

north east history

Volume 44 2013



Consett: a photo essay *Peter Brabban*

**Politics in the Piggery: Chartism in the Ouseburn
1838-1848** *Mike Greatbatch*

**An Uneasy relationship? Labour and the Suffragettes
in the North East** *Sue Jones*

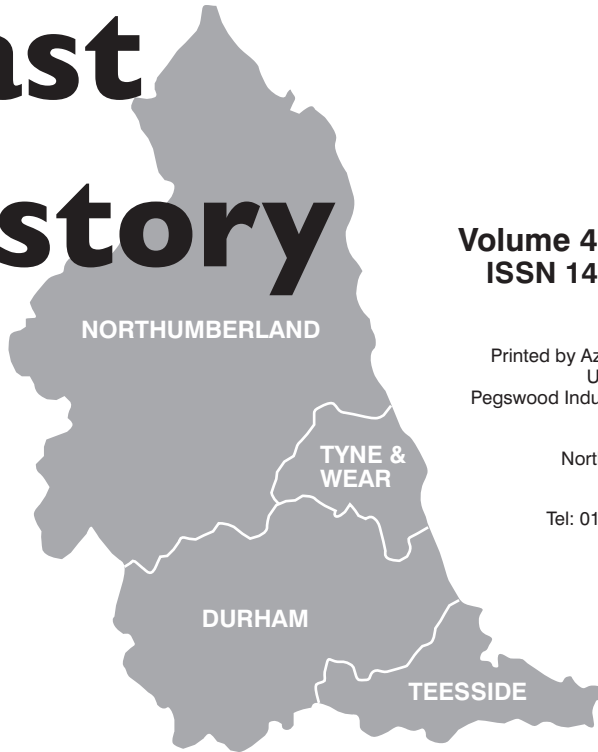
**Competition, conflict and regulation: the Foyboatmen
1900-1950** *Adrian Osler*

Their Geordies and Ours- Part 1 *Dave Harker*

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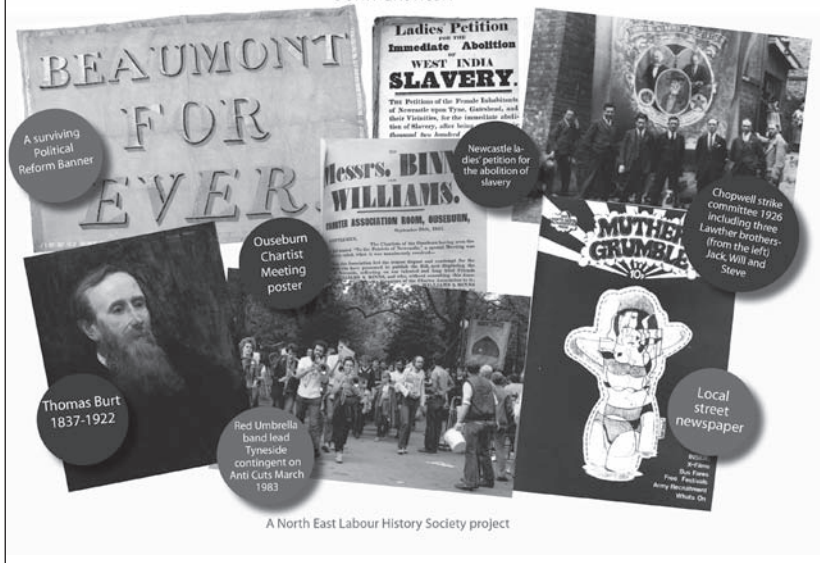
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Mapping Popular Politics: The story of a project

A brief History of radicalism in North East England

John Charlton



This book can be obtained free of charge from
email: nelh@blueyonder.co.uk

EDITORIAL

This year's journal again reflects the healthy state of interest in the history of the lives, work and struggles of people in the north east of England. It is very striking that many of the themes are so politically resonant still today both locally, nationally and even internationally: struggles for political and employment rights, campaigns to keep jobs, protect livelihoods and support communities.

The opening section includes a series of articles which have directly or indirectly emerged from the Mapping Popular Politics Project which concluded on March 13th this year with a large celebratory event in the Bewick Hall, Newcastle Central Library. This project had taken up nearly three years of some of our lives and must be regarded as a great success. It has created a data base which can be an important resource for many historians of the north east England. It can be accessed at: www.nelh2010.org

Of equal importance it has brought into the Society many new people, several of whom have already become writers for North East History. Over the next few years more should be making a contribution to its pages. This year we open with Peter Brabban's eye-witness account (with photos) of the Consett Ironworks closure campaign. This piece also raises interesting questions about the nature of photographs as historical evidence. We also have a substantial article on local Chartism by Mike Greatbatch which is one of the few attempts in chartist scholarship to trace the story of working class Chartism in one small industrial village. This is complemented by a short piece on the genealogy of two local chartists, Martin Jude and John Burnett, by Edward Davies. We then have an article by Liz O'Donnell on the contribution of oral history to the project; we hope that the next edition of the journal will reflect the continuation of this work. We are also carrying three pieces by project members which might be considered work

in progress. They are Sue King's work on the political campaign by dissenters to obtain a proper burial ground, Judith MacSwaine's brief biography of the anti-corn law campaigner, Daniel Liddell. Finally for this volume we also carry Judith McSwaine and Maria Goulding's note on working with the Thomas Wilson Papers at the Newcastle Central Library. Among the pieces hoped for in future editions of the journal are a comparative study of Berwick on Tweed in 1913 and 2013, the origins of public parks in Newcastle and Sue Pearson's work on the radical Newcastle Councillor, William Newton.

The next section opens with Sue Jones' article on Labour and the Suffragettes in the North East which provides an insight into the active campaigning of women for the vote and their sometimes uneasy relationship with the growing Labour Party. This discussion is timely in a year in which events marking the women's suffrage campaign have been held across the region.

The next group of articles builds on the coalfield communities series from the 2012 edition. Harry Barnes concludes his three part monograph on Easington Colliery, for the first part of which he was deservedly awarded the Local History prize. Part 3 focuses on 1919-1939, years which were characterised both by the rapid growth of the coalfield community and by long disputes. The author's personal engagement with the town of his birth is illustrated by a photograph of a local football team which includes his father and two of his father's brothers.

This is followed by two articles by novice researchers, both of whom have adapted much longer academic theses to meet the requirements of the journal. The first of these is by James English who won the Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy in 2012 with his article on the miners' strike in Co. Durham. His article emphasises the importance of focusing on local experiences and voices; it draws on interviews with nine people who played varying roles in the strike. What emerges both complements and also sometimes contrasts with the histories which foreground national leaders and their powerful stories.

Thomas Quincey's article on the Ashington and Hirst Co-operative Society in the 1920s is a welcome addition which extends the exploration of co-operatives which was the second key theme of the 2012 edition into Northumberland. It discusses the role of the Co-op in Ashington, a role which went well beyond its shops with their dividends to support for the provision of welfare and recreation. It saw itself as a proud upholder of the Owenite principles of the pioneering Rochdale Co-op in often difficult times.

Adrian Osler's article on the foyboatmen is a wonderful tribute to a lost occupation on the Tyne and to the huge value of this kind of detailed research using local archives. He focuses mainly on the twentieth century but also looks back to the early years of the nineteenth when enterprising foyboatmen competed with each other to hook on to a ship before it entered the Tyne.

Dave Harker knows more than anyone about the shared popular culture and language of Northumberland, Scotland and the borders in between. His detailed examination of the word 'Geordies' in songs and pamphlets is a good reminder a year before the referendum in Scotland on independence, of the porous nature of borders and of how they unite as well as divide. In the first part of his study published this year, Dave traces the use of 'Geordies' from 1600 until the late nineteenth century; he will conclude next year with a discussion of political activity among the Geordies.

