



Our first 100 years

# Cases from our first 100 years

---

**1921**

William Henry 'Harry' Thompson founds Thompsons Solicitors.

---

**1921**

The Local Authorities (Financial Provisions) Act 1921 is rushed through parliament after Thompsons acts for Labour councillors in the Poplar Rates Rebellion, a protest against the poorest boroughs of London paying the same tax as the richest.

---

**1926**

In an early precursor to the concept of equal pay for work of equal value, Thompsons represents Poplar Borough Council in a wages dispute (primarily about women's pay), after the councillors increased minimum rates of pay to £4 per week regardless of the work done or the person doing it. The case is ultimately lost and the council has to pay penalties.

---

**1926**

Thompsons works tirelessly to support miners and other workers taking part in the General Strike.

---

**1929**

The UK fall-out from a politically motivated trial in India (known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case) is taken up by Thompsons, which represents three English textile workers denied bail and refused a proper jury trial. The criminal case lasts for many years and leads to the conviction of all three, before going to appeal where their sentences are dramatically reduced.

---

**1934**

Thompsons secures damages for trespass on behalf of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, after documents are seized illegally and used as the basis for a charge against the client. This case establishes the law that the seizure of documents without a warrant is illegal – which remains to this day.

---

**1934**

The National Council for Civil Liberties forms, with Harry Thompson as a founding member and member of the executive committee. The NCCL (now Liberty) starts its campaigns in the 1930s, particularly focussing on the activities of the Union of Fascists.

---

**1935**

A march in South Wales by thousands of unemployed people in response to cuts in the benefits system leads to arrests and becomes known as the Blaina Riots. Thompsons represents numerous men charged with assault and riot.

---

**1937**

Joan Beauchamp, who Harry Thompson married in August 1921, publishes *Women Who Work* following years of activism for women's suffrage alongside the likes of Charlotte Despard and Sylvia Pankhurst.

---

**1937**

Thompsons acts for trade unions to fight and win the momentous **Wilson and Clyde Coal Ltd v English** case. This establishes, for the first a time, that employers are liable for the safety of their workforce and becomes the cornerstone on which all workplace personal injury claims have since been based.

---

**1947**

Harry Thompson dies after complications following an operation, leaving behind his two sons, Brian and Robin, to lead what is by now Britain's leading trade union law firm.

---

**1950**

Thompsons establishes the principle that an employer's duty extends to the personal characteristics of the employee. The case finds that an employer has a higher duty of care towards a one-eyed WWII veteran who loses the sight in his good eye in an industrial accident.

---

**1950**

The UK's first industrial disease case, involving exposure to Silica and the development of pneumoconiosis (a common miner's disease), is won by Thompsons.

---

**1964**

Thompsons wins a leading case involving the intimidation of a trade unionist, in which the court upholds an award of punitive damages against an employer. This is a turning point in judicial activism in trade unions.

---

**1972**

Thompsons wins the first-ever successful asbestos-related disease case in the House of Lords.

---

**1974**

The Court of Appeal awards extra compensation to a client represented by Thompsons after an injury at work leaves her permanently disabled, which could mean a loss of future earning capacity. The landmark case results in the potential for extra compensation for all injured workers.

## 1974

---

Brian Thompson works with the then Labour government to draft the Health and Safety at Work Act, which leads to approximately eight million employees being legally protected at work for the first time and remains key legislation for the health and safety of workers today.

## 1976

---

Thompsons represents union members in the Grunwick Dispute, which is sparked by the film processing plant's poor working conditions and refusal to recognise trade unions.

## 1983

---

Thompsons pursues and wins a test case on industrial deafness and subsequently leads in negotiations that result in the ground-breaking National Deafness Scheme, leading to compensation for hundreds of thousands of workers whose hearing has been impaired at work.

## 1984

---

Thompsons supports the NUM during a national miners' strike in sequestration proceedings against the union and criminal charges against hundreds of individuals. Thompsons' employees stand with miners on the picket lines.

## 1986

---

Thompsons physically supports and legally represents thousands of trade unionists during the Wapping Dispute. Thompsons Lawyers attend the picket lines and accompany those arrested to defend them in court.

## 1986

---

The principle of latent damage is passed into the law as a result of Thompsons' work over the previous two decades, securing compensation for victims of industrial disease whose claims would have previously been considered out of time.

## 1987

---

Firefighters attending fires started negligently are able to claim for damages as a result of Thompsons' win in **Ogwo v Taylor**.

## 1988

---

Thompsons represents cook Julie Hayward in the UK's first equal pay for equal value court judgment.

## 1988

---

Thompsons establishes that the losing party in a personal injury case can't unreasonably delay paying costs from the date of judgment.

