

**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Court of Appeal quashes conviction in historic Shrewsbury 24 case**

The Court of Appeal has quashed the conviction of a labour activist nearly fifty years after he was sent to prison for his role in the 1972 national building workers' strike.

Brian Williams was a member of the Shrewsbury 24—a group of twenty-four union activists convicted of offences ranging from threatening behaviour to conspiracy during three trials in 1973-74

Mr Williams, who pleaded not guilty throughout his 1974 trial, was convicted of affray and unlawful assembly and sentenced to six months in prison.

The Shrewsbury 24 were 'pickets'—union activists bussed to building sites in Shrewsbury and Telford in September 1972 as part of a unionized strike campaign to increase wages and improve labour conditions on building sites.

The 1972 building workers' strike resulted in the largest single pay increase ever negotiated in the building industry.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2021 the Court of Appeal quashed<sup>2</sup> the convictions of 14 members of the Shrewsbury 24, including the actor Ricky Tomlinson, following a referral from the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC).

Brian Williams passed away in 2013. However, in September 2021, his daughter in law, Samantha Williams, applied to the CCRC for a review of his case. In December 2021, the CCRC referred the case to the Court of Appeal on the same ground as his 14 co-defendants.

Samantha Williams was represented in the Court of Appeal by Paul Heron of the Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) and Piers Marquis of Doughty Street Chambers

**Samantha Williams, daughter-in-law of Brian Williams, said:**

'As a family we believe that Brian's conviction was undoubtedly life changing and caused a lasting trauma. For us the process of having his conviction quashed has not only allowed us to right a wrong which was done all those years ago, but has also allowed us to further understand the shocking truth of just how wrong this was.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us to achieve this overwhelming outcome, in particular Paul Heron & Piers Marquis.

Thomas Brian Williams – Husband, Dad & Taid – Not Guilty.’

**Ricky Tomlinson, Shrewsbury picket and actor, said:**

‘It is great to hear that another one of my comrades has had his convictions quashed. The Shrewsbury pickets faced a political trial. The secret state and the government assisted in our convictions by helping produce the TV programme ‘The Red Under the Bed’, a distorted account of the builders’ dispute. It was broadcast at the most damaging time for us – in the middle of the trial. After release, we all faced blacklisting and difficulty securing work – there needs to be a public inquiry into these events.’

**Paul Heron, senior solicitor at the Public Interest Law Centre, said:**

‘I am grateful to the family of Brian Williams for pursuing this matter. The innocence of Brian and the Shrewsbury 24 is now established, but that is not where the story ends. Many of the 24 were unable to find work after events of 1972-4 due to industry blacklisting.

Alongside the Blacklist Support Group we are calling for a public inquiry into blacklisting in the construction industry, including the collusion of government.’

**ENDS**

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** the family of Brian Williams instructed the Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) after PILC represented Ricky Tomlinson and Arthur Murray at the Court of Appeal in 2021. Piers Marquis, counsel at Doughty Street Chambers, was also instructed by PILC on the 2021 case.

**For media enquiries please contact:**

Mon-Wed: [benjamin.morgan@pilc.org.uk](mailto:benjamin.morgan@pilc.org.uk) / 07727 637 208

Thur-Fri: [saskia.ohara@pilc.org.uk](mailto:saskia.ohara@pilc.org.uk) / 07727610527 or [paul.heron@pilc.org.uk](mailto:paul.heron@pilc.org.uk) / 07747857172

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk/history/the-1972-strike/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pilc.org.uk/news/48-year-old-convictions-of-ricky-tomlinson-des-warren-arthur-murray-and-the-shrewsbury-24-declared-unsafe-and-quashed/>