Appreciations of those who have made significant contributions to the society and/or the wider world of the lives of working people have always been a feature of the journal. This year we have a wonderfully warm one by Michael Chaplin of his mother Rene who died in 2012 in the words he spoke at the ceremony of farewell and celebration. This is followed by Tony Wild's appreciation of Pete Steffens, who also died in 2012 and is remembered with affection by many.

Poems can often make an impact and catch the emotions in ways which more formal writing does not and our two poems this year by Keith Armstrong and Billy Hunt- Vincent are no exception. Keith's is from his

poetry collection, Splinters and it is followed by Billy Hunt- Vincent's Turn the Telly On ; both express the outrage many of us feel at the moment.

The review section again covers a good range of recent books. Thanks to Willie Thompson for co-ordinating these – everyone should find something of interest.

In the final section of Society business, the Secretary's report reflects the current strength of the Society with a range of talks, discussions and a visit to Wallington Hall. The First Tuesday events help support the production of the Journal, giving researchers the opportunity to present their ideas in an informal setting.

It has been a great privilege to edit this edition of the Journal; the articles bear witness to the passion and commitment of those who struggled to challenge the situations in which they found themselves.

I would like to thank the whole editorial team who have had a very active role in getting this edition ready for publication. I am also grateful for help with proof-reading from Judith MacSwaine, Sue Ward and Douglas Rennie.

Sarah Rennie on behalf of the editorial team.

John Charlton, John Creaby, Mike Greatbatch, Paul Mayne, Sarah Rennie, John Stirling, Win Stokes, Willie Thompson (Reviews Editor) and Don Watson (Society Secretary)

COVER NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Front Cover: The TUC Day of Action against cuts in London
10th March 1980.**

Photograph by Peter Brabban

Martin Jude, Ouseburn Chartist poster, Ouseburn 1839,
Local Studies Newcastle City Council.

Consett: a photo essay Peter Brabban

These pictures were part of a pair of two page features for the Workers' Chronicle.

A Cemetery for Newcastle's Dissenters

Gateway of Westgate Hill Cemetery 1829

Photo: Newcastle City Library Local History Collection

**An Uneasy Relationship? Labour and the Suffragettes in the North
East**

Sunderland Demonstration September 1911.

Newcastle Illustrated Chronicle, September 11th 1911.

Picture of Esther Harrison and Connie Ellis

Source: Bridge Studios

Mabel Atkinson photographed by George Bernard Shaw at first Fabian Summer School, 1907

Easington Colliery Part 3

Photo 1 http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_KmeU879465A/SlluQmtGUmI/AAAAAAAAAy0/4AA4DcGpF2o/s400/scan0019.jpg

Photo 2 Reproduced by permission of Durham County Record Office, D/Ph 303/1

Competition, conflict and regulation: the Foyboatmen 1900-1950

Photo 1 Author's collection, courtesy the late Hurst Hails

Photo 2 Author's collection D/Ph 303/1

The Back Cover:

Photos taken by Sally Mitchison

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Keith Armstrong was born in Newcastle upon Tyne, where he has worked as a community development worker, poet, librarian and publisher. He is coordinator of the *Northern Voices* creative writing and community publishing project.

Harry Barnes, was born at Easington Colliery into a mining family. A railway clerk, national serviceman, adult student, university lecturer, MP and now retired, lives in Derbyshire.

Peter Brabban was born in Consett. He worked as a commercial photographer (fashion and portraiture) until the late 70s when he switched focus, working for the labour movement and then for Oxfam in Africa and Asia. In 1983 he was appointed Campaign Organiser for Oxfam in the North East.

Michael Chaplin has written extensively for theatre, radio and television. His most recent book is *Tyne View: A Walk around the Port of Tyne* was published in 2012.

Edward J Davies is, by profession, an administrator for a lift and escalator company. He has wide genealogical interests and has had articles published in American and British journal, including *The Genealogist and Genealogists Magazine*.

James English studied History at the University of Durham, graduating in 2012. James now works in the energy sector in a Communications and Public Relations role, and retains a keen interest in British history, politics and current affairs

He won the Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy in 2012.

Maria Goulding, Sue King and Judith MacSwaine were volunteers on the Popular Politics project.

Mike Greatbatch is a Fellow of the Association for Heritage Interpretation and has over 30 years experience of working with communities to

document and celebrate local heritage. Mike worked for thirteen years in the Lower Ouseburn and the history of this area continues to be his main research interest. Mike was a participant in the North East Popular Politics Project.

Dave Harker wrote *One for the Money, Fakesong, Tressell and Gannin' to Blaydon Races!* He edited two Surtees Society volumes and co-edited *The Big Red Song Book, The Flying Pickets* and the Open University Press 'Popular Music in Britain' series.

Billy Hunt Vincent has lived and worked in Sunderland all his life. He believes poetry is a unique way of conveying information and human feelings.

Liz O'Donnell was the Oral History Coordinator for the Mapping Popular Politics project. A former history lecturer in further education, she has more recently worked as an outreach officer for Northumberland Archives, specialising in oral history projects. Her research interests include first wave feminism, the anti-slavery movement, and the development of professional social work.

Adrian Osler. Former Curator of Maritime History at Tyne and Wear Museums, with a long held enthusiasm for vernacular boats and their users. Particular research interests include the Tyne's nineteenth century foreign and coasting trades – widely published in specialist and popular journals.

Thomas Quincey studied inter-war Britain, with a focus on the North East of England, whilst reading an MA in British History at Newcastle University. He has since gone on to become a lawyer. He is from Morpeth, Northumberland.

Tony Wild. A Liverpoolian who has lived in the North East since 1965, is currently Vice Chairman of NE Humanists. He was a member of the History Society of Sunderland, where he met Pete Steffens.

TO
Messrs. BINNS
AND
WILLIAMS.

CHARTER ASSOCIATION ROOM, OUSEBURN,
September 28th, 1841.

GENTLEMEN,

The Chartists of the Ouseburn having seen the Hand Bill headed "To the Patriots of Newcastle," a special Meeting was immediately called, when it was unanimously resolved—

"That this Association feel the utmost disgust and contempt for the Individuals who have presumed to publish the Bill, now disgracing the walls of Newcastle, reflecting on our talented and long tried Friends MESSRS. WILLIAMS & BINNS, and who, without consulting this Association, have dared to affix the Signature of the Charter Association to it; that our confidence in the Integrity of MESSRS. WILLIAMS & BINNS is unlimited, and that from their Talents and Indefatigable Industry, we attribute the good prospects of the cause in the Northern Districts; and that we consider the above Attack to be Cowardly and Mean, and tending to the greatest possible Injury to the cause in this District, by endeavouring to cause dissension and create disgust in the mind of every right thinking Man."

"That the Secretary do respectfully forward the above Resolution to MESSRS. WILLIAMS & BINNS."

By order of the Meeting,
(Signed by) **WM. PARKER, Chairman.**

GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with the above Resolution, I beg leave with the greatest pleasure to forward it to you, and at the same time I am proud to inform you, that it conveys the Sentiments of every Working Man in this District.

I am, GENTLEMEN,
Respectfully and sincerely,
In the Bonds of True Democracy,
Your Obedient Servant,
JOHN HALL, Sub. Sec.

T. & H. DODDS, Printers, Head of the Side.

Ouseburn Chartists poster



Durham Miners Association

General Secretary: Dave Hopper.

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CONSETT – THATCHER'S FIRST VICTIM

Peter Brabban

Consett is my birthplace, where, in early July 1948 I became one of the town's very first National Health babies. It is where I went for the Saturday morning kid's cinema club, the ABC minors, and where I spent my pocket money on film and chemicals. Consett is where my father worked for the Northern bus company, and where he would sometimes return home with a patina of red dust on his cap and shoulders.

When on the 11th December 1979 it was announced that the Consett Steel Works would close I felt motivated to get involved in the fight opposing closure.

The best contribution that I thought I could give to the campaign was as a photographer. Previously I had made a livelihood as a commercial photographer but had moved away from this to do a degree in History and at the time of the closure notice I was using my skills and training as a photographer to support the labour movement in the North East: the Newcastle Trades Council magazine, 'The Workers Chronicle' was the main channel for my photographs.

