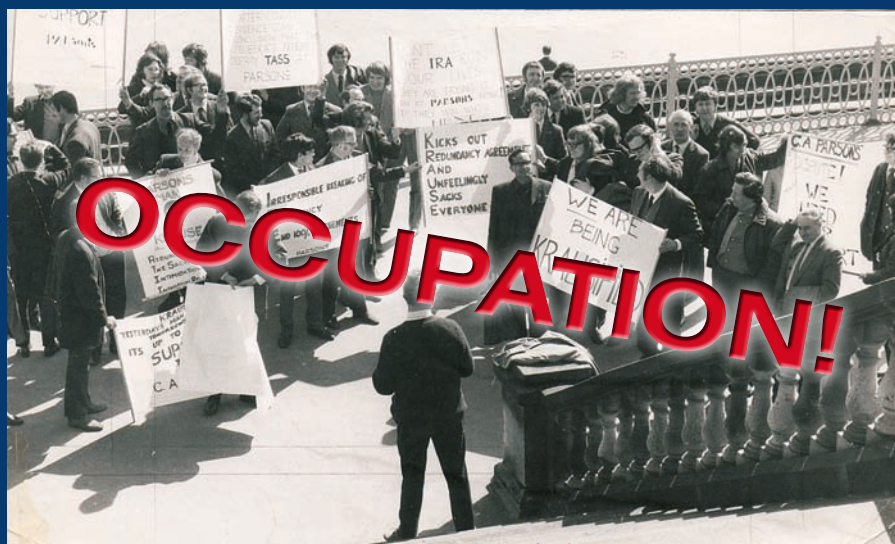


north east history

Volume 40 2009



Dave Neville - Parsons occupation 1972

Ian Roberts - Rural labour in Northumberland since 1945

Dave Byrne - Local government in the north east since 1945

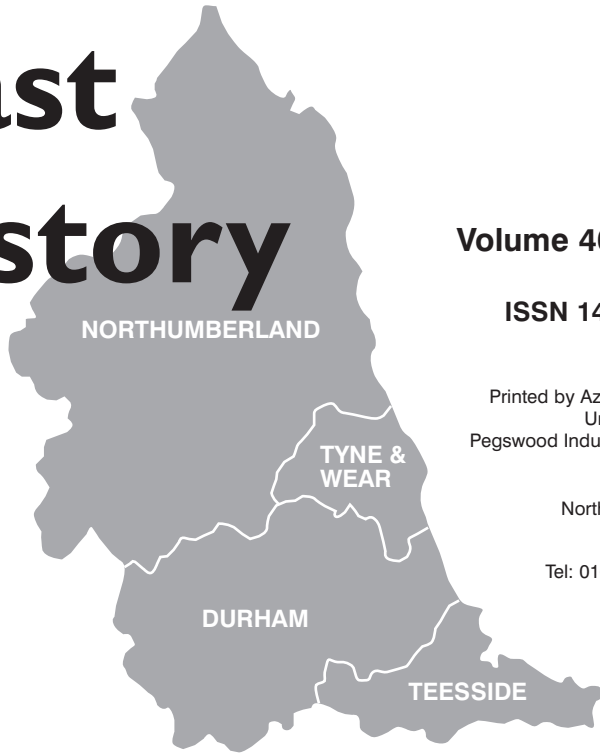
Paul Mayne - General Elections in Durham 1885 – 1910

Tim Healy - Origins of the Live Theatre plus reviews

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Editorial Collective: **Ben Sellers (Editor)**

Willie Thompson (Reviews Editor)

**John Charlton, John Creaby, Sandy Irvine, Lewis Mates,
Marie-Thérèse Mayne, Paul Mayne, Matt Perry, Win Stokes and
Don Watson .**

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EDITORIAL

Since the 2005 edition of the journal, North East History has been produced by an editorial collective and this has been productive, both in terms of the quality of the articles generated and the support given to members of the team. This year has been a particularly good year for articles, reviews and other pieces submitted, so much so that we could have ended up with a journal twice this size, full of well-written and interesting material. However, we had to stop somewhere and this has meant that one of the most difficult tasks facing the editorial collective this year has been to select what was to go in. As any football manager worth his salt has said, 'what a nice problem to have'.

The 'post-war' theme, in a sense, selected itself – based on the articles submitted, but it was also in our minds to reflect an interest in recent social and political history evident in the society. Obviously, this edition can't do justice to complexities and breadth of post-war history – what we do here is touch on themes, especially those around struggle, working lives and leisure. I think what has come together will be interesting to both those with extensive knowledge of the period and the general reader. What this theme has allowed us to do, however, is to tap into the real lived experience of members of the society and other contributors.

What often excites the liveliest debate in and around labour history is the relevance of historical movements to contemporary events and where politicians and policy makers are often guilty of the pursuit of 'the new' at the expense of what might be valuable in the 'old', we as historians understand the links between historical events and contemporary politics. In Dave Neville's piece on the Parsons Occupation, he recreates a world that does, in many senses

seem like a different age – and yet it comes at a time when the tactic, of ‘occupation’ is enjoying a renaissance. This is followed by Ian Roberts’ detailed and significant survey of rural work in Northumberland, an important topic that has rarely been covered since the North East History’s inception in 1967. David Byrne’s piece on local government machinations surveys the whole of the period from 1945, drawing out the implications of the ‘everyday political’ action for social and labour historians and flagging up a number of areas for further research.

While these articles chart the relationship between politics, struggle and people’s working lives, the post-war period was also a period of unprecedented social and cultural change. Win Stokes’ part-remembrance, part-archive study, reflects those changes in people’s lives and how they impacted on seaside towns such as Whitley Bay. Tim Healy’s short piece on the origins of the Live Theatre is also a window into a world of new opportunities which laid the groundwork for a whole series of cultural initiatives in the region.

This collection of pieces on post-war history is followed by two articles outside the period, included because we think they are both valuable contributions to themes explored in previous editions of the journal. Firstly, Ruth Blower’s Sid Chaplin-prize winning article on the anti-slavery movement in the North East builds upon growing evidence of the centrality of the slave trade and opposition to it in the region and secondly, Paul Mayne’s piece on late nineteenth century elections in County Durham explores the partial nature of the emerging franchise in very detailed and localised way. Also included in the main body of the journal is Katrina Porteous’ extensive review of Bill Griffiths’ *Fishing and Folk*, included here because it acts as an absorbing discussion piece – again following on from the themes of previous journals.

Our commitment to oral history continues and over the next year there will be a renewed push to record and transcribe interviews with people associated with the society and involved in real life 'labour history'. These interviews often produce the most compelling stories of how people have experienced the changes described in our theme articles this year, as is the case with Ken Appleby's fascinating account of his days as an apprentice engineering draughtsman. In the recollections section, we also revisit René Chaplin's engaging reflections on her early life, 'Educating René', which deals with the move down to Essex and Sid's early career as a writer.

We have published three poems by Keith Armstrong which capture the difficult relationship that we, as historians of struggle, have with mythologies of the North East. These are followed by a set of reviews that again, show the diverse interests of members and contributors to the North East Labour History Society.

As has been said in the previous few journals, the society goes from strength to strength, with a central tenet being the First Tuesday discussion groups, where many a good article have started their lives. We would encourage budding writers and those interested in discussing labour history in an informal way to attend the First Tuesday discussion. We have also recently re-launched our website – nelh.net and hope that people will use its forums actively to generate discussion and ideas for research.

Lastly, I would like to thank to the 2009 Editorial Team for the great deal of support they've given me: John Charlton, John Creaby, Sandy Irvine, Lewis Mates, Marie-Thérèse Mayne, Paul Mayne, Matt Perry, Win Stokes, Willie Thompson and Don Watson.

Ben Sellers

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Keith Armstrong is a poet, freelance writer and community publisher living in Whitley Bay. He was awarded a doctorate at the University of Durham in 2007 for his work on Jack Common. An archive of Armstrong's literary output is available for consultation at Durham University's Palace Green Library.

Ruth Blower graduated from Newcastle University in 2008 with first class honours. Her essay is adapted from her prize winning Chaplin Prize essay.

David Byrne is a native of South Shields. He is Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at Durham University, where he is also Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Tim Healy is best known for playing Dennis Patterson in the television series *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, but he was also a founding member of the Live Theatre over thirty years ago. He recently returned to the Live Theatre following a 14-year absence to star in a new play, *Looking for Buddy*.

Paul Mayne is an active member of the North East Labour History Society. He is a graduate of Sunderland University and works for the Tyne and Wear Museum Service.

Dave Neville is a professional engineer and works as a manager in a Loughborough community college following a long career in the gas industry. He obtained an M.Phil in History in 1989. His book on the North East women's suffrage movement, *To Make Their*

Mark, was published in 1992 by Northumbria University and is widely referenced in studies of women's suffrage in the region.

Katrina Porteous is a poet and historian living in Beadnell, Northumberland. Her work frequently involves collaboration with photographers and musicians. Publications include the poetry collections *The Lost Music* and the *Wind an' the Wetter*; historical work includes *The Bonny Fisher Lad* in the People's History Series.

Ian Roberts left school at 16 and worked as an apprentice plumber in the Wearside shipyards but left before serving his time. He gained a first class honours degree in Sociology from Durham University in 1982, completed a thesis on the labour process in the shipbuilding industry in 1988 and worked as a research associate at Durham University Business School and UMIST. He returned to Durham University as a British Academy Post Doctoral Fellow in 1992 and is currently a lecturer in the department of Sociology. Areas of writing include the sociology of work and employment, age and generations and working class studies.

Win Stokes is a retired history lecturer who continues to research and writes especially on local capitalists and their doings. She is Chair of the Durham County Local History Societies federation.

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ARTICLES

The 1972 Dispute at C. A. Parsons

Dave Neville

Introduction

On 16 December 1971, Mr. F. C. Krause, the newly appointed managing director of C. A. Parsons, met shop stewards from all the trade unions and said, "I am here to convey to you decisions that have already been taken. Over 1000 of you will be made redundant." Mr. Krause then invited discussion about how this was to be carried out. Mick Wallace, the works convenor, then spoke on behalf of every trade union at Parsons. He said, "Before leaving, we would like to state that we totally reject the philosophy of redundancy and will use all the power at our command to do so." Every steward then walked out leaving Mr. Krause, his colleagues and his flip charts alone. Overtime and subcontracting bans were immediately imposed and a joint union committee set up to co-ordinate action. Parsons' employees then attempted to enjoy Christmas under the threat of redundancy. Staff union secretary, Harry Blair, observed that there were just "a few more chopping days to Krausemas."

So began a major industrial conflict in the North East engineering industry. It was a dispute which not only offered a

challenge to the policy of redundancy, but also provided the first resistance to a new phenomenon – the Conservative government's Industrial Relations Act.

The Company

The long established turbine generator manufacturer, C. A. Parsons, was based at Heaton, Newcastle but also had a number of small satellite factories and subsidiaries. In 1964, Parsons acquired GEC Turbogenerators and inherited a design office in Erith, Kent with 60 employees. The position of the Erith office assumed great significance as the dispute developed.

In 1970, Parsons announced a joint venture with the North American Rockwell Corporation and embarked on a substantial campaign to recruit more technical staff. Although the venture collapsed after one year, the policy of high recruitment continued, and rumours spread suggesting that the company was facing financial problems. As a result, the then managing director, Dr. K. J. Wootton, met union stewards and stated that the company position was in no way bad enough to envisage any redundancies for two years. A few weeks later, Dr. Wootton was replaced by Mr. Krause who had presided over redundancy elsewhere.

The Trade Unions

Trade unionism was strong at Parsons. The works employees were organised into their respective unions which were integrated at shop floor level. Works stewards elected a joint co-ordinating committee to represent all manual workers. On the staff side, the clerical members were members of APEX, the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staffs. However as far as the technical and supervisory staffs were concerned, the picture was less clear. The Draughtsmen's and Allied Technicians'

Association, DATA, had recruited many of the staff during the 1960s and was well organised in its traditional areas. The company often indicated to those promoted to monthly staff conditions that it would be in their best interest to leave the union, however DATA believed that the conditions for all technical and supervisory staff, weekly and monthly, were based on those negotiated by the union. Consequently, when concluding details of a pay agreement in 1968, DATA refused to sign unless it contained a clause stating it was payable to DATA members only. This was refused, and DATA embarked on a campaign to establish a 100% membership agreement.

Industrial action was taken and the situation was complicated by the entry of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, ASTMS, who recruited a large proportion of the works' supervisory staff plus a few in the technical area. Things were apparently settled in 1970 when DATA won an agreement which gave it negotiating rights for staff below the level of Assistant Manager (referred to as "below the line"). All new employees were required to join as a condition of employment and non-unionists were given one year to join, or leave the company. However 1970 saw the emergence of the United Kingdom Association of Professional Engineers, UKAPE, which was opposed to industrial action. UKAPE began to recruit staff opposed to the agreement and some middle management. That same year DATA became part of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers as TASS, the Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section of the new union.

By the deadline of May 1971, several employees had not joined TASS. The company then issued notice in line with conditions of service to 38 employees. UKAPE applied for, and failed to get, an injunction claiming unfair dismissal using one of their older

members, Mr. John Hill, as a test case. However the Court of Appeal ruled that Mr. Hill should not be dismissed with only contractual notice because of his length of service. This judgement came as a surprise to TASS. It had previously been thought a court could decide reasonable notice only in cases without explicit terms of employment. The decision was widely interpreted as a judgement in anticipation of the Industrial Relations Act which outlawed the closed shop. Parsons then issued new dismissal notices to the 38, with the first expiring on 29 February 1972. It was significant that the date for implementation of the final clauses in the Act, originally planned for 1 March, had now been brought forward to 28 February.¹

The New Act

The post war years had seen changes in the power base of trade unions. The shop stewards movement had developed and become a more significant route for collective bargaining compared to the national agreements negotiated by union officials. The rise of so-called “unofficial strikes” and the decline in Britain’s share of trade were regarded by many on the right as cause and effect. The Conservatives identified industrial unrest squarely with the trade unions who, it seemed, were going to be dealt with once and for all. The Industrial Relations Act offered a root and branch change to the traditional basis for industrial relations with the force of law brought in to underpin the new arrangements.

Two institutions were set up under the legislation. The National Industrial Relations Court, NIRC, with power to hear claims on any breaches of the Act, and the Commission on Industrial Relations, CIR, to act as an investigative agency for the NIRC and to grant union registration after rules vetting.

A major issue for Parsons trade unionists was the status of the closed shop. This would be illegal and any actions by employers

or unions to maintain it would leave them facing unfair industrial practice charges. The pathway to more beneficial treatment under the Act was to become a registered trade union. It was on the issue of registration that trade union resistance was mobilised with the General Council of the TUC “strongly advising” unions not to register – which strengthened to an “instruction” during 1972. From the start the AUEW was to the fore in fighting the legislation, giving official support to one-day stoppages and was one of the first unions to remove itself from the register. There was every likelihood that the AUEW would be the first to fall foul of the Act.

Redundancy

It did not take long for Mr. Krause to take action. Speculation about sweeping redundancy began in the local press (beginning with the *Northern Echo* where son Julian Krause was a journalist.) At the announcement to the stewards on 16 December, Mr. Krause made his fateful statement. Up to 1150 would go by the middle of 1972 and another 300 would go in 1973.

Following overtime and subcontracting bans, further sanctions were applied. APEX and TASS made arrangements to implement a weekly one-day strike plus “minimum co-operation” as the company had indicated it would not negotiate short time working instead of redundancy. On 11 January, an interview with Mr. Krause appeared in the local *Evening Chronicle*. He stated that it had been a logical, commercial decision taken in the interests of the company and the thousands of people who would remain employed within it. His final statement was, “I still sleep at night, I am an executive paid to manage. If you can’t make the decisions you need to, you shouldn’t be the boss.”²

On 12 January, TASS stewards decided if the company proposed no enforced redundancies in 1972 – leaving the door



Members of the negotiating committee discussing the worsening situation with TASS General Secretary, George Doughty, fourth from left. 1 May 1972. The author is first on the left. Sorry about the hairstyle.



open for voluntary schemes – then this would be a basis for further discussion. They also decided to stagger the strike days, section by section, to have maximum effect. Consequently drawing office clerical staff took a different day to the draughtsmen, and the telephone switchboard staff took two afternoons per week because outgoing calls were only made in the afternoon, so disrupting external communications for two days.

On 14 January, a substantial and sympathetic front page article appeared in the *Evening Chronicle*.³ Under the banner headline “The Ten Angry Men”, an interview with the joint union committee was published. In it, the union leaders stated that they would resist “the hatchet man” who was trying to sack workers who had helped to build up the company. In the same issue UKAPE announced that it accepted rationalisation of the company and would have nothing to do with the “disruptive measure of four day working.” That same day the company applied to the NIRC to sort out the question of union representation for its technical staff in view of the forthcoming deadline for closed shops.

The next move came from the company. On Saturday 25 January, employees received a letter from Mr. Krause through the post.⁴ His proposals included a voluntary redundancy scheme for those acceptable to the company, short time working and following that “last in, first out”. He said that fighting to save jobs was a laudable aim, but the effect on the livelihood of the other employees had to be considered. “I appeal to all employees for their own benefit and that of their fellow workers to co-operate with the management in facing the realities of the unhappy situation of our company.” The joint union committee condemned the “last in, first night” suggestion, particularly when so many newcomers had been recruited. It also criticised the appeal to some of the workforce to accept the sack to save the company. The committee stressed the

need for a settlement in the interests of all the workers not just some of them. “If we remain united and resolved, his plans are doomed to failure.”

The Law Intervenes

The full implementation of the Industrial Relations Act was drawing near, and the company had no alternative but to comply with the law. Notice of dismissal to the 38 non-members was rescinded in accordance with the Act and on 29 February, the NIRC referred the issue to the CIR to report on the representation of staff at Parsons. On 1 March resignations from TASS were received – eventually 60 out of 1300 resigned. The TASS stewards agreed a policy of non-co-operation and the blacking of work to be applied to any member attempting to resign from the union in addition to the 38 who had refused to join. All the sanctions were approved by the National Executive of TASS, and so, in addition to those in support of the redundancy fight, further sanctions were added in support of the membership agreement. However this was not all to be decided at the stewards’ meeting as events had occurred to change the picture of the redundancy fight.

Settlement For Some

Because the proportion of redundancies on the shop floor was not large, the works negotiating committee approached the company and on 28 February reached an agreement that there would be no redundancy for manual workers in 1972. Consequently TASS and APEX made a joint approach to see if there had been a change in the company’s position. It responded by stating that it was not possible to give staff employees the same guarantees, but would not implement any sackings provided that, in addition to voluntary redundancies, there would be short time working. The union wasn’t

happy with some aspects of the proposal, however the offer seemed a step forward with at least the basis for further discussion laid – as far as the redundancy issue was concerned.

A meeting was held with the management on 16 March and it was then that the “Erith bombshell” was dropped. The unions were informed that there had been a “slight omission” from the previous communication – none of it referred to the Erith design office which would be closed by the middle of the year. This was unacceptable to TASS who immediately withdrew from the meeting. APEX, not involved at Erith, went ahead and gained an agreement similar to the others. Within a short space of time, the picture had changed from a united multi-union response to redundancy, to TASS alone in dispute fighting both against redundancy and for the retention of their 100% membership agreement.

At the beginning of April, the company stated that if sanctions weren’t lifted, then it would be forced to take action. The TASS stewards prepared for the company’s next move. It was agreed that no suspension or notice would be accepted and if there was a general lockout, then offices would be occupied. Because financial support could well be needed, members agreed to return to full time working with a levy for a dispute fund.

The Situation Deteriorates

On Saturday 8 April, TASS members received a further letter from the managing director.⁵ He referred to the company’s concern about the deteriorating situation “because of the introduction of a wide range of restrictive practices and sanctions by members of TASS aimed not only at the company but also at individuals who have chosen to tread a different path from that chosen by TASS.” Again he offered voluntary schemes with no enforced redundancies in the North East, although Erith would still be closed. Finally he stated,

“The company is reluctantly compelled to inform all members of the technical staff that those who refuse to resume full normal working as from Monday 17 April will be deemed to be in breach of contract and will be dismissed.” At a general meeting of members, motions were overwhelmingly carried on the need to keep on fighting until a satisfactory agreement was gained. However, a motion on fighting to defend the membership agreement was only carried on a split vote.

Plans were finalised for action in case departmental heads attempted to dismiss anyone – others to identify with the individual selected and to inform the manager that all were working sanctions. If only a few were suspended, then they were to continue working alongside their colleagues. The company response came earlier than anyone had anticipated. On 14 April, redundancy notices were handed out in several departments. In most offices members backed up the person declared redundant, refusing to accept the notice or returning it to the manager. The next day all those who had received and returned one redundancy notice, received another through the post. 250 received notice including all at Erith. Some were long standing employees, including a draughtsman employed for 43 years and active trade unionists had been singled out.

On Monday 17 April, a mass demonstration was arranged on the directors’ floor (known to all as the “Golden Mile”) to return the notices. Members packed the corridor spilling out on to the landings and down the stairs and formed a long “tunnel” through which those made redundant passed through to return their notices. The TASS members not only caught Mr. Krause in his office, but also Mr. Baker, group managing director, who had no option but to sit white faced through the whole proceedings. A reporter from Radio Newcastle dared to venture inside the office block and recorded the scenes on the directors’ floor. He even asked

Mr. Krause for an interview and, when challenged as to who had invited him in, replied that the trade unionists had. The managing director told him in somewhat forceful terms to leave – all of which was broadcast on the lunchtime news programme.

The next day the first sackings took place. The first to be challenged was an engineer who had spoken out against fighting for the membership agreement at the general meeting. Although he disagreed with the decision, he refused to work normally and was dismissed. His colleagues challenged the manager, with the result that they were all sacked. Other sackings followed bringing a total of about 100 on the first day.

Many departments were dismissed en masse. Some employees discovered they were sacked while off sick or visiting the lavatory. By 24 April, about 500 had been dismissed – some had been made redundant and dismissed, yet all were coming into work each day. The union's reasons for this tactic were to give point to the policy that all would be reinstated in any settlement, to remove the feeling of isolation, to prevent managers and non-members from taking over the work and to generally discuss the situation and keep other trade unionists involved. Although all sacked members would receive 60% net pay from the union, it was felt that a member who had been challenged should not be placed at a disadvantage to those who had not. As a result, a general meeting decided that members still on the payroll would pay 20% of their pay into a dispute fund for those who had been dismissed. As the numbers by this time were about half and half, in theory everyone would receive 80% pay.

Representatives from all the dismissed departments met that day to elect an informal committee to be responsible for the co-ordination of the dispute plus three sub-committees, an education sub-committee to organise talks and events, a publicity sub-committee to provide a regular newsletter and bulletins, and

a finance sub-committee to implement the machinery for the collection and dispersal of the levy.

I Met A Man Who Wasn't There!

Further sackings occurred during the second week bringing the total to 704. On 28 April, UKAPE made application to the NIRC to obtain an injunction against TASS members' operation of unfair practices against their members. TASS, who had been ordered to appear before the court, did not do so, and the judge, Sir John Donaldson, granted an injunction until 2 May when TASS would have another opportunity to answer allegations. Also on 28 April, sacked TASS members received their cards through the post. A demonstration was organised with sacked members filing into the Personnel Department to hand back their cards. All of this was filmed by the television companies who were now at the company every day. During the week the education sub-committee organised their first lectures in the office building with subjects as diverse as "History of Trade Unionism", and "Fly Fishing Made Easy". The publicity sub-committee consisting mainly of technical writers and illustrators, brought out a magazine called Platform containing information, contributions from members and quite professional cartoons.⁶ The second issue contained a poem written by Hughes Mearns in 1875 which seemed to sum up the situation:

As I was going up the stair
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
I wish, I wish he'd go away

Members began to visit other TASS branches to win support – and funds. A tour of the motor plants around Coventry resulted

in over £7000 being raised. The annual TASS conference began in Scarborough on 1 May where the general secretary, George Doughty, repeated that the union fully supported the Parsons members. Contrary to the rulings of the NIRC, the union would not recommend or instruct them to cease industrial action – whatever the consequences would be. Although it seemed that TASS was en route to becoming the first casualty of the Industrial Relations Act, moves were underway to find a settlement. A meeting took place between TASS national officials and the company on 2 May. This led to the bizarre situation in which new president, Arthur Scott at the same time as holding a meeting with the company, was fully expecting to be arrested by officers acting on behalf of the NIRC. Also on 2 May, the CIR officials arrived at Parsons to investigate trade union organisation, and the NIRC again extended its order against TASS to stop blacking non-unionists, now giving it until 12 May to appear at the court. On 5 May, questionnaires from the CIR were received by all the technical staff, even those supposedly sacked.⁷ In accordance with the policy of non-co-operation, stewards recommended that TASS members should not fill them in.

At the company, the sacked members were still coming into work. The education sub-committee followed their first programme with talks on “Old Newcastle”, “The Welfare State”, and “Women’s Liberation” amongst others. The lecture on “Old Newcastle”, given by one of the sacked members, proved so successful that guided tours were then organised to visit places of interest. On 1 May, Alex Glasgow, a well-known local folk singer, came into the company to give the first of two concerts. Local management did not know how to react to this type of activity and tried to give the impression of working on regardless, despite the fact that folk music was being sung round them. Alex duly received a solicitor’s letter threatening court action if he trespassed again. Chief Engineer, Dr. Hawley said, “This

is a place of work, not a night club. If we let this go on, the next thing is that they would probably have strippers in.”⁸ Despite this original suggestion, the education sub-committee rejected Dr. Hawley’s idea.

Compromise

On 9 May, a second meeting between the company and TASS national officials was held with the Parsons negotiating committee present. A package deal was offered – no redundancies in the North East or Erith during 1972, voluntary redundancy with cash bonuses for people who had recently moved to the company, and mutually agreed short time working. However in return, all sanctions had to be lifted, including those in defence of the membership agreement. A general meeting of members was held on 12 May with the TASS national president present. He reiterated that the union had no intention of instructing or recommending that Parsons members should end their industrial action. Despite the negotiating committee recommending rejection of the package, the deal was accepted on a 70% - 30% vote.

After The Dispute

The CIR report was published in October 1972 and came down heavily in favour of TASS.⁹ It rejected UKAPE’s proposal that it, and its partners should represent all professional engineers and scientists. The report pointed out an obvious weakness in UKAPE’s case in that it would call on its sister organisation, the Association of Supervisory and Executive Engineers, ASEE, to represent a large group of employees without membership of a professional body, when the reality was that ASEE had very few members in this group.

The voluntary redundancy scheme continued through 1972 with 322 members of the technical staff leaving out of a company reduction of 1000. Of these, only about 100 stayed in the

engineering industry. 40 joined the teaching profession or went to university and one technician left after having been presented with a substantial amount of money courtesy of Littlewoods' Pools. Despite the importance of the issue during the dispute, no-one ever went on short time working.

Because of the company's financial problems, the 1972 wage offer to staff was very low, and the workforce was in no mood to fight for more. The general meeting to discuss the offer was held in the People's Theatre, Jesmond, which had recently presented some of Shakespeare's plays. So when TASS secretary, Harry Blair took the stage, it was appropriate that he should announce, "Welcome to Much Ado About Nothing."

The Dispute In Perspective

Discussions with trade unionists involved in the 1972 dispute reveal that for many it was a formative and educative experience, having discovered that they possessed hitherto unknown organisational abilities. Significant fights against redundancy and closure had already taken place at companies such as Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and Fisher-Bendix. A common theme to these disputes was the occupation or work-in. The idea of workers staying inside the plant was new and was a crucial tactic for TASS at Parsons. A high degree of unity, mutual support and successful organisation resulted. It was a tactic that the management didn't seem to come to terms with. Unsure how to react, they never took up the option to escalate the dispute by attempting to physically prevent entry.

The Parsons dispute began with all the trade unions fighting redundancy and ended with TASS alone without an agreement and engaged in a fight over trade union law. How did this come about? The dispute certainly started over redundancy. The company needed

to reduce numbers and thought it could achieve this at first by acting in a heavy handed manner, and then retreating from this position at a later date if things weren't going well. A significant change took place in the company's attitude between 14 February, when they would not agree terms of reference for talks, and 29 February when the works unions gained their agreement. The company may well have realised that it could use the redundancy issue to get rid of a problem which had the potential for more serious damage – Parsons becoming the battleground for the Industrial Relations Act. The bringing forward of the implementation date certainly seemed no accident and prevented the company from dismissing Mr. Hill.

The company decided to offer terms to the staff unions on no sackings in 1972, which it knew would be generally acceptable. But it stuck to its guns on insisting on closure of Erith, so splitting TASS from the other unions. It went into a major dispute at some financial cost which was apparently over the employment of a small number of people at Erith for a year or so. It may be that the company deliberately waited until they were sure that TASS members would give up the membership agreement fight in return for an agreement on no enforced redundancies in line with the other unions. Had they settled the redundancy question earlier on these terms, it could have cleared the way for a fight on the membership issue with possible far-reaching consequences for the company. It's possible that the company, perhaps supported by the Engineering Employers Federation, planned the outcome of the dispute.

During the short life of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, few unions co-operated with its workings. The government itself did not use it against the mineworkers during its 1972 dispute, or against the health or gas workers later in the year. The eventual battleground for

the Act came with the dispute between the Transport and General Workers' Union, TGWU, and container and transport haulage companies over the transfer of traditional dockers' work to new inland depots. In the dispute with Heaton's, the NIRC fined the TGWU for refusing to lift its blacking of the company. However the Court of Appeal held that the dockers' stewards, and not the union, were liable. On 17 June 1972, when they were due to be imprisoned, rescue arrived in the form of the Official Solicitor who secured the quashing of the contempt order. However this only delayed the inevitable and in a related dispute with Midland Cold storage, Sir John Donaldson committed the "Pentonville Five" to prison. This was followed by immediate rank and file union strike action all over Britain. The government wriggled out of a disaster thanks to the Law Lords quickly overturning the Appeal Court judgement.¹⁰

As a result of the dockers' dispute, the Industrial Relations Act was brought into disrepute by the appearance of the fairy godmother Official Solicitor and differences in interpretation by the NIRC, Appeal Court and Law Lords on fundamental points of principle in the Act. A further death knell was the way the Act became an eccentrics' charter with references by aggrieved individuals producing legal decisions and an industrial response out of all proportion to the issue under consideration. The cases emphasised just how disruptive a combination of union defiance and individual idiosyncrasy could be.¹¹

After the Parsons dispute, further problems remained for the AUEW. In a number of cases the union was held in contempt of court with its damages paid by sequestered assets. Although the TUC policy had been amended to allow unions to defend their interests in court, AUEW policy remained firm and the union entertained no such concession. The end came for the Act in 1974 with the return of a Labour government.

Aftermath

Since the 1970s, redundancy and closure in the North East became commonplace, with traditional engineering and shipbuilding industries disappearing or existing as a shadow of their former selves. Parsons merged with other companies to form Northern Engineering Industries in 1977, and then fell into the ownership of Rolls Royce. The much-reduced Parsons plant is now part of Siemens Power Systems.

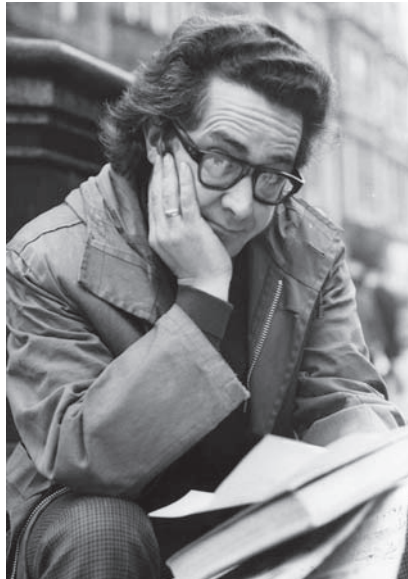
The Erith office – a central issue in the dispute – enjoyed a surprisingly long life following the settlement. For two years it continued as part of the main drawing office and then began to take on an increasing proportion of outside contract work. The local management was removed and the Erith TASS stewards put in charge. However as draughtsmen left, they were not replaced and closure came in 1979 when the complement had reduced to three. The union had the satisfaction of seeing the Erith office outlast Mr. Krause who retired in 1976. Alex Glasgow's friend, Dr. Hawley became the new managing director.

As for industrial relations law, when a Conservative government reappeared in 1979, it avoided the mistakes of the Industrial Relations Act and approached the subject in a much more strategic way. It drip fed legislation to outlaw secondary picketing, narrowed the definition of a trade dispute, made unions responsible for unofficial action and introduced the secret ballot. Against a background of unemployment and industry contraction, trade unionism was in no way placed to oppose the government using the tactics of 1972. The Labour governments since 1997 have modified the legislation to improve some workers' rights but the central thrust of the Conservative legislation now appears to be the natural state. The Parsons dispute now seems to be from a different age.

Author's Note

The main source for this article has been the log of the dispute kept by the author at the time, augmented by information from former members of the TASS stewards' committee.

- ¹ "Playing for Peace at Parsons", Derek Brown, *The Guardian*, 11 May 1972
- ² "Why I Have to Sack 1000 Men", Interview with F. C. Krause by Dennis Ramshaw, *Evening Chronicle*, 11 January 1972
- ³ "Ten Angry Men", Interview with Parsons Joint Co-ordinating Committee by Jack Amos, *Evening Chronicle*, 14 January 1972
- ⁴ Letter from F. C. Krause to employees at C. A. Parsons and Co. Ltd., 25 January 1972
- ⁵ Letter from F. C. Krause to technical staff at C. A. Parsons and Co. Ltd., April 1972
- ⁶ *Platform*, TASS Dispute Bulletin No. 1, 28 April 1972,
Platform, TASS Dispute Bulletin No. 2, 5 May 1972



Folk singer Alex Glasgow ponders the solicitor's letter threatening him with prosecution should he repeat his concert inside the plant. 5 May 1972.

