is a well-known community worker and campaigner in Liverpool. He continues to support marginalised communities through the Vauxhall Law Centre.

# Cabinet Eight

Tailored Advice Services in Communities (TASC) emerged out of the ashes of the welly rights department. Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged residents across Kirkby, a team of advisors offer specialist support on social welfare, debt and money management.




*"My time working there means so much to me. It gave me a sense of belonging. It inspired me. Gave me the confidence to go on and do other things."* - **Helen Barker**

*"Over the past decade, TASC has secured £20m in unclaimed benefits. We're a mini version of the Centre. There wouldn't be a TASC without the KUC, without all those people who came before us."* - **Lynne Dempsey**



# Credits

**Exhibition Space** - Knowsley Archives Service at The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley)The Kirkby Centre – First Floor, Norwich Way, Kirkby, L32 8XY

**Curated by** - Dr Greig Campbell with the Don't Mourn, Organise team and the team at Knowsley Archives Service

Knowsley Archives Service, based in The ARK: Archive Resource for Knowsley, is home to a wide range of resources that describe the heritage of the people and communities that make up the Borough of Knowsley.

Our Mission Statement is:

• To collect, preserve and organise archive materials relating to the people and places of Knowsley, creating a collective memory for the borough that is accessible for research and consultation, either physically or online through digital content and finding aids

• To encourage learning through engagement, offering support to individuals and groups as they explore the collections, enabling our communities to develop a sense of pride and place

• To promote Knowsley's rich heritage, sharing an understanding of the history of the communities that make up the borough of Knowsley

Knowsley Archives Service was awarded Accredited Archive Status by The National Archives in November 2017 and was retained in 2024

ARK Archive Resource for Knowsley