

# Thompsons Solicitors and trade unions – the work so far

**1921**

William Henry 'Harry' Thompson founds Thompsons Solicitors, acts for Poplar Councillors in a challenge against their council in the poorest part of London paying the same tax as the richest.

**1923**

The introduction of the Workmen's Compensation Act enables workers to claim personal injury compensation for the first time.

**1928**

The Equal Franchise Act grants equal voting rights to men and women.

**1934**

William Henry Thompson pitches in on behalf of an organiser of an unemployed workers' movement in Elias v Pasmore and establishes that a lawful arrest doesn't justify removing documents without lawful authority.

**1937**

Thompsons Solicitors and the trade unions fight, and win, *Wilson and Clyde Coal Ltd v English*, which establishes the concept of employer's liability.

**1951**

The UK's first industrial disease case is won by Thompsons Solicitors.

**1964**

Represented Barnard in *Rookes v Barnard* – a leading case on punitive damages and a turning point in judicial activism in trade unions.

**1970**

The Equal Pay Act is the first piece of legislation to enshrine the right to equal pay for work of equal value between women and men.

**1972**

Thompsons Solicitors brings about the first ever successful asbestos-related disease case in the House of Lords.

**1974**

Thompsons Solicitors involved in helping to draft the Health and Safety at Work Act, which means approximately eight million employees are legally protected at work for the first time.

**1983**

Thompsons handles the first test cases on industrial deafness, leading to the National Deafness Scheme, securing compensation for those who have lost hearing due to work.

**1986**

Thompsons Solicitors instrumental in establishing the principle of latent damage, which is passed into law.

**1990**

Thompsons Solicitors win first test cases for welders' lung.

**1992**

The introduction of The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations, known as the 'six pack,' which implements a series of European health and safety orders. These have become vital for the protection of UK workers and the enforcement of their safety at work.

**1995**

Thompsons wins landmark TUPE case to ensure it applies to all public sector workers.

**2009**

*Stringer v HMRC* ensures entitlement to annual leave pay while absent from work for long periods of time.

**2012**

*British Airways v Williams*, Thompsons Solicitors ensures the right to proper holiday pay for all money earned.

**2016**

Thompsons Solicitors secures victory against UK construction companies in a blacklisting case, recovering millions of pounds for hundreds of workers.

## Three Brexit challenges facing trade unions

For union members, no matter which way you voted in the referendum, Brexit represents a significant threat to hard-won employment and health and safety rights. These rights, along with consumer, environmental and citizens' rights, should be given a protected status in the EU (Withdrawal) Bill so that UK standards will have to keep pace with developments in EU law.

ONE

In health and safety, the 'six pack' of regulations from The European Framework Directive has provided the foundation in the UK for work-related personal injury claims. Whilst these laws would not be immediately affected by Brexit, they would no longer have the foundation of EU law and would be vulnerable to being amended by a future government.

TWO

As the UK re-writes its trade agreements with countries across the world, established legislation on products will be under threat. The current government's obsession on securing trade deals with the US raises the possibility of products containing deadly asbestos entering the UK (the US allows products which contain as much as 1% asbestos).



THREE

Rights that ministers have previously attacked - such as working time and holiday pay, parental leave and rights in the event of business transfers and collective redundancies - have their origins in EU law and could be changed or scrapped with no parliamentary supervision. Worryingly, some Cabinet Ministers have already indicated their support for getting rid of the Working Time Directive, which sets the working week to a maximum of 48 hours and guarantees four weeks of paid annual leave for full-time employees. Legislation in the UK relating to workplace discrimination in particular has minimum standards that are set by the EU.

**In light of these threats, Thompsons Solicitors will stand shoulder to shoulder with the trade union movement to continue to fight for workers' rights and protections.**