

Destruction of Labor History Archives at Ruskin College, Oxford

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The archives of Ruskin College, pioneer institution of working-class education, have been partly destroyed, on the instructions of the college principal and despite protests and an offer from the Bishopsgate Institute to take everything. What remains may still be at risk.

‘Papers have not gone to a landfill site but have been specifically destroyed. Even the removal firm seemed puzzled and sought clarification from the principal who allegedly confirmed that indeed such material must be destroyed.’, writes Hilda Kean in an article on the History Workshop website.

Please read Hilda Kean’s article for more information, “[Whose Archive? Whose History? Destruction of Archives at Ruskin College, Oxford](#),” *History Workshop Online*.

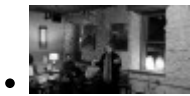
The College was a repository of lived experience of the trade union and labour movement of the twentieth century and its records complemented that. Some see past experience as unrelated to the future. As the college principal, Audrey Mullender has declared in email correspondence, ‘I think we must live by our future’, seeing this almost in contradistinction to the past. Others, particularly historians, tend to see a correlation between these time variables.

Much material from Ruskin’s past has already been physically trashed. This includes admission records of some of the trade union students who attended Ruskin in its first decades. These were activists, sponsored by their unions, who usually went back into the trade union and labour movement as leaders. Such archival matter is like gold dust to labour and social historians enabling a better understanding of the political and cultural life of working class people in the twentieth century. With the huge interest in family and local history it is also the sort of material that descendants find fascinating.

And please urgently sign and publicize the petition, [Stop further archive destruction at Ruskin College, Oxford](#).

Thanks to LAWCHA past president Jim Green for informing us of this development.

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