As a photographer the criterion for reporting on any situation or struggle is different to other observers such as reporters or historians. First and foremost you are driven by the visual, to tell a story through pictures. This both restricts your contribution while at the same time offers the photographer the opportunity to influence the audience about the way they feel about an event by the choice of subject and the way that participants are portrayed. The choices that a photographer makes when they take a picture: when they press the shutter, how they frame the subject, what

is in the foreground and background are all conscious choices. It is what the great French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson calls 'the decisive moment' and moves a photograph away from simply recording and into the area of interpretation. Unlike other mediums these choices are made even as the event is taking place. A photographer is seeking to produce a photograph that records the reality of the event but also that it has both a visual impact and reflects how he/she views and feels about an event. As a photographer working within the labour movement I felt it important to portray working people in a sympathetic light, choosing to picture smiling or good humoured demonstrators rather than images of angry or aggressive participants, so common in mainstream media.

So much of what we feel, as well as what we know, about much of twentieth century history has been influenced by photographers. Their interpretation of events has often put a human face to conflicts and events. Our feelings and views, for instance, of the war in Vietnam in the 1960's and 70's have been heavily influenced by the work of such photographers as Philip Jones-Griffiths, Don McCullin and Larry Burrows (incidentally all three are British). The work of these photographers and many others has provided us with a human insight into history as well as an emotional backdrop to events. The input of the photographer in his or her photographs is often ignored by the historian who usually concentrates on the contents of a photograph and not on what the photographer is trying to communicate. Interpretation of photographs is not easy because the medium exists on a spectrum with simple recording at one end and photography as an art form at the other. Photographers move around on this spectrum, sometimes frame by frame, choosing the aesthetic level for each picture. To interpret a photograph without taking into consideration the aesthetic input from the photographer is to view only half a picture. This is rather like considering literature from its contents, disregarding the author and the historical and social conditions in which it was produced.

In approaching the Consett campaign as a photographer I was confronted with a number of restrictions which mostly came from the

nature of the campaign. With some important exceptions the campaign was not fought out on the streets, where I could function, but within the steel works and in meetings where I had no access. Another difficulty arose from the attitude of the campaigners towards the press. An ex steel worker told me of how journalists would meet with a wall of silence when visiting pubs in Consett. A suspicion about the motives of those in the media extended to me, making me feel very much an outsider. Despite these restrictions my involvement with the fate of Consett, its steelworks and its steelworkers continued for over three years and covered the campaign, the demolition of the works and the struggle for recovery.

Timeline of the campaign

3rd May 1979

The Tories win the General Election under Margaret Thatcher. Few of us at the time realised just how far Thatcher and her government would go in pursuing their Neo Liberal agenda by selling off public assets to cut government spending.

27th November

Following a board meeting of the British Steel Corporation (BSC) rumours begin to circulate about the possibility of the Consett works closing

7th December

The General Manager of the Consett works is moved “overnight” to a post at Teesside

3.00pm 11th December

At a meeting of employee representatives the Divisional Director of the BSC confirmed that the works will be closing but did not give a definite date referring to ‘the latter part of next year’ 1980.

2nd January 1980

The National Steel Strike begins. The strike for a 20% pay rise was unwelcome to many at Consett. Ray Thompson described it as suicidal in the Evening Chronicle. Not all of the works unions are involved in the strike and workers from some of the craft unions continue to cross picket lines.



Pickets inside the steelworks during the National steel strike of 1980

Early March

Nearly three months after the closure announcement the different Trades Unions at the works come together to form a joint co-ordinating committee to resist closure.

10th March

National March and rally against cuts. The steelworkers provide a huge contingent. Consett workers travel to London to take part.



Striking steelworkers from Consett take part in the TUC Day of Action against Cuts, March 10th 1980, London

14th March

Protest March at Consett, the first activity organised by the joint union co-ordinating committee. Up to three thousand people joined in the march which culminated in two public meetings addressed by national and regional union leaders and politicians.

The first public demonstration against the closure of the steelworks, Consett, 14th March 1980



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Protest march against the works closure by three thousand steelworkers and others from the labour movement who march through the streets of Consett

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The rally in Consett's cinemas following the demonstration, Consett 14th March 1980



The march ended with rallies in the two local cinemas. The speakers were fiery and impassioned but very little of this was converted into action.



The audience was polite and supportive of their leaders

1st April

National steel strike comes to an end. Consett workers return to work.

9th April

Divisional Director calls a meeting with Trades Union Reps (ISTC did not attend having adopted a policy of non cooperation). He announces that the management intends to publish their case for the closure in about one month. No date for closure is announced.

12th June

Management publishes its case for closure . The only thing that was new was the actual date of closure starting on 30th September. The main case was still a reduction in demand and a need to reorganise geographically. There is little union response except to request a four week adjournment to compile a detailed response.

20th June

Mass rally in Consett Park attended by about 3000 people.

9th July

London March. The protesters carried a petition of 20,000 signatures for 10 Downing Street, calling for the works to remain open. About 600 protesters travelled to London on a chartered train; each was given an MP to lobby. Nearly all of the Labour opposition front bench and all of the Northern Group of Labour MPs made them selves available to Consett lobbyists. The Government and other political parties ignored them.

Consett workers in London



600 protesters from the works took their campaign to London at a mass lobby of Parliament on July 9th

10th July

The T.U.C.S.I.C. meets and approves the Trades Unions alternative strategy. The strategy focuses on moving the works 'up-market' in terms of product, mostly created to replace current imports and capable of yielding £7.5 million profit in a full year. Also Consett would provide a back up for Redcar. BSC never publicly respond to the alternative strategy.

25th July

Second Consett March and rally at the rugby ground About 1500 people took part and many drifted away from the rugby ground as politicians and union leaders made speeches.



2nd protest march through Consett, July 25th, attended by only 1500 people

26th July – 10th August

Summer shutdown of the Consett works

7th August

A 'task-force' of younger workers from Consett travel to London to make a

north east history

more militant stand on the issue. They disrupted PM's Question time in the House of Commons and held up traffic on Westminster Bridge. One was arrested and the other seven detained overnight in the Palace of Westminster.

August

ISTC Number One Branch follow the Blastfurnacemen into accepting the closure and begin negotiating redundancy payments.

29th August

Summit meeting between BSC and TUCSIC. Despite Iain MacGregor making it clear that he had no intention of discussing Consett any further, TUCSIC reps put forward a proposal to increase the number of redundancies in return for keeping the works open. The response was to tell the meeting that steel making would end 'next weekend'; in fact the date was 12/13 Sept.

3rd September

A mass meeting is held at the works at which the 'mini steel committee' reported from the London meeting. Two resolutions were passed, overwhelmingly, the first "bitterly resenting the wrongful closure of the works, but facing reality, seeks to negotiate the best possible terms of closure". The second, "placed negotiations in the hands of the TUCSIC in liaison with the local mini steel committee".

8th September

BSC and Union reps meet to agree closure terms. Agreement reached late in the evening

12th September

Production at the works ceases as the last ingot was rolled to billets and all production of steel comes to a halt. As workers left the works for the last time a piper played a lament all around the works.

3rd December

The first cooling tower is demolished.

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Demolition of the Consett Steelworks early in 1983

Consett in 1983 was quite a strange place. Demolition of the works was coming to an end, but many people seemed to regard the growing, vast, open, derelict space on the edge of town as if it wasn't there, as if admitting its existence was too painful. Lucky for me much of the reticence about talking to reporters had disappeared when I returned to do two follow up articles for the *Workers Chronicle*. Many of those who had been involved in the campaign were now happy to be photographed and to talk about their experiences.