- ⁷ Commission for Industrial Relations Inquiries at C. A. Parsons and Associated Companies (Letter and Questionnaire)
- ⁸ “Parsons Threatens to Sue Folk Singer” by Shane Kenny, *Evening Chronicle*, 4 May 1972
- ⁹ Commission for Industrial Relations Report No. 32
C. A. Parsons and Associated Companies HMSO 1972
- ¹⁰ A. W. J. Thompson and S. R. Engelman, *The Industrial Relations Act – A Review and Analysis*, London, Martin Robertson, 1975, p. 104
- ¹¹ Michael Moran, *The Politics of Industrial Relations – The Origins, Life and Death of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act*, London, Macmillan, 1977, p. 145

The hill farms are dying and the folk all but gone – aspects of rural employment, 1950-2000¹

Ian Roberts

Background

“The figures for change speak for themselves. They show that without a doubt the face of rural Britain has been almost totally transformed since the end of the Second World War in 1945. Intensive agriculture has altered the lowlands, changing a patchwork of woods, meadows and arable fields, divided by hedgerows, into huge blocks of intensive, chemical based crop production. In many areas landscapes that were once aesthetically pleasing and rich in many forms of wildlife have been turned into uniform factory farmland, where the wildlife remnants have to struggle to survive. Upland regions have not escaped, for there alien blocks of fast growing conifer trees have been planted, converting wildlife-rich areas of moorland and ancient forests into ecological deserts.”²

Less polemical writers than Robin Page echo his sentiments. Based on a substantial historical analysis, in 1989 David Grigg wrote, "The next 20 years will be a period of further radical change in agriculture, and indeed in the English countryside. Farming occupies only a small minority of the work-force in rural areas and the future of farming is only one consideration in possible policies for these areas. Farmers have lost the battle for public opinion in much the same way as landlords lost it in the period before the repeal of the Corn Laws. By the twenty first century, England will be not only a post-industrial society, but a post-agricultural society as well".³ And in the sixth year of that new century, Richard Benson concluded his account of his family's withdrawal from farming with equally chilling sentiments. "In 1939 there were 500,000 farms in Britain, including part time holdings. The majority of these farms were small mixed units of less than 50 acres, and one and a half million families made their living directly from agriculture. There are now 191,000 farms left, and of those 19,000 account for more than 50 per cent of national output. It is estimated that three out of four jobs in British agriculture have been lost since 1945".⁴

British rural society and those employed in it, especially in agriculture, have suffered considerably in the second half of the twentieth century. The commentators suggest that British agriculture and the countryside in which it is set have been transformed in such a way that it is now only one of many aspects of rural policy to be considered by politicians in the new millennium. Farming, so long the leading industry and employer of country people, has entered into a period in which it is run solely under business conditions and where it engages increasingly fewer people to the extent that, as Grigg suggests, it may be part of a post-agricultural society. If this has been the case, how has it taken place in Northumberland, what has been its effect in the county, what

forms of employment, if any, have come to replace farming and how effective have they been?

Before attempting to answer these questions it is essential to note that some of the factors that changed rural life after World War II had their origins well before that time. One of the most significant was the break-up of many great estates in the wake of the First World War and the possible change in ownership of as much as a quarter of the agricultural land in England.⁵ Out of this transformation of ownership there emerged many smaller estates and individual farms leading to a significant increase in the number of owner-occupier farmers with consequent changes in the nature of agricultural employment. Many jobs previously done by employees were now performed by members of the farmer's family while the financial assistance, provided in the past to tenants by some great estates in times of depression, disappeared.⁶ The reverberations of these activities were felt for many years and set some of the context for further changes after 1945.

At the same time, despite the long depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, urban Britain continued to expand. The largest town in Northumberland in 1911 was Newcastle-upon-Tyne with a population of 266 603 people, which became 286260 by 1931 and in 1951 was 291 724.⁷ As a result, some agricultural land around the town was taken for housing and industrial development and those displaced by this process often became urban dwellers taking up non-agricultural work, or moved away completely. Meanwhile many farm workers elsewhere in the countryside disliked the low wages, the limited prospects of promotion and the frequent manual nature of the work. They found Newcastle, along with other towns in Britain, offered a more attractive proposition and thus abandoned life in the countryside – a flight from the land which has not yet ceased.

Change in Northumberland – a case study

The comments which opened this paper apply to rural Britain as a whole and chronicle wide-ranging changes for the farming industry in particular as well as significant consequences for rural society in general. The nature of the transformation and its effects differed from one part of the country to another and in a county as large as Northumberland there has been considerable local diversity in their impact. Consequently, in order to analyse the problem more closely and answer the questions posed in the previous section of this paper, I propose to take an area within the county as a case study and examine in detail the changes that have taken place within it and consider the effects that these have had on the fortunes of those employed there.

The area selected is the valleys of the North Tyne and the Rede lying between Chollerton, just north of Hexham and the Scottish border. The valleys occupy an area of great natural beauty over a quarter of a million acres (100 000 hectares) in extent and during the period under review had a modest population living in villages, hamlets and outlying farms. The two largest centres of population are Bellingham in the North Tynedale and Otterburn in Redesdale - both approximately twenty miles from the nearest large town. From before 1950 until 1974, most of the area formed part of the Bellingham Rural District at which point local government changes transferred it to Tynedale District Council where it remained until 2009. One of the parishes, Elsdon, is geographically in the Rede valley but after 1974 was under the responsibility of a different District Council. The table below shows the demographic structure of the area and the long term changes in population in each of the valleys throughout the twentieth century.

Table 1
Decennial Population of parishes in North Tynedale and
Redesdale 1911-1991⁸

North Tynedale	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Bellingham and Tarsset	1569	1594	1469	1374	1460	1332	1328	1349
Birtley	397	353	303	266	190	155	157	155
Chollerton	1132	1245	1192	1059	791	841	813	744
Falstone and Kielder	872	834	474	709	805	580	539	499
Greystead	182	171	164	134	105	94	78	85
Wark	665	735	653	690	683	689	697	776
Redesdale								
Corsenside	640	718	708	587	511	425	449	424
Elsdon	403	368	383	343	249	200	165	198
Otterburn	333	350	361	624	555	564	1506	546
Rochester and Byrness	504	529	512	444	554	434	383	377
Totals	6687	6902	6219	6230	5903	5314	6115	5153

The decline in population shown in these figures represents a fall of 17.3% between 1951 and 1991, which is similar to the county as a whole. In relative terms this fall was at variance with that for the population in England and Wales which rose by 23.8% in the same period. In such a remote area as the North Tyne and Rede valleys with heavy reliance on employment in pastoral agriculture and in the light of the views expressed at the beginning of this paper, such an outcome from the last half century would seem fairly predictable. However, some of the movements in the

table require some explanation. Why was there such a marked fall in the population of Falstone and Kielder between 1921 and 1931 and such a remarkable recovery between 1951 and 1961? Why does Greystead's population fall unremittingly by over 50% over the century as a whole, a phenomenon shown nowhere else? Why does Otterburn's population ultimately outstrip that of Rochester and exhibit such a marked rise in 1981 and fall so rapidly by 1991? These anomalies will be explained in the remainder of the paper, but it is important to note that even in these two valleys, the demographic patterns show variations which have to be explained by individualistic patterns of employment that vary even across the region under study. The sources of these patterns lie in changes which took place in the economic structure of the valleys before 1950 but did not have their full impact until after the Second World War.

Land Ownership, Agriculture and Mining

Until the 1890s, the main industry in the two valleys was pastoral agriculture. Only small crops of oats, turnips and potatoes were grown on some of the more fertile farms and the resulting produce was used domestically for feeding the resident people and their livestock. The overwhelming majority of the land was owned by non-resident landowners and holdings were usually tenanted on long leases of up to twelve years in length. Farms tended to be occupied by the same families for many years as the cost of stocking and managing holdings, some of which were several thousand acres in size, restricted tenancy to wealthier families with knowledge of this type of pastoral farming. On some of the less fertile upland farms where there might be one sheep to every two or three acres of rough pasture, no other stock, other than a house cow or two, would be carried on the farm.⁹ The only other major industry in

the valleys was connected with the extraction of iron ore and coal. However, iron working took place at Bellingham only in the 1840s and at Ridsdale in the 1830s and '40s and between 1864 and 1879. Coal mining was more widespread.¹⁰ There were larger mines employing several men, such as at Hareshaw and Elsdon, as well as a number of smaller pits worked by one or two men for local sales. The two largest companies were in North Tynedale at Lewisburn on the Swinburne estate and on the Duke of Northumberland's estate at Plashetts where there were large numbers of miners employed. Both of these concerns closed down before 1950 but some smaller mines near Falstone continued to supply local customers until the 1980s.

However, from the 1890s, new undertakings began to take control of some of the agricultural land in the valleys for purposes



Mechanisation - constantly threatening jobs

other than farming. First, in the Rede valley, between 1894 and 1905, Catcleugh reservoir was constructed at the northern end of the river. The Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company bought up not only the land that was flooded but also much of the catchment area surrounding the lake. Although they leased out most of this property for farming, ownership was vested in a public company whose prime interest was water for Tyneside rather than the welfare of agricultural tenants.¹¹ The North Tyne valley had been considered as a potential site for a reservoir during the 1870s and 1880s, but it was not built.¹² Second, in 1910-1911, again in Redesdale, the Army began to show interest in acquiring a large area of land for use as an artillery range by the newly formed Territorial Army and eventually purchased over 19 000 acres of land from a number of local landowners. A camp was erected near Rochester and soldiers came from all over the country for artillery training, paving the way for increased use of the ranges during the First World War.¹³

Traditional land ownership in both valleys was disturbed in other ways. In the late 1880s, one of the oldest families in the North Tyne valley, the Charltons of Hesleyside, near Bellingham, attempted to sell their family estate.¹⁴ Over 20 000 acres of land was put on the market and over half was sold off either at the auction or by subsequent private purchase. The buyers continued to use the land for farming and field sports but the pattern of estate ownership had been broken up as a result of problems arising from the depression in agriculture at that time. This was a harbinger of a greater dispersal of property at the end the First World War when several estates in Redesdale and North Tynedale were sold and the land taken over by new proprietors, some of whom were owner-occupier farmers.¹⁵ The largest change to the traditional farming and mining activities in North Tynedale began to take place in the 1920s. Before the outbreak of war in 1914 and increasingly during the

conflict, the British government became concerned about the stocks of timber available in the country. In 1910, the Board of Agriculture commissioned research into possibilities for planting new forests but realisation of these schemes was postponed because of the war.¹⁶ Following wartime depletion of woodland, the government acted in 1919 to set up the Forestry Commission to begin planting trials in order to create new forests. In 1926, land was leased from the Duke of Northumberland at Smales farm in North Tynedale and experiments conducted to establish the most successful planting procedure. By 1930, the foresters had achieved their goal and sought land to plant large numbers of pine trees. On the death of the eighth Duke of Northumberland, the requirement to pay death duties¹⁷ enabled the Commission to purchase 47 000 acres (19 000 hectares) of land in North Tynedale from the Northumberland estate and from 1932 gangs of workers began more extensive tree planting in the valley. The work was slow as an infrastructure of roads and buildings had to be created so that the whole operation could be carried out efficiently and successfully. Former farmworkers were employed by the Commission, but others continued to work on farms not planted until after the Second World War.

The developments described above demonstrate that by the end of the Second World War in North Tynedale and Redesdale farming and mining had been challenged and partly supplanted by water extraction, military training and forestry. Traditional employment began to decline and new types of work were available for those who wished to take them up. What subsequently transpired in the period since 1950 is described and analysed below.¹⁸

Agriculture

Throughout the war and into the second half of the twentieth century, agriculture continued to be affected by land acquisition

and business plans made by other bodies than those connected with farming. It is not possible to chart these developments accurately for the North Tyne valley but it is for Redesdale. Using civil parish data, the approximate acreage of this valley available for farming was 92 000 acres. Table 2 shows ownership of the land by three non-agricultural bodies by the end of the twentieth century whose activities in purchasing the land had an impact on

Table 2

Non-agricultural ownership of land in Redesdale in the twentieth century

Water	Land purchased by the Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company for the construction Catcleugh lake and associated works 1894-1905. Whitelee Farm – 4017 acres Ramshope Farm – 1467 acres Lumsden Farm – 1166 acres Catcleugh Farm (part) – 350 acres Total – 7000 acres
Military	Land in Redesdale purchased by the War Office and successor government departments for the Otterburn Training Area 1911-1912 – 5974 acres 1940-1947 – 12 663 acres 1951-1952 – 1572 acres 1987-1988 – 1406 acres Total – 21615 acres
Forestry	Land purchased by the Forestry Commission by 1962 for the Redesdale Forest section of the Border Forest in Northumberland. Area under trees – 12056 acres Area to be planted – 109 acres Area under grazing etc. – 5087 acres Total – 17252 acres ¹⁹

farming. Although both the owners of Catcleugh reservoir and its catchment area and the Ministry of Defence have leased out land in their ownership for farming, the nature of their major activities have placed restrictions on the farmers and generally reduced the number of jobs available for agricultural workers. In a recent change of ownership, Whitelee, the farm at the very head of Redesdale, has been sold to the Northumbrian Wildlife Trust and its policies have reduced the stocking of the land so that at least three full time shepherds' posts have been lost. Much of the conservation work is carried out by volunteers under the supervision of wildlife rangers who do not live in the valley.

In the North Tyne valley, further land was purchased for forestry until 1969, at which point the forested area was divided into three main blocks; Kielder – 40 530 acres, Falstone – 36 960 acres and Wark – 33 830 acres, a total area of nearly 112 000 acres (45 072 hectares). Some land was deliberately not planted but was set aside to create smallholdings which were occupied by Forestry Commission employees who also acted as watchmen over parts of the forest paying particular attention to any fire danger. The impact on farming of these changes in landownership and industry is difficult to calculate. Two local writers estimate that about 50 000 to 60 000 breeding ewes were lost from the national flock while they also believe that taking the North Tyne and Redesdale forests together about 100 farms have either been lost in whole or part to the Forestry Commission.²⁰ These calculations showing the impact of afforestation do not include those areas which have been privately planted with woodland but which have also brought about a significant loss of farming land. For those farmers who remained, the difficulties of farming in an upland area were eased by post-war legislation. The Hill Farming Act of 1946 and the Agriculture Act of 1947 both gave long term stability and support to the farming industry through the medium

of subsidies for agricultural improvements and price control mechanisms. In North Tynedale and Redesdale, post-war support enabled the growth of a small scale dairying industry. New types of equipment and the establishment of the Milk Marketing Board encouraged small herds of dairy cattle to be kept on some upland farms. As Lawrence Dagg described,²¹ his father kept up to a dozen cows and received a monthly milk cheque. This altered the cash flow on the farm and enabled new machinery such as tractors to be introduced more speedily. Mr Dagg recalled that they bought their “grey fergie” around about 1950 and dispensed with horses. However, the dairy work was carried out by members of the Dagg family and provided no employment for other workers.

The introduction of mechanisation together with loss of land to farming reduced job opportunities for potential farm workers. H C Pawson noted that in 1930 there were 7745 full time male farm workers in the county and 2221 women and girls making 9966 regular whole-time workers; by 1951 this had fallen to 8708 and by 1961 to 7800.²² In terms of the trends for the country as a whole they follow a similar pattern to the rest of England and Wales although the decline is not as severe.²³

Helpful though Pawson’s figures are, they do not illustrate the pattern in smaller areas nor show the effects of the introduction of new industries such as forestry. Table 3 shows agricultural employment in selected parishes in North Tynedale and Redesdale in 1931, 1951 and 1971. Two of these, Rochester and Wark, were particularly affected by the work of the Forestry Commission while Chollerton had a higher proportion of arable farming than the other parishes.

Employment in farm work had fallen slightly between 1931 and 1951. There had been no serious decline that could not be accounted for by post-war adjustments and the gradual incorporation of mechanisation into farming as a result of the steady adoption of new, tractor based methods. By 1971 the position had completely

Table 3**Agricultural employment in 5 selected parishes – 1931, 1951 and 1971²⁴**

Parish	1931			
	FTM	FTW	PTM	PTW
North Tynedale				
Bellingham	62	11	7	0
Chollerton	76	23	4	0
Wark	62	30	12	1
		Redesdale		
Corsenside	28	3	5	2
Elsdon	39	8	2	0
Otterburn	25	5	1	1
Rochester	39	5	4	1
Total	329	95	32	4
Parish	1951			
	FTM	FTW	PTM	PTW
North Tynedale				
Bellingham	53	3	12	1
Chollerton	70	2	4	1
Wark	55	4	16	6
		Redesdale		
Corsenside	28	3	3	2
Elsdon	28	1	1	0
Otterburn	38	0	10	1
Rochester	33	2	10	3
Total	305	15	58	14
Parish	1971			
	FTM	FTW	PTM	PTW
		North Tynedale		
Bellingham	22	3	6	1
Chollerton	39	2	4	1
Wark	10	4	9	6
		Redesdale		
Corsenside	12	3	3	2
Elsdon	14	1	1	0
Otterburn	17	0	1	0
Rochester	19	2	5	3
Total	133	15	38	14

Key

FTM	Full-time males
FTW	Full-time women and girls
PTM	Part-time males
PTW	Part-time women and girls

changed. The number of full-time male farm workers had fallen by 57% and by 35% for part-time workers.²⁵ The greatest fall had taken place in Wark where there had been a reduction of more than 80% in the size of the work force. Chollerton and Rochester were the only two parishes where the reduction in the number of employed full-time male workers was less than 50% and this is probably explained by the mixed husbandry to be found on many farms in Chollerton while the land purchased for forestry in Redesdale had yet to be planted and there was still work for shepherds. Except at Chollerton, dairying as an important part of farm income had ceased. There are several reasons for this. During the 1950s the railway service was decreased in the North Tyne valley and eventually withdrawn in 1963. The churn collection service by lorry that replaced it was gradually superseded by a tanker service that required farmers to adopt on-line milking to bulk tanks for milk storage – a process that was made compulsory when the Co-operative creamery at Stocksfield was closed and the milk had to be transported a longer distance. Installing the new type of milking system was beyond the means of many farmers and in any case their herds were not large enough to warrant such expenditure. Lawrence Dagg explained that this encouraged most of the dairy farmers to turn their milking herds into herds for suckler beef production with a consequent saving on labour. In Chollerton, dairying was able to continue because there were larger herds of dairy cattle. Jobs in Chollerton were lost as a result of mechanisation and the amalgamation of some farms to enable a single holding to benefit from economies of scale.

Writing in the late 1950s, Pawson was aware of the way in which farming was changing in the uplands. “For many years the shortage of highly skilled labour, and the possible dearth of shepherds for the hills, have been questions of continuing concerns to farmers in the county. Fewer sons of shepherds, especially on the hills, decide

to follow their fathers' calling."²⁶ He was also concerned with the withdrawal of some transport services and the breaking of traditional ties with the land that took place for many younger people as a result of educational changes when village schools were amalgamated and children had to travel further to school. In addition, he considered that the imposition of compulsory National Service encouraged many young men to leave their native villages to work elsewhere.

The trends apparent by 1971 have not abated significantly although precise figures are hard to obtain.²⁷ Outbreaks of Foot and Mouth disease in 1965 and 2001 have played their part in reducing the size of the rural work force. Where farmers have simply given up or retired, the farms have been broken up with houses and buildings sold for "development" and the land incorporated in neighbouring farms. As jobs in agriculture have disappeared, what has grown up to replace them?



Replanting felled woodland - 1950s

Forestry

By 1950, extensive purchase of land and subsequent tree planting was taking place in North Tynedale and Redesdale and consequently

the number of foresters in the county rose from 452 men and 3 women in 1921 to 831 men and 29 women in 1951.²⁷ Yet more land had to be planted – indeed over 50% of the forest was planted between 1945 and 1960 – and it was anticipated that a much larger workforce would be required.

Accommodation for forest workers had been scarce up to this time. Before the war this had been solved by recruitment of displaced agricultural workers with some houses being built at Byrness in 1936/7 and temporary huts being provided at Kielder.²⁹ In 1950, Dr Thomas Sharp, a well-known planning consultant, was employed to design a set of forestry villages in both North Tynedale and Redesdale. Initially eight were planned on a scale large enough to house up to 2000 workers in England while another group was envisaged to be necessary in Scotland. In the event, only five were constructed of which three were in England – Kielder at the head of the North Tyne, Byrness in upper Redesdale and Stonehaugh near Wark. Some indication of the contrast between vision and reality is provided by the example of Stonehaugh. The initial plan “included 158 houses, two pubs, two churches, five shops, a school and a village hall”³⁰ which were to be constructed over a five year period from 1950 to 1955. No village achieved anything like this size. Manpower requirements were revised so that 35 houses were built at Stonehaugh (the only amenity building constructed, a village hall, was a former prisoner-of-war camp hut!), 47 at Byrness and 63 at Kielder, a total figure less than the number originally thought to be appropriate for Stonehaugh. In fact, all five villages in England and Scotland together with other housing in existing villages amounted to only 300 dwellings in total.

RH, a retired forester, explained that for the first few years in any new forest there was an unremitting round of fencing, draining, planting and weeding to be carried out. In Kielder, as elsewhere,

the gangs of men employed were often former farm workers who had changed their careers as their farms had been planted. Some years later the trees could be thinned thus producing some timber for marketing. This happened at Kielder as early as 1953 and as the forest matured so more and more wood was produced. At first some of this timber was sent away by train and lorry but, with the withdrawal of the railway, all future production was transported by road. In the period up till the 1970s all of the work connected with timber production was carried out by employees of the Forestry Commission. Not only were there gangs of 15 to 25 workers under foresters or gangers employed in fencing, draining, planting, weeding, thinning and felling but the Commission also had transport sections, road engineers, an estates division responsible for houses and other buildings, gamekeepers and rangers to patrol the forests and a host of other employees. Many of the jobs were also manual. For example, it was only in the 1960s and 1970s that the chain saw gradually began to replace the axe and cross-cut saw for felling trees.

From the late 1970s onwards, many processes became mechanised. RH recollected that the first heavy duty vehicles used at Kielder came from Scandinavia and were able to take the trees out of the forest ready to be cut up and placed on timber lorries. These machines were soon replaced or reinforced by more complex types that could fell trees, remove the branches and cut them to lengths ready for transporting. Although expensive, such machines could be worked for twenty four hours every day and together with shifts of operators and their own support crews, it became possible to carry out a continuous operation to clear fell sections of the forest. At the same time the Commission began to abandon its former practice of ensuring that every task was carried out by its own workers. Gradually, through the 1980s and 1990s more and more processes were carried out by independent contractors either

directly employed for specific tasks or who had tendered for and won a contract by submitting the best price and terms for the job. This change reduced the number of directly employed staff so that at the present time most of the work carried out by the Commission staff is of a supervisory nature while practical work is undertaken by contractors. Many contractors live away from the area in locations where they are able to tender for contracts in forests across the north of England and the number of their employees is small as so much of the work is now mechanised.

One of the results of these changes is that the number of those working in the woods has fallen drastically over the years and there are fewer opportunities for employment in the industry. Another is that the number of forest workers living in the forest villages is almost non-existent. RH believed that by the year 2000 there might have been one or two in Byrness and Stonehaugh and a few more at Kielder. The hope that the loss of agricultural work in the valleys would be replaced by forestry employment has not been fulfilled. This has repercussions wider than North Tynedale and Redesdale because the model of forestry operation adopted at Kielder has been transplanted elsewhere. Those wishing for employment in the countryside must look elsewhere for work.

Employment on the Ranges

Table 2 showed the growth of the military estate in upper Redesdale during the twentieth century. This was only part of the Otterburn estate built up by the Army which extended to over 56 000 acres by 1987.³¹ Originally intended to provide artillery training for members of the Territorial Army, the main centre was at Birdhopecraig near Rochester where a seasonal tented camp was erected. During the First World War the training area was used more extensively to train Regular soldiers as well as Territorials but

after the war ended it reverted to its original purpose. The Army was almost completely responsible for running the camp and there were few civilian employees – even laundry work was carried out by local women in their own homes. The dirty washing was delivered and collected by a “washing sergeant” so that civilians did not enter the Army camp and soldiers were not tempted to abscond.

After war broke out in 1939, the training area was not only used more extensively but additional land was purchased between October 1940 and March 1943 doubling the overall size of the range. New facilities were established and a permanent camp/base was erected at Otterburn and training carried on throughout the year. After the war the training period reverted to its former timetable but during the 1950s, as more land was purchased, changes were also introduced into the regime at Otterburn. Army activity took place all the year round and, in 1959, the former ranges were designated an All Arms Training Area while from the 1950s more civilian workers began to be employed at the Training Area. There was a broad range of jobs available and they were filled principally by local people. Some of these were former National Service men who moved over from working in the Army to civilians workers for the Army.

DS, an employee at the Training Area, explained that the most significant increase in civilian working began after 1963 when permanent buildings were erected at the Rochester and Otterburn camps and when a greater presence of infantry on the Training Area necessitated a larger civilian support group. During the building operations there may well have been as many as 200 civilians working at Otterburn and Redesdale but by the 1970s the permanent complement of workers was about 120 people.

In a similar manner to the changes at the Forestry Commission which reduced the number of employees, so there were modifications

to the regime at Otterburn which diminished the number of civilian workers. Government policy during the 1980s and 1990s had been to shed many of the directly employed groups of workers engaged by different ministries and branches of government. Agency and contractual working in which the employees were no longer part of the Civil Service became widespread. In the case of the Otterburn Training Area, the management of the estate has partly been placed under the control of Landmarc Support Services who are responsible for the employment of most of the civilians working there. This led to the demolition of the camp near Rochester while the civilian work force has been reduced to about 80 employees. Mechanisation and other technical changes have also been introduced so that the type of employee recruited has changed as there is a different range of jobs to be done. Consequently, some of the more recent employees, who have the required specialist skills, live significant distances from the Training Area and commute daily to work. Once more job opportunities for rural workers diminish and younger people move away to seek employment.

Quarrying

Quarrying for stone for building and civil engineering played an important part in the life of the upland valleys throughout Northumberland. In 1921, the census recorded that 687 men across the county were engaged full-time in quarrying. With changes in demands for building products, this figure had fallen to 308 by 1951, but in North Tynedale and Redesdale there were still two important quarries open at this date.³² One was the Blaxter quarry on the Ottercop hills just south of Otterburn. A pamphlet produced by the operators in 1950 advertises the wares produced at that time. Rough stone was available but the workers were capable of producing ready dressed stone of a high quality that could be

used in restoration work and refurbishing buildings damaged during the war.³³ The quarry continued to operate until 1983 by which time it was owned by Tarmac Limited. Tarmac found that by this time the market for dressed stone had shrunk to the point where operations were no longer economical and the quarry closed. It reopened for occasional extraction of large blocks of freestone in the 1990s but only one or two specialist workers were required for this work and no new jobs were available for local people.

The other large commercial quarry in the area is at Barrasford in Chollerton parish. The major company working this quarry by the 1920s was Northumberland Whinstone Limited. The company had several other quarries and, as one of the leading quarry owners in north east England, was also responsible for setting up the Quarry Owners' Association in 1905. By 1929, it was the sole operator quarrying stone at Barrasford and also operated a concrete and kerbing factory. The company continued to use the railway in the inter-war period but in the 1950s began to make increasing use of road haulage. They were therefore able to extend their business and were not hindered when the Border Counties line closed in the 1960s. By this time the company was under the control of Mr Ernest Marshall, a former president of the Quarry Owners' Association. During the 1970s, Mr Marshall and his son were approached by Tarmac Roadstone who wished to buy the company and its rights to operate at Barrasford. The sale was eventually negotiated and the quarry with at least 15 million tons of reserves passed into the ownership of Tarmac. Due to mechanisation they employ fewer workers than in former years but staff are recruited from time to time and it must be seen as an important local employer.³⁴

Kielder Water

Between 1961 and 1971 demand for water in north east England

increased so greatly that the Northumbrian Water Authority believed it was vital to construct a new large reservoir to supply those areas of the region where both industrial and residential customers would require additional supply. The area that was selected for this venture was the upper North Tyne valley. As a result of some opposition, it took nearly three years before the Kielder Water Order came into operation in May 1974.³⁵ From an employment point of view, the first part of the scheme was negative as large acreages of agricultural and forestry land were to be flooded with some consequent loss of jobs. However, several hundred workers were employed in the many aspects of creating Kielder Water. The project took nearly eight years to complete and provided local employment and extra income for those providing accommodation for workers whose homes were elsewhere in the country. Additionally there were some jobs from which local people eventually left equipped with enhanced and portable skills.

When construction was finally completed, it was clear that there were two aspects to employment arising from the scheme. First, posts with the Water Authority actually managing the reservoir and the works associated which included new tasks such as fish hatchery management and running a small hydro-electricity generation scheme. Second, it was apparent from the outset there was to be a recreational and tourist dimension to the project. Activity began at a very early stage as the Kielder Sailing Club enrolled its first members and held races in 1982. Information centres and facilities were provided for visitors who wished to take part in water sports, fishing and bird watching. Footpaths and cycle ways were also opened to permit people to explore the area round the lake. These activities have generated employment for local people but for how many and for how long are questions still to be answered as they are linked to the one area left to explore in this survey of rural employment, that of tourism.

Tourism

In September 1964, in a film made of the last train journey on the Wansbeck Valley line, the commentator described it as a visit to the “remote village of Bellingham”.³⁶ This typified the attitude of many people in the county to this area of Northumberland and partly explains the limited attention paid to the idea of tourism. The creation of the Northumberland National Park in the 1950s helped through publicity which drew in more visitors and provided some jobs for local people.

In the past tourists had been encouraged and, for example, a guide book to Bellingham was produced in the 1920s. A revised version followed in 1974 that went through several editions.³⁷

These books drew attention to the National Park and the surrounding scenery with its attraction for walkers and cyclists. The golf course was mentioned and the possibility of field sports such as fishing, shooting and fox-hunting, which were available locally. Lists were included of hotels and other accommodation, churches and the retail establishments in the area which encouraged some visitors and assisted shopkeepers and other service providers in earning enough money to keep open.

The decline of retail trade and the job opportunities that went with it had been severe in the period after the Second World War. For example, Wark had 14 shops before the First World War, 11 by 1939 and two by the end of the century. Smaller villages, such as Rochester and Ridsdale, lost all shops and garages by the 1990s.³⁸ Any increase in visitors was likely to help stave off further closures, but major initiatives were very costly so that the advent of the Kielder project in the 1980s was welcomed as a source of jobs and more general prosperity through tourist spending. The late 1990s saw the growth of local initiatives such as the Wild Redesdale tourism association in the Rede valley and plans for

further developments at Kielder. In addition to the problem of the length of the tourist season (often seen as only Easter to October), the Foot and Mouth epidemic of 2001, rising costs of fuel and the strength of the pound vis-à-vis other currencies have added to the difficulties to be overcome before tourism makes a very much larger impact on the rural scene. Government, through its local offices and partnerships with other groups, has tried to strengthen the tourist trade but evaluation of these tourist initiatives at the end of the twentieth century is still being made and it is difficult to see just how much new work has become available in the countryside.

Conclusion

In attempting to understand the problem of employment in rural areas during the period 1950 to 2000, the case study has provided many answers. Agriculture has shrunk considerably as a source of employment but the reasons for this are not the same in all areas. Amalgamation of farms, mechanisation and the use of land for other purposes all played their part as did government initiatives and priorities as well as influences exerted by European policies. However, these various factors manifest themselves in different ways depending on the place in which they occur. There are also particular local events, such as the military intervention into Redesdale that are almost unique to that area and create conditions not present in many other places in the country. What is also clear is that some of the new entrants on to the stage of local employment have initially provided new work opportunities but then contracted with damaging effects on local economies. This provides one of the most important lessons for those seeking to initiate new ventures – they must have long-term viability if they are to attract back younger people to the area, strengthen the rural economy and prevent some villages becoming simply communities for the retired!

- ¹ From *Rennie's Song*, a ballad of the lost farms of the 1950s cited in Tony Hopkins, *Northumberland – the Official National Park Guide*. (Pevensey Press, 2002), p. 67.
- ² Robin Page, *The Fox and the Orchid*, (Quiller Press, 1987, 2nd Ed., 2004), p. 12.
- ³ David Grigg, *English Agriculture – An Historical Perspective*, (Basis Blackwell, 1989), p.249.
- ⁴ Richard Benson, *The Farm*, (Hamish Hamilton, 2005) p. 229.
- ⁵ There is still debate about the details of this huge change in land ownership. *The Agricultural History Review* devoted half a recent edition of the journal (Volume 55, Part II, 2007) to a consideration of the debate following a conference in 2005.
- ⁶ *Land had also been bought for other uses as described in the sections below dealing with military activities and forestry.*
- ⁷ Census of England and Wales, County Reports for Northumberland, 1921 and 1951. Boundary changes make it difficult to cite comparable figures for later in the century but the trends from census reports are clear.
- ⁸ Data is taken from Census of England and Wales, County Reports for Northumberland, 1921, 1951, 1971, and 1991. The titles of the parishes have been slightly altered to overcome changes in census collection procedures and local government changes thus creating parochial areas which are the same for each decennial survey permitting like-for-like comparison.
- ⁹ Willowbog, a farm at the northern end of North Tynedale, carried 1700 sheep and two cows in 1920. Interview with the former farmer W A Robson by I D Roberts, March 2004.
- ¹⁰ For iron mining see I D Roberts, "Iron making in North Tynedale and Redesdale in the Nineteenth Century: the problems of rural exploitation and diversification", (*Northern History*, XXXVI:2, September 2000); on coal see the relevant chapters in Beryl Charlton, *Upper North Tynedale*, (Northumbrian Water Authority, 1987).
- ¹¹ For the Catcleugh project and the developments in Redesdale see R W Rennison, *Water to Tyneside*, (Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company, 1979), pages 207-226.
- ¹² K Wilson and S Leathart.(eds.), *The Kielder Forests – a Forestry Commission Guide*, (Forestry Commission, 1982) page 10.
- ¹³ Beryl Charlton, *Fifty Centuries of Peace and War – an archaeological survey of the Otterburn Training Area*, (Ministry of Defence, 1996), pages 9 and 155-6.

