

CHRISTIAN SHAW - A HERO TO BE CELEBRATED?

IN 1697, THE LAST MAJOR WITCH HUNT IN SCOTLAND OCCURRED IN PAISLEY. Christian Shaw, the 11-year-old daughter of a landowner, accused 30 people of bewitching her. 7 were found 'guilty'. They were hanged and then burned at the stake. Who were these witches? The family's maid, their tenant farmer, a local midwife and an old woman begging for food to survive. The witches were vulnerable people struggling to make ends meet. Perhaps they had an interest in changing the unequal society that benefited Shaw's wealthy family.

The witch hunts happened to begin just when Europe's ruling class needed to control a rebellious peasantry. After the Black Death Plague (1347-1352), a third of people in Europe had died. Workers could demand better conditions because there were less workers about. For the state to profit, the workforce needed to be replaced. Food shortages meant that women often chose not to have children. So, states banned contraception and abortions. The women who helped each other out with contraceptive medicine? Witches! Midwives were suspected of helping with abortions too, so they got accused of witchcraft. Across 200 years, about 200,000 'witches' were either burned alive, tortured, or hanged. It was genocide, mostly of women, to divide and rule the working class.

Thankfully, society has moved on... right? 12 June 2023: the UK government sentences a woman to over 2 years in prison for using abortion medicine past the legal time-frame, using a law from 1861.

As abortion rights diminish, we need to keep fighting for women's bodily autonomy. We need to end the new witch hunts which target migrants, trans people, climate activists, and whoever threatens the fragile order of patriarchal capitalism.



RADICAL PAISLEY

Number 5

July 2023



'THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD. IT'S NOT EVEN PAST'



END OF THE LINE FOR FASCIST AGITATORS IN ERSKINE

ON SUNDAY 21ST MAY, 400+ PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE TRADE UNION AND ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT came out to support asylum seekers and to oppose fascist agitators in Erskine. For the first Sunday since February, the Nazis who have been staging weekly protests to intimidate asylum seekers being temporarily housed in the old Erskine Bridge Hotel were nowhere to be seen. The Nazis couldn't bring themselves to face the force of a diverse band of workers standing united against them.

With the sun shining and the absence of Nazis, we enjoyed the barbecue and rally. Speakers included local people, trade unionists, anti-racist campaigners, and hotel residents.



Our little runaways: fascists were outnumbered 400 to 0

The mass mobilisation seen on 21st May marked a turning point in the long and arduous anti-fascist struggle that has been smouldering for more than 4 months. The celebratory spirit of the big day has continued while the Nazi's numbers have shrunk to the low teens.

The Nazis are now looking for a way out of this campaign. After mobilising their side to Erskine for many months, they have completely failed to stop asylum seekers being housed in the hotel. They have put all their eggs into one basket and it has not paid off for them. They are now looking for a way to abandon the handful of loyal local people they have recruited without losing face. It is only a matter of time until reason will overcome the weight of their over-inflated egos.

While the fight is not over yet, there is an evergreen lesson to be learned from all of this: racial hatred and fascism will always be crushed by the power of **love, compassion, and working class unity**.

GLEN ST. RESIDENTS FIGHT BACK

RESIDENTS OF GLEN ST. IN PAISLEY ARE FIGHTING BACK against years of neglect and managed decline at the hands of Linstone Housing Association. Residents are demanding that concerns about asbestos and electrical safety in the blocks are addressed.



When a single resident complains, they can choose to ignore you. When the whole street unites behind a common cause, they have no choice but to listen

With the support of Living Rent Paisley, the local section of Scotland's tenants' and community union, a petition was written and signed by more than 60% of the residents. The petition was handed into Linstone HA's headquarters in Linwood with coverage appearing on the front page of the Paisley Daily Express.

In the weeks since, remedial work has begun to address the issues outlined in the petition and Linstone HA have agreed to a

public meeting to discuss the residents' demands.

RENFREWSHIRE REMEMBERS KILLED WORKERS

THE ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY COMMEMORATIONS to all those killed at work took place in both Renfrew and Paisley on 28th of April, organised by Paisley Trades Council. A representative of the Fire Brigade Union from Barrhead spoke about the loss of Barry Martin, the firefighter who lost his life at the Jenner's fire in Edinburgh in January. He also spoke of how firefighters are significantly more likely to die from cancer, heart attack, stroke and several other diseases.

Other speakers talked about the continuing death toll from asbestos, and how poverty drastically reduces life expectancy.



Remember the dead, and fight like hell for the living!



Solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community in Paisley and beyond this Pride month!

Assimilation into capitalism ≠ queer liberation.

We do not stand with the banks who delight in our debt.

We do not stand with the modern oil barons who destroy our planet and drive up our cost of surviving.

We do not stand with property investment companies who price us out of our homes.

We do not celebrate corporate pride because they do not celebrate us - they celebrate endless consumption and profiteering.