## 1990

---

Thompsons wins the first test cases for welders' lung on behalf of former shipyard workers suffering a variety of respiratory injuries from exposure to welding fumes.

## 1993

---

Thompsons represents a number of speech therapists in a series of cases fighting for equal pay, which reaches the European Court of Justice. The Court finds that an employer cannot use a collective agreement to justify unequal pay, leading to the historic Agenda for Change – a national pay structure for the NHS.

## 1994

---

Thompsons wins the first successful case for a stress-induced illness caused as a result of work, leading to personnel departments all over the country having to consider emotional as well as physical well-being.

## 1994

---

Thompsons wins a landmark TUPE case on behalf of UNISON members at Orsett Hospital, meaning that if a new company takes over an existing employee's contract the employee's rights subsist.

## 1997

---

Thompsons brings, and wins, test cases for a group of Durham miners suffering from Vibration White Finger. This leads to the development of a national scheme compensating miners suffering from VWF.

## 1998

---

Thompsons supports a number of miners suffering from chronic bronchitis and emphysema in a series of successful test cases, which lead to the world's largest national compensation scheme known as the Respiratory Diseases Scheme.

## 2002

---

During a case heard in the House of Lords, Thompsons establishes that material contribution to asbestos exposure by one employer makes that employer liable for compensating the worker, regardless of any other exposure.

## 2002

---

The European Court of Justice rules in favour of a challenge brought by Thompsons on behalf of a UNISON member who had been excluded from pension benefits following a TUPE transfer.

## 2002

---

Thompsons represents a journalist in the first-ever successful case on behalf of a union or union member heard in the European Court of Human Rights. The Court rules in favour of Thompsons' client Mr Wilson, whose employers had sought to treat him less favourably because of his union membership.

## 2002

---

Thompsons represents a nurse in a successful claim following her developing a latex allergy from the repeated use of latex gloves. The case clarifies the extent of an employer's duty to provide safe work equipment under the COSHH Regulations.

## 2006

---

Thompsons wins a finding in the House of Lords that FBU retained firefighters working part-time cannot be discriminated against over sickness benefits and pension rights.

## 2007

---

Thompsons wins back a UNISON member's job in the UK's first age discrimination case to go before an employment tribunal.

## 2007

---

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act becomes law after 10 years of campaigning by victims' families and trade unions, with Thompsons' support.

## 2008

---

Thompsons wins a victory on behalf of a female train driver who suffered tenosynovitis following inadequate training. The case helps define the modern principles of risk assessment.

## 2009

---

The European Court of Justice rules in Thompsons' favour in **Stringer v HMRC**, leading to an amendment of the Working Time Regulations which ensures entitlement to annual leave pay while absent from work for long periods of time.

## 2011

---

Thompsons wins a seminal judgment in the Court of Appeal, overturning the High Court's decision to grant injunctions preventing strike action.

## 2011

---

Thompsons secures a landmark ruling on the false arrests of teachers, strengthening NASUWT's calls for police guidance to be rewritten.

## 2011

---

The High Court rules employers should provide employees working in damp conditions with protective clothing in a major Unite the Union and Thompsons victory.

## 2012

---

In **British Airways v Williams**, Thompsons ensures the right to proper holiday pay for all money earned, including any supplemental pay.

## 2016

---

Thompsons successfully represents a POA member and catering manager at HMP Swansea, establishing that prisons are vicariously liable for prisoners negligently carrying out prison work who injure staff as a result.

## 2016

---

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

## 2016

---

In a landmark case for breastfeeding working women, Thompsons secures damages for two easyJet employees on the grounds of indirect sex discrimination.

## 2017

---

Thompsons wins an appeal in the Supreme Court on behalf of NASUWT members, minimising salary deductions for strike action.

## 2017

---

After breaking a national story regarding disgraced breast surgeon Ian Paterson, Thompsons secures a multi-million-pound settlement for hundreds of women who received negligent treatment.

## 2018

---

Thompsons wins a landmark case which protects those suffering from pre-cancer from being unfairly dismissed by their employer.

## 2020

---

Thompsons secures victory for BBC presenter Samira Ahmed in a breakthrough pay equity and transparency case.

## 2020

---

Thompsons safeguards wages for redundant Carluccio's staff during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, providing a blueprint for how all employees of companies in administration during the pandemic should be treated.

## 2020

---

Thompsons ensures workers have a right to take lawful industrial action during the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown.

## 2021

---

Thompsons successfully challenges the government's introduction of a cap on public sector exit payments.

## 2021

---

A new fund is set up to compensate thousands of additional victims of jailed breast surgeon, Ian Paterson, and Thompsons is appointed to manage the claims.

## 2021

---

Thompsons wins the first case in the Supreme Court relating to trade union bargaining rights, establishing that employers cannot bypass or undermine union bargaining procedures.

**The story continues...**