- ¹⁴ F M L Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), page 320.
- ¹⁵ The Selby Estate in Coquetdale and Redesdale went under the hammer in 1914, outlying portions of the Redesdale Estate were sold in 1919, the Clayton estate in North Tynedale, which contained some extensive former Charlton property, was sold in 1920 and the Morrison-Bell estate near Otterburn was sold in 1921: the total acreage of these properties was well in excess of 50 000 acres.
- ¹⁶ K Wilson and S Leathart.(eds.), *The Kielder Forests – a Forestry Commission Guide*, (Forestry Commission, 1982) pages 10-11.
- ¹⁷ Richard Lomas, *A Power in the Land: The Percys*, (Tuckwell Press, 1999), page 207.
- ¹⁸ Interviews with local informants have been used in the compilation of this paper. At the request of some interviewees, their identities have been limited to initials.
- ¹⁹ See R W Rennison, *Water to Tyneside*, (Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company, 1979), Beryl Charlton, *Fifty Centuries of Peace and War – an archaeological survey of the Otterburn Training Area*, (Ministry of Defence, 1996) and John Walton (ed.), *The Border – a national forest park guide*, (H M S O, 1962). The total land purchased amounts to 45867 acres which was slightly below 50% of the agricultural land in the valley.
- ²⁰ C Dalton and D Clegg, *Daft Laddies – farming tales of North Tyne and Rede fifty years on*, (Glen Graphics, Wooler, 2003) pages 61-62.
- ²¹ Interview with Lawrence Dagg of the Hott Farm by I D Roberts and the Rev. I F Downs, April 2004.
- ²² H C Pawson, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Northumberland*, (Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1961), page 218.
- ²³ Alan Armstrong, *The Farmworkers – A Social and Economic History 1770-1980*, (Batsford, 1988), page 224..
- ²⁴ The National Archives, Kew, MAF 68 – June Parochial Returns of Agriculture for Northumberland 1931, 1951 and 1971. More recent data is currently unavailable. Corsenside is the name of the parish containing the villages of East and West Woodburn and Ridsdale.
- ²⁵ Armstrong's figures suggest that the fall in the number of full-time male workers in the period 1949 to 1980 was approximately 42 %, a figure well below that for the seven parishes shown in the table.
- ²⁶ H C Pawson, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Northumberland*, (Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1961), page 41.

- ²⁷ Ministry census returns are unavailable after 1971. Armstrong's figures come from a national survey. National Census methods about occupations also changed after 1971. .
- ²⁸ Census of England and Wales, County Reports for Northumberland, 1921 and 1951.
- ²⁹ Beryl Charlton, *The Story of Redesdale*, (Northumberland County Council, 1985), page 69.
- ³⁰ M Murray, *Stonehaugh – a Forest Village*, (Abbey Press, Hexham, 2005), page 4.
- ³¹ Statistical evidence is drawn from Beryl Charlton, *Fifty Centuries of Peace and War – an archaeological survey of the Otterburn Training Area*, (Ministry of Defence, 1996) additional information is taken from Richard Cross and Beryl Charlton, *Then and Now – a snapshot of Otterburn Training Area*, (Defence Estates, 2004).
- ³² Census of England and Wales, County Reports for Northumberland, 1921 and 1951.
- ³³ Redesdale Society Archives, Blaxters Limited, *Blaxter Freestone*, (Hindson and Andrew Reid Limited, 1950).
- ³⁴ Details supplied by the late E Marshall (personal communication, 1979) and Tarmac Limited.
- ³⁵ Detailed accounts of the planning and construction of Kielder Water can be found in David Stoker, *A Short History of Kielder Water*, (Northumbrian Water Authority, 1982) and Beryl Charlton, *Upper North Tynedale*, (Northumbrian Water Authority, 1987).
- ³⁶ In K Hartnell (ed.), *Remember the Wannie Line – The Wansbeck Valley Railway 1865-1966*, (Hartnell Images Limited, 1990).
- ³⁷ Bellingham Rural District Council, *Bellingham and District*, (1923) and Bellingham Parish Council, *Bellingham – Capital of the North Tyne*. (5th edition, 1980).
- ³⁸ I Roberts and M West, *Bellingham, North Tynedale and Redesdale*, (Tempus, 1998) page30.

Local Government in the North-east in the post-war years – the politics of the local versus the politics of politics

David Byrne

The issues that emerged in local government in the North-east in the years from 1945 until the early twenty-first century could sustain a score of Ph.D. theses and indeed should do exactly that. This short article is really about delimiting the issues that deserve much closer detailed attention and suggesting some themes for exploration. Let me begin by saying very firmly that local government matters in relation to labour and particularly labour history because it provides the context for much of everyday political action. In other words, the politics of local government provide the setting for much of the politics of social reproduction and indeed given the significance of the components of the welfare state as locales of employment, of much of the politics of actual production as well.¹ And of course the role of elected local councillor provides a political niche for political activists in far larger numbers than that of MP or MEP.

Let us begin by remembering something about the politics of local government in the North-east from the development of the modern local government system in England, which we can date from the establishment of modern county councils by the Local Government Act of 1888 through until the Second World War. We have to remember that for much of this period until 1930 not only did we have local authorities but also Boards of Guardians as established under the New Poor Law of 1834 and responsible for administering locally funded income maintenance as poor relief. This matters because one of the big working-class political issues of the inter-war years, particularly in mining areas around the 1926 lockout, was the control of the Poor Law and hence of relief to strikers and their families. This continued as an issue in more general terms after legislation in 1929 transferred this function to the Public Assistance Committees of County Boroughs and County Councils and a salient feature of central/local government relations revolved around the control by Tory and National central government over Labour controlled local government in relation to the politics of relief. This transfer into generic local government of income maintenance and, very importantly health and social care responsibilities, was the culmination of a concentration of services into single elected bodies that had involved the elimination of separate Boards of Education and Health earlier in the twentieth century.²

The other big political issue of pre-war local politics revolved around the construction and particularly the standards of construction and rent levels of council housing. Particularly in urban areas in the North-east, enormous fortunes had been made from the development of working-class housing (of a historically high standard under building by-law imposed standards but also reflecting high working-class incomes – see Manders 1974

for a good account here) by 'an urban bourgeoisie' which had provided much of the personnel of anti-socialist political parties in contested local council elections. Much of the actual production and realization apparatus for privately rented housing was easily transferred to owner occupied housing in the inter-war years and a constant if often low key battle about the scale and standard of municipal housing was a constant of local politics in those years (see North Tyneside CDP 1977). The local politics and political personalities of this period are worth serious detailed attention. I would draw particular attention to Councillor Edmund Hill on the anti-Labour side and Alderman Maggie Sutton for Labour in South Shields as well worth careful consideration as two fascinating and, in Hill's case somewhat contradictory, personalities. Add in Labour's Alderman Gompertz and you have a real multi-national and complex mix.

However, the focus here is on the post-war years after Labour's victory of 1945 had established a version of the welfare state which was to persist unchallenged until the late 1970s, and on developments after that date. It is really important to realize that Labour by no means exercised unchallenged control over North-east local politics through that period. It was effectively hegemonic in the coal mining areas of the then Counties of Durham and Northumberland, although Northumberland with its large rural and suburban areas was not always Labour controlled. Likewise, in urban Tyne and Wear and still more in what became Teesside, it had serious anti-Labour opponents. These were not usually Liberals as the Liberal party was to all intents and purposes wiped out in local politics in this period. Rather they were usually Conservative or some local organized variant such as the Progressives in South Shields. Many of the Liberals of the inter-war years in the North-east had become National Liberals (like Thomas Magnay Gateshead's

MP at that time), and in effect mutated into Conservatives in the post-war period. The political support for these anti-Labour parties and coalitions certainly included the remaining bourgeoisie, both grand and petty, but also included much of the large urban industrial middle-class – the technical and office staffs of very large industrial enterprises including nationalized industries. Moreover, many of the managerial and professional personnel of the local state and NHS were anti-socialist. The Conservative activist head teacher, doctor or health manager, and even nurse, was common in this period.

In consequence, whereas Labour rule in Durham was absolute outside rural areas, in the County Boroughs of Gateshead and South Shields whilst Labour usually prevailed, it had to fight hard to retain control and Northumberland County was contested and changed hands. For example in the early 1970s Labour only retained control of Gateshead CB through its monopoly of Aldermen – those members of the local council elected not directly but by other councillors. Newcastle City in its then boundaries was more often non-Labour controlled than controlled by Labour, although Ardagh in his fascinating study of provincial European cities (1979) concluded that the Tory Alderman Grey who was the Leader of Newcastle City Council seemed much more proletarian than his Communist equivalent in Bologna who was decidedly high bourgeois in style! Tynemouth CB was almost always a Tory stronghold as was the municipal borough (with less powers and particularly no control over Education) of Whitley Bay.

The main focus of this article is on developments since the re-organization of local government into something which more or less resembles its present geographical if not functional form in 1974. However, the 1950s and 1960s in particular are a very interesting period. This was of course the era of corruption

associated with the figures of the charismatic and charming Dan Smith in Newcastle and the thuggish and pig ignorant Back Handy Andy Cunningham who in the early 1960s dominated both the regional GMWU and Durham County Council (see Fitzwalter and Taylor 1981 for a good journalistic account of this aspect). There were significant political arguments in the urban areas, again centring primarily on the scale and quality of development of municipal housing. It is worth remembering that literally tens of thousands of council dwellings were built in the North-east in the 1950s and 1960s, which was of course a primary basis for corruption during the period. In the 1960s in particular the politics of housing changed form in that it became less a politics of Labour versus anti-Labour and more a politics of technocrats in association with Labour imposing housing forms on working-class populations and areas, often against the wishes of the residents of those areas. This is being repeated on a smaller scale with the absurd pathfinder schemes of the early twenty first century. Dennis (1970) and Davies (1972) give good accounts of this particular set of issues.

Let us turn to the central focus of this article – the actual politics of the form of local government in North-east England over the last forty years. By form is meant here both the geographical and administrative organization of elected local government itself and the way in which non-elected QUANGOs (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation) under both Tory and New ‘Labour’ governments since 1979 have taken away many of the functions of those elected bodies. We can begin with the geographical and administrative issues themselves. By the 1960s, North-eastern local government was a geographical mess. This has been recognized for Tyneside in the 1930s when a Royal Commission had recommended the establishment of a single County Borough style authority for the whole of urban Tyneside (1937). Nothing came of this but on

Teesside Middlesbrough was merged with Stockton and Redcar to create the Teesside County Borough in the late 1960s. On both industrial rivers nineteenth and twentieth century urban and industrial development had led to the emergence of a continuously built up industrial conurbation which in the late 1960s on Tyneside included the following local government units: South Shields, Gateshead, Newcastle and Tynemouth CBs; Whitley Bay, Wallsend and Jarrow Municipal Boroughs; Gosforth, Longbenton, Hebburn, Boldon, Felling, Blaydon, Whickham, Ryton and Newburn Urban Districts. In all except the County Boroughs important services and in particular education, were under the control of either Durham or Northumberland County Council. Local autonomy was jealously protected by local councillors and officials although as the 1930s Royal Commission had found, this was much less of an issue for the general population. The extreme example of this was perhaps provided by Gosforth, which pumped its sewage over a watershed rather than discharge it into the Newcastle sewerage system and run the risk thereby of being subject to amalgamation with that City which had taken in the urban districts of Benwell and Walker earlier in the twentieth century.

The Wilson Labour Government of 1966-70 attempted to sort this out by establishing a Royal Commission chaired by Redcliffe-Maud, which reported in 1969. Dan Smith was a member of this commission and part of the majority that recommended the establishment of single tier multi-function authorities across England outside Greater London. In the North-east this would have created the following units: Northumberland, Tyneside, Durham, Sunderland and East Durham (i.e. what became Easington District), and Teesside (i.e. what became Cleveland County plus Whitby in North Yorkshire). In a carefully drafted minority report, Derek Senior the *Guardian's* Planning Correspondent, recommended the

establishment of city regions with districts below them. The City Regions would be the structure planning authorities with most service delivery being a district level function. The North-east's regions would be Newcastle including all of Northumberland and Tyneside together with Sunderland and most of Durham, and Teesside being Teesside including Whitby, Darlington and Hartlepool. If Richmondshire and Hambleton were added to Teesside this organization would still make excellent sense as a city region organization of the North-east today.

However, with the election of the Tories into office in 1970 neither scheme was implemented and instead the London Model was extended nationwide with two tier authorities based on Metropolitan Counties with Metropolitan Boroughs – in the North-east, Tyne and Wear, and Counties with County Districts – in the North-east, Northumberland, Durham and Cleveland i.e. Teesside plus Hartlepool. Substantial areas of Northumberland and Durham were incorporated into Tyne and Wear and of Durham and Yorkshire into Cleveland, but not Whitby. Tyne and Wear was a structure planning authority with local planning and services provided by the five Metropolitan Boroughs. The Counties of Northumberland, Durham and Cleveland continued to provide Education and Social Services in particular with Housing being a county district function. The amalgamation was not uncontested nor always accepted. For example most of the territory of the former Ryton Urban District which had been solid Labour territory in the former County Durham was represented for many years on Gateshead MBC council by Rytonians led by the former Clerk to the UDC. Importantly local council group rules allowed many individuals to be both district and county councillors although Labour, in Tyne and Wear at least, later ruled this out. The new authorities in 1974 were all Labour controlled on coming into office at the County level although some districts and in

particular rural districts were either Tory or Independent dominated.

The history of local government after 1974 in the North-east is a rather bizarre combination of local Labour hegemony, certainly outside Stockton, Darlington and deep rural areas (with the Wear Valley, which combined rural and ex-coalfield areas, being an interesting exception) and continued reduction in the powers of elected local authorities with the transfer of functions to QUANGOs. This process was begun by the Tories under Thatcher and continued not only unabated but in fact accelerated under New Labour. Now towards the end of New Labour's inglorious reign, the Labour hegemony at the local level has begun to crumble and indeed collapse.

The first Tory assault was the abolition of the Metropolitan Counties in 1986. This was generally understood at the time as being collateral damage in relation to Tory hostility to the Greater London Council although the then 'People's Republic of South Yorkshire' had also annoyed Thatcher. Tyne and Wear went with the rest. At this time, local Labour did maintain a unified opposition to the abolition, although many district council leaders quietly welcomed it. This was particularly the case in relation to Newcastle where Tyne and Wear's rather sensible transport policies had provoked opposition. This meant that the conurbation no longer had a structure planning authority and had to turn to joint boards for the running of former county functions. These were split up to leads [??] at the metropolitan borough level and became to varying degrees locales for contest based on localism among those districts. Some functioned better than others but personal participation in one of the more effective demonstrated to me that to a considerable degree they became primarily about the distribution of spoils to 'your own territory'. In 1987 the Tyne and Wear Urban Development Corporation was established as a QUANGO. It had planning powers and territory in all Tyne Wear

Districts except Gateshead. Despite general Labour party hostility in principle to the TWDC, local council leaders served as board members. TWDC's main achievements were the sterilization of irreplaceable deep water fronting sites by the construction of large numbers of banal housing schemes and retail parks. They destroyed modern shipyards in Sunderland in this way and rendered one of the most valuable marine sites in Europe, what is now called Royal Quays at North Shields, useless for the foreseeable future. In contrast with the Structure Planning process, which had contained serious elements of participation and even democratic control, TWDC ran a profit led land development regime with no proper strategic direction.

Whilst the County Level and Gateshead MBC functioned rather well as political entities, other Tyne Wear districts were marked by intense political disputes within Labour groups. In South Tyneside, this was entirely a matter of localism with Jarrow and South Shields councillors continually at each others' throats. The organization of the Labour Party around parliamentary constituency General Management Committees facilitated this kind of conflict since the local government District Parties were much weaker entities. In North Tyneside, the battle was between an older and much more working-class right wing faction and more middle-class and a younger more left wing faction who were often, although not always, incomers. This ultimately led to a split with the old guard standing and being defeated as 'Labour against Militant' although the wife of one of this group is now North Tyneside's recently elected Tory Mayor and one of the leading lights of the left is now the arch Blairite MP for part of the area – Steven Byers. Sunderland for many years was under the strict control of a real party boss – Charlie Slater, a tough and authoritarian³ local solicitor. The history of that council group since his departure is a

bit like that of the later Western Roman Empire with council leader succeeding council leader in coup after coup. There seems to have been no ideological basis whatsoever to any of those transitions. In Newcastle Jeremy Beecham, like Slater a solicitor, was Leader for many years maintaining his power through a less authoritarian personal style but with tight control over committee chair positions. A powerful working-class rooted group of Labour councillors representing the east end of the City had considerable influence and although relationships with the leadership were often tense, a more or less uneasy alliance usually persisted. Gateshead under the able and unassuming George Gill who succeeded David Clelland when the latter became an MP and who had in turn succeeded another competent authoritarian – Bill Collins – functioned much less rancorously through this period and was generally regarded as exceptionally well run. Here the good partnership between an able and public service oriented Chief Executive – Les Elton, and a service oriented Leader was plainly significant. South Tyneside's original leader, Fitzpatrick who had a good record as works convenor at Reyrolles in Hebburn, was an able and decent man as was Brian Floud for many year's North Tyneside's leader but both were not well served by factional Labour groups.

Intra-local conflict, particularly within Labour groups, was common but so was inter-local conflict between adjacent local authorities, particularly between Newcastle and Gateshead during and subsequent to the construction of the Metro Centre. This is well described in a sour memoir by Green (1981). Newcastle had always benefitted from its large central area business rate and this was threatened by the Metro Centre. Now Unified Business Rate is set and collected nationally and distributed to authorities on a per capita population basis, which as we shall see has had some interesting consequences for policy, particularly in Newcastle. There

was also rivalry between Newcastle and North Tyneside, partly because Longbenton had in large part been developed by Newcastle for overspill council housing and it lost this stock on local government reorganization. It would have made far better sense to add Longbenton and Wallsend to Newcastle and establish a cross river authority from Whitley Bay, Tynemouth and what became South Tyneside, but that would have created two solidly Labour authorities which was not what Conservative central government wanted at all.

The significance of a public service oriented Chief Executive like Les Elton in Gateshead who led a team of generally very able Chief Officers with a similar conception of their role, is considerable. The tradition in the UK established in the nineteenth century was that those seeking careers in the public service should only have that career within the public service because of the potential conflict of interests that can arise when people pass backwards and forwards between the public sector and private sector businesses that provide services to the public sector. This has now been abandoned. Elton's exemplary public service career is in marked contrast to that of Kevin Lavery who was appointed to Newcastle City Council as Chief Executive in 1997 following a career with Price Waterhouse and then left for the private sector including a role as Chief Executive of SERCO Solutions, part of the SERCO group which is a major provider of services to local and central government. Lavery is now Chief Executive of Cornwall Council, although his appointment attracted local criticism precisely on the grounds of conflict of interest.

Let us turn to the functional role of local government. The establishment of Urban Development Corporations in both Tyne and Wear and Teesside removed major planning powers from elected local government, although the participation of council leaders as board members on both bodies served to legitimize the

dysfunctional and property capital serving agendas they pursued. However, the UDCs were temporary bodies and have now been wound up. Other QUANGOs are not temporary. For a good coverage of the north-east QUANGOs and 'quangocracy', the networked collection of individuals who sit on the boards of these bodies, see Robinson and Shaw (2001). They identify a large number of NHS bodies as QUANGOs and one important development is that over time elected local authorities have lost all their right of direct nomination of members of these bodies and in particular of the key commissioning bodies, Primary Care Trusts.⁴ Local authorities lost what became the Polytechnics and now post 1992 Universities, then they lost Further Education Colleges to what are presently Learning and Skills Councils. They have been obliged to hand over day-to-day control of their local authority housing stock to ALMOs – Arms Length Management Organizations. These remain owned by the local authorities but in some cases, most notably in Sunderland with what is now GENTOO, ownership of the stock has been transferred to a not-for-profit social landlord which has attracted a good deal of local criticism. The New Labour imposed 'Academy' programme for secondary schools, which has caused considerable controversy in Blyth and Durham City, removes control of schools from elected LEAs. There are now academies in several places in the North-east, some under the control of the creationist foundation established by the Vardy family, others under more mainstream control. Newcastle's academy in the west end, Excelsior, has been sponsored by the Scottish Peer Lord Laidlaw – the devolved government of Scotland will have no truck with academies – who is both a tax avoider and a self-admitted sex addict! Newcastle City Council has approached the government in order to remove him but he still appears as sponsor on the school's website.

One interesting episode in the more recent history of north-east local government was the abolition of Cleveland County Council in 1996. This was an act of the Major government whose primary target was probably the unpopular Avon County around Bristol. Others argue that the backwash of the Cleveland 'child abuse' scandal played a part. What is interesting is that unlike the controversy surrounding the abolition of Tyne and Wear Metropolitan County, where Labour politicians maintained public unity in opposition to the proposals, this time Labour split. Essentially, the councillors representing the areas in the former Teesside County Borough i.e. Middlesbrough, Redcar, Stockton and surrounding areas generally opposed the move whereas Hartlepool councillors and their MP, Peter Mandelson, enthusiastically supported it. Mandelson abstained in the parliamentary vote on the issue, as did Stuart Bell. Evidence collected by the Banham Commission (1993) although totally unreliable in terms of proper statistical procedure as is so often the case in consultation exercises, showed that whilst the County Council was quite popular over most of its area, it was very unpopular in Hartlepool district. The result after a judicial review was the establishment of four separate unitary authorities with Hartlepool being one of the smallest in England. At the same time, Darlington was removed from Durham County and established as a separate Unitary authority. That seems to have been a less contentious move. Again, a cursory examination of press material etc.⁵ suggests that the battle was almost entirely about localism and council group cliques and was devoid of any differences of ideology or principle. What of course would have made most rational sense would have been the establishment of a unitary authority in the Tees Valley which would have included Darlington and Hambleton and would still have had a rather smaller population than say Birmingham City, but that was not politically feasible given Tory electoral interests and Labour factional interests at the time.

The almost final element in the recent saga of local government has been the reorganization of Northumberland and Durham Counties into unitary authorities. This was vigorously supported by the controlling Labour Groups of both counties under the then two tier system and equally vigorously opposed by district councillors and officials. In Northumberland the preferred district option was for two unitaries with coalfield South East Northumberland forming one and the rest of the county being the other. All Northumberland MPs of all three parties supported this proposal in an adjournment debate in the Commons on the 10 May 2007 with the lead being taken by Alan Beith but with the other three all chipping in to support him. In Durham, districts even commissioned a referendum on the subject. Eventually only Durham City attempted to have independent unitary status. In both cases, the government decision was for unitary councils. In Northumberland, a number of Labour County Councillors who had been active proponents of single unitary status were not selected as candidates for the new unitary authority being replaced in several instances by district councillors who had opposed its establishment. In any event, when the new Council was elected Labour lost control becoming only the third largest political group and a Liberal Democrat group, which had opposed single unitary status, took control.

In Durham Labour managed to retain control but there was in effect an internal coup with the former leader of the County Council who is an ex-miner from Easington being replaced by a polytechnic lecturer. The former leader, Councillor Nugent, had been elected subsequent to an internal revolt in the Labour Group over the closure of local authority run care homes. He and another strong candidate for leadership from the Easington Constituency were disqualified from standing for leadership by the national party

on the grounds that Easington had not kept to a deal in relation to the proportion of women candidates to be put up for election. The new leader Councillor Henig is a former political researcher turned politics lecturer. This change is emblematic in many respects of the shift in the character of the regional Labour Party in recent years.

One interesting aspect of the county reorganization debates is the role played in them by council officials. For example the then Chief Executive of Durham City Council was a very active opponent of the single unitary authority and was publicly identified as such. Although reorganization was actually in many respects apolitical in party terms in both counties, with as noted above very significant internal divisions within the Labour Party, this active engagement of public officials in public as opposed to administrative politics is interesting. Certainly the role of 'Chief Executive' which has decidedly managerial connotations in contrast to the previous service administrative role of Town or County Clerk indicates a shift in power between politicians and appointed officers. This has been reinforced by the intervention of the Standards Board for England and councillors in this region have actually been suspended by this non-democratic body for the offence of criticizing council officers in relation to the performance of their duties. Indeed a very important and under-examined erosion in local democracy has resulted from the replacement of executive council committees managing services on which councillors of all parties sat and where backbenchers could have considerable influence, with executive cabinet members who are 'overseen' by very weak scrutiny committees. This is associated with the emergence of the full time councillor, a radically different situation from the picture thirty years ago when most councillors had full time jobs, many of them as industrial manual workers and for Labour with trade union connections in their place of employment.

The final descriptive element in this piece relates to the erosion and perhaps even collapse of Labour's political hegemony in North-eastern local government. As has been noted this hegemony was really only a phenomenon from the late 1970s onwards but it is now disintegrating as I write. Labour has already lost control of Northumberland and Newcastle City to the Liberal Democrats, Stockton to no overall control and North Tyneside to the Conservatives. In Middlesbrough, North Tyneside and Hartlepool there are directly elected executive mayors. In North Tyneside, the Conservatives have both the Mayor and the Council which gives them full control. In Middlesbrough and Hartlepool, the elected mayors are non-party political in the persons of Ray Mallon, former local police commander, and Stuart Drummond, formerly H'Angus the Monkey mascot of Hartlepool F.C. Interestingly there is no constant opposition across the region. In Newcastle and Gateshead, it is Labour versus Liberal Democrat. In North Tyneside and Sunderland, it is Labour versus Conservative. In Durham and Northumberland the largest other party, controlling party for Northumberland, is Liberal Democrat but there is a substantial independent and / or Conservative presence. In Tees Valley and Darlington, the Conservatives are stronger. In South Tyneside, going its own way as usual, there is a substantial 'other' presence including independent Labour. Labour never controlled the rural areas of the North-east and a zone of boundary conflict was Wear Valley, which contains both rural and former mining districts. A fascinating dual personal memoir of politics in that locale is provided by Olive Brown and Chris Foote Wood (2009).

Plainly the developing unpopularity of New 'Labour' in government has played in a role in the disintegration of North-eastern Labour local power, although we should always remember the very close associations between key New 'Labour' figures and

the North-east including here odd links between old right 'club committee man' style local labour bosses and very different New 'Labour' MPs including Tony Blair. That said some local Labour administrations were perfectly capable of alienating their electorate all by themselves. This was particularly the case in Newcastle where 'the Going for Growth' policy, designed to attract more middle-class households back to the West End in particular by 'ethnically cleansing' (actually demolishing their houses and moving them out rather than actually murdering) the existing poor working-class population. The rationale for this was to increase the City's population and thereby get more Unified Business Rate allocation whilst also getting more council tax from households that actually paid it. In contrast to Newcastle where Labour was replaced by the Liberal Democrats and shows little sign of recovery, Gateshead where George Gill's service oriented style survives if somewhat weakened, remains firmly under Labour control.

So what themes emerge from this survey? Interestingly to an increasing degree from the 1980s onwards, the issues in local government in the North-east, in marked contrast to the inter-war years and even the years up to the mid 1980s, have not been about fundamental differences of ideology and policy. Rather they have been about personalities, localism, tribalism, and sheer bloody mindedness. Personalities matter – some of them have been mentioned here and there are others – the interesting Don Robson of Durham who brought first class cricket to the county for one. Cliques matter and mostly political cliques, especially those inside the Labour Party, have had little to do with politics and far more to do with localism, tribalism, or just being part of a gang – rather like New Labour, which of course owes a lot to its alliances with local political cliques in the North-east. One overwhelmingly important theme is the increasing disconnection between the Labour Party in

local government and those who vote, or increasingly don't vote, for it. I had many disagreements with Bill Collins when he led Gateshead, not least because he was trying to knock down my house and 1,500 others with it, but he was part of the community and accessible to it. It is noticeable that the equally absurd Pathfinder project in Bensham, run by the QUANGO 'Bridging Newcastle Gateshead' is so detached from local reality that access to its deliberations has only been achieved by use of the Freedom of Information legislation and parliamentary pressure from Jim Cousins MP (who together with his wife Anne are again interesting and important personalities in their role on Tyne Wear County Council).

This piece is in part a kind of personal memoir / oral history from a tangential participant in the socio-scape it describes. Let me suggest something about how a more systematic history of this period might be established. There is an abundance of resources. Local press coverage of issues, particularly in the regional morning newspapers, was quite reasonable. There are large documentary resources in local government records held in county archives and in local libraries. Above all else, there is the opportunity for the collection of oral testimonies. Somebody certainly should be interviewing key officer figures – people like Les Elton or Pat Conway who moved from Gateshead to Durham to head up culture and libraries to name but two – the key figures in the campaign around secondary school reorganization in Northumberland, those associated with the Conservative revival in North Tyneside and Sunderland and many more. This matters because the contemporary crisis in UK politics has many dimensions but the problems of local autonomy, the lack of connection between local populations and their elected representatives, and the tension between democracy and rule by QUANGO are certainly some of them. The scope for undergraduate and Masters' level dissertations as well as Ph.D. theses is considerable.

And of course the participants should write their own histories as well – the local matters and it is full of tales well worth the telling.

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- ¹ It is important to note that in general in relation to direct employment of workers by agencies of the local state, that that production has been 'de-commodified' i.e. it has not generated direct profits for capital as has also been the case for other state activities including in particular the National Health Service. That said an important theme in the political economy of government in the UK since the election of Thatcher and throughout the 'New Labour' years has been the re-commodification of that production through contracting out of services to private capital. Of course government has always bought in services from private capital, particularly construction although the history of 'direct labour' in construction is worth attention in its own right. But since 1979 more and more of what had been traditionally understood, even in the nineteenth century, as the functions of the state to be delivered by the state at all levels, has been handed over to production for private profit. So re-commodification, whilst not a focus of this article, is worth exploring in detail in its own right.
- ² However, in 1948 local government lost its hospitals to the newly founded National Health Service and in 1974 its public health and community health services likewise were removed from it.
- ³ Certainly Slater was authoritarian but he was also in the opinion of this author a rather effective local politician in a traditional right Labour (and certainly NOT New Labour) style.
- ⁴ The existence of local authority based Health Scrutiny committees with rights of consultation in relation to health service re-organization etc. is an important remaining democratic element but they have no powers of control or veto.
- ⁵ There is at least one and probably several Ph.D. theses in the careful examination of the actual politics of local government re-organization in the North-east, particularly if done whilst the oral history is still available.

**I did like to be beside the seaside:
The post war heyday of Whitley Bay
- a personal view.**

Win Stokes

*There is room for a serious socio economic and cultural study of 20th century Whitley Bay to complement the work that John Walton has done on Blackpool and Scarborough. I have used both his seminal **The English Seaside Resort –a Social History 1750-1914** and his more recent **British Seaside Resorts and Holidays in the Twentieth Century**, to provide points of reference, and have taken factual information from Eric Hollerton's photographic compilations held in North Shields Local Studies library to anchor down some of the chronology. The nearest I have come to original research is to scan the pages of **The Whitley Bay Seaside Chronicle and Visitors' Gazette** and **The Whitley Bay and District Weekly Guardian** (available on microfilm in North Shields Local Studies Library) for the relevant years. For anyone undertaking a more analytical examination of the*

phenomenon of the seaside holiday immediately after the Second World War they provide useful insights into the priorities and mind sets of those involved but apart from some degree of contextualisation what follows here is unashamedly reminiscence. I experienced Whitley Bay as a teenage holiday maker in 1950 an involuntary resident in 1952 and in a vacation job as general factotum in a boarding house for four successive summer seasons between 1953 and 1957.

Early days

From almost the beginning of the 20th century the former colliery village of Whitley aspired to become the Blackpool of the North East coast. The title above is a deliberate variant on that of the song which became synonymous with Blackpool and in the post second world war years with Reginald Dixon at the Wurlitzer organ broadcasting live from the Tower ballroom on BBC radio, synonymous with the seaside holiday season in general. In fact the song had started life in 1907 in the London music halls celebrating the 'bank' holidays instituted in the late nineteenth century to give clerical workers among others, four Mondays off in the course of the working year.¹ By the time the song had been adopted by Blackpool the original wording of the first verse.

*When you're just a common or garden Smith or Jones or Brown
At business up in town (i.e. London)
You've got to settle down
You save up all the money you can
Till summer comes around
Then away you go to a spot you know
Where cockle shells are found*

Had become

*When you're just a common or garden working lad like me
A chance to see the sea is quite a novelty
I save up all the money I can when skies are grim and grey
Then off I run to have some fun where balmy breezes play.*

with the chorus

*Oh I do like to be beside the seaside, I do like to be beside the sea
I do like to stroll along the prom.prom.prom
Where the brass bands play 'Tiddly om,pom,pom'
If I could just be beside the seaside, I'd be beside myself with glee
There are lots of girls beside I should like to be beside
Beside the seaside, beside the sea*

The 'grim and grey' referred to the smoky mill towns of Lancashire and the 'balmy breezes' to the soft climate of the west coast, not to more bracing Whitley Bay.