Criticisms of the campaign

I was relieved to discover this new openness because the Consett campaign had been severely criticised by Colin Randall, the General Secretary of the Newcastle Trades Council in the *Workers Chronicle* in August 1980, just before the works shut down. Colin's argument was that by arguing a 'unique' economic argument for Consett they not only failed to involve steel workers across the country but may have alienated them. In effect the 'Mini Steel Committee' was putting forward a business case as the basis for their campaign. Colin Randall felt that this strategy was wrong because it imposed restrictions on who could be involved in the campaign and the tactics that could be used. Other trades unionists whose jobs were at risk from the closure found that they had no place in the campaign; the same could be said for the wider community. The strategy also restricted the tactics and approach that could be used, limiting activities to traditional industrial and political channels. A wider campaign involving popular support from the community and the wider labour movement was never considered, and radical actions were ruled out from the very start. From the comfort of hindsight it can be said that the business case for Consett that was being put forward as an alternative to closure was a poor one; with a return of only £110,000 on an investment of £45 million this was not good business. It also failed to address long term trends and rising costs. Perhaps the biggest blind spot in adopting this strategy was in recognising the motives behind the closure, as Colin Randall put it, "no matter how good the Consett case,

the management and the single minded Tory butchers behind them, would not take a blind bit of notice.” In defence of the ‘Mini Steel Committee’ many of us in those months just after Thatcher’s election were not aware of how far they would go to follow their ‘neo-liberal’ agenda in off-loading public ownership of industry. Colin also criticised the tight control of the campaign and the poor communications that emanated from it. He argued that the wider labour movement found it difficult to get involved because of poor communications, citing the train to London and the second Consett demonstration as examples. I had considerable sympathy with this view because I had found it extremely difficult to find out what was happening with the campaign, and had, indeed, missed the train.

John Lee, Secretary of the ‘Save Consett Steel Campaign’ responded to Colin Randall’s letter with a bitter attack branding Colin as dogmatic with a ‘puny mind’. After responding to some of the criticisms Mr Lee declared “the Consett Crusaders are not ashamed of what we did, nor have any regrets in having done it. We made mistakes – that we would not deny – but the man who never made a mistake, made nothing”.

The national steel strike: Suicide pact?

In 1983 when I journeyed back to Consett I wanted to see how these arguments played out in hindsight. But first my interviewees wanted to talk about the impact that the national steel strike had on the closure campaign. Eddie Grogan, of the ‘Mini Steel Committee’ told me that the attempt to create a trades union co-ordinating committee had met with ‘teething troubles’ because of the divisions thrown up by the strike. Ray Thompson of the EETPU, who, in 1980 had described the steel strike as a ‘suicide pact’ for Consett told me in 2013 that “When the closure came we would have nowt to do with John Lee and the ISTC. For fifty years before this the ISTC had done everything they could to stamp out grass roots militancy ---- and then John Lee and them came out on strike and set up picket lines to save the works. It was a totally bloody paradox. I’ve got a picture of me taken by the Evening Chronicle, driving through the works gates and John

Lee pointing at me and shouting scab, scab”. Before the end of the strike these cracks had been papered over and Eddie Grogan declared that “Once the steel strike was finished all the unions got together to fight the closure. This was one of the best things that ever happened; it brought all the unions together. You got the craft unions and the operators together, who had never seen eye to eye”.

Strategy or Business Plan?

On the strategy itself, Eddie Rowell, another member of the Mini Steel Committee explained, “the fight at first was about putting the case for Consett. – it was a case of getting around the barriers that were dealing with Consett”. Dave Hodgson of the Unemployed Action Group put a different spin on this, “people were very confused about what their role could be if they didn’t belong to the company. I think that this was a deliberate policy of the people leading the campaign. In the beginning they thought that they couldn’t fail because they had sound economic arguments”. This approach he believed kept the local population and regional trades union organisations and the labour movement firmly on the sidelines. Ellen Mills an ISTC member and one of the few women connected to the campaign told me, “the union men, especially the ISTC were blinkered, they had one thing on their mind; to keep the works open, but the idiots didn’t have plan B ---- They set their sights on the works not closing. You could see what was going to happen and they didn’t prepare for it. They were blinkered – we will save the works, they won’t dare close it”.

The leadership of the campaign was another hot topic. Eddie Rowell put the case for the Mini Steel Committee, “it was decided that the campaign should be controlled from within the works by the Mini Steel Committee, who controlled the fight itself, we weren’t being controlled from outside”. Brian Thurlaway, an ex steelman put a different slant on leadership, “They led us from behind. They used the right words, but!” Dave Hodgson goes further in declaring the leadership elitist, “in the sense that it wasn’t in the hands of the mass of the people, even in the company --- and was very

much individualised by certain members (of the committee) who stood out as if speaking on behalf of the whole community, which they weren't". Ray Thompson is even more acerbic, "the campaign had no leadership and no national leadership. With disparate groups and no unity". The lack of national leadership was something that all contributors agreed to.

To be, or not to be radical – “the embarrassed shuffling of feet”

The question of whether the steelmen should have been more radical in their approach to the closure was another topic which participants were keen to explore. Brian Thurlaway commented, "Perhaps if we'd taken more radical action it might have worked. I don't know. Perhaps we should have acted like the steelworkers in France and rioted in the streets, but as the old saying goes – that's not the British way. You try to act in a responsible manner, but it doesn't seem to get you anywhere. It's very difficult to judge what will and won't work". Eddie Grogan, from the Mini Steel Committee, looking back said, "On hindsight we should have been more activist to keep the works open – several plans were formulated, some had such an element of risk that we on the Mini Steel Committee could not authorise the use of them ---but I didn't believe they (the works) would close, I still don't really believe that they are closed". Even those who could be expected to take a more radical line expressed doubt about the capacity to generate any radical action. Dave Hodgson of the Unemployed Action group explained, "Since the sixties, at least, in Consett, the community and the labour movement never worked in unison. It wasn't that the community weren't responding to the closure of the Company but rather it was a lack of response to the organisations campaigning against the closure. The labour movement in this area was far too closely identified with freemasonry, the church and community organisations linked with the company. The union officials were seen as corrupt within the company, they were seen as identifying with the management, the labour movement was very much part of that, therefore what could they say?" Ray Thompson expanded on this view, "There was a strong religious element (at the works); the Roman Catholic

church had a very strong influence on some of the trades union leadership. Whether that was good or bad that was for others to judge. Many of these people had a background that would accept authority, be quite submissive, willing to let people above them – in whatever capacity – do the thinking for them. They had great reluctance to challenge authority”. This perceived acceptance of authority by the leadership and a discouragement of all forms of grass root activism meant that the workers and the wider community were by no means prepared (in both senses) to adopt a radical approach. John Tiernay of the Unemployed Action group explained how this played out,” the embarrassed shuffling of feet on the marches had to be seen to be believed. People did not know how to walk around the streets and demonstrate some kind of solidarity against closure. The community has always been taught a mentality of passive acceptance – when there was a need for the workforce and the community to be active, when they needed activists they obviously weren’t there. Activism before that had been discouraged, totally discouraged”.

Disunity in the ranks

Disunity in the ranks has also been put forward as a cause of failure in the campaign, disunity between the craft unions and the production unions. Ray Thompson told me that, “the electricians didn’t like the mentality or philosophy or the prevailing attitudes of the major unions in the works – we separated ourselves because we didn’t like their attitudes”. There was also disunity between the campaign and the wider labour movement and even between generations, with older workers accusing young workers of wanting to ‘sell out’ and vice versa. Perhaps the biggest division was between those wanting to save the works and those wanting to negotiate severance payments. Ray Thompson explains, “There was always a small group who argued that it was always going to close so get the best deal we can, they were a minority. But as the campaign wavered, people began to say we are not going to save it and pessimism set in. The lads at the top were still saying lets have big rallies and a march through London, it was great

that, but it meant nothing.” As the time of closure began to draw nearer the pressures to begin severance negotiations became intense. Ray Thompson describes what happened when a rumour spread through the works that the company were planning to cut severance packages,” within days there was people going round attacking the leaders. There was people going round with placards saying ‘close Consett now my Daddy wants his money’. So it was hardly a surprise in August 1980 when the Number One branch of Consett ISTC voted to end their campaign and to accept the closure of the works and to begin negotiations on severance. The writing was very much on the wall.

