



Women Chainmakers Festival 2008 - Special Edition

11 September 2009

In this issue:

- **Welcome to the 2008 Women Chainmakers' Festival**
- **Banner Procession**
- **The Leftfield returns**
- **The Theatre of the Chainmakers'**
- **Music in the Village and Leftfield**
- **Thanks to the supporters of the festival**
- **Dates for your diary**
- **Further Information**

Welcome to the 2008 Women Chainmakers' Festival



Welcome to the fourth annual Women Chainmakers' festival at the Black Country living Museum. This event celebrates the achievements of 800 or so women who fought to establish their right to a minimum wage for their industrial sector. This dispute was an

important step towards establishing a National Minimum Wage – finally achieved in 1989.

Last year saw 3,000 people attend what proved to be an award winning festival to hear Tony Benn and Billy Bragg. This year we are delighted to welcome Baroness Margaret Prosser, Deputy Chair of the new Equalities and Human Rights Commission and Professor Mary Davis, Head of the Centre for Trade Union Studies at London Metropolitan University. Mary is also a member of the TUC's National Women's Committee.

On stage we have the pleasure of welcoming headline act Chumbawamba, pictured below, who have been playing the festival scene for many years now and recently headlined at Tolpuddle.



- Chumbawamba

We have also secured Eric Faulkner, below, once a Bay City Roller, who will reveal a lesser known side to his musical career. An acclaimed songwriter and acoustic guitarist, he revisits his

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trade union roots as he plays songs from the trade union movement.

Drawing on his solid trade union background for inspiration - his dad was a shop steward for the GMB union – Faulkner has written ‘The Chainmakers’ Song – England’s Disgrace’, especially for the chainmakers’ which will debut at this year’s festival.



- Eric Faulkner

No Women Chainmakers’ festival would be complete without Stacey Blythe singing the Chainmakers’ song. Stacey returns with her moving and emotion song recording the struggle and victory of the Cradley Heath Women Chainmakers’.



- Stacey Blythe singing with Billy Bragg at the 2007 festival.

The full stage line up is:

12. 30 p.m. Nottingham Clarion Choir

1.00 p.m. Speeches on the stage

Roger McKenzie, TUC Midlands Regional Secretary comperes for the day

Mary Davis – TUC Women’s Committee

Baroness Margaret Prosser – Deputy Chair Equalities and Human Rights Commission

Stacey Blythe singing the Chainmakers’ song

Revd’ Fletcher sets the scene for Mary Macarthur speech followed by:

1.40 p.m. Banner procession around the Museum.

2.10 p.m. Revd’ Fletcher sets the scene for second speech by Mary Macarthur.

2.20 p.m. Eric Faulkner

3.20 p.m. Chumbawamba

5.00 p.m. Stage closes

Banner Procession

Many trade unionists now look forward to the opportunity to get their branch and regional banners out. The Women Chainmakers’ Festival recreates the 1910 victory march and has grown to be a major centrepiece at the festival. Led by Mary Macarthur and the costumed theatre groups, the procession is ably supported by The Highley Colliery Band who play traditional marching tunes throughout the course of the procession.



This year they will be supported by The Nottingham Clarion Choir who will also sing on the main stage prior to the speeches.

The Leftfield returns

This year's Leftfield will feature an expanded programme of speeches and debate and will again host the exhibition area. Indeed, plans are afoot to have an even bigger marquee for the Leftfield – one that will be impossible to miss!



- The Leftfield 2007

There will be three debates this year separated by musical interludes from acts provided by RoosterSpake Entertainment, full details below:

10.15 a.m. Music from Yvonne Parkes

10.30 a.m. **The Women Chainmakers'**
Chair: Lee Baron, Regional Secretary of the CWU.

Speakers:

Dr Lynn Sinclair – History of the dispute and Mary Macarthur.

Hilary Bills, former President of the National Union of Teachers, launching the Women Chainmakers' Resource Pack.