As the playground of Lancashire mill workers Blackpool gradually forfeited its original aspirations to gentility. The Edwardian entrepreneurs of Whitley Bay, as the original Whitley had become, harboured similar aspirations. Just as Blackpool's tower was modelled on that of Eiffel in Paris so Whitley Bay looked towards continental Europe or even the Orient for its iconic landmark. The reinforced concrete domed pavilion evocative of Moorish Spanish architecture, the Spanish City, appeared on its skyline in 1910. The aim was to provide a concert hall, restaurant, tea room and roof garden to attract a respectable clientele. But as was the case with Blackpool the sheer weight of numbers particularly at the August Bank Holiday weekend made the maintenance of decorum very difficult and notions of

gentility tended to give way to the maximisation of profits through more 'popular' pursuits during an all too brief summer 'season'.

This process was already under way before the first world war but without the advantage of the Lancashire tradition of mass absenteeism during 'wakes weeks' and with easy rail access from industrial Tyneside and beyond, the focus in Whitley Bay at that date was on the needs of the day tripper rather than the residential boarder. The opening of the Spanish City coincided with that of a new station to cope with rail excursion crowds at summer weekends. The main promenade opened in the following year, the bandstand was set up to commemorate the coronation of George V. The amenities referred to in the song were already in place by 1914.

Monkseaton and what was then the subsidiary village of Whitley had gained UDC status in 1888 and local government agencies became vital to ensuring the continuing development of further amenities in the interwar period. There were still no paid holidays for workers but holiday clubs of various sorts, often based in pubs or chapels could enabled the 'working lad' to save enough to take himself and his family to the seaside for at least a few days at some time during late July or August. All round the coast despite the economic ups and downs of the twenties and thirties the different resorts competed for custom with a variety of amusements, offered through the illustrated guides, publicity posters on railway stations and photographs in railway carriages. This meant that in addition to the day trippers from industrial Tyneside and beyond, Whitley Bay began to attract growing numbers of residential visitors catered for not only by the existing hotels but by private householders taking in paying guests during the holiday season. In addition to board and lodging, the sand and sea, the brass bands and the 'prom', given the vagaries of the English climate these guests required entertainment in venues with some protection from the elements. From the early

thirties pierrot and variety shows (somebody ought to research Leo Dodds whose troupe was the mainstay of these as well as Christmas pantomime in the area for over twenty years) ran in the Links Pavilion at the northern end of the promenade and the Priory theatre subsequently based in Tynemouth started out in pre war Whitley Bay. When it was not actually raining there were concerts in the sheltered gardens of the Panama Dip, and a proliferation of cafes and licensed premises. This was also the era of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, of the cinema and the ballroom. Whitley Bay in the thirties boasted at least two official dance halls with resident bands, one in the Spanish City and the other in the Waverley, subsequently the Rex, Hotel, and four cinemas. In the rearmament boosted working class prosperity of the late 30s the resort was vying with Wearside's Roker and Seaburn with illuminations, funfairs and all kinds of outdoor and indoor entertainment.²

For the 'working lads' however in this period it was still a matter of saving throughout the year and then losing a week's wages by taking time off work. Employers had bowed to the inevitable absenteeism of the school holiday season and some had regularised



Queuing for electric train

this by closing down for a week but it was not until the eve of the second world war that they were compelled by law to offer a week's *paid* holiday every year. The war prevented the ramifications of the 1938 Paid Holiday act from being properly worked out and for much of its duration the East coast became out of bounds for civilian holiday makers

although for Whitley Bay the invasion of the town by military and particularly RAF personnel helped offset the loss of income to hoteliers and other traders.

When the war was over

I started the little newsprint research that I undertook at July 1946 the first 'proper' post war summer. In the pages of *The Seaside Chronicle* the mood was one of euphoria and optimism. An enterprising Scots resident of the town had organised a Scottish gala week during the week before the August Bank holiday. So far as I can tell this was the introduction of the 'Scots holiday week' which from 1948 under the auspices of the Royal Air Force Association (R.A.F.A) was to become an established feature of the Whitley Bay 'season' Then, as now, Scottish schools 'broke up' at least a fortnight before their English counterparts and in the long run this enabled the boarding house keepers and other traders to extend the season to a full six weeks.

In this immediate post war summer however *The Seaside Chronicle* focused its attention on the day trippers. Working on the basis of sales of rail tickets it estimated that on Bank Holiday Monday 5th August 50,000 people had flooded into the town by that mode of transport alone while bus companies had been forced to double and sometimes treble their services. 'Visitors queued continuously for deck chairs' and with war time restrictions still in place supplies of ice cream ran out. Later that day the weather broke. But on the next fine weekend thousands more flocked to the coast and 'the Spanish City was thronged with pleasure seekers.'³

The immediate post war euphoria was short lived. The severe winter of 1947 although followed by a good summer had further stretched an already strained economy and many wartime restrictions remained in place. My own first visit to Whitley Bay

was that summer on a Sunday School coach trip organised by the Methodist chapel in the south Durham pit village where we lived. For many of the younger children this must have been their first sight of the sea.

Away from home

My first experience of Whitley Bay as a holiday resort came in 1950 when emboldened by a week spent away from the family at a Methodist youth camp in the previous year, a friend and I managed to persuade our anxious parents to let us go on a seaside holiday on our own. We were only allowed to do so because Gladys, the wife of one of father's former workmates had decided to take summer visitors to help pay off the mortgage on the house they had just bought in Whitley Bay. I am sure that she had been given strict instructions about what we were to be allowed to do but apart from insisting that she knew where we were going in the evenings and that we were in before 10.30 when the pubs chucked out, no questions were asked. Of course our parents having paid full board we were tied to a 12 noon lunch and a 5 pm tea time but otherwise our time was our own. So what *was* there for two would be sassy sixteen year olds to do in Whitley Bay in 1950?

The simple answer so far as we were concerned, was (as the song says) to stroll along the 'prom' and ogle the opposite sex. In some ways for us the demographic was skewed by the existence of National Service. Then as now, no female sixteen year old was likely to contemplate a male of the same age but at 18 the lads disappeared to reappear three years later as 'men'. In retrospect what we were looking for was proof of our attractiveness, male company and dancing partners. Ironically the choice had been wider at the previous year's Methodist Youth camp which catered for groups from across the country. But we did find a couple of lads

to succumb to our charms although to our chagrin they turned out to be from a pit village not far from our own. However they were reasonable ballroom dancers and were happy to escort us to the dance hall and the cinema a couple of times. We went to St Mary's lighthouse and on the rides at the Spanish City together, walked along the seafront to Cullercoats and Tynemouth, bathed on the one day when it was warm enough, made elaborate sand castles and promised to see them again when we got home. We never did.

The real excitement was to be without surveillance. Pit villages were claustrophobic places for lively young females.

According to *The Seaside Chronicle* for that week⁴, the first of the English school holidays, we had arrived between the Scot's gala week, now a fixture, and the run up to the August Bank holiday. However there were still brass bands, variety shows, displays put on by local schools and youth organisations, and beach entertainments, all of which we studiously ignored. We preferred the new (to us at least) juke boxes in the Spanish City (we must have worn out at least one copy each of 'Sixteen Tons' and 'Jezebel') the amusement arcades and the ice cream parlours. Something that I had totally forgotten until an item in the paper reminded me was that we still had to bring our 'ration cards' to hand over to our landlady for the week.

In 1948 with a Labour government in power, paid holidays for workers had been extended to two not necessarily consecutive weeks and demand for residential accommodation had increased accordingly. But external forces could affect this increase - and not only the weather. The London attractions of the Festival of Britain in 1951 apparently seriously diminished the take up of seaside holidays⁵. That year coach and railway companies ran excursions to London which included overnight stays and drained working class pockets. We, as a family, followed the trend. The previous year we'd gone to Morecambe.



Whitley plodgers

Full houses

In 1952 I experienced Whitley Bay from a different perspective. My father had been promoted by the Coal Board to an administrative job in Newcastle. His appointment started from 1 July which meant that we had to leave our tied house in the south Durham pit village and move to Tyneside, but we'd never lived in anything but rented or tied housing before. The NCB agreed to put up the initial capital to buy a property (with a strict limitation on the amount) and also to subsidise our accommodation in the meantime. So off we went, initially to the boarding house in Whitley Bay where my school friend and I had stayed two years before but this was now fully booked from mid July so we were passed on for a week to one of Gladys's friends who took King's College students in term time and summer visitors in the season. Scots holiday week saw us moved out again and we finally ended up in a small private hotel that prided itself on *not* taking summer visitors. Its residents could have come out of a Terence Rattigan or Noel Coward play.

The Whitley Bay and District Weekly Guardian reported what we knew to be the case that during the Scots holiday week that year there was not a single room to be had in any of the boarding

houses and that some visitors were encamped on the beach. The whole of industrial Clydeside seemed to have migrated to Whitley Bay. The town had clearly responded to the fear of repeating the shortfall of the previous year by catering specifically for Glaswegian tastes. There Scottish dancing, pipe bands, Scottish entertainers, visitors' beauty competitions and tartan everywhere. The Scots had dispersed by the Bank holiday weekend which was wet although the annual flower and vegetable show, held under cover, still attracted record crowds of day trippers who spent their money in cafes and ice cream parlours rather than on deck chairs and pony rides.⁶

I went off to London University that autumn and in the meantime the family moved into a house at the coast. When, at the end of my first year I was looking for vacation work Gladys pointed me in the direction of the daughter of the friend who'd put us up for the first week the previous year. Betty needed domestic help for the summer season, her previous girl having proved 'unreliable'. I was now to see tourist provision 1950s style from the inside.

B & B inside story

In retrospect I wish that I had asked more questions and thought more about the social implications of what I was witnessing but I was a History undergraduate, specialising in French history and somehow the social structure of Whitley Bay did not seem very relevant. I wish for example that I'd found out how much Betty charged and how she recruited her clients. While I was there it seemed to be mainly by word of mouth. However achieved, the house was always full. Even without asking questions it soon became clear that there was a sort of 'mafia' of seaside landladies who all knew each other and that they, like their boarders, covered a wide social spectrum. Mrs A, Betty's mother was a respectable lower middle class widow (her husband had been a clerk in a shipping firm) who depended on her students

and her seaside visitors for a decent livelihood. She had become a full time boarding house keeper. She only took male students and seems to have mothered them. Her summer clientele was staid, respectable and middle aged to elderly. Gladys had done bar work before her marriage and was happy to cater for younger more boisterous holiday makers. Her husband was reasonably well paid but she was something of a gadabout and what she made during the season went towards supporting her aspirations to a more glamorous social life. Betty my employer was married to an electrician in one of the Wallsend shipyards. She had different aspirations. She had trained as a secretary and during the war had worked as driver and PA to one of the RAF personnel billeted in the town. She had joined the golf club and outside the boarding house dressed smartly but unostentatiously in tweeds and twin sets. Childless, she hoped through her connections to get at least a part time office job that would correspond to her qualifications. She was also a member of the Hotel and Boarding House Association whose function seemed to be to ensure that minimum standards of cleanliness, catering and general service to the visitors were maintained. She came home from the Association meetings with horror stories of near doss house conditions in some establishments and complaints from exploited holidaymakers. These are echoed in some of the letters to the local paper. But *we* ran a respectable family guest house!

This house like most of the others catering for summer visitors was part of an Edwardian terrace. It enjoyed the advantage of being within five minutes walk of the town centre and the sea front but was rather further from the railway station. The sleeping accommodation consisted of two large bedrooms and one smaller one. There was one toilet and one bath room. On the ground floor there was a large bay-windowed front dining/sitting room looking out on a small garden and the street. At the end of the passage

leading from the front entrance was a half glazed door with a large PRIVATE sign on it. Beyond it lay a small sitting room and a scullery/kitchen with a back door leading to a yard with an outside toilet and coal house and access to a back lane. Whitley Bay is still full of such houses although upgraded and no longer run as seaside boarding houses. The two larger bedrooms had a double bed and space for one or even two single fold up beds for children. The small bedroom had a three quarter bed which could sleep a young couple. Betty and her husband slept on a bed settee in the back sitting room for the duration of the season.

Seaside landladies have been portrayed as tyrannical exploiters of holiday makers. If ours were at all typical most of the visitors seem to have been content to have no less than the sort of amenities that they had at home and accepted that in a house where there could be up to ten people in cramped accommodation there must be ground rules for the system to function efficiently. As one of those involved in the operation of this system I soon began to appreciate how necessary these were. It was essential for example that mealtimes be rigidly observed, and in an era when most adult visitors were smokers, that the dining room and bedrooms be vacated for cleaning and airing when not in use and that in everyone's interest visitors should observe reasonable hours.

This was the daily timetable:

Breakfast, 8.30 to 9; dining room and bedrooms vacated 10 am; dinner, 12 o'clock sharp, dining room vacated 1.30; bedrooms vacated 2 'til 4; tea, 5pm; 6.30 onwards dining room available to visitors as a lounge; doors locked 11pm.

The staggered breakfast was to allow use of the single bathroom and toilet, the hour before tea was usually spent removing sand from the feet of both children and adults.

A long day

I lived at home and caught a bus or walked to work. My day began at 8 am setting the tables for breakfast which I then served, cleared and washed up. After the visitors had all gone off to enjoy themselves I cleaned up the dining room, tidied the beds and bedrooms and disinfected the bathroom and toilet. In the meantime Betty did the shopping. There were no fridges and perishables had to be bought in daily. Once she returned we began to prepare the dinners. Full board included a cooked breakfast, a two course midday dinner and a salad or sandwich tea with cake, scones etc. I did most of the vegetable and general preparation while Betty did the cooking using an antiquated gas cooker and a separate free standing gas ring. There was also a kitchen range dating back to when the house was built but because it involved lighting a coal fire in the back room it was only really usable if the weather turned cold and was not very reliable. Once I had served the midday meal, cleared the table, swept up any debris and helped with the drying up (usually about 2 pm) I had two hours off which I spent on the beach if it was fine and in the library if it wasn't, before returning to serve the teas and wash up the tea things.

Weekends were different. The visitors were expected to be out by 10 am and enterprising young school boys with 'bogies' (boxes mounted on pram wheels) appeared on the doorsteps offering to transport heavy cases to the railway station. Some charged a few pence per case, others relied on tips. I don't recall that any of our visitors came by car but some of the Glaswegians came by coach and the bus station was only a few minutes away.

Once the visitors had gone the major changeover began. Betty and I stripped the beds, cleaned the house from top to bottom and made ready for the next influx whose numbers and sleeping arrangements might be different. The bed linen was collected by the Co-op laundry van. I left at lunchtime with my wages in cash.

My recollection is that this was 21 shillings but I may be wrong. Whatever it was it was welcome. For the remainder of the weekend Betty's husband filled my place.

The first meal for the new arrivals was high tea on Saturday evening. There was always a substantial Sunday roast the remains of which appeared in some form on Monday. The cramped accommodation and the limited toilet and washing facilities were accepted by visitors as a matter of course. They brought their own soap and towels and although unlike some boarding houses there was no extra charge for taking a bath the water heater was only put on in the morning and between 4 and 6 in the evening.

What the visitors most appreciated was Betty's home cooking. She was an adept pastry, scone and pudding maker and could make a small amount of meat go a long way, but for folk accustomed to wartime rationing what she offered was more than acceptable. There was a distinct regional dietary variation. Basically the season consisted of two Scottish weeks, two Lancashire and two Yorkshire and Betty catered accordingly. Porridge, root vegetables, mince and suet puddings for the Scots, hotpots sausages and black pudding for the Lancastrians and pies and cakes and scones for the Yorkshire ones. She always reckoned she didn't make much profit on the Yorkshire visitors but that they were 'a pleasure to feed'.

Out on the streets

What did these people do all day when they were cast out onto the streets? Well mostly these were families with maybe one or two children who had friends and neighbours holidaying in similar boarding houses in the town and if the weather was fine they all trooped down to the beach where there were always entertainers and pony rides as well as sand and sea. They walked on the prom, sampled the amusements of the Spanish City or the Panama Dip,

and ate ice creams and candy floss. They were tethered to the boarding house by having paid full board so they could not go far afield, Tynemouth, Cullercoats, St Mary's lighthouse, North Shields fish quay were about their limits. If it was wet, the cinemas, the show at the Links Pavilion or even a trip into Newcastle were possible distractions. In the evenings those with children might go out for a walk after tea, or to a playground. The men would go to the pub and the women would put the children to bed. For the young there were ice cream parlours, the cinemas and probably the most popular of all the dance halls which catered for every conceivable type of dancing over the course of the week with competitions and demonstrations. The dance halls alongside the 'prom' the amusement arcades and the rides at the Spanish City were the places to meet the opposite sex. Nothing much had changed since our sixteen year old taste of freedom.

Yet the pace seemed to have quickened. As the war memories receded the increasing popular appetite for hedonistic enjoyment was clearly being catered for by opportunistic entrepreneurs. The Scots holiday now covered two weekends. These and the intervening week competed with the August Bank Holiday as money spinners for the pubs and traders of the town for they also drew in day or evening trippers to watch events like the carnivals, the beauty competitions and the highland dancing. The brass bands on the prom were replaced by marching pipe bands. It was a glorification of romantic Scots' nostalgia recreated in Whitley Bay. According to the *Guardian*, that year £7,000,000 had been withdrawn from Glasgow savings banks to pay for the annual spending spree.⁷ Although this is a global figure a very considerable slice of it was spent in Whitley Bay.

There were also signs of an emergent youth culture. We, in 1950 were still dancing to tunes that harked back to the pre war romantic film comedies but within a few years a new phenomenon

appeared on the sea front and in the dance halls of Whitley Bay and Tynemouth, the Teddy boy. In draped velvet collared suits with drainpipe trousers and beetle crusher shoes and with oily DA hairdos they fascinated the young and scandalised the older and staid seaside visitors and residents. This was before rock and roll, this was bebop and jive. The dance halls started to cordon off a central area as 'boppers' alley' to allow ballroom dancing to proceed unhindered around wildly gyrating couples. So far as I could tell the 'Teds' were mostly young Tyneside or Glaswegian manual workers who had adopted these outfits and this American inspired dance style as an assertion of their group identity and nothing worse but they were regarded with deep suspicion. Gladys our erstwhile landlady, no stranger to flashy dressing herself was still horrified when her newly employed son used his first pay packet to invest in a 'zoot suit'. Betty's husband reckoned they should 'aall be hoyed into the sea.' Secretly I suspect that many a slightly older female, like me, would have quite liked a chance to 'cut a rug' in 'boppers alley' rather than circling round doing foxtrots and quicksteps or drinking sedately with our current boyfriends in the lounge at the Rex Hotel listening to the two sisters Mitzi and Mindy playing violin and piano duets.

If the Scots holiday weeks were now an established attraction patronised by local day trippers as well as holidaying Clydesiders the town and its various organisations continued to seek other events to maintain the momentum for the remaining weeks of the six week season. The illuminations now re-established, started in the last two weeks of August and continued as an evening attraction for locals and others until the end of September. In the interim there were dance festivals, art and photographic competitions and Cliff College evangelists invited by the local Methodist chapels holding hymn singings on the beach. As a 'seasonal' I was on the periphery

of all this and to some extent shared the mixed feelings of the only occasionally participant local residents about these mass invasions while nevertheless accepting that holiday makers were the *raison d'être* of the town.

Like and unlike Blackpool

John Walton's work on the seaside holiday takes Blackpool as its starting point but while it is true that Whitley Bay was developed in conscious emulation of Blackpool there were marked differences.⁸ As a result of the mass migrations of the 'wakes' weeks Blackpool began to provide for residential holiday makers early. It was not until between the wars or even after the Second World War that Whitley Bay became more essentially a 'resort'. The length of the queues at the station on summer weekend evenings showed the strength of the continuing Tyneside tradition of 'gannen doon the coast' whenever the sun shone. Whitley Bay never succeeded in developing a Golden Mile. Even its illuminations were not worth travelling far to see but it was part of a much more interesting and picturesque coastline with shipping coming in and out of the Tyne, the fish quay, St Mary's lighthouse - still functioning but visitable - and the quaint fishermen's cottages at Cullercoats. There was sea and sand as well as all the 'artificial' attractions that ingenious promoters could contrive.

Walton lays stress on the seaside summer holiday as a 'liberation' from the routine of the work place, domestic chores and school timetables. Whitley Bay and its simple pleasures provided this for an immediate post war generation still largely in manual or skilled artisan employment and dependent on public transport. The Teddy Boys were perhaps a first indication of what would become an ever widening generation gap in which more anarchic youth cultures invaded the seaside resorts. But for much of the

fifties National service, apprenticeships and limitations on foreign currency all helped to keep places like this in a time warp with more in common with the immediate pre war period than with the supposedly 'swinging sixties.' In retrospect this was indeed the town's heyday.

- ¹ I am indebted to the actor, folk singer and leader of the Tyneside Maritime Chorus, Benny Graham for researching the origins of the song and pointing me in the direction of the pictures of 'the plodgers' and 'the queue for the train'.
- ² North Shields Local Studies Library boasts a large collection of photographs and picture postcards gathered together mainly by the former librarian Eric Hollerton. I have made extensive use of his commentary in *History of Whitley Bay in Pictures* to supply background on the development of the town.
- ³ *Seaside Chronicle* 9 August 1946, 23 August 'Thousands flocked to the coast' but 30 August 'now the season is over.'
- ⁴ *Seaside Chronicle* 14 and 21 July the Scots' week that started on 15 July that year seems to have been less specifically Scottish than it subsequently became but still included an elaborate carnival procession, gymnastic and dancing displays and a beauty contest. In mid August there was a Dance Festival and dancing competition and the illuminations were revived on 26 August.
- ⁵ *Whitley Bay and District Weekly Guardian* 4 July 1952 on the eve of the season there is a reference to the concern of traders following the disastrous previous year.
- ⁶ 25 July and 8 August 1952
- ⁷ 7 August 1953
- ⁸ John K. Walton *British Seaside Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* MUP 2000

Origins of the Live Theatre

Tim Healy

*Tim Healy, a founding member of the Live Theatre, wrote this piece for the programme for **Looking for Buddy**, the play which marked his return to the Live after a fourteen year absence.*

My father had been a very keen amateur actor when I was little boy and I used to watch him at Birtley Amateur Dramatics Society. He was like the heart of the whole place playing all the lead roles. They got me to play a little boy in Finian's Rainbow, which was my first ever role and I fell in love with the whole thing there and then.

I served my time as an apprentice welder at Caterpillar Tractor Company in Birtley because at the time, then in 1968, the steel industry was thriving as was the coal industry. I hated every minute of it.

When I was 21 I decided that it wasn't for me and one day I just threw the gear down, walked out and enrolled on a two year Drama and Music Course at Durham Technical College.

When the course finished in 1973, myself and great friend, David Whitaker, were just thinking about how we were going to get into the job professionally when an advert appeared in The Evening Chronicle saying new actors were wanted for Live Theatre Company in Newcastle. A company that was been set up by a guy called Geoff Gillam. At the time there was just himself, Val McClane and Madeline Newton who were founding members. They'd just done the one play but didn't have any men in the cast. David and I turned up to audition and got the gig.

We started off rehearsing on the 13th floor of a block of flats in Gateshead. We'd sit in this little flat and tape ourselves improvising and then we'd write a play. During this time we began performing in the pubs around Newcastle. One pub that particularly sticks in my mind is *The Quarry* in North Kenton where the people there loved our play so much that we decided to stage this big extravaganza.

Some of the families in Kenton were always fighting each other and getting caught up with the police. We thought that if we could do this play again, but actually get the families to help out, get them to make props and get the women to come in and make sandwiches and tea, it would be good for the community. So we did. The play was called *North Kenton Do* and all the local families got involved.

Following our work in Kenton we received a fantastic review in The Evening Chronicle about our work with the North Kenton families and how we'd brought the community together. The people from the Northern Arts had obviously read this and when we approached them again for a grant, we were refused the first time, they awarded us with a tiny little grant, which led to us getting a little rehearsal room by the high level bridge, right opposite the café where Alan Hall wrote *Fog on the Tyne*. It had no heating and was a bit like a squat, but a definite improvement from Gateshead digs.

The late, great CP Taylor was on the board of Northern Arts at the time and I think he saw the potential in our theatre company. Cecil became our first resident writers in 1974 which changed things completely. We started getting little bits of regular funding, which meant getting paid my first wage of £9 a week.

Soon after myself, Ronnie Johnson, Ray Stubbs and Annie Orwin came onboard and we started to get other fantastic writers involved, such as Tom Hadaway (the protégé of CP Taylor), Phil Woods, Leonard Barras and Michael Chaplin. Over the years we started to get more money from Northern Arts as well as a grant for the Arts Council of Great Britain which meant we could finally afford a proper space to rehearse in.

Max Roberts arrived in about 1976 and with his guidance over the last 30 years the company has been transformed. The last time I played here was in Tom Hadway's play *The Seafarers* in 1993. We performed in the same space that we're performing in today, but the building was almost derelict back then.

So now when I come back and walk into this building I'm so proud of being one of the founding members of the company. Looking back they were the happiest days of my life and my involvement with Live was the best thing that could have happened to me. That's where it all began, where I learnt my trade and now to get the chance to perform here once again, especially with an Alan Plater play, my third at Live Theatre, is just such a delight. I'm sure I'm going to have great fun once again, back to my roots and back home.

Anti-Slavery in the North East: a study of the early campaigning years, 1787-1807

Ruth Blower

In 1783 the Religious Society of Friends presented a petition to the House of Commons calling for the abolition of the British traffic in African men, women and children. Four years later, with the establishment of the London Committee, abolition began to stir popular opinion. The national campaign that followed relied heavily on the printed word to aid the deployment of anti-slavery arguments.¹ The spread of such sentiments across the country saw provincial societies become important driving forces for abolition. By the eighteenth century Newcastle's printers were crucial to the dissemination of information across a diverse and vast region. Although historians have not disregarded Newcastle's newspapers in relation to abolition, references tend to be selective with no sustained analysis. As a result this article explores the anti-slavery arguments voiced through the provincial press and the identities of local abolitionists uncovered. Such research allows

the nature of the North East's agitation towards slavery to be understood in relation to the national campaign.

The Printed Word & the Culture of Anti-Slavery

With Quakers initiating the campaign, what the British read about the wrongs of the slave trade before 1787 they learned primarily from Quaker writers and publicists.² The *Newcastle Journal*, published by the Quaker Isaac Thompson, in 1783 printed the Epistle of the Yearly Meeting in London advocating the need for abolition as well as the Quaker petition to Parliament.³ The appearance in the Newcastle newspapers of tracts by the American Anthony Benezet reveals not only the infiltration of Quaker arguments across the region but also connections to London and America.⁴ Recognized as 'that body of individuals, who have so eminently distinguished themselves in this cause of humanity', Quakers contributed significantly to the North East's campaign.⁵ Such recognition is testament to the extent to which they influenced social mores.

Closely linked to religious justifications were appeals to humanity and almost all those writing to the press were unanimous on the trade's inhumane and unjust characteristics. Identifying slaves as human beings exemplified the need to relieve their sufferings. Evangelical Christians, in particular, combined a belief in a universal humanity with a strong sense of individual guilt.⁶ Appealing to their audience's emotions abolitionists stressed the damage done through slavery;

To observe the uncommon degree of natural affection, which naturally prevails between husband and wife, parent and child, amongst the natives of Africa, is highly delightful: but to think of the horrid violation of their domestic happiness, by the execrable treacheries, and nameless cruelties

of their rapacious invaders, the Slave Traders,
(or to speak more properly *human* butchers) is
sufficient to wound the hardest heart.⁷

The belief that the slave trade was cruel and inhumane was closely linked to the national campaign to boycott slave-produced products. Discussed in Newcastle's press, one article included an extract on 'Abstaining from Sugar and Rum' and argued that 'a family using five pounds of sugar per week, with the proportion of rum [could] prevent the slavery or murder of a fellow creature' through abstaining from their consumption for twenty-one months.⁸

Abolitionists in the national campaign used sentimental rhetoric extensively. The power of sympathy was used to raise awareness of suffering, and through portraying slaves as 'the noble savage', abolitionists sought to highlight the barbarism of Europe.⁹ Such sentiments were diffused throughout the North East, with revised versions of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* being performed in Newcastle three times between 1788 and 1806.¹⁰ The first performance, at the Theatre Royal in 1788, was performed as altered by Dr. Hawksworth. These alterations included a drastically revised first act, which intended to expose the inhumanity and hypocrisy of the West Indian planter by presenting Oroonoko as a victim of a cruel and inhumane system.¹¹ The play's advertised prologue, 'The African Slave's appeal to Liberty', further demonstrates the use of this performance for anti-slavery purposes.

Local campaigners utilized the printed word to express their belief that the slave trade violated the right to liberty. By comparing Britain with France, 'Lycurgus' highlighted nationalistic and patriotic arguments for abolition; unlike the Assembly of France who did not 'include the Negroes' in its celebrated declaration, Britons were urged to show that they were 'willing to extend that liberty we boast to the unhappy African'.¹² The support of anti-slavery re-affirmed

THEATRE ROYAL, NEWCASTLE.
Mrs. KEMBLE's Night.
 On MONDAY Evening, March 9, 1792, will be performed,
 A PASTORAL-PASTORAL (by SOURCES) called
O R O O N O K O;
 Or, **The ROYAL SLAVE.**
 AFRICANS.
 Oroonoko, Mr. Giff; Hottentot, Mr. Archer; and Abena,
 Mr. Swindall.
 AMERICANS.
 Governor, Mr. Clark; Blanford, Mr. Fox; Stanmore, Mr.
 Bland; and Captain Driver; Mr. Inchbald.—Inoinda, (with a
 Song in Character) Mrs. Kemble.
 END OF THE PLAY,
 A BURLESQUE SONG by Mr. FOX.
 Afterwards, a PANTOMIMICAL INTERLUDE, of one
 Act, called The
CHEST of ENCHANTMENT;
 Or, **The GENII's RELEASE.**
 Harlequin, Mr. Clark; Pantaloon, Mr. Holiday; Lower, Mr.
 Archer; and Clown, Mr. Davis.—Ariel, Miss Kemble; and
 Columbine, Mrs. Davis.
*To which will be added, a Grand Historical ROMANCE, of
 three Acts, performed upwards of 200 Nights at the Theatre
 Royal, Drury-Lane, with every Mark of Approbation called*
Richard Cœur de Lion.
*With entire new Scenery and Dresses, and all the original Music.
 The Scenery painted by Mr. PHILLIPS, from the Theatre-Royal,
 Hay-Market.*
 Richard 1st, (King of England) Mr. Archer; Sir Owen, Mr.
 Fox; Osbourne, Mr. Sherrett; and Bloncel, Mr. Clark.—Lan-
 cet, Miss Sarahell; Jellie, Mrs. Davis; and Matilda, (disguised
 as a blind Minstrel) Mrs. Kemble.
 In Act First, a distant View of the CASTLE where Richard
 is confined.—In Act Second, the whole Stage will exhibit all
 the inner Works of the Castle, with the Terrace, Fosse, Draw-
 bridge, Portcullis, &c. &c.—In Act Third, another Part of the
 Castle, with all the Fortifications, &c. which will be attacked
 and destroyed by Matilda's Troops, who rescue their King.
 To begin exactly at Half past Six.
BOXES 1s.—PIT 2s.—GALLERY 1s.
 Places for the Boxes to be taken of Mr. Giffard, at the Thea-
 tre, from Eleven till One each Day. Box Tickets to be
 taken at the Time of taking Seats.
 Tickets to be had as usual, and of Mrs. Kemble, at Mr. Orr's,
 Newby-Street.

Advertisement for *Oroonoko* at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle

the North East's commitment to liberty: abolition became an emblem of a national virtue allowing the British to 'impress foreigners with their innate love of liberty'.¹³ Ideas regarding liberty further influenced regional concerns. A popular argument by the inhabitants of the region's seaports was founded on the fact that the trade was 'detested by British seamen'.¹⁴ In South Shields 'owners of ships and mariners' signed a petition for abolition, arguing that the slave trade was 'the most baneful to the lives of British seamen'.¹⁵ A letter published in the *Newcastle Advertiser* argued that sailors suffered the same lack of liberty as Negroes: 'there appears to me

a striking sameness in the treatment and suffering of AFRICAN NEGROES and BRITISH SAILORS'.¹⁶

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the North East continued its humanitarian approach to abolition. The *Newcastle Courant* argued that 'Friends of the Abolition of the Slave Trade' should pledge their votes during the county elections of 1806 to 'any candidate who has shewn [*sic*] himself disposed to support the impious Traffick [*sic*] in our Fellow-creatures the Natives of Africa'.¹⁷ The paper called the attention of the Freeholders to the parliamentary conduct of Ralph Milbanke who continually used humanitarian ideals: 'repugnant to every sentiment of humanity ... the sufferings ... inflicted on our fellow creatures ... form a picture too disgusting to be dwelt upon'.¹⁸ Milbanke further adopted a patriotic rhetoric calling the traffic 'disgraceful to a civilized nation' and regarding it as 'a foul blot on that most beautiful fabric, our constitution'.¹⁹ For the people of the North East the cruelty and oppressive nature of the slave trade remained a focal argument for its abolition.

The newspapers of Newcastle reveal the ideals and arguments circulating provincial society. The region's abolitionists adopted an anti-slave culture heavily influenced and reliant on national propaganda. The breadth of arguments, from the cries of liberty attracting patriots, to women supporting absenteeism, united and accommodated abolitionists and their campaign.