Tory butchers

There is a very strong argument that there was, in fact, nothing that the Consett workers could have done to save their jobs. Colin Randall had recognised this in 1980 when he wrote, “no matter how good the Consett case, the management and the single minded Tory butchers behind them, would not take a blind bit of notice.” The fate of so many industries under Thatcher’s government in the 1980s underlines this thesis. In 1983 Brian Thurlaway summed it up this way, “The BSC don’t have a social conscience, and I don’t think that the government have a social conscience either. Once they had made up their minds about Consett I don’t think that anything could have been done to change their minds. Although we did try, we fought a hard campaign, a long campaign”. But for Ray Thompson that campaign “contained the seeds of its own destruction”.

Consett nowadays is a dormitory town with very few clues to its past. The site of the works is now filling up with the inevitable supermarkets and executive housing and displays very few remnants of its past. A past which has become the property of community organisations and projects and where past arguments have become the stuff of historians.

Peter Brabban

POLITICS IN THE PIGGERY ' CHARTISM IN OUSEBURN, 1838-1848

Mike Greatbatch

Some years ago I was given a photocopy of a manuscript now preserved in the National Archives at Kew, entitled 'To The Queens Most Excellent Majesty'. This hand-written document is dated 5th October 1841 and is signed by Isaac Bruce on behalf of 'the Working Classes living in the Vicinity of the Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne'. Isaac Bruce was a flax-dresser living in Lime Street, and a founder member of the Ouseburn Charter Association. Members of this Association later served on the executive of the national Miners' Association, and through their example of political agitation, education, and organisation, they would challenge the contemporary perception that those living in Ouseburn were simply 'factory hands' dissipated by drink and violence. ²

Part 1: The Ouseburn & Popular Politics

By the 1830s the lower Ouseburn was well established as an industrial suburb on the eastern outskirts of Newcastle upon Tyne. The early water powered mills upstream of the tidal estuary were being superseded by larger steam powered mills located either side of the navigable stretch of the burn, serviced by keels on the tide. At the mouth of the Ouseburn there was a concentration of glass works and iron foundries alongside the timber yards, shipyards, sail-cloth and rope works that characterised the north shore of the Tyne.

In the late 1820s, the young doctor Thomas Giordani Wright captured something of the atmosphere of this industrious locality when he recorded his experience of entering Ouseburn via the Shields turnpike road:

‘Here then we go a sort of jog trot to Ouseburn a sort of outskirts Village where your every faculty is put in instant requisition. After crossing the bridge your nose is assailed by a combination of all the odours that can render smell disagreeable, and till your taste shares the sensation. A steam mill and iron foundry vapour on the one hand and lime kilns on the other, with a tripe shop in the van and a general receptacle for manure at the rear, all lend their aid toward this delectable perfume. Nor do your ears enjoy a greater repose; the combined powers of a dozen or two of hammers upon the melodious tones of a steam engine boilers from three forges in close contiguity afford a delicious and harmonious treat’³

These forges included the huge iron and brass foundry of James Glynn on the west side of the burn and those of the Toward family on the east side; one at Glasshouse Bridge, another higher up the burn, on the east side of the ford, and a third, at St Peter’s, just east of the Ouseburn. The Glynn and the Toward families were major employers throughout this period, with the Towards expanding into iron shipbuilding by 1850⁴, and Messrs Glynn diversifying into steam powered flour mills and adjoining timber yards.⁵ Furthermore, as their products ranged from boilers, steam engines, punching machines, brewing vessels, iron plates, and furnaces, these two firms created a demand for skilled smith work alongside the more numerous foundry labourers.⁶

Higher up the Ouseburn were other important industrial concerns, the two largest being James & Co.’s lead paint and varnish works, and the flax-spinning mill of Clarke, Plummer, and Co. James & Co. operated successfully throughout this period, and was to be a feature of the Ouseburn economy for at least another sixty years. Both firms had been active since the early 1800s.

The Northumberland Spinning Mill, as it was originally called, was a major local landmark by the 1830s, occupying a conspicuous site just north of the ford that crossed the Ouseburn between Stepney and Byker Bar. The business owned the freehold on much of the adjoining land, occupied by tenements, shops and a public house. When built, the

Northumberland Spinning Mill contained 772 flax spindles, 144 tow spindles, and four carding engines, all worked by a steam engine.⁷ A plan of 1836 shows the layout of this mill with its adjoining heckling shops and engine house.⁸ Heckling or dressing the flax described a series of measures designed to separate the fibres from the dried plant and then straighten these prior to spinning the yarn.⁹ This yarn was then used to weave sail-cloth and tarpaulins, demand for which increased steadily throughout this period to service the growing numbers of Tyne built ships and railway wagons. Indeed, the demand grew so much that in the 1840s, Messrs Clarke and Plummer commissioned architect John Dobson to design a new brick and stone built mill, with cast iron columns and stone floors to minimize the risk of fire. This opened in January 1848 and today is popularly known as the Cluny warehouse.

Other industries of local note throughout this period include the soap works of Anthony Clapham (Ouseburn Bridge), and the earthenware factories of Dalton, Burn & Co. (Stepney Bank), John Dryden (Phoenix Pottery, east side of the ford), Thomas & Joseph Thompson (Ouseburn Pottery, opposite the spinning mill), and the Ouseburn Bridge Pottery of Robert Maling. As the market for patterned tableware increased in the 1840s, so these potteries relied on ancillary trades such as the prussiate of potash works of Messrs Parke (Stepney Square) and Pearson Mitchinson (Lime Street); as this manufacture involved the decomposition of huge quantities of animal blood, the atmosphere in parts of the Ouseburn became 'loaded with a perculiar effluvia, most pernicious in its effects upon the health of the poorer classes, by whom the locality was occupied'.¹⁰

The location of most of these industrial establishments can be identified on Thomas Oliver's detailed surveys of 1830 and 1844, as can the concentrations of workers' dwellings in Stepney Bank, Lime Street, Ouse Street, Cut Bank-Byker Bank, and Ballast Hills. At Ouseburn Bridge, where the Shields turnpike road crossed the burn, there was a concentration of shops and tradesmen's workshops. By 1840, the Ouseburn was an established industrial community, separate but closely attached to Newcastle proper.

To the north and east of the Ouseburn were the coal mining areas of Heaton, Byker and St Lawrence, whilst to the west was the rapidly growing residential districts of Stepney and Shieldfield.

Chartism

Chartism in Britain developed out of working class disappointment and distrust of a parliamentary system that, after the 1832 Reform Act, continued to exclude all those without property and sustain rather than weaken the stranglehold on political power of the established political elites.

The Whigs had been the architects of the 1832 reform, and as part of this new political settlement, they implemented a series of measures that drew inspiration from an increasingly assertive laissez-faire ideology, measures that impacted harshly on those excluded from the political settlement, the workers. Most controversial of these was the re-framing of the Poor Law in 1834 to create a much harsher regime of poor relief through the odious institution of the workhouse.

Most Whigs were henceforth only prepared to accept a limited extension of the franchise and redistribution of parliamentary seats, both measures designed to accommodate the growing of numbers of property owning urban middle class.

Whilst some middle class radicals continued to agitate for more extensive reform, a far more significant initiative was the creation of the London Working Men's Association in January 1837 and its subsequent address to Parliament containing the six demands popularly known as 'The People's Charter'. This launched the national workers movement known as Chartism, and their six demands were: universal suffrage, the abolition of property qualifications, annual parliaments, equal representation between constituencies, the payment of MPs, and voting through a secret ballot.¹¹

Newcastle Radicals and Working Men

In Newcastle the agitation for franchise reform had coalesced around the Northern Political Union (1831). Whilst its largely middle class membership welcomed the subsequent reform of local government (1835 Municipal Reform Act), some radicals remained dissatisfied with the settlement of 1832. In particular, they resented the flagrant use of bribery by established landed elites to ensure the re-election of their parliamentary candidates.