11.00 a.m. Music and spoken word from Billy Spakemon and Lozz Hipkiss

11.15 a.m. **International Debate –**

Chair: Diana Holland, Assistant General Secretary of Unite

Speakers:

Nang Seng, Campaigns Officer at Burma Campaign UK

Karen Mitchell, solicitor with Thompsons, speaking on Columbia

11.45 a.m. Music from Pete Boddis and Bob Franklyn

12.00 p.m. **NUJ Statement on freedom of speech and support for open debate** – Barbara Goulden, NUJ Mother of the Chapel at the Coventry Telegraph.

12.05 p.m. **Organising for the future** –
Chair: Joe Morgan, Regional Secretary of the GMB

Speakers:

David Braniff-Herbert, Unite – Organising young people

Katie Curtis, NUS Women's Officer - Organising students

12.30 p.m. Leftfield Stage closes – Main stage commences

The Theatre of the Chainmakers'

The Women Chainmakers' festival is unique in terms of Labour Movement festivals in that it is the only festival that specifically celebrates the achievements of working women.

So too, the Chainmakers' is the only festival to tell its story direct to the public through the means of live theatre.

We are again proud to be associated with Fizzog Theatre Company, a Black Country based professional theatre group that enlivens the proceedings with their particular brand of direct and combative acting. Fizzog will confront both the employers and Mary Macarthur as each seeks to woo the Women Chainmakers' of Cradley Heath to their views of commerce and liberty respectively.

While Fizzog provide the bare-knuckle theatre of working class survival in 1910, The Black Country Players bring sophistication and erudition to re-enactments of key points of the dispute. The Black Country Players provide key performances including the employers, cinematographers, police, and the key figure of the local parish priest. Look out for re-enactments where the priest calls on the miners to strike in support of the women chainmakers' – showing that working class solidarity was alive and well in Edwardian England.



The Women Chainmakers' Festival would be incomplete without the brilliant interpretation of strike leader Mary Macarthur by Lynn Morris. Lynn performs the set piece speeches on the main stage both before and after the banner procession, bringing passion and energy to the depiction of one of the most important female figures in trade union history.

Music in the Village and Leftfield

The Women Chainmakers' festival has made a particular point of promoting local Black Country Artists since the first festival in 2005. This year we are pleased to welcome back artists

promoted by RoosterSpake Entertainments including Lozz Hipkiss and Billy Spakemon.

Lozz and Billy have provided a top line up of local artists who will perform in the village throughout the day, as well as between the NUJ sponsored debates in the Leftfield, which take place throughout the morning in the marquee.

RoosterSpake prides itself on giving a platform to the very best Black Country contemporary performance, including storytellers, dialect poets, street singers and musicians. Material will range from the humorous to hard-hitting issue based works focussing on Mary Macarthur and the Chainmakers' fight. The acts have a passionate commitment to the festival – and vie with each other for the privilege of performing on the day!

Thanks to the supporters of the festival

Thanks again to all those trade unions and firms of union solicitors who consistently back the festival with generous donations. This years' supporters are:

- GMB and UNISON for sponsoring the stage
- CWU and Thompsons Solicitors for the Leftfield
- NUJ for sponsoring the Leftfield Debates
- Rowley Ashworths for sponsoring the improved festival programme
- Thompsons for sponsoring the tickets
- NASUWT for sponsoring the Highley Colliery band
- Community and Unite for sponsoring Fizzog Theatre and The Black Country Players
- PCS for sponsoring the Nottingham Clarion Choir

Dates for your diary

White Ribbon Day

November 25th "White Ribbon Day - The International Day Against Violence Against

Women" has been a focus for the Women's committee for a few years now. This year Walsall and Wolverhampton football clubs have agreed to support the campaign by allowing us at the matches held around 25/11 to release balloons and display information.

International Womens' Day celebration:

14th March 2007. Further details will be released closer to the date.

Women Chainmakers Festival 2009

The 2009 Women Chainmakers' Festival will take place on Saturday 12th September at the Black Country Living Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley. Check out the Museum and TUC websites for further information in the new year.

www.bclm.co.uk and www.tuc.org.uk/midlands

Further Information

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Pictures from the 2007 festival were taken by Roy Peters. Reproduction by agreement with Roy at roy@roypeters.co.uk