The Encourager of Initiatives: Newcastle and the Anti-Slave Network

In 1791 the establishment of the 'Society instituted for promoting the Abolition of the Slave Trade' in Newcastle laid the foundations of the region's anti-slave network. Taking the lead, the first meeting consisted of

the Reverend William Turner as chairman, and of

Robert Ormston, William Batson, Henry Taylor, Ralph Bainbridge, George Brown, Hadwen Bragg, David Sutton, Anthony Clapham, George Richardson and Edward Prowitt.²⁰

Although instituted in Newcastle, the committee included delegates from across the North East: Taylor and Richardson both lived in North Shields, whilst Bainbridge was a grocer and tea-dealer in Gateshead.²¹ From its beginning the Society had a strong desire to inform the public at large. Meetings regularly included gentlemen from various towns, such as Sunderland, Morpeth and Hexham, and two thousand copies of Clarkson's *Abstract* were not only distributed throughout Newcastle but were also sent to

the Sheriffs and Justices of the Peace ... the Mayors, Alderman, &c. of the several Corporations of Newcastle, Durham, and Berwick upon Tweed ... the Stewards of the several incorporated Companies in Newcastle ... the officiating Minister of every Parish Church, the Minister of each Dissenting Congregation, the Stewards of the several Societies of Methodists, and the Clerks of the People called Quakers.²²

Initiating the campaign, the Newcastle Society laid the foundations of a well-organised committee developing strong regional connections.

With religious arguments central to the anti-slave culture, prominent religious figures quickly favoured abolition. Under the guidance of the Unitarian minister William Turner of the Hanover Square Chapel, the Newcastle Society contained prominent dissenters. Although Turner influentially steered the city's campaign, the majority of the Society's founding members were Quakers. Dissenting clergymen, by informing their congregations of the

slave trade through sermons and lectures, further strengthened the network. Some advocated national tactics: the Rev. Baillie gave a lecture in Sunderland observing the 'virtuous resolutions of the Quakers ... to abstain from the use of delicacies [*sic*] of the West Indies'.²³ Ministers could also initiate the collection of group subscriptions: a sermon at the Methodist chapel in North Shields saw a collection made for the purpose of abolition.²⁴ Anglican clergymen contributed, in addition, by chairing meetings. Thomas Allason, vicar of Heddon on the Wall, chaired the meeting of the Newcastle Society on 13 January 1792, whilst the Rev. William Haswell chaired a meeting considering the petitioning of parliament in North Shields.²⁵ Involved in various philanthropic organizations, including abolition, many Quakers, Unitarians and Anglicans formed close contacts and acquaintances. Religion stimulated anti-slavery attitudes, contributed to the organization of the region's campaign and connected individuals across the North East.

Newcastle's rising middle-classes dominated the region's campaign. Abolitionists included shopkeepers, such as the grocer and tea-dealer Robert Doubleday; merchants and manufacturers; and skilled artisans, such as the engravers Beilby and Bewick. Dissenting communities were prominent within these trade and business sectors of society. Quakers occupied important positions as merchants, craftsmen and bankers. For example, the respected James Backhouse of the Darlington Bank collected anti-slavery subscriptions. Abolition allowed the urban elites to affirm their social eminence and political power over their communities. As a significant member of the Hanover Square congregation, Robert Rankin was both a close family friend of Turner's and a merchant on Mosley Street.²⁶ With many professionals playing important roles in the establishment of intellectual institutions, such as the Literary and Philosophical Society, they gave anti-slavery both status and respectability.²⁷

Being ideally placed within the community and important meeting places for the urban middle classes, the North East's printers and booksellers occupied crucial positions in the anti-slave network.²⁸ The shops of Charnley, Akenhead, Fisher, Hodgson, Humble and Whitfield held the Newcastle and Gateshead petition for signatures.²⁹ With Solomon Hodgson and Edward Humble members of the Hanover Square congregation, coverage of anti-slavery within their papers demonstrates the dissenters' desire to influence the wider public. The recording of subscriptions from Berwick to North Yorkshire reflects the success of the printed word in disseminating the anti-slave culture across the region.

Although normally excluded from local committees and rarely allowed to sign petitions women in the North East did contribute financially to the region's campaign. Those identified as supporters were usually connected to anti-slavery through religious communities. Miss Humble, a member of the Hanover Square congregation and a relative of Edward Humble, was heavily active in philanthropic societies. The Quakers, Lydea and Margaret Richardson, were connected to the Newcastle Society through George Richardson, whilst Deborah Westgarth owned a haberdashery on Newgate Street. Such women played a diverse part in the region's campaign. Having no doubt that both the 'ladies and gentlemen of Sunderland' would attend his sermon on the slave trade the Rev. Baillie highlighted the regional expectations for women to support abolition.³⁰ In Belford 'ladies who were anxiously desirous to shew [sic] their abhorrence of this abominable trade' signed the town's petition.³¹ According to 'Humanus', writing to the Newcastle Courant, women also supported the national absenteeism campaign: the females in his family had convinced him to abstain from the use of slave-produced products.³² Irrespective of their number, female abolitionists exerted influence as subscribers, petitioners and abstainers.

Even though the middle classes dominated the North East's campaign, regional anti-slavery was reliant on politicians and County Representatives to present petitions to parliament. Ralph Milbanke and Rowland Burdon were called upon to present the petitions from towns in County Durham, including Durham, South Shields and Darlington.³³ Members of the nobility also occupied central roles in the organization of petitions: in Berwick and Durham the towns' mayors chaired the meetings.³⁴ P. G. Burrell, with connections to the Hanover Square Chapel, helped to organize a county petition from Northumberland.³⁵ That Northumberland sent a county petition is evidence of the strength and organizational skills of the region's network.³⁶ Bringing together communities and expressing their grievances nationally, the gentry played a significant role in joining the North East to the national campaign.

Acting as the encourager of initiatives, the Newcastle Society united the North East over abolition. Individuals were forged together on lines of religion, gender, politics and business. The dominance of the middle classes emphasizes their position as the campaign's driving force whilst the support of the gentry reflects the closing gap between society's classes. The alliance that emerged produced a coherent and organized network that pressured parliament against the slave trade.

A National Perspective: the Nature of Agitation in the North East

In 1787 Manchester had launched a petitioning campaign without consulting either the London Committee or the regional Quaker network.³⁷ Creating intense discussions, the campaign saw nearly all the larger towns in England actively petition parliament:

Not only Manchester and Sheffield, but
Shrewsbury, York, Northampton, and indeed

SLAVE TRADE.

AT numerous and respectable Meeting of the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Inhabitants of the City of Durham and its Neighbourhood, held at the Guild-Hall of the said City, on Tuesday the 28th Day of February, 1792, for the Purpose of taking into Consideration the Propriety of presenting a Petition to Parliament for the Abolition of the Slave Trade:

WILLIAM SHIELDS, Esq; MAYOR, in the Chair,

Resolved unanimously,

That the Trade to Africa for Slaves is destructive of the Lives of Thousands of the unhappy Natives, and of great Numbers of British Seamen; is, in its Principle, subversive of the dearest Rights of Humanity, and is expressly repugnant to the Law of God.

That a Petition be presented to the House of Commons for the Abolition of that Trade; and a Petition having been prepared by a Committee, appointed for that Purpose, and brought in and read, the same is unanimously approved of.— And it is

Resolved unanimously,

That this Petition be left for a convenient Time at the Guild-Hall, to be signed by the Friends of this Measure, and be afterwards transmitted, together with the present Resolutions, by the Chairman, to John Tempest and William Henry Lambton, Esquires, the City Members; and that they be desired to present it to the House of Commons.

That the Chairman also transmit Copies of the Petition and Resolutions to Rowland Burdon and Ralph Milbanke, Esquires, the County Members; and that they be earnestly requested, in Conjunction with Mr Tempest and Mr Lambton, to exert their best Endeavours to obtain the Object of the Petition.

That the Thanks of the Meeting be given to the Chairman for having called the Meeting, and for the judicious Manner in which he has conducted the Business of the Day.

Ordered, That these Resolutions be signed by the Chairman, and published in the Newcastle Papers, the York Herald, and the English Chronicle.

WILLIAM SHIELDS.

Petition meeting held in Durham

almost every inland town in England, have resorted to the standard set up for the abolition of slavery.³⁸

The Newcastle newspapers, however, do not reveal any regional participation in the petitioning campaign. Although E. M. Hunt has argued that Newcastle took a more traditional form of appeal by sending a petition from the Mayor, the rest of the region remained strangely inactive: only Berwick is known to have presented a petition to parliament.³⁹ Contemporaries were shocked by this public inactivity. 'Eboracensis' stated his surprise that Newcastle's 'opulent and public spirited neighbourhood, should have taken no steps for the encouragement of so laudable a design'.⁴⁰

The cause of the region's limited public response during 1788 is difficult to ascertain. Seymour Drescher has argued that the first campaign had clear geographical limits, as Manchester restricted the scope of its advertisement campaign.⁴¹ However, with two of Newcastle's papers publishing the minutes of the Manchester Society, limited press coverage did not alienate the region from national developments.⁴² Although the resolutions did not produce any comment from the various editorials, press coverage did show some discussion of abolition. The Newcastle Courant in particular printed numerous articles and letters regarding national agitation. 'Eboracensis' informed readers of the petitioning campaign, referring to the Manchester abolitionists Walker and Cooper.⁴³ Through coverage of petitions and local subscriptions, as well as articles on the trade itself, Newcastle's press informed readers on anti-slavery matters. Hunt's argument that the inactivity in Newcastle was the result of a lack of important or prominent philanthropists, with the Quakers not of sufficient social significance to call public meetings, can also be questioned by subsequent research.⁴⁴ What may best explain the region's limited response, therefore, is that petitioning had not yet become a popular form of collective activity.⁴⁵ The initial resolutions of the Newcastle Society support this explanation. Between October 1791 and February 1792 the Society did not

discuss petitioning parliament. It was consequently communities already politicized by contested electoral struggles that found it easier to respond to Manchester's call for mobilization. In 1788 Newcastle was content to leave the matter to its common council.⁴⁶

The uneven campaign of 1788 was followed by a more systematically organized campaign by the London Committee in 1792. Following the defeat by parliament of a vote for abolition in April 1791, Clarkson personally distributed large quantities of his *Abstract* during a tour of the north from October to December.⁴⁷ Recorded as being the first committee to appear in correspondence with the London Committee, the establishment of the Newcastle Society reflects Clarkson's influence in the region.⁴⁸ Sympathizers in the North East quickly responded to the renewed drive for abolition, actively participating in the campaign. Newcastle was the first town to organize a petition, which was successfully signed by 3122 persons: one in three of Newcastle's adults.⁴⁹ Beyond Newcastle, North Shields (1600 persons), South Shields (1268 persons), Darlington (1500 persons) and Sunderland (2400 persons) all presented petitions of a remarkable size.⁵⁰ Just as important as the quantity of signatures was the petitions' geographical diversity. Market towns such as Belford (433 signatures), Alnwick (600 signatures) and Wooler (400 signatures) all sent petitions, as well as smaller towns and villages, such as Wackworth, Rothbury and Staindrop.⁵¹ During 1792 the North East created a considerable force for abolition contributing significantly to the national campaign.

After 1792, however, anti-slavery suffered a serious setback as the French Revolution and the slave uprisings in Haiti affected government's perception of popular politics.⁵² This political repression paralyzed local activity: the group in Manchester did not meet again after 1792.⁵³ Closely connected to the London Committee the North East followed this national trend. Although the last meeting of

the Newcastle Society in 1792 recognized the importance of keeping awake the public attention to the issue of abolition, the Society failed to reappear after March 1793.⁵⁴ The Durham Committee also ceased campaigning, with the last recorded meeting being held

Durham, February 29, 1792:

To be signed, at the TOWN HALL, between the Hours of Ten and Four, this, and every Day this Week; a PETITION, for the

**ABOLITION of a TRADE, to the Coast
of AFRICA, for SLAVES**

In Order to promote, a Relief, of the unmerited Sufferings, of our much injured and oppressed black BRETHREN, and to prevent in future, the atrocious Violation, of tearing a Number of innocent Persons, from their NATIVE COUNTRY, their WIVES, and FAMILIES.

Be Men in DEED, and not in Word only.

Petition organized at Durham

on 1 February 1796.⁵⁵ Although the abandonment of abolition throughout the country affected the region's anti-slavery societies, the North East's strength and determination saw its two committees pursue abolition longer than many other provincial towns.

Conclusions

Although a region with limited connections to the slave trade, the North East mobilized in support of abolition during the early campaigning years. Complimenting the existing historiography of abolition, this article has investigated the culture of anti-slavery

through the provincial press, demonstrating how arguments were adapted to suit provincial societies. A greater awareness of the regional campaigning network enriches the literature concerning abolitionists at a grass-roots level. By understanding the region's agitation, as well as its close links to the national movement, it is possible to demonstrate how societies beyond London developed organized campaigns. With vast popular appeal, anti-slavery in the North East adopted a variety of arguments attracting diverse support. In close alliance with the London Committee, the region's Quakers were among the first to voice their concerns regarding the slave trade. Encouraged by the Newcastle Society, the region's middling ranks dominated the anti-slave network. This network ensured persistent discussions of abolition, as well as aiding the distribution of both regional and national developments. The dominance of religious and humanitarian arguments characterised the nature of the campaign. Quakerism and Unitarianism assumed a prominent position and under their guidance the region rallied towards the cause. The North East should not be overlooked within the historiography of anti-slavery. Although geographically distanced from London and largely invisible in the slave economy, the region not only supported abolition, but campaigned with both strength and determination.

Acknowledgements:

To Sean Creighton for guidance and information shared and to John Charlton for reading drafts.

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- ⁵ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Courant* 28 January 1792.
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- ²² NCL/LS/*Newcastle Advertiser* 28 January 1792.
- ²³ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Advertiser* 10 December 1791.
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- ²⁵ Hunt, 'The North of England Agitation for the Abolition of the Slave Trade', p. 142; NCL/LS/*Newcastle Advertiser* 28 January 1792.
- ²⁶ S. Harbottle, *The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle upon Tyne*, (Leeds: Northern Universities Press for the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1997), p. 46; Tyne and Wear Archives Service [TWAS]/Whitehead's Trade Directory for Newcastle & Gateshead, 1790; 1801.

- ²⁷ As discussed in: Roy Porter, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England', *The British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 3 (1980), pp.20-46.
- ²⁸ Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, p. 132.
- ²⁹ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Courant* 11 February 1792.
- ³⁰ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Advertiser* 29 October 1791.
- ³¹ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Chronicle* 3 March 1792.
- ³² NCL/LS/*Newcastle Courant* 7 January 1792.
- ³³ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Chronicle* 3 March 1792; 25 February 1792; 21 April 1792.
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- ⁵¹ NCL/LS/*Newcastle Advertiser* 25 February 1792; 3 March 1792.
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- ⁴³ A. Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: the British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*, (London: Pan, 1996), p. 255.
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General Elections in Durham 1885-1910

Paul Mayne

The 1884 Representation of the People Act created a mass electorate in the UK for the first time. However, Britain did not become a democracy, she was merely democratising (a process that is still ongoing). What this act did was enfranchise greater numbers of working class men. Women, although they could vote (depending on property qualifications) in local and vestry elections, were denied the privilege of electing in parity with men those who would legislate over their lives. The 1884 act did not even bring about complete manhood suffrage. In England and Wales the number of males eligible to vote under the new act was 66.66%; this was an increase from 33.33% in 1869. Scotland fared slightly less well with an increase from 33.33% to 60%, and in Ireland the eligible male electorate rose from 16.66% to 50%, the greatest proportionate increase but still behind the rest of the U.K. in terms of eligible male electorate. The total UK electorate in 1885 was 5.6 million out of a total population of 36 million and the majority of these, 4.4 million, were situated in England and Wales¹.

This was not by any means perfection, but it was a significant step along the path to democracy that reflected successive governments' caution in extending the franchise.

It is the intention of this article to focus on general elections held within County Durham after the 1884 reform act (1885 to 1910), paying particular attention to the Home Rule Question. Home Rule split the Liberal Party in 1886 and was a contentious issue within politics throughout the period under examination. Another factor is that during this time the boundaries of the constituencies remained as they were set in 1885, which gives one constant to work with. The total electorate in County Durham (Boroughs and County divisions) in 1885 was 150,319 people unevenly spread in 15 constituencies and rose to 239,579 electors in 1910. That is, 7 boroughs and 8 county seats, with the borough of Sunderland returning two MPs; the only borough in the county with such an honour. The boundary commission sat in 1885 to coincide with the extended franchise, and as a result of this measure new constituencies were created. Jarrow and Houghton-Le-Spring were successors to the old North Durham division for example, and like many of the new parliamentary divisions, were contested for the first time in 1885. It has been stated that Northumberland and Durham were underrepresented at Parliament throughout the nineteenth century. By 1918 women had been granted a limited franchise, being enabled to vote after the age of 30 provided that they or their husbands were ratepayers. All men were enfranchised at the age of 21 by the same act, an anomaly that was not addressed until 1928. In these Durham divisions there is a large working class element among the electorate. In Jarrow the working class, occupation voters were the majority (10,728 occupants & 13 lodgers out of 12,897 total electorate); also Barnard Castle and Houghton-Le-Spring give the same impression from indirect sources. This may be true of many of the county divisions but more detailed

work needs to be done and electoral registers consulted to gather data on occupiers as opposed to owners and proprietors.

The period 1885 – 1910 was a time of change in the alignment of politicians and parties. Perhaps the most salient issue was the division of the Liberals over Home Rule and the absorption of the Liberal Unionists into the Conservative and Unionist Party in 1912. There was also the emergence of Socialist candidates in this period; the SDF was founded in 1884, and the formation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) 1893 and Labour Party 1900 occurs at the latter end of our period. There is also evidence within the election data of such challenges. The political entity referred to here as Durham (i.e. the 15 Durham Constituencies), show all the signs of the national debates but with local twists and quirks. There is a Liberal Unionist challenge from one end of the political spectrum, and a socialist or radical contention at the other through which the Liberals are relatively unscathed, but it does see Liberal MPs hedging and voting against their personal inclination when faced with a more radical or reactionary electorate.

As can be seen in the election data, the Liberals held the majority of seats in Durham although that majority was on occasions reduced quite dramatically. Durham can legitimately be considered as a Liberal stronghold in terms of MPs returned, particularly if Lib/Lab MPs are taken into account. The alternative name for Lib/Lab candidates or MPs was Working-Man Liberals. Indeed these candidates were Liberals for the purposes of elections and in terms of the House of Commons in that they sat on the Liberal benches. They stood for election often with the blessing of the Liberal Party and the support of their trades unions although they tend to be of a more radical inclination. A report in the *Gateshead Observer* for January 1885 gives an account of the Durham Miners Association (DMA) political council meeting in which “labour (sic) candidates”

were chosen from among their members. Also present was one of the Liberal MPs for Sunderland, S Storey, who spoke at the meeting. The newspaper does not report Storey's speech but does name the selected candidates and those who declined to stand². Further evidence of political interest and activity comes from the minute book of Jarrow pattern makers: the branch resolved to send one of their brothers as a delegate to the meeting of the Jarrow Parliamentary division. Brother Edwards reported Jarrow constituency proceedings to the branch meeting of March 5, 1894 (frustratingly his report is not minuted in the minute book). It is apparent that organised labour is certainly taking an interest in politics, and parliamentary politics especially.

It would appear that there was a deep adherence to the Liberal Party, however radicals could make themselves a presence as at Jarrow where Palmer, industrialist and MP for that division, voted with Gladstone on the Government of Ireland Bill against his instinct but as a matter of political expediency. In Jarrow, of the 6 elections between 1885 and 1906 three were unopposed: 1886, 1895 and 1900. Of the remaining three, Palmer was challenged from the left by either independent labour or Lib/Lab candidates: J Johnston,³ Independent Lib/Lab, 1885; ED Lewis, Independent Lab, 1892 and PF Curran, Labour, 1906; who subsequently went on to win the by-election in July 1907 following Palmer's death. A political agent for Lord Strathmore comparing Barnard Castle with Jarrow notes that both Liberal MPs have "ratted" and become nominally at least (& so voted) Home Rulers. They have thus prevented an ultra radical or working mans candidate being brought forward in either division. The probability is that the sitting member would have been defeated by a radical working mans Home Ruler unless thoroughly supported by the Conservatives.⁴

The Conservative position appears to be in the absence of a strong Conservative candidate it would be better to have a

tepid Gladstonian Liberal than a radical working man candidate. It is apparent from this agent's correspondence with the Earl of Strathmore that the Conservatives are worried over the politics of the working class electorate and feared that their trades unions had too great an influence over them. It has been suggested that Tory family political influence remained in Northumberland and Durham until the Secret Ballot Act of 1872. Although the interest of a magnate such as the Earl of Strathmore would suggest that the old paternalist influence of voting patterns was broken by the 1872 act, there was still a small vestige of power remaining at this time of transition.

Harris has argued that the middle classes, by either buying or marrying their way into the gentry, tended to move to the Conservative end of the political spectrum. Harris also argues that the Liberal split over Home Rule, which created the Liberal Unionists, eased the way for such middle class capitalists into the Conservative Party. For example, industrialist William Armstrong was a Liberal Unionist candidate in one Newcastle Parliamentary election.

It has been stated that voter turnout was low in the period 1820 – 1886 however election turnouts in Durham after this period do not seem to be low. The lowest turnout was Jarrow in 1885 at 57.6% of the electorate, almost two thirds, and in subsequent elections voter participation markedly improved. The above demonstrates a political awareness that was denied an official outlet among the populace under the previous 1867 settlement. Other factors, the Secret Ballot Act for example, also had an effect, reducing the ability of landlord or employer to intimidate the tennantry or workers into voting according to the squire's interest. Nevertheless, Jarrow, particularly the Ward of Jarrow town, had a significant 'pay-roll vote' (i.e. Palmers works in Jarrow) for Palmer. The outlying colliery districts were more independent in their voting patterns.

When taking account of the aggregated percentage share of the vote for each party in Durham, over the period 1885 –1910 general patterns can be perceived, but at the loss of local constituency detail. Generally when Tory results are compared to those of the Liberals it can be seen that the Liberals scored persistently a greater percentage share of the aggregate vote in Durham - the Conservatives having attained over 35% of the vote on two occasions. The Liberals declined to a low point of 35.5%. However this can be misleading since the Liberal Unionists never opposed a Tory candidate or vice versa, and it is probably a better measure of the opposition to the Liberals to count the Liberal Unionists, as Lady Bracknell observes, as Conservatives⁵. The combined ‘Unionist’ Vote never exceeded much beyond 46%. In numbers of Unionist, Tory or Liberal Unionist MPs returned, this only amounted to six out of a possible sixteen at best. This could have something to do with the *First-Past-the-Post* electoral system; yet the pro Home Rule vote, at least the vote for those candidates from parties supporting Home Rule, never was lower than 53.7% in 1900. There could be many reasons for this. Firstly, Home Rule was one issue among many that was hotly contested. Secondly, organised labour tended to favour both the Liberals and be sympathetic to the idea of Home Rule. Whilst the DMA did not have a policy on the Irish Question, it is clear that their leaders were trying to steer the membership in the direction of sympathy for the measure. In 1892 (an election year), at the 21st Annual Miners’ Gala, a resolution was proposed from the platform: “That we express our thanks to the electors of Durham for their adherence to Liberal principals, shown in the return of 15 members to support Mr Gladstone in his endeavour to give justice to the people of Ireland”⁶. One of those Liberals was J Wilson, a Lib/Lab MP for Durham Mid., and on the platforms were Mr Atherly-Jones and Mr. Storey; Liberal members for Durham, North-Western and

the Borough of Sunderland respectively. There was a close affiliation between the Liberals and organised Labour and, given that the majority of many of the Durham electorates were working class men, then the liberal majority both in share of the vote and number of MPs would seem to tally.

Gladstone's accommodation with the idea of Irish Home Rule was a gradual process. Morley suggests that Disraeli, on leaving office in 1880, predicted that Ireland would be the issue that the incoming government would be excised with. The Land League in Ireland and the Irish party led by Parnell in Parliament were the twin manifestations of the "crisis swelling upon the horizon, and that shortly after rushed upon us like a flood"⁷. By 1884, the year of the speech quoted, Parnell and Gladstone were on their way to forming an alliance although not without some flirtation with the Conservatives in the form of Lord Carnarvon in 1885. These wider concerns obviously impacted at a regional level, and within Northumberland and Durham, the ethnicity of the area was a factor. Described as a melting pot, the expanding economy of the area was attracting migrants from a wide variety of locations. Catholicism differentiated the Irish migrants from other groups in society although there was a significant proportion of Irish Protestants in the region. Another feature of the region compared to Lancashire or West Scotland was that the region did not develop a sectarian culture in the face of being one of the four areas of mass Irish migration.⁸ That is not to say that there were no outbreaks of violence, and echoing Cooter, Burnett and Macraird have concluded about the region;

Although there were intermittent ethnic and religious tensions in these areas, the dominant characteristic was one of co-existence based on shared circumstances.⁹

Accounting for the support for Liberal Candidates as opposed to Liberal Unionist or Tory, then ethnicity was not a major factor. The Irish, inclined towards Home Rule, were too thinly spread out around the Durham Constituencies to be a significant factor, Pelling gives figures of about 10% of the electorate in South Shields and 14.28% each in Gateshead and Jarrow¹⁰. No Home Rule (Irish Nationalist) candidate presented themselves to a Durham electorate until the 1907 Jarrow by-election that had the effect of splitting the Liberal vote and allowing a Labour candidate to take a seat in the Palace of Westminster. In effect, support for the Liberal Party and the high esteem in which many of the working classes held Gladstone, are greater factors in the electoral success of the Liberals. One other factor, following 1885, was the alliance between the Irish Nationalists and the Liberal Party.

On Home Rule, the early 1880's saw a heavy legislative programme that enabled the small number of Parnellites to obstruct legislation at every opportunity. Furthermore, with his leadership of the Land League and connections to the Fenians, Parnell had a strong power-base in Ireland. Both Salisbury and Gladstone had commented upon the phenomenon of Irish obstructionism. However, obstructionism was a mere nuisance in Parliament and could not have gained the concessions that the Home Rulers sought unless one or other of the great parties were willing to grant them. Salisbury had stated the case that both parties, Liberal and Tory, came to recognize; of the difficulty of a Parliament in 'keeping people as subjects against their will'¹¹. This realisation that "the Irish Question [should] be 'domesticized'"¹² led to the flirtation of both great parties with Parnell. The 1885 election returned Gladstone with a majority of 81 over Lord Salisbury's Conservatives, and the Irish Nationalists with 81 MPs; Parnell could keep both parties out of government or form an alliance with the Liberals. When Gladstone came out

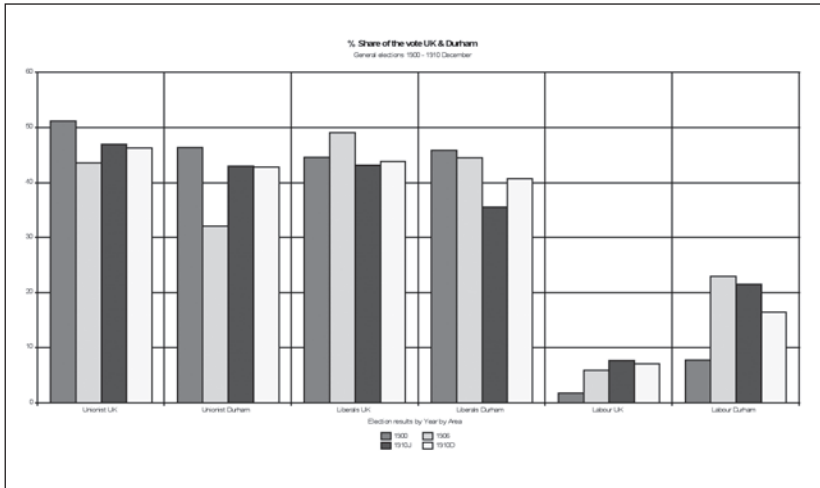
in favour of Home Rule for Ireland, the Irish Nationalists became the allies of the Gladstonian Liberal Party. "The Parnellites", argues Boyce, "were for most purposes a manifestation of the radical wing of the Liberal Party". They replaced those Liberals who left the party over Home Rule.

It is this Nationalist radicalism coupled with the Liberal alliance that held the loyalty of the Durham electorate and the Irish minority within it. It is perhaps too much to assert, but it is possible that support of Home Rule was a badge of radicalism. Nonetheless, the consequences of the split were profound within the Liberal party nationally and locally. One example is that the industrial Pease family of Darlington was split politically over Home Rule. Leading member Joseph Pease was a coal owner in and MP for Barnard Castle, and Chairman of the North East Railway. Joseph's brother, Arthur, very much a Liberal Unionist, stood in Darlington against his brother-in-law, Theodore Fry; winning the seat in 1895. Arthur's son HP Pease stood and won the seat of Darlington in 1898, upon the death of his father, which he held in the Unionist interest until the January election of 1910, regaining Darlington in December that year. Pelling comments that Darlington had a considerable middle-class vote and, for a non-conformist industrial town, was more Unionist than would be expected. However, the recorded results demonstrate that the struggle was closer than the stripe of the Parliamentary incumbent would suggest, the victorious candidate in any election not holding more than 55.5% share of the vote with majorities as low as 29 votes and a maximum of 688 votes, the average turnout being 92.11% over eight contested elections. This raises the question; was the name Pease an electoral asset in Darlington? Darlington looks like a marginal seat and the Pease family had been leaders in the town's industrialization; a member of the Pease family might just have the local edge over a political opponent¹³ (see table in notes below).

The Liberals were split over Home Rule though Liberal Unionists had some but not overwhelming impact on the Liberal hegemony within Durham¹⁴. The total Unionist Percentage aggregate share has already been stated as a little over 46%; both Tories and Liberal Unionists gaining a maximum of three constituencies apiece at their highest point in 1900. How the Liberal Unionist candidates fared in elections was to a great extent dependant on conditions in the local constituencies. The election results appear to ebb and flow over the period with the national results. Comparing the number of MPs returned for Durham, for England, and the UK as a whole, over the eight general elections demonstrates this. In 1900, for example, the table below demonstrates that local fortunes were linked to the outcome of the national debate. The Unionists (Tories and Liberal Unionists), under Salisbury formed a government having a majority of 134 in the House of Commons.

	Liberals	Lib/Lab	Total	Con	LU	Total	Lab	I.Nat
Durham	8	1	9	3	3	6	1	0
England	122		122	287	45	332		1
UK	184		184	334	68	402	2	82

The percentage share of the vote is synchronous but not necessarily proportional to the electoral fortunes of the parties nationally. If the Unionists did well in Durham then it can be predicted that they would be enjoying a certain measure of success in the country as a whole. The graph below illustrates this quite well.

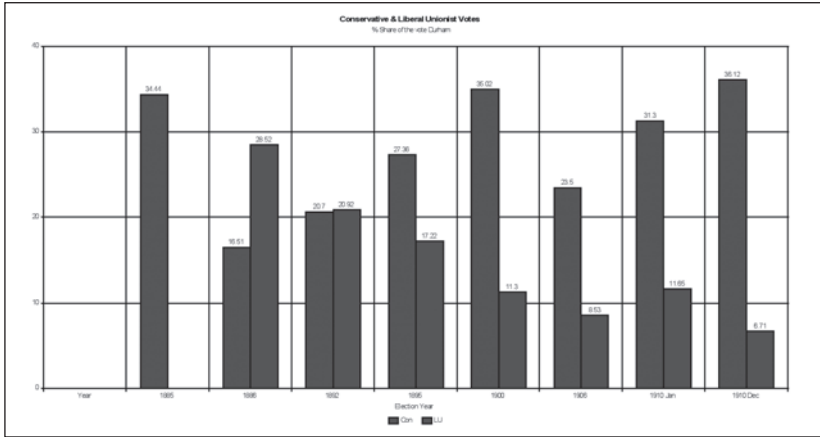


Data Collated from Craig FWS, *“British Parliamentary Elections 1885 – 1918”* (London: MacMillan, 1974) & Cook C & Stevenson J *“Modern British History 1714 – 1987”* (London: MacMillan, 1988)

As can be seen Unionists in Durham never matched the performance of their colleagues in the country as a whole and were only once (marginally) ahead of the Liberals locally in share of the vote. The Liberals locally had a mixed fortune, outperforming on two occasions their colleagues nationally, and doing less well in 1900 and 1910 (January). Also of interest is that the Labour share of the vote in Durham after 1900 is significantly greater than that of the Labour party nationally, more than double in January 1910. This is the beginning of the slow transition of the area from being a Liberal to a Labour stronghold later in the new century.

County Durham was not a particularly good hunting ground for the Conservative Party, Durham City being the exception. There is a core vote for the Tories that ranges between 16.5% and

36.12% of the vote depending on number of seats contested; from just over one eighth to just over a third of the electorate. The Liberal Unionists, after initial success in 1886, declined in their percentage share of the vote. Where Unionists were successful in gaining seats they were often Liberal Unionists and were already known to the electorate; for example, Liberal incumbents who became Liberal Unionists. T Richardson voted against the Government of Ireland Bill and successfully defended Hartlepool as a Liberal Unionist in 1886. His death in 1891 precipitated a by-election in which a Liberal was returned. Similarly in Durham South East, where Sir HM Havelock-Allan was successfully returned as a Liberal Unionist in 1886 to lose in the following general election of 1892 to a Liberal, J Richardson. Throughout the period the seat swung back and forth between Liberal and Liberal Unionist contestants until December 1910, when a Tory contested the constituency without success. 1886 in Houghton-Le-Spring is an interesting election worthy of further investigation. Captured by John Wilson in 1885 as a working - man Liberal (miner) and lost to a Conservative in 1886. Pelling intimates this was a more rural constituency in which the Freeholders of Sunderland voted, and containing large estates owned by the coal-owning Earl of Durham and Marquess of Londonderry. Pelling attributes the defeat to clerical hostility and the *Northern Weekly Leader* commented that the contest in Houghton had been one, “between capital and labour in the oldest and most restricted sense.” The article goes on to ascribe the Conservative victory “to the wholesale coercion of the Miners.¹⁵” The constituency reverted to the Liberals in 1892 and returned Liberal candidates thereafter.



