

Every year on 28th April the UK joins countries around the world in marking International Workers' Memorial Day, paying tribute to those who have lost their lives at work or from work-related injury and disease, and reaffirming our commitment to fight for better standards of health and safety for the benefit of everyone.

In a borough like St Helens which has been built on the back of hard labour and heavy industries like glass and coal, we've sadly got a legacy of tragedies large and small and it's vital we remember them and do all we can to stand up for the rights and welfare of working people everywhere.

In Haydock where I was brought up the legacy of mining in particular is still felt, with tributes and local knowledge still strong regarding the pit disasters which took place in the village. In one such example, my mum's good friend Peggy Bentham – now in her 90s – is the daughter of Mr Harry Hatton who was a collier and pit rescue worker who saved many men in the 1920s and 30s. Thanks to Harry and others like him lives were saved, and thanks to the efforts of ordinary men and women and the fighting spirit of the labour and trade union movement things are very different today – but still not good enough.

The past year has brought the issue of safety at work to the front of all our minds with many workers sadly paying the ultimate price for simply doing their jobs. NHS and care workers, education staff, shopworkers, taxi drivers and more have all put themselves at risk every day to keep essential services running and to protect us, and we will all remember the fight that was had at the start of the pandemic to secure enough basic PPE to keep staff as safe as possible.

In St Helens we are blessed to have an outstanding tribute to the cause of workers' safety with the stunning memorial in Vera Page Park near the Steve Prescott Bridge, depicting a Teaser from the Hot End of glass production line holding his child before leaving for work.

The purple forget-me-not is the flower of Workers' Memorial Day, and this year the statue will be draped in a cloak of purple ribbons. I had the honour earlier this week of laying a wreath at the memorial alongside Lord Mayor Cllr Paul McQuade, and residents are encouraged to leave their own tributes if they wish.

The campaign to create the memorial was led by St Helens resident John Riley and my Labour colleagues councillors Martin Bond, Richard McCauley and Paul Pritchard. It's an emotive piece of art and a fitting and lasting memorial to this important and ongoing struggle.

Find out more about the St Helens Workers' Memorial charity and the tribute in Vera Page Park at www.shwm.org.uk.

Best wishes to all Star readers.