Instead we stand alongside our neighbours, share our radical history and build people power in our community.

Stonewall was a Riot! Happy Pride!



Kairos Women+ is a community-led women's space for all women and non-binary people across Renfrewshire and beyond.

www.kairoswomen.org

LIVING RENT

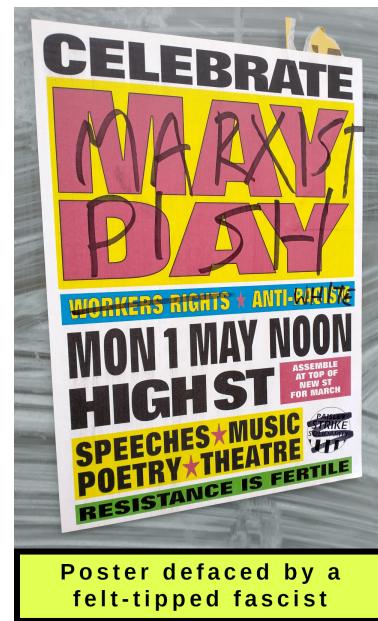
Scotland's Tenants' and Community Union is active in Paisley!

livingrent.org/join

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE MARXIST PISH?

YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED our defaced May Day posters about town. They gave us a chuckle, but we thought it would be worth addressing for anyone who's interested in what's going on.

Those who would have you believe we represent 'Marxist pish' are the same people who are hostile to immigrants and are attacking trade unionists, socialists, or anyone concerned about standing up for workers' rights. Why is this?



There is a link between the ruling class propaganda that ordinary people are threatened by immigrants and that of silencing workers and the downtrodden. It serves the same purpose.

Socialists stand for a world where ordinary people are united and identify in our common needs, so that together we can overcome oppression. All races, religions, ideologies, genders and sexualities, all people together, standing up for freedom from the powerful elite who want to keep us divided.

Some believe the ruling class to their own detriment because they think that they can be like them - "successful", powerful, self-interested individuals. Karl Marx was more interested in uniting the people for a better world. As are we.

Join us and stand up for your rights, jobs, family, communities, homes, healthcare, and all that we share in common.

KEEP OUR SMA' SHOT DAY RADICAL

THE MILITARY BIG BASS DRUM THAT WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE NAPOLEONIC WARS was brought out again from its secure place in the socialist, republican district of Charleston in Paisley. The thumping of the drum through the thoroughfares called the weavers and families to meet at the Dooslan Stane at the corner of the Neilston Road and Rowan Street to discuss and come to a decision about the latest dispute. The Corks, or manufacturers, middlemen, were at it again. The Weavers Trade Union had agreed amongst themselves that certain rates would be held, offered by all members. Struggle to maintain this in the face of Cork aggression, made 'struggle' weaving's middle name – as it had been for a hundred years: in 1787 six weavers were killed in the Calton, Glasgow for striking. The Renfrewshire weavers' struggles had many successes, but now, in 1856, the Corks were refusing to pay for the Sma Shot.

The main fabric was finer, thinner, than the threads that added colour, the 'spotting' colours. To recompense for the difference in thickness, in places, two or more shots were added, the last one being a fine lace cotton. This could not be seen separately. This was the Sma Shot.

The dispute was acrimonious, but the striking weavers were victorious. The weavers of Paisley declared that this victory would be celebrated on the first Saturday in July, with the Charleston weavers' drum leading the parade. Sma Shot Saturday was made a family holiday by the victorious weavers as in: '... it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too'. Largs was a favourite with the younger folk.

One writer tells us: 'It was a common saying that the Weavers of the First Ward (The West End) " . . . gave the tone of politics to Europe." Certainly they added to it. We know this because a certain Karl Marx, as he mentions, was taking note of the prior Radicalism in Paisley (weavers, block printers) and in other places such as Silesia where, in 1844, 11 weaving folk were killed fighting against wage cuts in the weaving trades.

Noting such Radical struggles, led him to write the Communist Manifesto, first translated into English by Helen McFarlane, a Barrhead woman.



**Sma Shot Day serves as a reminder of the power that lies in the hands of workers.
Keep the flame of resistance alive!**

There is much to celebrate with the weavers striking victory at Sma Shot and it must forever be a joyous commemoration of this part of Paisley's Radical past. We must bang the drum in solidarity, and with thanks to those families of the past whose struggles have helped us today. As Paisley's radical American brother, Frederick Douglas, said: 'Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning.'

*Thanks M. Blair: the Paisley Shawl.
For Cork behaviour see Chapter One: The Rat Pit, Patrick McGill.
Bread and Roses quote: Helen Todd - Suffragette.*

JOIN THE I.W.W.
The Union for ALL workers
IWW.ORG.UK

People power doesn't happen on its own... Get involved!

- More info on local radical groups/campaigns at radicalpaisley.com