Election data from Craig FWS, “*British Parliamentary Elections 1885 – 1918*” (London: MacMillan, 1974)

It should be remembered that Liberal Unionists did not stand against Tories and did not contest all constituencies, a fact that will account for their percentage share of the vote. ‘Conservative and Unionists’, as they became after 1912, were making efforts for limited electoral reward in Durham.

Among these efforts was an avowedly Unionist newspaper in Sunderland called *The Blizzard*. The paper has a particular reactionary feel and is heavily opposed to Home Rule, although it is not alone in this; *The Newcastle Daily Journal* also took against Home Rule, referring to Irish Nationalism as a conspiracy. On the prorogation of Parliament prior to the 1886 election the Journal produced an editorial of stinging invective.

“... There must be neither doubt or scruple in the minds of those who are in favour of maintaining the unity of the Empire. Great pains are being taken by our opponents lead by the

“Grand Old Mystifyer” to confuse the issues of the controversy. ... Every voter, therefore, Liberal, Radical, Whig or Conservative, who is convinced that the scheme is a mad one, a fatal, delusive, dangerous and desperate effort of an angry dotting and defeated statesman to ruin the country in order to receive a coat of electoral whitewash as a discharge of twenty years of legislative bankruptcy in Ireland should vote for those candidates only who have pledged themselves to the hilt to resist such proposal to the death either in the next or in any other Parliament.¹⁶”

The Blizzard continues this visceral opposition to Home Rule for Ireland in the early 1890s. It uses bellicose language towards efforts in successive parliaments to bring a measure of Home Rule to Ireland. Over difficulties faced by the Government on the 1893 Home Rule bill, *The Blizzard* gloats that “Home Rule will be dead as Queen Anne.”¹⁷ *The Blizzard* also gives a glimpse at political life in Sunderland taking a politely malicious swipe at the ILP, pejoratively describing the speaker, Miss Conway, as having a “voluble tongue and masculine voice.” Dismissing Conway’s speech as a “stock address, which orators of *her type* [my italics] persist in trotting out at every available opportunity.” Quoting Conway, *The Blizzard* writer goes on to take issue with the ILP position on Home Rule:

‘I am in favour of Home Rule’, she declared, ‘because the loafer-landlord is no more use in Ireland than he is in England.’ Much as Miss Conway may know of labour problems she evidently knows but little of the Irish Question, when she would be willing to break up the Empire simply for the above named reason. Miss Conway is a wild visionary enthusiast,

a splendid theorist but like many other well-meaning individuals totally incapable of dealing with the stern realities of life¹⁸

The objection is to the dismemberment of the Empire; however, there is a sideswipe at enthusiasm for political change and an implicit dismissal of theoretical exploration. *The Blizzard* comes across as a particularly virulent and unpleasant vehicle for its proprietor's deeply held conservative views. Suffice to say, *The Blizzard* did not last long as a publication.

The Unionist stance on the Irish Question and their opposition to Home Rule would seem to stem from two sources. Firstly, that of refusing to reward deviance; the land war of the 1880s was seen as a revolutionary act or just simple lawlessness and boycotting as going against the natural order. The whole history of Irish insurrection seems to be taken into account. Another is that of the Empire and the unity of the Empire. Ireland's proximity to Britain geographically means that Ireland has potential as a staging post for any attempt on the territorial integrity of Britain, so security was also an issue. Additionally there is the concept of conservative dislike of changes. In the press, anti-Home Rule papers tend to emphasize disorder and Unionist politics whereas pro-Home Rule publications place emphasis on Irish hardships and constitutional Home Rule politics. That some of these periodicals enjoyed wide circulation within Durham also raises the question as to their efficacy as promulgators of their respective causes, especially given the Unionist poor showing in Durham electorally. The press, it would appear, seem to reflect their readership's prejudices much as they do today.

One other method Conservatives used to get their message across was the lecture. One such remains in print, the title of which suggests that the Conservatives had acknowledged the necessity to proselytize the lower orders. The title was "Conservatism and the

working classes". In this talk Isaac Lyons places Conservatism within the canon of liberal thought and discourse. Lyons lists legislation, without going into any depth, passed by the Tories to help the working classes. On Ireland, Lyons said that the Conservative administration had restored order to Ireland and decency in the House of Commons and expressed a hope that Ireland would become law abiding and constitutionalist. He offers this hope of Balfour's stewardship of the Ireland brief:

I believe that, granted the government is allowed a free hand, and Mr Balfour has fair opportunity granted the Government are not interfered with by captious critics on the one hand or obstructive revolutionists on the other I believe in two or three years time Ireland will settle down.¹⁹

Whether Lyons is preaching to the converted or attempting to persuade the undecided is not entirely clear. The parenthesis indicating cheers or applause is indicative of members of the audience not hostile to Conservative ideas and politics. Lyons was from Newcastle and secretary to the Northern Union of Conservative Associations and presumably undertook such speaking engagements frequently. That the speech was published is indicative of the Conservatives trying to get their message out as widely as possible to the working classes.

Despite their efforts Unionists had little return at the polls in Durham. The working class nature of many of the electorates within Durham is a probable factor. Another is organised labour. That the Unionists, particularly the Tories, were uncomfortable with trades unions is evident as early as 1886. Earl Strathmore's agent, Daglish, writing to his lordship about the constituency of Jarrow noted the comparisons with Barnard Castle. He noted of the DMA that the leadership had not

much influence except in the direction in which the body of the union wishes to go and that unfortunately is in an extreme radical direction – if they attempted to direct the council otherwise, they would be at once superseded.²⁰

Daglish also avers that the miners did not understand or care about the Irish Question, arguing that their:-

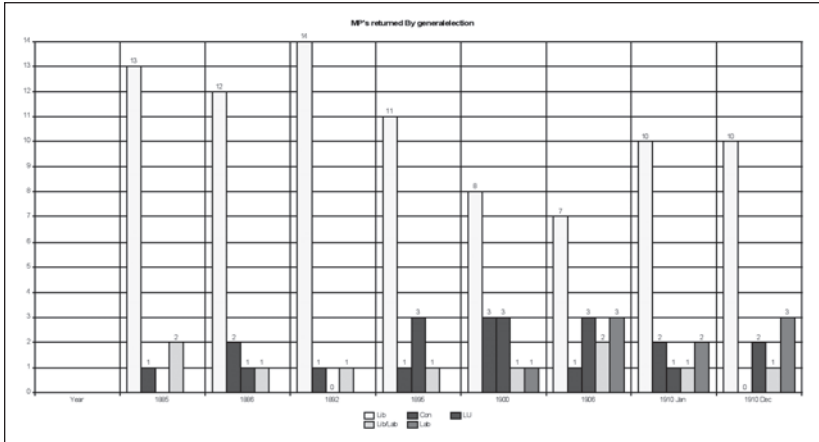
views are entirely subordinate to their trades union action not only due to the influence of their leaders – but also to their own wishes to attain parliamentary power, which they think (& certainly think correctly as shewn in this last parliament by the introduction of the “employers liability bill” and the mines act &c &c) will enable them to obtain legislative enactments favorable to their immediate interests.²¹

To state that Miners did not understand Home Rule would indicate a level of prejudice on the behalf of Strathmore’s correspondent. A reading of the nominations from miner’s lodges in 1895 and 1897 for paid speakers at the Durham Miners’ Gala demonstrates this quite clearly. Out of thirty five nominations recorded in the council minutes for 1895 there are three Irish Nationalists, Michael Davitt, leader of the Land League, and two other Irish nationalist MPs; TP O’Connor, MP for Liverpool, Scotland Road and W O’Brien, MP for Mallow and, as the concise DNB states, ‘political jail bird’²². These nominations also demonstrate the democracy of the DMU as well as the heterogeneity of the politics of the working classes. In 1897, Lord Randolph Churchill was nominated as a paid speaker. However there were six Irish Nationalist MPs, including Charles Stewart Parnell himself. Generally speaking of these lists of nominations (the only two I have

encountered so far) the trend is to nominate either radical Liberals (Charles Bradlaugh is nominated 1897) or local Lib/Lab, mining or ILP speakers, indeed, the Social Democratic Federation's founder HF Hyndman is also nominated in 1897. These lists do not generally display a tendency to sympathy for the Unionist cause, Randolph Churchill's nomination being an exception. The DMA standing as a proxy for the whole of the working class electorate may be stretching a point; but given the dominance of coal mining industry in the area, it is a good hint as to the working class political attitudes.

Heterogeneity is another issue; in trying to recover the working class political history of this period we inevitably deal in aggregates, losing much individual data. That Lord Randolph Churchill received a nomination as a paid speaker to the Miners' Gala may be a surprise but should not come as a shock. It is, in fact, a testimony and tribute to the internal democracy of the DMA that such an event could occur. Not having seen the minutes of any of the nominating miners lodges one is left at guessing at the circumstances behind such an incident counter to expectations. At a Home Rule meeting in Felling, part of the Jarrow constituency, in May 1886 a motion of confidence was moved in Gladstone and his colleagues – implying the Government of Ireland Bill. This motion was passed with one person opposed, because that person was an Ulster Protestant. Yet that is what happens in an election. An individual, a whole bundle of attitudes and opinions will go into the polling booth and their owner makes a mark against the name of a candidate they disagree with the least, and the winner is the candidate for whom the most individuals have voted. It is that simple and that complicated. It was Michael Davitt who spoke to the Durham Miners' Gala, not Randolph Churchill. That the Liberal Unionists did well initially in 1886 but their vote dwindled over the intervening period to 1910 says much for the newly enfranchised working class electorate.

They saw their interest as best represented by Liberal, or Lib/Lab MPs mostly of a radical inclination, leaving the Tories with a core vote returning, at best, three MPs. Liberal Unionists fared worse in share of the vote. In number of MPs returned the Liberals never lost their grip on what was a stronghold, returning ten out of sixteen MPs when the Unionists had their best ever General Election in Durham returning six Unionists, three each, Tories and Liberal Unionists. It is also interesting that in Jarrow CM Palmer may have been prevented from becoming a Liberal Unionist by the presence of radical working class groupings. The re-adoption of Palmer was in doubt in 1886: *The Northern Weekly Leader* reported that the Labour League wanted to adopt Joseph Cowan as prospective Parliamentary candidate, and at the delegate meeting Palmer was adopted with four votes against. It is not known whether those four votes belonged to Labour League members, but at every subsequent contested election in Jarrow, Palmer's opponent was of the radical stripe. That all fifteen constituencies in Durham are different is true but their heterogeneity also makes the County more interesting and research more complicated. What they have in common is that they contain a largely working class electorate and that the working classes have a tendency to vote along liberal or radical lines often returning a coal owner such as Pease or an industrialist as Palmer but equally returning radicals such as Atherly-Jones or Lib/Labs Such as Crawford and J Wilson of whom the local Tories made a great and successful effort to oust from the Houghton-le-Spring Parliamentary division in 1886.



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Notes

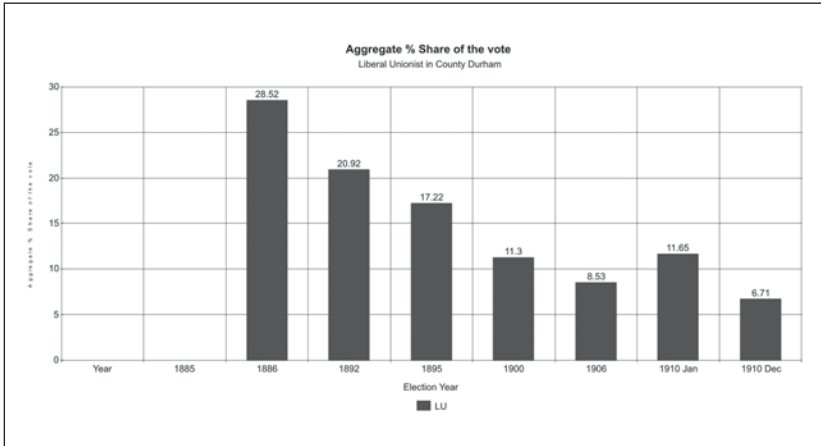
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- ⁴ ? Daglish ?J, Letter dated 20 June 1886, Strathmore Papers
- ⁵ "Oh they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate." Oscar Wilde, "The Importance of being Ernest", Act 1, 1895.
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¹³ Election Results in Darlington

Year	Candidate	Party	Votes	% Share	Majority
(Votes)	T Fry	Liberal	2866	50.5	56
	A Pease	LU	2810	49.5	
1895	A Pease	LU	3354	55.4	657
	Sir T Fry	Liberal	2697	44.6	
1898	HP Pease	LU	3497	55.5	688
Death	OC Phillipps	Liberal	2809	44.5	
1900	HP Pease	Unopposed			
1906	HP Pease	LU	4375	51.7	288
	IH Mitchell	Labour	4087	48.3	
1910J	ITT Lincoln	Liberal	4815	50.2	29
	HP Pease	LU	4786	49.8	
1910D	HP Pease	LU	4881	52.2	406
	F Maddison	Lib/Lab	4475	47.8	

Election data from Craig FWS, "*British Parliamentary Elections 1885 – 1918*" (London: MacMillan, 1974)

¹⁴ Graph showing Liberal Unionist Aggregate percentage Share of the vote for General elections 1885 - 1910



Election data from Craig FWS, "*British Parliamentary Elections 1885 – 1918*" (London: MacMillan, 1974)

- ¹⁵ *Northern Weekly Leader*, 17 July 1886. Volume: 111, Issue: 128, p4, c5.
This is a reference to Gladstone known as the "Grand Old Man" (GOM) and plays on this appellation.
- ¹⁶ *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 16 June 1886 p4.
- ¹⁷ *The Blizzard*, 8 July 1893, p4, c1-2.
- ¹⁸ *The Blizzard*, 22 July 1893, p4
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REVIEW ARTICLE

Bill Griffiths, Fishing and Folk: Life and Dialect on the North Sea Coast

(Northumbria University Press, 2008) 304 pp_

• ISBN 978 1 904794 28 8, 304 pp £11.99

Katrina Porteous

In an interview not long before he died, scholar, poet, musician and polymath Bill Griffiths discussed his internet poem, 'Trawler Race', published on the website 'Acknowledged Land'. Like many of his poems, it contains elements of 'found text' – fragments of language seen or overheard. It is also truly interactive: it invites readers literally to create it, presenting them with pages of disconnected fragments to reconfigure as they please. All his life, Bill eschewed authority and control, identifying himself with communities outside the 'establishment'; so the internet provided him with an ideal medium, inclusive, anonymous, eclectic, egalitarian. It is with these qualities in mind that one must approach the posthumous final volume of his 'Wor Language' trilogy, Fishing and Folk.

Like its predecessors on the language of cooking and of coal mines, this book grew out of a Heritage Lottery Funded project at Northumbria University, a paradoxical, postmodern juxtaposition of Old English scholarship with community engagement. It was an admirable and brilliant experiment, which only someone as unusual as Bill Griffiths could have accomplished. Much of Bill's work since his move to the North East in 1990 had been to encourage former mining communities to value their dialect as an embodiment of history. The language of the North East is rich with Old English vocabulary – words like 'bairn' and 'nowt'. In his 'Wor Language' project, Bill aimed to record for posterity words which might otherwise disappear along with the industries which they represent. As the once vital inshore fishing industry declines, *Fishing and Folk* admirably fulfils that aim.

But Bill had more than an antiquarian objective. He described his approach as 'history by vocabulary', and *Fishing and Folk* covers a dazzling range of topics. It is divided into four sections dealing, first, with coastal terminology (words describing headlands, rocks, beaches, the sea, weather, fish and birds); secondly with boats; thirdly with fishing (techniques, catches, landing, processing and distribution); and fourthly with communities (fishing folklore and traditions, and the wider uses of the coast, including ports, ships, leisure and holidays). These later chapters are less glossary-driven and more loosely-structured around an amorphous collection of material.

The coast between Berwick and the Humber is sometimes referred to as 'the coble coast', because until recent times it was distinguished by the coble, a type of clinker-built open fishing boat which was not found elsewhere. Its lines are well-illustrated in Part Two of *Fishing and Folk* by Adrian Osler's detailed drawings. The coble's origins have long been debated. What is clear is that

the coast where it was used, from Northumberland to Yorkshire, is united by elements of cultural similarity.

The central inquiry of *Fishing and Folk* starts from this similarity, asking whether the settlements of the North Sea coast can be said to form a coherent culture; and, if so, how this relates to the opposite coast in Europe. Bill seeks his answers, first, by assembling a kind of loose ‘found poetry’ of historical and sociological fragments; and, secondly, through close study of the etymology of words found therein. His conclusion is that it is indeed valid to speak of a North Sea community, and to prove this he lists many words shared along the East coast of England which, since they are not in use elsewhere, attest to a maritime-based cohesion.

Bill’s argument

The main thesis of the book is that, within this coastal language, several historical strata overlay one another. Bill identifies three main layers. Closest to the present, he unearths a collection of ‘local’ names, which implies a society of separate, settled fishing villages. These include words like ‘cuddy duck’ for the eider, ‘podler’ for the immature coal-fish, and ‘hashy’ for a gusty wind. Within this group, he discovers a number of Dutch-influenced words.

Beneath this, Bill identifies another, more unified, layer, an interchange of Old Norse and Old English terms, which he refers to as ‘Anglo-Viking’ culture. He concludes from the similarity of certain words within the two languages that we tend to over-emphasise the difference between them. This is particularly apparent with regard to coastal features, where a headland may be a ‘snook’ or ‘snab’ in Old English, or a ‘nook’ or ‘nab’ in Old Norse, and a rock a ‘carr’ in Old English or a ‘scar’ in Old Norse. Bill suggests that the difficulty we have in attributing word origins to one language or the other may be a problem we make for ourselves. Repeatedly, the language

points to an interpenetration between Anglian and Viking cultures.

Thirdly, Bill identifies an older layer of language which does indeed distinguish Anglian from Viking. This is clearest in coastal feature and place names, and shows a division fossilised along the lines of first settlement, with Norse words predominating on the Yorkshire coast and Anglian words on the Northumbrian. This enables Bill to add to and confirm a list of specifically 'Northumbrian' words within Old English, including the word 'steel', for a promontory, and 'piner', a word used by Beadnell fishermen to identify a penetrating South East wind.

Words for sea conditions illustrate this three-fold archaeology of language, with the word 'hobble', used in Northumberland to mean short seas, derived from the Dutch 'hobbelen'; 'lipper', meaning wind-driven waves, from the Old Norse 'hleypa'; and 'droomly', meaning disturbed water, from the Old English 'droflíc'. This etymological enquiry is of considerable interest to the general historian, especially where it seems to enlighten questions of the relation of Viking to Anglian to pre-Anglian culture. It is also of interest to the specifically maritime historian; the development of the language seems to parallel that of the coble, which Bill concludes, was probably a hybrid of Celtic, Germanic and Scandinavian influences.

But, as mentioned earlier, *Fishing and Folk* is not just a scholarly investigation into language. As a product of a community project, it aims to be all-inclusive. Bill has drawn on oral accounts from a wide variety of living interviewees and correspondents, and interwoven these with a splendidly eclectic range of written sources. Alternating word-lists with interpretative paragraphs and quotations, he presents lengthy excerpts from many of his source texts. So alongside contributions from living people, we encounter writing from a 10th century cleric, medieval mystery plays, names drawn from 19th century Ordnance Survey maps, Victorian folksong,

ballads and newspaper reports, and quotations from specialist boat-books. Bill's two primary sources for fishing language are included complete, as appendixes; these are Stanley Umpleby's 1930s word-list, 'the Dialect of Staithes', and my own 28-page list of words collected from fishermen in Beadnell and nearby in the early 1990s.

Some reservations

In a later edition, Bill might have gone on to consider literature on 19th century Scottish herring fishing (the culture of the Northumberland coast was completely continuous with southern Scotland); and the important account rolls kept by Durham Priory and its cells on Holy Island and Farne in the 13th to 16th centuries, published, and in the latter case translated, by James Raine and the Surtees Society in the 19th century. The information on fish purchases in these accounts would help fill the gap in *Fishing and Folk* between the early and modern periods. As it is, while Bill refers to early aristocratic patronage of coastal communities, he says little about the vital role of the Church in the medieval organisation of fishing. The accounts would also have helped him avoid some obvious errors, such as his confusion of the early practice of drying and smoking herring with the later, more specialist, practice of kippering.

Sadly, Bill did not live long enough to proceed to a second edition, or even to oversee his book at proof stage. It seems ungenerous, therefore, to point out any shortcomings. Indeed, any criticism of *Fishing and Folk* is no more than a description of what Bill himself intended the book to be – a work in progress. Even if he had lived to correct the proofs himself, I doubt whether he would have objected to the result being described as a draft rather than a definitive volume. He would have welcomed additions, corrections and the opportunity to defend or amend his text.

While Bill's aim of inclusiveness produces a fascinating scrapbook of coastal material, great for dipping into, what it cannot do is produce any coherent narrative or proper 'explanation' of fishing culture. Bill would have been the first to admit this – it was not what he intended. Yet without such a narrative, *Fishing and Folk* can at times be confusing. In bringing together material from very diverse sources and strands of tradition – inshore fishing from cobbles, herring fishing from keelboats, deep-water fishing from trawlers, even (briefly) whaling, as well as traditions associated with other industries, such as collier brigs and 'keels' – it occasionally mixes up its separate strands. Basic factual mistakes made by some of Bill's correspondents – the inability to distinguish between trawlers and drifters, for example (pp. 107-8) – are sometimes allowed to pass without comment. Confusion of this kind is not helped by the book's layout; it is often unclear how paragraphs relate to their headings. Too often, completely separate subjects are introduced as subsets of paragraphs, or under headings which do not relate to them.

A second problem, again beyond Bill's control but perhaps correctible by Northumbria University Press in a later edition, is the number of small avoidable errors of fact and spelling – even allowing for the eccentricities of direct quotation and transcription. It would be nit-picking to enumerate these, although the assertion that 'it was from Seahouses in 1838 that Grace Darling and her father achieved the memorable rescue of the crew of the *Forfarshire*...', or that 'Dunstanburgh was built for the War of the Roses', give some idea.

A third shortcoming, and one which it would have been fascinating to discuss with Bill, is more far-reaching. It attends his aim of inclusiveness. If words are drawn indiscriminately from different cultural streams, should they be given equal weight in an historical and geographical assessment? In Beadnell, fishermen often

joked disparagingly about people from other industries, who might live beside the sea and even fish for part of the year, but who were essentially 'landsmen'. Landsmen could be told apart from fishermen by the way they used language. For instance, a landsman might say that the sea or tide was 'running' to mean that it was coming in; but a Beadnell fisherman would never use the verb 'to run' in this way. To say that the sea was 'running' meant that there was swell on; and to say that the tide was coming in he would say that it was 'flowing'.

Although the fishermen's disparagement of landsmen's terminology was uncharitable, it did acknowledge a real cultural distinction. The landsmen's knowledge of the sea was essentially different from those 'born to the sea' and was expressed in a different vocabulary. That is not to say that the landsman's words are not equally interesting or valid; or that there is no overlap with the fishermen's; or that they should not have been included in *Fishing and Folk*. It is simply that the vocabularies and cultural references passed down within the families of a full-time fishing community are different in kind from those of other sorts of communities, and that these differences need to be acknowledged. In his effort to be all-inclusive, Bill gave his sources equal weight, and while he meticulously attributed each word in his glossaries with initials and place, he did not discriminate between the cultural context from which each contribution was drawn. The result is that words used within a fishing community are not distinguished from those which, while in general dialect currency, fishing folk themselves would almost never use.

Achievement

None of these remarks detracts from the overall achievement of *Fishing and Folk*. It is an invaluable resource, preserving a vanishing language for future generations, recording voices from a number

of related traditions, and lamenting the loss of a once-thriving industry which has helped shape local identity for hundreds of years. Together with Bill's other volumes, it stands as a fitting memorial to his scholarship and community engagement. His greatest legacy has been to imbue a culture, once widely ignored, with an awareness of its own dignity and historic value.

Beyond this, in *Fishing and Folk* Bill has left us with one last profound question: in a postmodern, internet age, when any source can be juxtaposed with any other, and all are of equal value, how are we now to write history? Are readers, like those of Bill's 'Trawler Race' poem, each to be left to construct their own narrative of the past from a brilliant, eclectic, anonymous 'community' of fragments? The internet allowed Bill to follow his anti-authoritarian argument to its logical conclusion, a poem without an author. In a sense, this is also what he was moving towards in his history. With characteristically self-effacing generosity, he has opened it up to the reader to decide. The trouble is, without scholarship, without adequate information – without the brilliance of a mind like Bill's to inform our choices – how can we trust them?

Recollections:

Ken Appleby

Ken Appleby went to work at Reyrolles, Hebburn in 1956 as an engineering draughtsman. He gave a detailed interview on an apprentices' life including the apprentices' strike of 1960. The interview was undertaken and edited by John Charlton.

I was lucky to get into Reyrolles drawing office from South Shields Grammar School. I was actually the very first draughtsman apprentice on a new scheme introduced by Reyrolles in 1956. I think I talked myself into it at the interview. However it was a scheme without indentures which proved to be advantage later on. I got into the jig and tool drawing office where I stayed. This was also a bit unusual because I was not moved round like engineering apprentices were. Probably a hangover from the travelling artisan's personal bag of tools, the junior draughtsman had to provide his own tools. These consisted of an adjustable set square, slide rule, pencils and trig and log tables to six decimal places. None of these were cheap though the AESD (DATA)* did have a scheme of bulk purchasing for members which

lightened the blow somewhat. Additionally available in the office were Atwood's, *Principles of Apprenticeships* and the draughtsman's bible, the American volume, published in New York in 1914, *The Machineries Handbook*. This was an expensive book which might be awarded by the employer to the trusted apprentice on completion of his training. The pay was pretty low. I think it started at 27/6 per week out of which you had to give your mother board and lodgings. It went up by small increments. When the apprenticeship ended in the early sixties the first wage was approximately £17 per week. When I left Reyrolles in 1964 it had climbed to all of £18.

I didn't get involved in politics early on. I went to Labour Party League of Youth meetings but found them really boring - just sitting round talking. I've always wanted action. It was unions that engaged my interest for unions seemed to be doing things. I been told by relatives that when you start a new workplace the first thing you should do is to find the union. But when I went to Reyrolles I was told that apprentices could not join the union. They moved round from department to department and the branch was organised at that level. It was really about them defending craft status. It was ideal for the bosses though. This was true of AESD, the draughtsman's union, and the AEU, the engineers. Though Reyrolles branch would not bend on it I was allowed to be a national member unlike the apprentice engineers. It suited the bosses because their habit was to sack apprentices before the end of their sixth year, just before they would have to pay them craftsmen's wages. Of course they could not do that if men were union members. In fact by the third year apprentices were doing skilled work at the apprentices' rate. The unions got away with this because in the 1950s it was easy to get a job elsewhere. Even some apprentices without pre-war fear, fancied a change.

AEU members particularly, were obsessed by status. They were steeped in tradition and would only fight to maintain differentials.

They behaved like a Mason's lodge. The only people to disturb this cosiness was the T & G who organised the semi-skilled and unskilled. They were always putting pressure on the AEU by pushing for wage hikes but the AEU would just insist on jacking up their rate to maintain the status quo.

Apprenticeship too long

I think the apprenticeship was too long and frankly a way for the boss to get cheap labour. You see the first year you were really a gopher, fetching and carrying, making the tea, acting as a runner to the bookies. In the second and third years you learned the job, first by watching and listening to the skilled man. If you were any good by the third year you were being given work for yourself and expected to get on with it. By the fourth you just got on with it with a similar level of supervision to every one else. The fifth and sixth, or journeyman year, was a scandal really. You were doing the same job as the skilled man but being paid a hell of a lot less and you were not accepted in the union branch! Frankly it was a long lasting conspiracy between the unions and the bosses, on the one hand to prevent dilution and on the other to keep wage costs down.

There was also another point. The length of apprenticeship imbued the craftsman with a sense of his own importance and his superiority making it difficult to win the argument for better conditions for young workers. You were also very quickly introduced to the rules of the game. There was a dress code rigidly imposed when I went there in the mid-fifties. You wore a dark suit and collar and tie, the collar stiff and detachable. There was actually a shop in Newcastle called Collars where you were expected to buy them by the box. I couldn't afford that so I got paper ones from Woolworths in Shields. My boss, or section manager, a draughtsman made up, wore a bowler hat to work and would put it on when ever he went down onto the

shop floor. I think this fashion was dying out in the fifties. He was an older man near to retirement, a hangover to pre-war days when the draughtsman's status was much higher than it was becoming. Nevertheless management did try to enforce petty discipline. I was told off for having dirty shoes or coming in on a very hot day with an open necked shirt. The supervisor brought me a tie and told me to wear it. Indentured apprentices were threatened with ending their indentures even for offences committed out of work. I don't mean theft or violence either. Being seen drunk could be enough.

They were very keen in watching movement towards the tracers' section. They were all women and naturally a magnet for young lads. I was told off for being seen talking to a messenger girl in the lift between floors. I was only telling her the time! Tracers were a really important part of the workforce. It was traditionally women's work, as it was thought to need no initiative, merely tracing designs from paper onto linen. Paper was hopeless after it had been taken off the boards. It got scruffy, smelly, from tobacco smoke, damp and tore easily. It could not be taken to the factory floor. Linen was expensive but durable. It was thought to be a good job for girls, especially working class grammar school girls, since it was better paid than typing and clerical work and had a little bit of status though there were no apprenticeships for females. It was also union work. The only other women employees were in the office, typists and comptometer operators. The factory messengers were also female. They worked the site via an internal electric bus and were a useful way of informal communication across the site.

Breaking down tradition

The war had begun to loosen some of the traditions. Service men had seen the world returning with attitudes changed. They still were status conscious and aspiring, pipe smoking a cut above cigarettes and very

common in the drawing office. Smoking in general was universal and the office was often engulfed in a foggy haze especially in winter when windows could not be opened. Ex-servicemen probably shifted the dress code into something a bit more casual. Many men were coming to work in the mid-fifties still in their demob suits which could be more casual and who was going to stop them? National Service had a bigger impact. Lads who had interrupted their apprenticeships to do National Service at 18 returned at 20 with changed attitudes. They'd learnt how to dodge work and handle supervisors. They would not take the acts of petty discipline experienced by boys before they joined up. They'd answer back, they'd laugh and even give a supervisor a smack. They'd get sacked for that but they didn't care. They could easily get another job.

Reyrolles made large switch gear for the CEGB and Parsons made the control equipment. The enormous hangar like building at Hebburn was the high Value Research Centre which turned out to be a failed experiment. It was an attempt to make a big breakthrough in production in using metal laminates from flat sheet steel. It needed to be tested to destruction with the potential to produce an explosion hence the absence of windows but a light roof. Of course it was all part of the management project to deskill the workforce. Laminates were an important part of this process as they would be produced by pressing out sheets on massive machines which embodied the skills possessed by the skilled man. Some local people thought it was much more sinister; perhaps testing nuclear material.

Management was always fighting to increase production efficiency and the drawing office was a critical part of this. The project was to deskill the shop floor work force by constantly embodying manual skills in refining the tools for the job. However good craftsmen were, there was variation between men and tasks. The Pattern Makers were the ultimate craftsmen and among the highest

paid. They had to make a wooden structure, drop it into a sandbox then molten metal would be poured in. That skill could not be learned from a book. The black art was passed on from generation to generation. Pressing out metal from machines carrying the pattern was a big step forward for management. It wiped out the pattern maker.

The introduction of disposable ceramic tipped cutting tools removed the process of regular skilled tool preparation and sharpening from the engineers' work. Turret head lathes with different cutting widths 'automated' the cutting processes, again diminishing manual skill content. Such innovations had their origins in the drawing office which grew in size to meet new demands. The office was not immune to change either. The draughtsman's 'meat and veg' were log tables, sine tables, calculation of size and distance. The advent of personal calculators, replacing the department expert on his mechanical calculator, and more sophisticated drawing boards with moveable heads reduced the skill inputs of draughtsmen. The shop floor crafts certainly diminished but it was a booming labour market and he smartest younger craftsmen could move up to the office as part of the expanding field of production engineering.

Unlike other skilled workers there were not many perks available to draughtsmen. You even had to sign for work's pencils! Oddly perhaps the female tracers did best as the linen they used was very useful as towels or pillow cases. However some blokes always seemed to be able to gain some advantage at the bosses' expense. Supervision was often low on Saturday mornings which allowed a bit of leeway. I do remember an entire vintage sports' car exhaust system being designed and manufactured from copper pipe one Saturday. The old system was simply thrown over the wall into the Tyne. The key to having personal work done on the premises was to obtain a work number for a 'government job'. Government work was undertaken

by Reyrolles on a cost plus basis and no one ever scrutinised the bills provided there was a 'legitimate' work number allocated to an invoice.