In the elections of 1835 (January), 1837 (August), 1841 (June), and 1847 (August), the long serving Whig MP William Ord was re-elected with most votes. Newcastle had two parliamentary seats, and Ord shared this representation with Sir Matthew White Ridley, elected no less than nine times up to 1835 and succeeded by another Tory, John Hodgson Hinde, from 1836.

Newcastle radicals and the Newcastle Working Men's Association (1837) both condemned the conduct of these elections. In 1837, one observer recorded, with delightful sarcasm, that:

‘There has been the most open and shameless bribery practiced here this last election; and the worthy friends Hodgson Hinde are very much dissatisfied at having got only 5s per day, while Ord's independent electors have received 8s without drink – the former having as much of that as they pleased, but very ungenerously (as I think) do not take it into their account’.¹²

Despite the 1832 reforms, there appeared to be little difference between Whig and Tory. In summer 1837, the Newcastle Working Men's Association, at a meeting held at 7, Clayton Street, resolved that:

‘the result of the recent contested election of Newcastle-upon-Tyne adds another proof, if any more were wanting, of the utter want of sympathy in the idle classes with the working population of this country, is a strong argument for the necessity of universal suffrage, and is also convincing evidence that the Whig faction as cordially hate a real friend to the laboring classes as the Tories, and shrink from nothing, however

Table 1. Council Members of the Northern Political Union

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Thomas Doubleday	Soap manufacturer	John Rewcastle	Druggist
Thomas Horn	Music dealer, & president of the Northern Political Union	Thomas Devyr	Journalist, & corresponding secretary of the Northern Political Union
Robert Blakey	Furrier and academic	Edward Charlton	Bricklayer
John Blakey	Boot and shoemaker	John Cockburn	'a blind man, earnest and eloquent' (T Devyr)
William Thomason	Recording secretary of the Northern Political Union	Richard Ayre	Publican
Andrew Holmes		Thomas Hepburn	Collier, and president of the Newcastle Working Men's Association
Robert Lowery	Tailor	Thomas Allison	
Thomas Alder		John White	
John Gallon	Shoemaker	Stephen Brown	Chemist and druggist
Thomas Gray	Tobacconist	Ralph Currie	Joiner
George Smith		William Parker	Labourer
William Smith		Thomas Cook	
Robert Carruthers		James King	Mason
Andrew Learmouth			
Other members of note included:			
Dr Hume	Surgeon	Thomas Thompson	Earthenware manufacturer
Richard Blackhall	Workman	Joseph Thompson	Earthenware manufacturer
James Ayre	Mason		
John Mason	Shoemaker		

Source: Thomas Ainge Devyr, The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, (New York, 1870), and the Northern Liberator (1830s), especially 'Re-organization of the Northern Political Union', 22nd September 1838.

base or mean, to effect their purposes'.¹³

The radical candidate in the 1837 election had been A. H. Beaumont, and in October 1837 he launched the radical newspaper, the *Northern Liberator*, as a platform for democratic opinion.¹⁴

A Radical Association had been launched in Newcastle in November 1836, and included, amongst others, the alkali and soap manufacturers Charles Attwood and Thomas Doubleday, the shoemaker John Blakey, and the publican Richard Ayre.¹⁵ Papers for enrolling members were distributed to premises throughout Newcastle, including those of Stephen Brown, a chemist with a shop in the Ouseburn. All later became Council members of a re-organised Northern Political Union (1838) but before then many of these radicals had joined with working men in calling for the repeal of that 'abominable measure', the New Poor Law.¹⁶

This alliance of the excluded was further strengthened in April 1838 through the radicals' advocacy of a joint stock company for the purpose 'of erecting a large and commodious public building, to be called the "Working Men's Hall"'. Shares were to be £1 each, paid in 6d weekly installments, with shareholders having just one vote irrespective of their shareholding. The Secretary was John Blakey, whilst the Treasurer was Thomas Doubleday. The provisional committee included Robert Blakey and Richard Ayre.¹⁷

Robert Blakey was a prosperous furrier and former mayor of Morpeth (1836-37), a writer who later became Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Queen's University in Belfast (1849). In late 1837, he and Doubleday joined forces to purchase the *Northern Liberator* from Beaumont; henceforth the paper became synonymous with the twin grievances of franchise reform and the repeal of the New Poor Law.¹⁸

In March 1839, Doubleday, Blakey, and Ayre contested the elections for Guardians of the Poor in Newcastle's St Nicholas Ward but to no avail, as the existing Guardians were easily re-elected.¹⁹

By now reform of a corrupt political process was seen by many as inseparable from a reform of the franchise, and at its re-launch at the New

Lecture Room on Nelson Street, 10th September 1838, the Northern Political Union resolved:

‘That this Meeting, approving of the Principles contained in the National Petition and People’s Charter, pledge themselves to use all possible means to give speedy and full effect to those just and righteous Principles’.²⁰

One month later, on the evening of Tuesday 30th October, they took their message of ‘Universal Suffrage’ to an open-air meeting at the Ouseburn.

Ouseburn Working Men’s Association

The public meeting in the Ouseburn was chaired by Edward Charlton of the Northern Political Union, and it is obvious from the speeches made that this event was primarily an exercise in enrolling working class members to that organisation. The speakers, on ‘a commodious platform, surmounted by a tri-colour flag’, played to the anxieties of their audience, condemning the New Poor Law, the ‘famishing Corn Laws’, and the fear of unemployment, whilst repeating standard radical attacks on ‘a vile and profligate Whig and Tory Aristocracy’.²¹

All of the speakers were Council members of the Union - John White, John Cockburn, William Thomason, Thomas Devyr, and William Parker. The first speaker, William Parker, was a local man living in Lime Street, and by January 1839 he is the Secretary of the Ouseburn Working Men’s Association.²²

It isn’t clear how many people attended the open-air meeting in October or the early meetings of the Working Men’s Association. These meetings were held at their Association Room in Lime Street, and characterized by ‘angry bickerings, in which no business is ever done’. Finding it impossible to get an elective council chosen, Parker appealed to the Union for help. Indeed, not until June 1839 did they formalise the Ouseburn branch of the Union, with a secretary and treasurer elected and ‘a great number of members enrolled’ at a meeting held in Roger

Middleton's public house.²³ This coincided with a particularly active period for the Chartists in Newcastle but other than Parker's reports, there is little evidence that much support came from Ouseburn. Individuals collected funds on behalf of imprisoned martyrs, participated in public demonstrations, and contributed towards a modest subscription to support the Union.²⁴

One reason for this restraint may be that the language of some Newcastle Chartists had become increasingly insurrectionist. Nationally, attempts to agree a common strategy had resulted in the establishment of a National Convention, initially in London and then in Birmingham. The national petition now had over a million signatures but when it was presented to Parliament on 4th July 1839, it was summarily dismissed. This reversal strengthened the voice of those who advocated physical force, provoking a response in Newcastle from the Corporation and the magistrates that significantly increased police surveillance and the conspicuous deployment of the military.²⁵

This culminated in the suppression of a Chartist meeting at the Forth on Tuesday 30th July. Demonstrations of workers from various parts of Newcastle paraded toward the Forth and were met by the police and special constables deployed in force, directed by the Mayor on horseback. When the Mayor read the riot act, four men from St Peter's were amongst those arrested - Thomas Spence, Thomas Brown (keelmen), William Stephenson (waterman), and John Tweddel (chainmaker), having resisted attempts to seize their banners. Various witnesses gave evidence at their trial, identifying the men as banner-bearers, including Benjamin Plummer (a brass founder) who stated that 'about seven o'clock in the evening, I saw from Byker Buildings a body going up the Ouseburn Bank, headed by a banner; I went to see what the magistrates would do, and render aid if required', which he duly did, assisting Captain West of the police in arresting men from the procession as it neared the Forth. The crowd was then dispersed by the military.²⁶

Whilst this event more than likely attracted men from the Ouseburn, the atmosphere there appears to have been far less confrontational. True, there is evidence of increased police surveillance and harassment, but there are no reports of mass meetings or major disturbances.²⁷

Almost from the start, there had been tensions between the Ouseburn Working Men's Association and the Northern Political Union. Whilst Doubleday and the Northern Liberator were held in high esteem, some members of the Union Council were viewed less favourably, with the stationer William Byrne singled out for particular criticism.²⁸ In 1840, many of these Council members were arrested on charges of sedition, the evidence at their trial including short-hand notes of their speeches and meetings, as recorded by local newspaper journalists.²⁹

Following the rejection of the national petition, and subsequent violent suppression, especially in South Wales, the Chartists regrouped as the National Charter Association (NCA), inaugurated in Manchester in July 1840. The NCA was far more working class in membership and leadership, and emphasised the value of local branches and an elected executive; it was less overtly political and more rooted in the economic condition of workers.