'Private enterprise'

There was also a bit of private enterprise conducted via the photo processing dark room. A small photography business was run from there. Pictures were taken of student beauty queen contestants. The Rag Mags would pay for the pictures and the contestants themselves would buy very nice black and white enlargements, courtesy of Reyrolles. This work also had the advantage of putting the lads in contact with very attractive female students! The same group ran a small dance band—this was before the advent of rock-playing at pubs and even at the Marimba in Newcastle. Some of this reflected the very low wages received by juniors and their great social ambitions. In the fifties holidays were very limited affairs. Usually camping or a day trip up the Tyne or even to Scarborough was what they amounted to. However, a bit later Butlins crossed the horizon though the real art was to get in free by surreptitiously entering and sleeping on the floor of a mate who was paying. A problem though was that apart from breakfast meal times were very heavily supervised. The food was nauseating by any culinary standard but you were grateful for anything. It was ironical that for lads who had done National Service they were trying to illegally enter the very facilities—disused army and air force camps—which they had recently tried to escape from!

Although employed on the same projects it seemed Reyrolles and Parsons hardly spoke to each other. One exception was on the quaintly named Outside Erection Projects. This was where the factory manufactured equipment was assembled on sites like Spadeadam, near Brampton where I was sent whilst still an apprentice. This was where the infamous Blue Streak rocket was being tested. The project became a target of the anti-nuclear movement as being both dangerous and

ludicrously expensive. Here the companies had to co-operate and it was also a rare opportunity for rank and file workers to meet up. For an apprentice it was great to be out of the factory. It was more interesting work, you were getting away for days at a time and got a bit more money. It was quite sought after but really suited single blokes best though reputedly some married men liked to get away from home too!

Organising and striking

I had been talking for some time to Parsons' apprentices when possible about joining the union and even about co-operating with Reyrolles' lads over pay and conditions when the apprentices' strike of 1960 broke out in various parts of the country. It was not surprising that management would do nothing to encourage them to join the union. It was really terrible that the unions, and especially the AEU, were not interested in helping either. The bosses of course got cheap labour from the situation. In fact they would have been happy for apprenticeships to last for twenty years! The craft unions just got the status quo and confirmation of their status but of course a large non union workforce was a terrible weakness for the union side. Anyway we really started to talk to each other at night school and day release at Gateshead Technical College. I really do think the strike on Tyneside anyway had its roots there. That's where the networks were built. The employers never saw this at all and classes were allowed to continue throughout the strike.

Actually though the education classes were the vehicle for organisation there is a sense in which rumour played the biggest part. The word spread about walk outs and picket lines sometimes where none had taken place. When you talk of causes low wages and petty discipline were longstanding issues but the immediate spark was 1960 wages and conditions settlement between the Ship Building and Engineering employers and the Confederation of Ship

Building and Engineering Workers Unions. By design, or accident, the traditional clause inserted in the agreement relating apprenticeship pay and conditions to the main agreement, was misleading. This pegged apprentices' pay to the previous agreement. Initial union responses to the problem were complacent with vague promises to raise the matter as soon as possible. Walk outs began on the Clyde, at Barrow, Manchester, Sheffield and the Tyne and Wear. When apprentices picketed their own shop floor workers they were ignored and local officials refused help to those they provocatively considered non-union workers. Of course when the employers threatened apprentices with ending their indentures shop floor attitudes changed. After all most apprentices at that time were sons, brother, nephews or close family friends of craftsmen who certainly would not sanction their boys being sacked. I had a special situation. I was a non-indentured apprentice and therefore could not be charged with breaking an indenture. Also I was a union member. When threatened I wrote to the management at Reyrolles invoking the dispute procedure with a copy sent to the AESD national officials. To their credit they recognised my dispute which again made me probably unique in the country. I was given a dispute number by the union and this caused a big stir in the local branch which was obliged to support me. On the first day a minority of apprentices at Reyrolles struck but after hasty 'flying picketing' on the second day it was almost solid. On the third day the AEU officers came down to order people back to work but they were given short shrift. We started to visit other work places and after a few days there was very widespread action.

The strike lasted for three weeks. It was very exciting. Tech College classes continued, picketing was organised and lively discussions took place at each session. Visiting delegations came from other areas like Clydeside. Eventually the unions realised they had a problem on their hands. Patronising the lads just did not work and

they were really they were the ones who could effect a settlement because it involved establishing procedures which is what eventually happened. In the meantime different methods were used to try to influence the strikers. One of the most amusing was the visit by the gentlemanly South Shields, MP and former Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede. He arrived at Reyrolles in a smart chauffeur driven car with the attendance of three policemen on bicycles. The pickets told him how it was. He advised returning to work to allow the officials to deal with the issues. It was vigorously pointed out that the officials had sat on their hands. He departed.

Others argue that the strike was brought about by Young Communists. This may have been true of other areas even in the north east. However whilst there may have been individual YCLers amongst the lads I knew it was not a significant presence and they certainly could not have been seen as instigators. I saw the upsurge as being largely spontaneous arising from the long term grievances of disgruntled young men sparked by the National Agreement cock up and 'organised' by whoever was present at the Technical College. Mind, lots of people were radicalised by the strike.

I ended my apprenticeship in 1962 and stayed only a short time further at Reyrolles. I moved on to Kendal which was the first of a long cycle of moves around the country and even to the States, usually following attempts to organise the labour force in non-union shops followed by a sacking and black listing in the local area.

* AESD Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen
DATA Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians

Educating René

Part Two

René Chaplin

*January 1 1947 was what you might call a red-letter day in the history of labour in Britain, especially in the North-East. On that day the pits were nationalised and in the Durham village of Ferryhill where I lived with my husband Sid and my two older children Gillian and Chris, there was celebration in the air. We'd waited for this day for many years, although as one of the characters in Alan Plater's play *Close the Coalhouse Door* (based on Sid's work) observed many years later, "there were the same bloody gaffers!" Sid was then working as a belt-fitter at Dean and Chapter Colliery, owned by Dorman Long's, but for the previous 10 years he'd also been a part-time writer, as busy between shifts as in them, churning out short stories and poems, many of them published in *Penguin New Writing* by his mentor John Lehman*

Nationalisation was good for us in another sense. The newly formed National Coal Board created a magazine for miners called *Coal*. Sid's short story *The Leaping Lad* was published in the first

edition and as a result he subsequently became a regular contributor. In 1949 Robbie Robertson, editor of the magazine, sounded Sid out about a job as feature writer on the magazine. This was exciting – Sid leaving the pit and earning a living with his mind rather than his hands – but the selection process took three months and he was offered the job on a year's probation. He started work on January 1 1950 and a strange, exciting new life began. London friends helped Sid to find somewhere to live – a shared flat in Earl's Court - while I stayed with the children in Ferryhill. As feature writer Sid travelled each week to a different coalfield and eventually he visited every pit in Britain and Ireland. He covered the terrible disasters at Knockshinnoch in Scotland and closer to home, Easington in 1951. He never forgot what he saw.

He came home just once a month – all we could afford – arriving late on a Friday on the train from London, which then stopped in Ferryhill. Sid's salary was less than £12 a week, and managing two homes on this was tricky but we were helped by my parents and his – often a load of coal in return for some cleaning work (done by you know who) and fresh vegetables from my father in law's allotment. We managed – we had to be, learning to be frugal in 'austerity Britain'. In September 1950 Sid's third book *The Thin Seam* – an account of a shift underground – was published and I went to London to share the day with Sid and mark the occasion with his publisher and agent. Special memories! We visited the theatre (I wish I could remember what we saw) and then went into a pub – at the age of 30, my first time. Someone asked me what I wanted and I hadn't the faintest idea what to say. Sid suggested a glass of wine – another first - and I rather enjoyed it.

Living apart wasn't easy, emotionally as well as practically and financially, but we all felt it an investment in the future. Sid was out of the pit and doing what he desperately wanted – writing.

Our youngest son Michael was born in 1951, so a small flat in London for us all was out of the question, and we continued as before, desperately looking forward to the occasional weekend and holiday. Finally, in early 1953, we were offered a London County Council house for 'the managerial class' on a new estate in Harold Hill in Essex. It was palatial, especially by comparison to our two-up, two down house with outside toilet in Gladstone Terrace, Ferryhill. Tees Drive (a drive!) had four bedrooms, two bathrooms, central heating (Sid was fascinated by its thermostat control), gardens front and back and garage, though of course we had no car. At the bottom of the back garden, a stream ran and on the other side was the Green Belt. We had pitched camp on the very edge of London. We also became acquainted with another new facet of modern life – the direct debit – we had to pay rent and rates via the bank. We were not always sure there'd be enough in our account to pay it – it was a squeeze – but at least we were together. When I travelled down from Durham, with children, mother and mother-in-law (none of whom had ever been to London before), we found Sid casually sitting on the garden wall, smoking his pipe, while the men from Pickfords unpacked our meagre belongings. I will never forget the sight.

It was our good fortune to join a very diverse bunch of people who'd blown into this new development at the same time. Our immediate neighbours were Lisa and Phillip Ford. He worked at the plant of his namesake in Dagenham as a manager, Lisa was a Roman who fed me pasta for the very first time, while I fed her roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. I have loved Italian food ever since. My son Chris was once shocked to see a painting of a naked woman on their walls – you didn't see that kind of thing in Ferryhill. "Don't you think that's disgusting, Mam?" he asked me.

Our other very special friends in Harold Hill were Lela and Vili Pavlovic and their daughters Jasminka and Vera. Vili had been

in the Yugoslav Army and then the RAF during the war and he and Lela were separated for 8 years before she was able to come to Britain. Sadly Vili, who later worked for the BBC, has passed away but Lela and I remain great friends – we talk on the phone regularly. When we first met she could speak very little English and the headmistress of my Gillian and her Jasminka suggested I might help her out. She still jokes that she is possibly the only Serbian to have ever learnt English with a Geordie accent.

I loved it in our new home – it had a country feel yet was only half an hour from Liverpool Street. The shopping in Romford was very good, especially the market where Sid soon discovered a second hand bookstall which also sold herbal medicines. There he bought – for 50 shillings – a delightful watercolour by John Linnell which hangs downstairs from where I write and still gives me great pleasure: a limpid stream, grazing cows and a church in the distance. At the same stall Sid was offered an even finer landscape by the matchless Samuel Palmer (Linnell's son-in-law) but the price was a fortune - £50! Years later Sid thought he should have taken out a bank loan to buy it, but that would never have occurred to anyone in the mid-50's.

One place we visited regularly from Harold Hill was Stratford East, then occupied by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in its heyday. We had met Joan, a very striking and singular person, years before when she put on a Workshop production during the war at Ormesby Hall near Middlesbrough. At about the same time we also met two of her collaborators, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger – in fact we had the rare pleasure of them singing in our kitchen! We saw some wonderful productions at Stratford, including *The Hostage* and *The Quare Fellow* by Brendan Behan, and some great actors like George A. Cooper and Harry H. Corbett, later to become a star in *Steptoe and Son*. I also vividly remember *Joan of Arc* with Sian Phillips in the title role. For a girl who'd acted in plays mounted by the

Ferryhill Women's Institute, seeing drama of this quality was a great privilege and in effect my second education.

Our regular babysitters for these cultural outings were two Scots whom we'd befriended when they were sent to work in Ferryhill as Bevin Boys during the war, George Millar and George McRobie. In return for being fed, they dug the garden – not Sid's cup of tea at all.

During this time, we also made a great and lasting friendship with a couple originally from Consett called Joe and Doris Watson. Doris had written to Sid in 1952, congratulating him on an article he'd written about D.H. Lawrence. A big man, Joe had been a blast-furnace man at the steelworks but had left the North-East in 1936 to join John Middleton Murry's literary community at the Adelphi Centre in Langham, Essex. Later he became manager, and Doris housekeeper, of a cooperative farm manned by conscientious objectors at Frating Hall just outside Colchester. We spent weekends with them, sharing a passion for music and the arts. A man with a big, booming laugh, tragically killed in a car accident 10 years later, Joe was a great friend of the Newcastle writer Jack Common and introduced Sid to him. They once spent the day in a pub together and didn't come home till midnight, something that had never happened before in my life with Sid (he was not a drinker). Years later Sid wrote Jack's obituary in *The Sunday Times*.

In July 1955 Sid was awarded a scholarship by the English Speaking Union to visit coalfields in the USA. The year before, Robbie Robertson, the editor of *Coal* and Sid's journalistic mentor, retired and was replaced by his deputy Alan Delafons. He refused to allow Sid the time off, but an appeal was made to the NCB chairman Sir James Bowman (the subject of Sid's very first piece for *Coal* years before) and he allowed it, though then Delafons withheld his salary for the duration. Another appeal was made and again granted, though Sid was in no doubt that he'd made an enemy in his boss. But he did get to the States for six weeks, travelling through the Appalachian coal-belt

and – a final indulgence – being driven to New Orleans so he could listen to his beloved jazz. Sid often wrote to jazz on the radio, often not quite properly tuned, in a fug of cigarette smoke, and some years later he wrote a fine essay about that unfortunate city, a bar called O'Brien's in particular. Maybe he didn't leave it until after midnight.

When he came home full of the excitement of America, and conscious of the trouble he had coming at work, I made a bold suggestion – we'd come from Ferryhill to London, why not take another (big) step and emigrate to the States? But that wasn't what Sid wanted. In all the time he'd been in the South and on the road, he'd done very little of his own writing. The commuting and travelling made it difficult, but just as important, nothing fired his imagination as pit village life had once done. He wanted to come north again.

I must confess I had mixed feelings about this. I loved our home and our life in Essex and the children were settled in very good schools. But there were other considerations. My horizons had been broadened and I did not want to return to village life, with its constrictions as well as its strengths. But I also knew that coming north would liberate Sid's writing and make him happy, and that was the most important thing for me. I agreed to move to Newcastle.

On January 1, 1957 Sid started work as public relations officer for the NCB in Benton. We found a dark, gloomy house perched above a municipal tip – and the old Playhouse (the 'Dinky') - in Jesmond Vale and our children started new schools where their accents became the objects of derision, and the cause of an occasional fight. But within four years Sid had written three novels, two of them best sellers, embarking on the most creative period of his writing life.

Our life – and my education – continued in another place, the great smoky city by the Tyne.

But that's another story.

POETRY

55 DEGREES NORTH

55 Degrees North is the latitude of Newcastle upon Tyne. It is also the name of an apartment block (and its associated bar) in the centre of Newcastle.

They're going to illuminate Scotswood,
make floral entrepreneurs in Elswick.
Someone's set fire to our Arts reporter,
it's another Cultural Initiative.
Sting's buying the Civic Centre,
they're filling the Baltic with tanks.
The Sage is changing its name to onion,
Shane's pissed on the classical conductor.
They're floating quangos down the Tyne,
the bonfire will be at Shields.
They're bringing tourists to witness miracles,
the Chief Executive will strip for money.
They're blowing up the Castle Keep
to build an installation.
They're giving the locals more public art,
it's something to rhyme with.
They're taking live theatre to the cemetery,
the vicar will write an Arts Council poem.
Steve Cram's taken up painting
to stop his nose from running.
The river will be made into an ice rink,
we can play with our boats in the bath.
Let New Labour bomb Iraq,
they're making a museum of politics.

Stuffing glass cases with old principles,
the head hunters are out and about.
It's cultivated jobs for the boys and the girls,
they're putting the Arts into centres.
Drain the music from our souls,
we have to be grateful to be patronised.
Their self-righteousness grins from on high,
let the bombs fly and rockets rip.
We can enjoy some more tamed Art,
say cheerio to your history.
They've wrapped it up in moth balls,
thank God for the boys from the south.
They've saved us from self-government,
we've missed out on the Love Parade.
This City of Culture got lost in the end,
the Angel glowers over us though.
Thanks again City Fathers,
it looks uglier every day.
You've reinvented our culture for us,
you've rendered it meaningless.
Guts ripped out,
we touch our forelock to your glorious Lords.
From the orifice of the Deputy Prime Minister
leaks the corrupt emptiness of your manifestos.
The aching past of the working man
has become the death of England.
Let us hail you from NewcastleGateshead,
a city you made up for yourselves.
Let us watch your empty schemes plummet,
let us learn to dance in community again.
We are Geordies naked with a beautiful anger to burn.

AT ANCHOR

Birds hurl themselves at the leaping Tyne;
I catch them through the evening window.
It is cold for the time.
My throat is stuffy with poems left unsaid.
Weary troubadour I am,
swimming with visions of ancient European tours.
Now I have landed, with my seagull wings, in Haydon Bridge
to honour a famous son.
I am lodged in the Anchor Hotel,
another lonely night of a whirlwind life:
lorries howl around me
and I can hear a village trembling
in the blinding dark.
Restlessly at anchor,
I cannot sleep for the ghost of John Martin
lighting up my room
with dynamic visions
and the thunderous clatter of his wild dreams.
Stuck in the rut of my own poetry,
I force myself to sleep,
bobbing by the river,
under the fantastic sky.
The community lights shine on my imagination,
and the screams of swifts
make a life worthwhile.

*Keith Armstrong,
Haydon Bridge, Northumberland.*

*John Martin (1789-1854). Historical Painter. Born Haydon Bridge, Northumberland 1789.
Died Isle of Man 1854.*

TELL ME LIES ABOUT NORTHUMBERLAND

(in honour of Adrian Mitchell)

Say this land is ours,
these pipe-tunes do not cry.
The birds all sing in dialect,
old miners breathe like dukes.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

Tell me it isn't feudal,
that castles were built for us.
We never touch the forelock,
bend to scrape up dust.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

Your pretty girls don't stink of slaughter,
your eyes don't blur with myth.
You're as equal as a duchess,
saints never smell of piss.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

Your roots are in this valley,
you were never from doon south.
You never hide your birthplace,
you're a real poet of the north.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

The churches are not crumbling,
the congregations glow with hope.
We are different from the foreigner,
our poetry rhymes with wine.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

There is no landed gentry,
no homes locals can't afford.
There's no army on the moors,
the Romans freed us all.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

That the hurt is in the past,
the future holds no war.
Home rule is at our fingertips,
the Coquet swims with love.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

'The Garden' is our children's,
Hotspur spurs us on.
The seagulls are not soaked in oil,
the cows are not diseased.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.
This Kingdom is United,
'Culture' is our God.
Everyone's a Basil Bunting freak,
there's music everywhere.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

We will have our independence,
we'll get the Gospels back.
We live off museums and tourists,
we don't need boats or trades.

Tell me lies about Northumberland.

We're in charge of our own futures,
we have north east citizens here.
In this autonomous republic,
we're free as dicky birds.

So shut your eyes.

And tell me lies

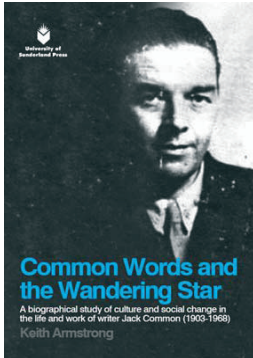
about Northumberland.

Keith Armstrong

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David John Douglass
The Wheel's Still in Spin



The Wheel's Still in Spin (£12.95) is part two of Dave Douglass' autobiography. Part 1 was *Geordies – Wa Mental* (£9.95). Both volumes are available from:

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REVIEWS

TYNE BRIDGE PUBLISHING

Several of the books reviewed in this issue, and in previous issues of the journal, are published by the local publisher, Tyne Bridge Publishing, which could be described as the publishing arm of Newcastle Libraries and Information Service, and recently brought out the much acclaimed *Hidden Chains: the Slavery Business and North East England* by our former secretary, John Charlton and reviewed in this issue by Nick Howard. Tyne Bridge has been publishing now for a quarter of a century. Their current catalogue contains nearly sixty texts on various local-related themes, with an emphasis towards Tyneside history.

Interviewed for this number of the journal, the Publications Manager, Anna Flowers, explained how the project was initiated in the early eighties, with the first publication appearing in 1984. The title of that was *Gone But Not Forgotten*, which was a book of twenty-two photos with captions, of Newcastle from the sixties. It proved extremely popular and went straight into reprint. The idea behind it was to make more accessible photos (over 80,000 of them) in the local studies collection.

Later a revised publication was produced with more photographs, then a similar project was undertaken for the suburbs, being developed in a number of themes – ‘at play’, ‘at war’, ‘the 40s’, ‘the 50s’, ‘the 60s’. In 1987 Tyne Bridge ventured on its most expensive production up to that point, a book of colour photos under the title *Newcastle Now*. An academic text followed in 1988, *Post-Industrial Tyneside*, by Fred Robinson of Durham University, and in 1990 *Newcastle's Changing Map*, which was a history of the city through maps (including demographic ones

which took account of immigration), the work of Dick Boswell and Mike Barke.

Richard Grainger and the Making of 19th Century Newcastle

A typical volume of the nineties published in 1997 (under the imprint of the city's Community and Leisure Services Department) was Ian Ayris's *A City of Palaces: Richard Grainger and the Making of Newcastle upon Tyne*. The title is taken from the remark by a visitor in 1842, 'You walk into what has been termed the COAL HOLE OF THE NORTH and find yourself at once in a CITY OF PALACES; a fairyland of newness, brightness and modern elegance'.

Grainger, born in 1797 was the T Dan Smith of his era, though he possessed much better aesthetic taste and was never convicted of any criminal activity (he killed his wife with multiple pregnancies but that was routine for the nineteenth century). It was in fact largely due to his city planning vision, mostly implemented in the 1830s and early 40s, that we owe the appearance of central Newcastle as it is today, Ayris refers to the 'grandiose scale and majesty' of the plan. Some of his projects, most notably Eldon Square, have since been demolished – a piece of unforgivable civic vandalism – but most remain standing and give the city its distinctive neo-Georgian appearance. Grainger was also responsible for the central position of the Monument with the streets fanning out from it towards the river. 'Grey Street I built entirely', according to his boast — along with Market Street, Nun street, Clayton Street, Hood Street, Shakespeare Street, together with numerous sections of other streets. What he meant of course was that he did the planning and organising, not that he lifted the masonry or laid the bricks.

Grainger's projects were made possible by the dramatic expansion of the national economy taking place at the time and

creating the commercial demand to which he responded. The thirties saw also the initial pulse of railway expansion, another crucial underpinning for Grainger's schemes, as was the unprecedented migration into the city, which supplied the workforce of 2000 that he employed. We would like to know more about the wages, working conditions and character of their employment, but this is not explored at length. However we do learn that in 1840, when the workmen resorted to strike action he rapidly hired blacklegs until hunger drove them back to work, after which he victimised the ones he regarded as ringleaders.

He was however able to do what he did because he had money and connections in the city Corporation whom he knew how to manipulate (though not all of its members were favourably disposed towards him). Initial capital came from the connections established by his marriage to the unfortunate Rachael, later money was raised with the assistance of the Town Clerk, John Clayton who knew leading men willing to lend on his recommendation and of course helped to expedite Grainger's schemes through the Corporation.

Grainger came unstuck at last however when he overreached himself piling up debt to finance his projects, and did so on a scale which he could no longer service so that in 1841 he was compelled to acknowledge defeat and undertook no more mega building projects. Thanks to Clayton's intervention he avoided bankruptcy, and though he died in debt did so in fairly comfortable circumstances.

How it's done

Anna explained that Tyne Bridge doesn't have to commission volumes – sufficient projects are offered for its consideration. Close relations are maintained with local studies librarians and books

are often done in conjunction with archives and museums. She herself – with never more than part-time assistance – handles all the organisational aspects, including book design. Up to six books a year can be produced, depending on the costs involved. Distribution takes place through local bookshops, website wholesalers, and local distributors such as Northern Heritage.

Earlier this year Tyne Bridge published *Jimmy Forsyth: Photographs from the 1950s and 1960s*, at £8.99, and in September a volume on the 1960s called *It's My Life: a 1960s Newcastle Scrapbook* will appear. In October we are promised the biography of a retired miner with the striking title *Beneath this Green and Pleasant Land*.

A free catalogue is available from Tyne Bridge Publishing, Newcastle Libraries, PO Box 88, Newcastle NE99 1DX. Its website is www.tynebridgepublishing.co.uk Tyne Bridge is one of the region's major cultural assets – the line on the front of its catalogue which says 'For the best local history on Tyneside' is fully justified and it well deserves to flourish long into the future.

Willie Thompson

Enduring Chains

John Charlton, *Hidden Chains – the Slavery Business and North East England 1600-1865* (Tyne Bridge Publishing, Newcastle, 2008), ISBN 9781857951233, 180pp, £10, pbk.

A simple Marxist explanation for the timing of the 1807 Act of Abolition might be that the British ruling class attempted to abolish the slave trade while maintaining the value of the commodity. Too simple, others may object. Commodities cannot be given value unless they are traded at all stages, from the labour power that is bought and sold in their production to the finished products that enter the market. Yet slaves were a very special commodity - human and self re-producing. It was their transformation into property that challenged the morality of the times, a morality that had grown out of the Age of Reason. Had the divine right of kings and the justification of their powers from the Almighty not been swept aside in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people may still have looked upon black Africans or indigenous Caribbees, the Aztecs and the Incas as sub-human creatures, part of the animal kingdom.

Yet the slave trade and its property relationships continued for much of the nineteenth century, if Brazilian, Portuguese and Belgian slavery is taken into account. 1807 is explained in John Charlton's excellent book as the fortuitous opening of a window of opportunity, brought about by a conjunctural crisis.

The context

Britain was deeply immersed in the Napoleonic Wars. The costs to the population were huge and hardship prevailed. The repressive Acts were in force and upper class fears of sedition contended with their need to build and maintain the patriotic loyalties of the lower

orders. The Act fitted these requirements admirably. Despite the lamentable weaknesses of its armies, the window was opened for the ruling class by Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 that heralded British naval supremacy for the following hundred years. The Act was so worded that it emphasised British intentions to intervene in the prohibition of the trade in virtually any part of the globe. Thus the British Empire could use the Act as the focus for the suppression of rival empires.

It is scarcely surprising that the first to ignore and challenge this grandiose objective, were the slave-owning British settlers in the Caribbean and their allies to the north, who simply carried on buying and selling and cruelly exploiting the human beings whose supply had been severely curtailed by the embargo on the African slave trade that was the one positive consequence of the Act. Even at the outset of the wars with the French, the warring rivals had conspired, together with Spain, aiming to suppress the first and most successful slave revolt led by the black revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture.

The combination of the national and north-east abolitionist campaigns, described in great detail by Charlton is set against this background of burgeoning imperialism. He emphasises the humanity of the slaves and of the campaigners on their behalf, contrasting it strongly with the inhumanity of the techniques of enslavement and exploitation that accompanied the trade. The wealth of illustrations in the book showing these artefacts is a great bonus in a work of this kind. The voluptuous portraits in colour of slave owning oligarchs contrast with the severe line drawings and black and white photographs of their opponents.

In one chapter the author shows how in the north east these ostensibly antagonistic factions continued to live side by side, without great animosity. This gives insight into the nature

of the campaign, both sides coming from very similar, upwardly mobile social backgrounds. Was this relative harmony peculiar to the region? According to Charlton it was, but a more detailed account of the struggles in the main centres of the trade, Bristol and Liverpool might have confirmed this point more convincingly. How might it be explained? One conjecture has to do with the differing regional levels of industrialisation. The Lancashire cotton trade adjacent to Liverpool was in its infancy and the industrialisation of Bristol and its environs, fed by Brunel's great western railway, was as yet unestablished. Iron, coal and shipbuilding on the other hand were well established in the north-east and the concomitant growth of an organised and radical working class movement was more advanced. Hence the cautious approach of the abolitionists in the region and their reluctance to disrupt their relations with the landowners in a region where industrialisation was linked to the slave owning plantocracy in the West Indies.

Campaign conditions

The abolitionists followed a path with pitfalls on either side. Their campaigns, particularly those conducted by Methodist missionaries, encouraged bloody and merciless revolt against the slave owners. They also gave support to the growing reform movement and the rising combinations of organised labour, all of which stemmed from Thomas Paine's advocacy of the rights of man. The result, as Charlton details in his accounts of the rise and decline of the abolitionist movements around Tyneside was the adoption by campaigners of gradualist and conditional demands following cautionary principles. He shows how the foundations of the movement were laid in the period in which political radicalism, movements for emancipation and the waves created from the French and American Revolution washed over the social profligacy

and corruption of the age. What strengthened the campaign was the sense of revulsion that ran through all classes at the very idea of slavery, reinforced by the inadequacies of the Act itself and the outrageous contempt for it shown by the slave owners. The latter's violent suppression of the continuing demands of the 'apprenticed' ex-slaves, whose conditions post-1832 showed little improvement over their previous sufferings, would arouse a flagging campaign to levels of greater determination. In this respect the campaign in the North East was a torch-bearer for what followed, after the defeat of the slave states in the American Civil War. The drive for the abolition of slavery became world wide.

All was not upwards and onwards however. Charlton records how the effigy of Tom Paine was burnt publicly on nineteen occasions in the periods when reactionary patriotism stalked the land.

Links

There are areas of study into which the book does not reach. Charlton describes how the profits from slavery enabled the beneficiaries to indulge in conspicuous consumption, acquiring stately homes and great tracts of land. He does not try to trace the link from the profits of slavery to the exploitation of the mineral resources under that land and subsequently to the growth of heavy industry, nor how much of the financial resources the landowners accumulated through the trade went initially into canal building and subsequently into the railways. The North East was not suitable territory for the former but ideal for the latter and once the various infrastructural building booms got under way, the investments made from slavery could be directed to any part of the country from their original source on the scarred backs of the slaves.

Marxists whose lives overlapped with the ending of the slave trade could argue that by its very nature it was an impediment to

the circulation of commodities and thus had to be abandoned as a hindrance to the growth of capitalism. Whereas the latter divided surpluses into wages, rent, interest, dividends and profit, each of which could flow back into the capitalist economy, the slave owner in the Yorkshire phrase, 'cop't the lot!' Thus he had to go.

But later, Marxists could point out that the echoes of the trade continued to resound, most ominously in the long periods of barbarism that punctuated the twentieth century. Many of the slavery practices of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan were justified by the notion that their opponents, the British, the Americans and the French all at one time ensured their growth and survival through the slave trade. How much more alert do we need to be against its revival in the event of a global economic collapse, given these examples? Reading John Charlton's excellent book provokes all these urgent questions.

Nick Howard

Ken Smith, *Emperor of Industry – Lord Armstrong of Cragside 1810 -1900* (Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2005), ISBN 978 1 85795 127 1, 44pp. £4.99 pbk.

This booklet gives a good, if brief, portrait of the Victorian capitalist Armstrong, 'his achievements and benevolence' in clear text and pictorial record. Unlike most other booklets of its genre, it does outline, in one part, two major industrial disputes of the period. Although, in recording *his* achievements, no reference is made to the human sweat and talent of who, elsewhere, have been called the most skilled mechanics of the industrial revolution, the engineering workers.

My personal link in reviewing this booklet is that I honed my trade unionism at the Elswick Works in the late 1960s (owned by Vickers, but still known as Vickers Armstrong); even then one of the foremost employers. As a management trainee I often traversed the 'corridors of power' passing photographs and prints of 'past glories', some of which appear in this booklet. However, this narrative demonstrates the importance of the company to the proto-industrialisation, development of capitalism and trade unionism of Tyneside. Divided into ten parts, it illustrates the burgeoning Victorian middle class, summarizing Armstrong's progress from an amateur in engineering design to owner of the largest factory and eventual major north east capitalist, not only in the home market but internationally.

The early parts are devoted to describing his prosperous family background, early career and scientific interests. Armstrong benefited from the education open only to his class and predestined by his father, became a lawyer and partner in a family friend's practice. The senior lawyer, Donkin, was to be important in Armstrong's life. He allowed Armstrong to pursue his scientific

interests, providing much of the capital for his early commercial enterprises. The invention of the first efficient hydraulic cranes for Newcastle Quayside was to be the success that turned him, in 1847, into an engineering entrepreneur. With the help of Donkin and other contacts he set up the great Elswick Works on the Tyne which employed, by 1863, 3,800 workers. This illustrated how the finance of British industry at this time remained for the most part a private matter between wealthy families.

The Elswick Empire

The next part aptly headed 'The Elswick Empire' charts the progress and establishment of the greatest factory on the riverside west of Newcastle. From specialising in cranes, the business now included railway traction and bridges, notably build the Swing Bridge over the Tyne. But the real growth was through the profits of war. His attention turned to armament manufacture during the Crimean War, successfully designing and his factory building an artillery gun that fired a shell rather than a ball. Surrendering its patent to the British Government, he received a knighthood and took up a post at the War Department. A separate company was formed, Elswick Ordnance to avoid any conflict of interest. As a senior government official he could not stay a partner of that company, but remained a partner of the engineering works. The government, in 1862, ceased ordering the gun from Elswick. So with this vicissitude of relationship, he resigned his government post, returned to the Elswick partnership and obtained recompense for loss of business. In 1864, both firms merged – armament and engineering. Expanding into naval artillery, this led to the building of ironclad warships. Now Britain's leading armament Company, it attracted an impressive list of international customers. So from this time on Elswick was primarily an armament manufacturing company. By 1895, with Armstrong in his eighties

and semi-retirement, this was truly an empire; stretching 'for nearly three quarters of a mile' and employing '11,000 to 13,000' workers.

Armstrong in person

The next parts concern Armstrong's 'palace', Cragside in Rothbury, the ill-fated HMS Victoria, first battleship built at Elswick, a summary of his role as a benefactor and his personal life. Cragside is a magnificent mansion with ingenious devices; first house lit with electricity; set in beautiful gardens and estate. Armstrong's home, achieved by 'his increasing wealth' from his armament manufacture, was 'remote from the pressures of Elswick'. His benevolence, like a benign emperor, was to the North East and particularly Newcastle as a benefactor of hospitals, schools, college and an institute to educate Elswick apprentices. However the author notes with regards to latter, that the '*Workers gave contribution from their wages towards the upkeep*'. His personal life is depicted as one befitting the rich and powerful of that time... 'paternalistic towards his workforce', genial in character and enjoying countryside pursuits. A paragraph refers to his venturing into politics as a Liberal Unionist,' strongly opposed to Home Rule for Ireland. Failing to enter Parliament in 1886, he was, however, a Northumberland County Councillor, 1889-92.