The following month, on Wednesday 12th August, at a meeting held in a schoolroom at Byker Buildings, the model of the NCA was debated and 'adopted unanimously' by the local branch of the Northern Political Union. Thus, the Ouseburn Charter Association was born.³⁰

Part 2: The Ouseburn Charter Association

The move from Lime Street to Byker Buildings not only signaled a break with the middle-class leadership of the Northern Political Union, it also reflected the growing importance of pitmen to the Ouseburn Chartist movement.

Of the seventeen members that can be identified with some confidence, six were pitmen. Also significant is that out of these seventeen, nine lived in the vicinity of Byker Bar, the toll-gate that closed the turnpike road just

up the bank from Byker Buildings.³¹

In addition to the pitmen, there were three labourers, a mason, a waterman, a shoemaker, and three flax-dressers. The latter included Isaac Bruce and John Hall, Treasurer and Secretary of the Association from its inception in 1840. When Bruce resigned as Treasurer 'on account of not being able to attend regularly', at a meeting held in August 1842, he was succeeded by Martin Jude, then a pitman living near Byker Bar, who was elected in his place.³² Bruce, Hall and Jude were to be the driving force of political agitation and debate in Ouseburn until 1844; thereafter they provided leadership and organizational experience for the fledgling national Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland.

Isaac Bruce and John Hall had both been active in the Ouseburn Working Men's Association. Their wives, Hannah Bruce and Jane Hall, had raised money for the defence of the Rev. Joseph Raynor Stephens, an out-spoken opponent of the New Poor Law and champion of worker's rights.³³

William Parker also continued to play an active role. When the Whig inspired Newcastle & Gateshead Anti-Corn Law and Free Trade Association held a public meeting at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in the Ouseburn on 24th September 1841, Parker objected to the accuracy of the lecturer's facts and motives, and requested further debate. The speaker, Daniel Liddle, showed little enthusiasm but the trustees of the chapel concurred with Parker's request, and after a lengthy discussion 'ably sustained by Messrs Bruce, Catrine, Hall, and Parker on the part of the working population', the speaker and his associates were silenced.

The Chartists later reported that 'every man and woman in the well-filled chapel were satisfied of the fallacy of the Corn Law humbugs' and confidently claimed that no more such lectures would be attempted. This event illustrates the ability of the Chartist leadership in Ouseburn to provide an alternative point of view on those issues of greatest concern to working people at that time.³⁴

Table 2. Members of the Ouseburn Charter Association 1842 – 1844

Name	Occupation	Age (1841)	Dependents (age)	Residence
John Hall (Secretary)	Flax-dresser	25	Jane (25)	Stepney Bank
Isaac Bruce (Treasurer)	Flax-dresser	25	Hannah (25) Jane (25) John (4) Hannah (1)	Lime Street
John Hebden	Collier	25	Mary Ann (25) Mary Frost O'Connor Emmet (b. 1842)	Northumberland Terrace
John Scott	Mason	20	Living with parents (1841), later married to Frances, aged 17 in 1841 Eleanor Frost O'Connor (baptised. 1843) NB. 1851 Census, John & Frances Scott, St Lawrence Row; Eleanor, aged 9	South side, Stepney Bank
William Parker	Labourer	50	Mary (15) Isabella (15) Sarah (14)	Lime Street
William Scott	Labourer	40	Frances (40) John (10)	Lawson Street (Bank Top)
James Bell	Pitman	30	Mary (25) Margaret (3 months)	Lawson Street (Bank Top)
John Bowman	Pitman	45	Eleanor (50)	Ouseburn (near Crawford's Buildings)
Henry Harrison	Flax-dresser	45	Ann (45) Edward (15) Thomas (7) Isabella (5) Amos (3)	Lime Street
Henry Fenwick	Pitman	30	Isabella (29) John (10) Collier Mary (6) Thomas (3) William 2 weeks)	Byker Bar
Martin Jude (Treasurer, 1842+)	Publican (pitman)	35	Ann (40) Nathan (10) Anthony (8)	Byker Bar

north east history

William Kimpster Robson	Collier	40	Ann (30) William (12) + Matthew (40) Collier	Byker Hill
Joseph Kidd	Waterman	40	Margaret (45) Joseph (15) Collier Margaret (10) Mary (7)	Byker Hill
Thomas Walker	Shoemaker			
P. M. Brophy	Chartist Lecturer		Ann (35), living in Ireland	Bank Top
Thomas Rand	Collier	40	Jane (45)	Catterick Buildings, Byker Hill
John Compton	Labourer	35	Agnes (30) William (5) James (2) NB. 1851 Census, John & Agnes Compton, Wreckington; John, aged 9 (John Frost Compton, baptized 10th April, 1843)	Catterick Buildings, Byker Hill

Source: Northern Liberator and Northern Star (1840s); 1841 Census, HO 107/820/1, HO 107/846/1; 1851 Census, HO 107. 2408, HO 107. 2402. Also, records of Chartist baptisms: Mary Frost O'Connor Emmet Hebden, and John Frost Compton, Northern Star 30th April 1842, and Eleanor Frost O'Connor Scott, Northern Star 18th November 1843.

Another example is the issue of Warburton's Anatomy Bill, widely regarded as failing to curb the practice of selling pauper corpses for dissection by hospital surgeons. At their regular Chartist meeting on 17th October 1841, Parker recounted the recent case of Charlotte Smith, a young woman reduced to prostitution and pauperism, who died whilst in the care of the Poor Law Guardians. When her body was taken for burial at All Saints Church (on the 13th October) an attempt was made to transfer it to the Surgeon's Hall, and only the intervention of the crowd prevented this. An inquest was immediately held and it was agreed that she be given a Christian burial at All Saints. By this action, working

people had challenged the power of the guardians and the surgeons: 'That if they starved people to death they should not cut them up afterwards'.³⁵

Chartist Reading Room, Byker Buildings

The Ouseburn Charter Association held their meetings at the Reading Room of 'Mr Wilson's School' at Byker Buildings, near the top of Byker Bank.