Labour relations

There then follows a section, 'Strike and Lockout'. Although it is a brief digest of the two historic disputes of the engineering industry, it is sensitive to the workers' cause and plight. It is a pity the successful strike of 1871 is given only a paragraph, as it was momentous in establishing the nine hour day; a reduction of three hours off the working day. Significant because, although it was, in present day parlance, an unofficial strike, it strengthened the union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. On the other hand, the rest

of the three pages provide a better account (again, of course brief) of the employers' offensive from July 1897 to January 1898; the engineer employers' lockout of workers; 'which ended in defeat for the trade unionists'. It is an understanding account of the workers' cause for an eight hour day. Quoting sympathetic reports from the *Newcastle Daily Journal* of July 1897 and referring to the great demonstrations held in Newcastle in July and August of that year, the author recognises that defeat was due to finance. As the pioneer engineering trade unionist Tom Mann wrote in his memoirs 'In the end the longer purse of the employers secured them the victory'.

Then follows a section which indicates Armstrong's pleasure in entertaining his clients, the wealthy and the high-born, with particular reference to the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales, principally at Cragside. The concluding part refers to his death, funeral and burial in Rothbury.

This is a nicely produced booklet and its local focus is its greatest strength. It is clearly produced for a particular reading audience; the general interest in the 'past industrial giants' of the North East and a particular interest in Armstrong. This has developed by the many sightseers to his magnificent mansion, now National Trust property, Cragside. Armstrong's influence pervades Tyneside, even to a mention of his Elswick Factory in the Geordie Anthem, the Blaydon Races. With the decline in manufacturing industry, working class families more and more cease to depend on the engineering industries, once the largest source of employment, but its distinctive feature is all around us and Armstrong is part of that heritage.

John Creaby

Hilary Fawcett (ed), *Made in Newcastle: Visual Culture* (Northumbria University Press, 2007), 200 pp, 978-1-904794-26-4, £11.95, pbk.

Growing up in 50s Newcastle, I have to say that an awareness of the City's uniqueness, except for the fact it was where I lived, was not of first importance to me. The great industrial past and its heroes were long gone and apart from the idiosyncrasies of dialect and football fetishism and the unparalleled grandeur of its setting nothing much seemed to mark what we learned to call the 'Toon' from other settlements. Afterwards other cities claimed my loyalty – Leicester, Bristol and Manchester among them - and only then did it occur to me that Newcastle's conscious efforts in place marketing probably marked it out from the best of the rest. The fact that this would-be cultural revolution appeared to be top-down rather than bottom-up almost certainly, Chris Wharton concludes in his chapter on 'The Newcastle Look', sank the City's hope of being voted European City of Culture.

Yet win or lose, Newcastle was always eager to join such contests. *Made in Newcastle* reminds us that this aspirational quality was part and parcel of post-war Newcastle. Fashion models paraded up and down in Binns's department store, the Caller brothers were setting trans-national standards at their Northumberland Street furniture store and some smaller shops like the Stone Gallery were famous in a way too. Hilary Fawcett found much of this exciting compared with life in her native Sunderland but concedes that Newcastle when all said and done was and remains a fairly provincial place.

Culture

Why publish a book like this in that case? Either the city is unique in some way (and Newcastle did have the Essoldo cinemas, its very

own cinema chain, and even had a mock Oscar night at the Pilgrim Street Odeon with real Hollywood stars) or it can be used as a proxy for examining wider social developments. *Made in Newcastle* tackles both viewpoints. Cheryl Buckley has interesting points to make about the fine art and design reputation of Kings College and how some of the spirit entered the wider consciousness of the town. A fascinating chapter by Paul Barlow demonstrates the increasing use of Newcastle's Roman identity as a branding opportunity and a stimulating one by Paul Usherwood illustrates how the Angel of the North is part of an increasingly shrewd appropriation of works of public art for municipal aggrandisement

The remainder of the chapters are without exception readable and though-provoking but have a wistful air about them. Peter Hutchings's round-up of film and David Martin-Jones's summary of television depictions of the North East confirms my view that the former has been much more perfunctory than the latter in depicting regional identity. The achievement of television programmes like 'Our Friends in the North', 'Auf Wiedersehen Pet' and 'Spender' lies as much in their relatively serious attempt to come to grips with lives outside the South-East as well as demonstrating the recurring failures of the British film industry, with the possible exception of 'Get Carter', to do likewise. Incidentally so far as film attendance goes, Sarah Leahy details, unwittingly perhaps, the demise too of the sort of cinematic enterprise culture lovingly recalled in Frank Manders's *Cinemas of Newcastle*. Leahy wheels in Marx (Karl) and Bourdieu as guides to this downward spiral but whatever the causes Newcastle compares unfavourably (the Tyneside Cinema notwithstanding) with other similar British cities in providing a satisfactory range of films to watch.

What can one conclude about the elusive world recalled and interpreted in *Made in Newcastle*? The decline of an authentic

localism would be one explanation. But it would be a mistake to be too pessimistic given that the rise of the Sage and the Baltic (albeit on the wrong side of the river) and the brave efforts of the Live Theatre and the Amber Collective in their contrasting ways suggest that the post-industrial city need not resign itself to the shopping experience and nothing else. Yet, returning to an earlier theme, place marketing by local government and its satellite bodies remains the name of the game in most British cities. Perhaps we should be thankful for this and the visual culture it spawns to rank alongside the heart-lifting experience of crossing the River Tyne by train.

Roger Hall

Maureen Brook, *Herring Girls and Hiring Fairs* (Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2005) ISBN 978 1 85795 147 9, 112pp, £8.99 pbk

This book is based on oral history taken from over 40 individuals, expanded upon by using newspaper articles and adverts for situations vacant, mainly from the first half of the 20th century. It covers the lives of those living and working in Northumberland during this period and includes a useful index of places along with the names of the contributors, some regional recipes and local songs.

It encompasses a broader spectrum than the title suggests although the herring girls and hiring fairs form a significant part of the narrative. Contributors tell of the herring girls of the title who came to the Amble area every year from further up the east coast arriving in the Northumberland area in June and July. These women, working in crews, were well paid at the end of the season for their hard work which they carried out using dangerous, sharp knives. However, local women also prepared the fish especially in

towns such as North Shields where the herring were taken to sheds for them to carry out the gutting and preparation for kippering.

Fisher life was hard for all of the family and the trawler men were at sea for 8-10 days along the North East coast to Scotland and even Iceland. This was hazardous work and men tended to marry local girls who knew what to expect rather than ones from the local mining areas. (Comment is made about the differences between the fisher folk who had a non-drinking Methodist tradition and the mining communities where drink and gambling featured.)

Although the histories cover the experiences of those living in both the countryside and towns of Northumberland and are from individuals from a range of backgrounds, the emphasis and feel of the book is that of rural life in the agricultural and fishing communities where transport and trade was horse-based and the blacksmith was at the centre of village life. The first sighting of a car was momentous and remembered by more than one person and the telephone was a new-fangled instrument. Life for most of the contributors was lived in what would now be considered overcrowded cottages with minimal facilities. Availability of produce and the routine of life were much more based on seasonal factors than is the case today. The delivery of more 'exotic' items like tea and sugar had to be arranged and the arrival of Co-operative stores in the larger villages was welcomed.

Family problems

Many contributors also commented about the impact of family health problems or illness on the lives of either their family or other relatives and friends. This was before the NHS and modern drugs so medicines were either of dubious content bought from passing salesmen or came from recipes handed down in the family.

The hirings of the title were a time for meeting friends but also of great uncertainty as the housing was tied to the work

and until a man was hired the family had no certain home. For farm workers hirings were held in the main towns in January and the period of hire was a year from May 12th. It was different for domestic staff who were hired for 6 months in May and November. A number of the women interviewed for this book went into service and had varying experiences from being treated very badly, almost like slaves, to being almost included in the lives of the family.

The privileged lives of the middle and upper classes are reflected by these tales although the attitudes to local landowners and professional people changed a great deal during the period covered by the book as did the lives of the children whose experience of schooling varied. Most went to school until they were eleven and took the grading exam but even the few who passed this were often unable to take the opportunity offered due to cost and travel. Some children were overlooked by the Education Authority and one of the stories told is of a shepherd who as a boy had no formal schooling but amazed inspectors by his ability to count sheep and carry out other related tasks.

Mechanisation started with the introduction of the tractor which began to change the nature of farming as a complete family activity. (It is commented that during the period covered there were 22% women working in agriculture in Northumberland compared with an average of 3.5% in rest of England and Wales). Lives started to change significantly as the century progressed and the Second World War was a major factor in speeding up these changes.

To those of us born in the later part of the 20th century this book is a reminder of the stories told to us by our parents and grandparents of the lives they lived where the church and the seasons had a far greater effect on daily life. Some of the hobbies continue but many have died out. For today's children it is another world, like a foreign country or one featured in school history

and museums. Some of the reminiscences have a slightly rosy feel to them as if the difficulties of the times, although recalled, have faded and the memory of family life been enhanced by distance. Hence this book has the slightly golden glow of the recent television series 'Lark Rise to Candleford' but it is nonetheless a valuable contribution to oral history being pleasant to read rather than feeling like a serious academic study.

Val Duncan

Craig Armstrong, *Tyneside in the Second World War* (Chichester, Phillimore Press, 2007), ISBN 978 1 86077 467 6, 172 pp, photographs, £17.99 hbk.

As a centre for shipbuilding, coal mining and munitions production Tyneside had a major role in the national war effort between 1939 and 1945. The shipyards of the region replaced half of the four million tons of shipping lost during the conflict, for example, and the North East also hosted key military and naval bases. Yet until now we have lacked a comprehensive account of Tyneside and the war. Fortunately this book provides one, and with a 'people's history' focus. It is also an attractively produced hardback at a reasonable price and available in local shops.

Craig makes extensive use of resources held by the Tyne and Wear Archives Service and thereby demonstrates the breadth of relevant material they have on offer. The book is also illustrated by a large number of interesting photographs, mainly from that source. Where necessary the National Archives and those of Mass Observation are used to supplement local records. Readers accustomed to seeing oral history as central to 'history from below' may be surprised to see that it is not a major plank of this book.

The author points out that those able to contribute their narratives were almost exclusively children at the time, and therefore limited to that experience; more to the point, he found that their memories were shaped by the dominant 'myths' of life on the home front. As he puts it, people say what they think they ought to say.

This leads to the historical problematic of the book, to an issue where local history is particularly relevant. There are two principal strands of approach to Britain in the Second World War. The first, still largely the 'official version' and the dominant narrative, emphasises national unity and a society brought together by the common purpose of defeating the enemy. The second strand reacts to this by seeking out examples of social conflict and division that went on underneath the veneer of a 'national' war effort. Craig demonstrates that on Tyneside these two strands do not cancel each other out, and that either one alone is too simplistic. This is done by covering the war in the workplace, the preparations for total war from the air, through civil defence, the culture of everyday life and the effects of air raids on civilian morale and attitudes to the war.

War and the workplace

Readers of *North East History* may be particularly interested in his analysis of the war and the workplace. He provides detailed and useful accounts of several industrial disputes: in the docks, and particularly the Wallsend apprentices' strike that led to the prosecution of the Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party members who had advised them. (I was interested to see that members of the Peace Pledge Union stood bail for them). But he also notes that for the most part industrial unrest was not a feature of the early, crisis years of the war, and that strikers did not enjoy public support in the region. Disruptive disputes occurred generally in protest at perceived threats to working rights and

against the combined weight of government, management, and union leadership. On the other hand in the shipyards news of heavy losses at sea, such as the sinking of HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, led to increased production by the workforce because the central value of their labour to the war effort had been forcefully demonstrated. There were also occasions when putting self interest above the national interest was an accusation against the establishment, as the account of corruption scandals in Newcastle local government demonstrates.

It is in this area though that I do have one criticism. Craig notes that the local industry to lose most days of production during the war was coal mining. Yet he does not analyse the reasons for this at all, even though there is relevant material in the National Archives series he uses to good effect for other industries. Are his generalisations about what determined support for the war effort through production relevant for mining too? This could be a fruitful area for future research. Tyneside began the war with high morale, probably due to the improved employment prospects it brought. Craig traces how that morale was sustained until the end but with occasional and temporary blips caused by military defeats and reversals overseas. The 'blitz spirit' was on his evidence no myth around Tyneside. Reactions to bombing were, interestingly, often localised: the blitz in North Shields does not seem to have caused alarm in Newcastle, for example, or vice-versa. The author sets out a number of issues for future local analysis: many aspects of the role of women in the workplace and the armed forces have yet to be studied; a detailed local analysis of evacuation has still to be done. This book is a valuable example of how national generalisations can be examined against local experience and a stimulating and informative work in its own right.

Don Watson

Chris Mullin, *A View from the Foothills: The Diaries of Chris Mullin* (Profile Books, London, 2009) ISBN 978 1 84668 223 0, 448pp, £20 hbk

The Hugh Dalton diaries and the lesser known Chuter Ede diaries have long been valuable sources to researchers examining the Labour Party in the 1930s and 40s; and the Tony Benn, Barbara Castle and Richard Crossman diaries covered the Wilson years. As Chris Mullin observes in his preface to the publication of his diaries: 'As the New Labour era draws to a close there will be no shortage of memoirs from those who have occupied the Olympian heights.' He is right: Dalton and the above diarists viewed events from Cabinet level, Chris Mullin, who only achieved junior rank in the New Labour governments, is an observer from a more humble position, hence his title *A View from the Foothills*.

Chris Mullin was – and most probably still is – a man of the left. After graduating from Hull University with a law degree he worked as a freelance journalist for several years and edited *Tribune* 1982-84. During the upheavals that rocked the Labour Party in the 1980s, he was an influential figure on the left and a supporter of Tony Benn. He also found time to write three highly readable 'thrillers'. But perhaps his most notable achievement was his successful campaign to secure justice for the 'Birmingham bombers', recounted in his book *Error of Judgement*.

He was selected as Labour candidate for the Sunderland South constituency to fight the 1987 general election, after a closely contested selection campaign, and was duly elected a Member of Parliament. He moved his family to Sunderland and earned the reputation of being a conscientious constituency MP. His diaries show how assiduously he kept in touch with local affairs.

His diaries start on 20 July 1999, when a call from Downing Street informs Mullin that the Prime Minister will ring in fifteen minutes. Blair offers him a job as a junior minister in John Prescott's ministerial team at the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR). The last entry is on 9 May 2005, the day in which Blair tells him 'I'm sorry, Chris, but I'm going to have to let you go.' As Mullin records in his diary 'I'm out'.

Ministerial life

Chris Mullin was doubtful about accepting a junior post in Blair's Government, knowing that it would mean giving up his influential position as chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee. He had few illusions about his new job at the DETR, recording in his diary 'To bed, feeling miserable at the thoughts of the avalanche of tedium to come'. He is soon proved to be right: as a junior minister he finds that he has no power or influence over policy or indeed over anything at all in, what he refers to as, the Department of Folding Deck Chairs. When he leaves the Department he concludes that his only achievement has been to help ban power-boating on Lake Windermere.

In January 2001 he was moved to the Department of International Development, where he found the work much more congenial. However in June 2001 he was sacked and returned to the backbenches. In June 2003 he was offered and accepted the post of junior minister at the Foreign Office with responsibility for African affairs, and he was happy doing this until the axe fell on him following the general election of May 2005.

From his lowly position in the Government's pecking order, Mullin was able to observe and record his impressions of those above him. The diaries reveal Mullin to have been an admirer of Tony Blair: he particularly admired Blair's communication skills and, like many

others, he succumbed to Blair's famous charm. He did not admire Gordon Brown, who is portrayed in the diaries as vindictive and conspiratorial, with a 'mirthless smile, switching on and off like a neon sign'. When Mullin was dropped from the Government he received a warm note from Blair 'saying how much he enjoyed working with me'. Then he learns that every former minister has received an identical letter. Peter Mandelson is criticised by Mullin for being indiscreet and wanting to hog the limelight, while he noted how Geoff Hoon's lawyer's training enabled him to speak to any brief required of him.

John Prescott, Mullin's boss at Environment, is observed as being insecure and irascible, although Mullin recognised that 'Prezza' possessed some political ability and deep down was probably a nice guy. Mullin's boss at International Development, Clare Short, receives high praise from Mullin for her sincerity and ability to get things done. Chris Mullin is also kind to his third departmental chief, Jack Straw, whose political skills he respected and perhaps envied.

Chris Mullin was critical of, what he refers to as, 'New Labour wheezes', namely: constant spin, the creative accounting that repeated items of public expenditure to give the impression that it was expanding more than it really was, and the phoney consultation exercises. He writes that 'wheezes' may succeed in the short term but in the long run the electorate gets wise to them.

There is some good behind-the-scenes stuff on the invasion of Iraq. Mullin wobbled on this issue: being torn between opposition to the war and loyalty to Blair. After much procrastination, described in the diaries, he ended up voting against the Government.

At the time of writing, the New Labour enterprise appears to be coming to an end. What comes next is anybody's guess. There is certainly a lot of work to be done assessing the achievements and failures of the Blair and Brown governments, and Chris Mullin's diaries should prove to be a useful source to those who undertake

the task. The diaries are also a must for those who enjoy reading about the cut and thrust of Labour politics. Chris Mullin is an accomplished writer and he has provided us with an entertaining peep below stairs.

Archie Potts

Dominic Sandbrook, ***Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*** (Little Brown, 2005), ISBN 0-0316- 88083-2, 824 pp., £20.00, hbk.

Peter Hennessy, ***Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties*** (Penguin, 2007), ISBN 978-0-141-00409-9, 739 pp., £9.99, pbk.

Neither of these two long volumes relates directly to the North East – indeed the region gets no mention in either – but they cover, from differing perspectives, the period which this volume of *North East History* focuses upon. The late fifties and early sixties saw an unprecedented rise in real incomes for the majority of British working people – particularly young ones – and resulting from that the transformation of social and cultural agendas. Harold Macmillan’s notorious though slightly misquoted phrase of ‘never had it so good’ has come to define that period and also his own prime ministerial career.

Both are highly readable books, but of the two Hennessy’s is much superior, with deeper insight and the more analytical approach; it is distinctly the work of a historian, while Sandbrook’s by contrast, though not lacking in merit, has a more journalistic feel to it. His emphasis too is a more cultural one, as indeed the title of his book suggests. His successor volume has a similar orientation – it’s subtitle is *A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, where the

North East is mentioned – but mainly as a prop for his description of *Get Carter* (perhaps he is already at work on a title like ‘Britain in the Big Brother House’!).

Each one deals at some length with the new youthful radicalism which emerged in the later fifties and early sixties in the shape of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, though they neglect the New Left, apart from a passing comment in each volume – slightly inaccurate in Hennessy’s case, for he confuses the *New Reasoner* with its predecessor *Reasoner*. Sandbrook discusses CND quite lengthily but in a fairly patronising fashion; ‘overburdened with righteousness but short on reason’ he writes, and in line with his general approach concentrates on the Campaign’s cultural aspects or what he takes to be these aspects, rather than weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of its case.

Hennessy’s is an altogether more serious analysis, puts the development in an international context, notes the effectiveness of its logo and refers to the secret history of the movement prepared for Macmillan in 1965 by MI5, though tantalisingly he does not expand on this. He endorses the claim that CND was ‘the largest spontaneous popular movement in post-war Britain’ – though also the suggestion by Alan Brien that the Aldermaston marches were hotbeds of sexual activity – which was untrue.

Both of these texts can be recommended to our readers. Both are worth reading on their own account, but perhaps the best results are achieved by studying their contrasts.

Willie Thompson

This extract is from *Behemoth*, the classic analysis of Nazism by Franz Neumann. In it he summarises the effects of the economic slump in 1929 ...

Only a small fraction received unemployment insurance and an ever larger proportion received no support at all. ... there were hundreds of thousands who had never held jobs. Unemployment became a status, and, in a society where success is paramount, a stigma. ... Small businessmen and craftsmen faced destruction. House-owners could not collect their rents. Banks crashed and were taken over by the federal government. Even the stronghold of industrial reaction ... was near collapse and its shares were purchased by the federal government at prices far above the market quotation. The budget situation became precarious. The reactionaries refused to support a large-scale works programme lest it revive the declining power of the trade unions, whose funds were dwindling and whose membership was declining.

Remind you of anything?



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AT THE BACK

Labour History Society Notebook

North East Labour History Society

Officers and Committee

(As of the Annual General Meeting 2008)

President: Ray Challinor

Vice Presidents: Maureen Callcott, Archie Potts

Chair: Nigel Todd

Vice Chair: Sandy Irving

Treasurer: Mike Cleghorn

Secretary: Val Duncan

Journal Editor: Ben Sellers (Vol 40)

Committee Members: John Charlton (*Newcastle*), Val Duncan (*Tynemouth*), Stuart Howard (*Darlington*), Sandy Irvine (*Newcastle*), Tony Jeffs (*Ryton*), Peggy Jones (*Hexham*), Lynda MacKenzie (*Newcastle*), Steve Manchee (*Newcastle*), Lewis Mates (*Newcastle*), Marie-Therese Mayne (*Hebburn*), Paul Mayne (*Hebburn*), Jeanie Molyneux (*Newcastle*), John Painter (*Newcastle*), Ben Sellers (*Durham*), Win Stokes (*Tynemouth*), Willie Thompson (*Sunderland*), Nigel Todd (*Newcastle*) and Don Watson (*North Shields*).

Secretary's Report

When I took over the position of Secretary following the 2008 AGM I was very aware of the dedication and hard work of John Charlton during his 5 years as Secretary when he developed the Society from a low ebb to a growing and active state. I knew this would be a very difficult 'act' to follow' and so it has proved. However, I have been assisted greatly up the steep learning curve by John and also other members of the Committee who have helped smooth my path. Many thanks to all concerned.

It has been an interesting year although some of the activities that we hoped to organise did not happen, partly due to my not realising how much activity John had put in behind the scenes and partly other external factors. Hopefully the May Day outing and a general social event will take place next year. 'The Pitman Painters' theatre trip has been finalised and tickets obtained for 2nd October.

Sheila Rowbotham in her talk 'Reflections of 1968', following the 2008 AGM, covered aspects of recent history that has some resonance with the theme of this year's Journal, concentrating on the period following the Second World War. Sheila talked of the 1960s optimism, the feeling that we could change everything and do anything and how looking back from our current perspective it is hard to believe how high our expectations were. However the legacy lives on in our hopes for equality, tolerance and democracy.

The public meetings during the year have continued the high standard set by Sheila although they were very different in content. A packed house was present for the launch of John Charlton's book 'Hidden Chains' where John developed the results of his research into slavery in the North East, a subject he had introduced earlier in the year during a First Tuesday meeting.

Jacky Longstaff and Chris Wharton talked about the background for their book of photos and essays about Newcastle Town Moor. This beautiful book, reviewed in the 2008 Journal, often shows the Moor from a perspective that many of us have not considered giving it a timeless quality. Many of the photos show a landscape with no people whereas most of us, and certainly I, have tended to be on the Moor during public events and in the company of others.

Max Adams introducing his book about John Martin, his family and contemporaries, 'The Firebringers' took us back to the 19th century and a time of artistic and scientific vision. Max showed slides of several of John Martin's paintings featuring scenes of divine vengeance on a grand scale and talked about Martin's life as part of a generation inspired by the myth of Prometheus, the Greek Titan who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to man. Max also considered the lives of John Martin's brothers, William and Jonathan, who had extraordinary lives being an arsonist and inventor respectively.

'First Tuesday', overseen by Steve Manchee, continued to be a successful discussion forum despite, or maybe due to, a move of venue to the Irish Centre. The programme was again varied and interesting. Liz O'Donnell looked at the Bevin Boys; John Griffiths considered the early life of T Dan Smith and Dave Douglass made two appearances with the first and second parts of his autobiographical works covering his post war childhood and 40 years as a pitman respectively. These took us up to the early 80s and the coming of Margaret Thatcher.

Combining the discussion element of First Tuesday and oral history we had a number of members making contributions on aspects of life in the North East after the Second World War. These were Dave Byrne on Local Government, Maggie Pearse on women and work; John Creaby on Trade Unions; Sandy Irvine on

the media; Peter Latham on education and Ian Roberts on rural life. Given the time constraints all of these could only consider a few aspects and overview of the subject in question. There remains a rich vein to be tapped in future both in expanding these areas and bringing in others that we haven't had time to consider. A more overtly political dimension to our discussions was given by Don Watson looking at the communist councillors in the North east during the 1930s and 1940s and Dave Harker considering the early history of the Bolsheviks.

The Society had a table at the 9th Durham History Fair 'Yesterday Belongs to You' where we were one of 78 many and varied exhibitors. It was an interesting day where we distributed a large number of leaflets advertising our events and gained 2 new members. We were visited by attendees with very varied questions on aspects of working life in the area and it was again apparent that the term 'Labour' in our title leads to a number of people having the mistaken belief that we are dedicated to the history of the Labour Party. Thanks to John Creaby and Paul Mayne for their stints at table minding.

During the year significant progress has been made on establishing an interesting and active web site which contains details of events coming and opportunity for discussion and comment on previous meetings and other topics of interest to members. This new web site is to replace the current one prior to the AGM.

Finally I would like to thank all of the Committee members for their work and help during the year. It has been invaluable. Should any Society member who is not already on the Committee be willing to join us you would be very welcome.

Val Duncan

**2009
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The Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy



Past winners

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1994	Kathleen Smith
1996	Reg Brown
1997	Angela Goldsmith
2000	Robert Hope
2004	Craig Turnbull
2005	Craig Armstrong
2006	Elspeth Gould
2007	Candice Brockwell
2008	Ruth Blower

The author Sid Chaplin was a founder member of the Society and his Memorial Trophy is awarded each year to the winner of a labour history essay competition. The aim of the competition is to foster the interest in North East labour history under the following conditions:

1. The Trophy will be awarded for the best essay submitted on any aspect of the history of labour in the North East. The essay should show some knowledge and use of original sources. It should be word-processed and not more than 10,000 words in length.
2. The competition will be open to anyone who is not employed full-time as a professional teacher or writer of history.
3. An Adjudication Panel, drawn from the Society, will judge the essays and the Adjudicators' decision will be final in all matters affecting the award of the Trophy.
4. All entries must be submitted to the Secretary of the Society and received not later than 30th June each year. The results will be published in the Society's Journal.

The Trophy is a miner's lamp with the name of each winner inscribed on it. Winners may keep the Trophy for one year. The winner also receives a £50 book token.

The WEA - A century of adult learning in the North East

Many thanks again to North East History for space to offer an annual update on the Workers' Educational Association in the North East.

2009-10 represents an historic milestone. In the autumn of 2010, the WEA will mark a century of continuous activity in the North East. The North East District of the WEA was founded at a conference held in Armstrong College, Newcastle, in October 1910, and thanks to the generosity of Newcastle University, our centenary conference will take place in the same hall on Friday 29 October 2010.

A year-long programme of centenary events is being planned with several of these taking the WEA back to its roots. For example, the coalition that brought the Association into existence in the North East included universities and trade unions, socialists and women's suffrage activists and, crucially, the co-operative societies. Co-op halls, education committees and women's guilds provided part of the bedrock for the new movement.

We are especially delighted, therefore, that the Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear Area Committees of the modern Co-operative Group each committed substantial amounts of money to fund the research, development, and touring of a play about the early years of the WEA in the region. And Tom Kelly, one of the North East's rising playwrights, is writing the play that will then be performed at local venues in the tradition of vibrant community theatre.

There are also plans to create a WEA regional banner, based on work by groups across the North East, and to be unveiled at the 2010 Durham Miners' Gala. A new centenary history is in

preparation by WEA members with the intention of capturing the achievements of the Association's approach to adult learning

More in the pipeline. One interesting development is a return to strengthening democratic participation, which was an original WEA aim. For two years from the summer of 2009, the Association will be leading a Take Part project in North Northumberland, seeking to engage community and workplace groups in influencing decisions that affect them, as well as raising awareness of how the political system works. This is one of several schemes funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government, using adult learning as a tool to improve levels of democratic involvement. Another will be the launch of a WEA project to work with ethnic communities in the West End of Newcastle to ensure that their voice and needs are heard in local decision making.

The focus on democracy has rarely been more important. In the context of the emergence of a fascist party, capable of getting its members elected as MEPs and Councillors, the WEA in the North East is introducing a tutor training programme that will equip adult education tutors to deal more effectively with the impacts of organised racism in white working class communities.

Within the Association, too, we are cultivating a more supportive framework for volunteers and members to participate in the WEA and shape its directions. The North East WEA Without Boundaries project has now laid the ground rules for this renewal and several practical initiatives are projected for 2009-10.

All of this is on the back of a broad range of adult education that builds people's self-confidence, provides access to greater quality of life, improves health, and tackles issues such as climate change and the future of adult learning.

One of the founders of the WEA, Albert Mansbridge, once described the Association as ‘an adventure in working class education.’ We’re still up for the adventure, and you’re welcome too!

Nigel Todd

Regional Director, Workers’ Educational Association –
North East Region
(e: ntodd@wea.org.uk)

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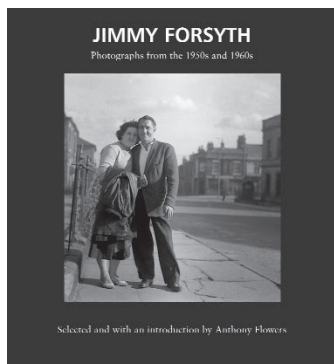
We updated our web site at the start of September with the help of Roger Cornwell and Jean Rogers. If you have used it you will have seen that is much easier to use and has some new features. Probably the best innovation is a functioning Forum. Once a User is signed in he or she should be able to submit announcements of events or publications and to start or join in appropriate discussions. We are also beginning to include articles from past journals and will be happy to consider specific requests from our index. At first we will concentrate on adding appreciations of activists from the labour movement. We would very much like users to submit biographical material of deceased activists. Other types of article will also be welcome, long or brief. We can also handle illustrations and will soon establish a gallery. Audio material is better placed with the Tyne and Wear Archives.

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Constitution

Name:

The name of the Society shall be the North East Labour History Society.

Objects:

- a. To bring together those interested in labour history in North East England.
- b. To promote the study, teaching and research of labour history.
- c. To assist in the preservation of relevant records.
- d. To increase public knowledge and awareness of labour history.

Membership:

Membership shall be open to all those actively interested in the aims of the Society.

Annual General Meeting:

An Annual General Meeting shall be held open to all members of the Society.

Subscriptions:

The annual subscription shall be determined by the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

Finance:

All money raised by or on behalf of the Society shall be applied to further the above objects. An audited account shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting.

Officers and committee:

The business of the Society shall be conducted by a Committee composed of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer plus six ordinary members. The Committee shall have the power to co-opt additional members. The Committee and Officers shall be elected at the Annual general Meeting. The Quorum for all Committee meetings shall be one third of its membership, including attendance of the Chair or Vice Chair. The Committee's agenda shall be drawn up by the Secretary in consultation with the Chair.

Honorary Officers:

There shall be a President elected at the Annual General Meeting and not subject to re-election.

There shall be one or more Vice Presidents elected at the Annual General meeting and not subject to re-election.

The President and Vice President(s) shall be ex officio members of the Committee with full voting rights.

Bulletin:

The Society shall publish an annual journal. The Committee shall appoint the Editor/s of the Bulletin. The Editor/s shall report to the Committee on matters affecting the production of the Bulletin.

Changes to the Constitution:

Changes to the Constitution can only be made at the Annual General Meeting, and a motion outlining proposals for change must be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 28 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.

PUBLIC MEETINGS 2009-10

The Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 7th October

AGM 6.30 for 7 p.m

Lit & Phil

John Charlton: **Don't you hear the H-Bomb's Thunder?**

• • •

Tuesday 24th November

7 p.m.

Lit & Phil

Stephen Roberts: **Workers Education Association:
its purpose, work & achievements**

• • •

Tuesday 1st December

7 p.m.

The Bridge Hotel

Keith Armstrong:

**Common words and the wandering star -
life of Jack Common**

Book Launch

• • •

February 2010

Ian Roberts: **Rural Labour in Northumberland**

details to be confirmed

May 2010

Gidon Cohen: **History of the Independent Labour Party**

details to be confirmed

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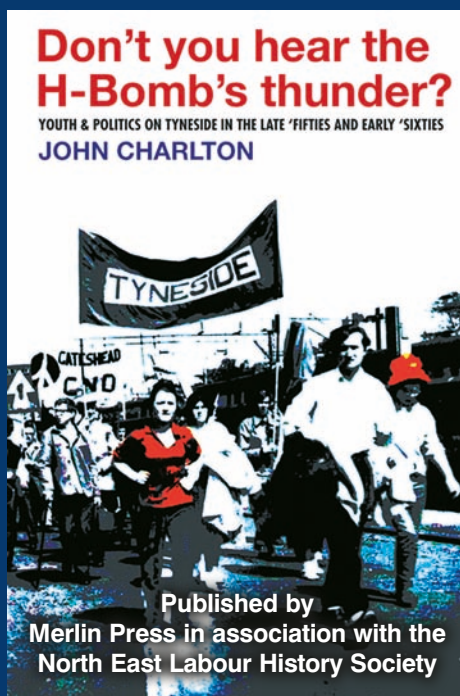
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