Byker Buildings dated from the late 18th century and like Brough Buildings (built 1790), slightly higher up the bank, they were built as a row of houses with large gardens designed to maximize the views and airy environment of this elevated site.³⁶ Early residents were tradesmen, often with adjoining workshops. In the 1830s, the properties are described as having 'lodging rooms above' ground floor kitchens and parlours, and by the night of the 1841 census Byker Buildings consists of forty-four dwellings that are home to 136 people whose occupations range from warehousemen, joiners and shopkeepers, to flax-dressers, iron moulders, and numerous pottery workers. There are no pitmen at Byker Buildings; these live higher up the bank, at Lawson Street, Brough Buildings, and Byker Bar, where they are numerous.³⁷

The landlord for Byker Buildings was Sir William Lawson of Brough House, near Catterick in Yorkshire, and Lawson's agent in Newcastle appears to have been the Newcastle attorney William Wilson; Wilson rather than Lawson would likely be seen as the local proprietor of the school, especially if he collected the rents, though the classroom itself may well have been the one established at Thornton Place, Byker Buildings, by the Misses Fletcher in 1838.³⁸ In 1841 the Primitive Methodists built a chapel and school just downhill from Byker Buildings, at the junction of Thompson Street and Byker Bank, but does not appear to have been the 'Mr Rutter's School Room' that the Chartists are using from 1841 onwards.³⁹

From 2nd February 1841, this School Room was the venue for a 'Discussing Society' that met every Wednesday evening. This followed

a successful address by Mr Mason, the county Chartist lecturer, 'to an over-flowing audience'.⁴⁰ Another guest speaker was Peter Murray McDouall, who lectured on Chartist activities in Scotland on Monday 15th February.⁴¹ In early March they hosted a debate 'On the relative merits of a republican and monarchical form of Government'.⁴² On 21st September, local man William Parker lectured on the causes of the French and American Revolutions, and on 20th December a Mr Croft lectured 'On the evils of a State Church'.⁴³

Another lecturer was P. M. Brophy, one-time Secretary of the Charter Association in Dublin and former Secretary to the Dublin Universal Suffrage Association, 'forced from his home, and his family, for his advocacy of the people's rights'.⁴⁴ Brophy was an outspoken advocate of suffrage reform. He called himself a Chartist Lecturer, had a close association with the Arnold Charter Association in Nottingham, and after living there and in Sheffield during much of 1842, chose to return to Newcastle in November and was one of those nominated to the Chartist General Council as a representative of the Ouseburn Charter Association in December.⁴⁵

In addition to the Discussing Society, the Ouseburn Chartists also established a Reading Room at Byker Buildings where it was reported that 'a number of books have been bought for a library, to instruct the members'.⁴⁶

In 1842, they initiated a Northumberland and Durham Lecturers' Fund, with John Hall as its Treasurer. This venture ultimately proved a disappointment, as only Ouseburn, South Shields, and the 'Whole hog Chartist brigade' of Sunderland subscribed.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it reflected the Ouseburn Chartists increasing emphasis on regional collaboration and unity of action by working men, separate from those 'would-be-thought middle class men, shopocrats' who had taken control of the Northern Political Union.⁴⁸

'To the Queen Most Excellent Majesty'

Relations between the Ouseburn Chartists and the Northern Political Union deteriorated significantly during 1841 because a nationwide economic slump threw thousands of Tyneside working men out of work, and the alarmingly high levels of distress resulted in a polarizing of debate regarding how to resolve this.

In July 1841 the Mayor of Newcastle, John Ridley, called a public meeting to consider this distress and initiated a public subscription to raise funds for relief of the most urgent cases. Amongst the first subscribers were prominent advocates of free trade, including William Lockie Harle, the fund's Secretary.⁴⁹ For the Whigs, the present crisis created an opportunity to link working class poverty to the issue of tariff reform and specifically to the repeal of the Corn Laws. For starving workers the prospect of cheap bread had its obvious attractions but for the Chartists this renewed emphasis on a single issue threatened to dilute the appeal of universal franchise as a means of abolishing all laws pernicious to working people.

In October the Whigs requested a public meeting, and this was held at the Guildhall on 5th October, during which Charles Attwood read-out an address to her Majesty, requesting that the monarch intervene to delay the recess of Parliament until such body had debated and produced a solution to the present crisis. This address was read out in full, and accompanied by calls for tariff reform.

The significance of this event is that the address to 'The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty', had actually been written by the Ouseburn Chartists, and an original copy dated 5th October 1841 is signed by Isaac Bruce.

The petition lists a number of grievances and calls on the Queen to delay the Prorogue of Parliament until they have repealed 'the obnoxious Taxes on the Importation of Provisions, and have passed an Act confirming the undoubted right of every one of Your Majesty's Adult Male Population of 21 Years of Age and Upwards untainted with Crime to act and vote in the Election of Members to conduct the Affairs of the

Nation in the Commons House of Parliament'.⁵⁰

Bruce and his fellow Chartists condemned Attwood's appropriation of their manifesto and the Whig's attempt to substitute 'extension of the Suffrage' in place of universal suffrage, especially as both Whigs and Tories in Parliament had voted against an official enquiry into the cause of the current distress.⁵¹

Ouseburn Economy, 1840s

At one of its earliest meetings, the Ouseburn Charter Association made an appeal to the 'men of Ouseburn' to 'muster in your thousands and tens of thousands' and join the Charter Association in a 'procession from the Ballast Hills' on the day that McDouall and two other national Chartist leaders were to visit Newcastle.⁵² This appeal was published in the *Northern Liberator*, and soon after a letter from Edward Alport of the Birtley Radicals was published, accusing John Hall of exaggerating the level of popular support, 'as the great procession of eighteen in number from Ballast Hills, on Monday last, fully bears out'.⁵³

John Hall's response does not appear to have been published, but there are a number of reasons why the numbers participating was so much lower than John Hall's call for 'thousands and tens of thousands'.

Firstly, the Ouseburn was an area with a high police presence, with two police stations in the area, one near the top of Cut Bank on the west side, and one at Byker Buildings on the east side.⁵⁴

Far more significant was the prevailing economic conditions. The 1830s were a period of steady growth in the Ouseburn, and when the Northern Political Union had proposed a major demonstration in Spring 1839, the Ouseburn delegate advised that 'unless the meeting was got up at an early hour, there would be a thin attendance from his district'.⁵⁵

In the early 1840s, the onset of trade depression that blighted other parts of Newcastle was less severe in the Ouseburn because the building of the viaduct by the Newcastle to North Shields Railway was not completed until May 1839, and soon after the Spital Tongues Colliery

began construction of their huge staithe at the Tyne Street end of the Victoria Tunnel; this undertaking was not completed until late 1841, with the Tunnel and staithe ready for business in January 1842.⁵⁶

The completion of the Newcastle to North Shields Railway released a large amount of land either side of the railway viaduct, which was advertised as a good investment for building sites as 'tenanted houses are much in demand in this part of the town....stones and bricks are upon the premises, and coal and lime within a short lead'.⁵⁷ Stepney, Shieldfield, and Byker Bar all experienced significant housing development throughout the 1840s. This was the period in which Ripponden Street and Thompson Street were built, just down the bank from Byker Buildings, and Stepney Terrace, Shield Street, and the Buxton Street area on the west side of the Ouseburn. By the mid-1840s, local newspapers could easily claim that 'the Manufactories and Population of the Neighbourhood are greatly increasing'.⁵⁸

Some established Ouseburn businesses undoubtedly suffered during the trade slump. The earthenware business operating from the Phoenix Pottery was eventually sold after its owners, Isaac Bell and John Davidson, were declared bankrupts in 1843. The owner of the premises, John Dryden, struggled initially to restore the firm's fortunes, advertising the premises again in 1845. Another longstanding firm, the iron foundry of Crowther and Smith, was also forced to close in 1843, and following the dissolution of the partnership in October 1844, the premises passed to Messrs Rayne & Burn (of Busy Cottage fame), who also advertised the site for sale or let in Summer 1845.⁵⁹

However, the bigger firms like Maling, Glynn, and Toward survived, and new firms started-up, such as a steam powered corn mill south of Ouseburn Bridge (1842) and a cocoa-nut fibre manufactory (1845), whilst neighbouring St Peters continued to prosper, including Messrs T & W Smith's ship-building yard with a ship on the stocks in July 1842.⁶⁰

The flax-spinning mill of Messrs Clarke, Plummer & Co. was possibly the single biggest employer in the Ouseburn at this time, and in the 1840s

they embarked on a major programme of capital investment, the result of which in 1848 was a new mill that almost certainly more than doubled the firm's floor space and involved a significant increase in the number of employees. However, this expansion was not as benevolent as it may first appear, as the report of the dinner and dance provided for the workforce on the anniversary of the opening of the new mill records that 'there are about 500 persons employed, chiefly young females'.⁶¹

Child labour was a feature of the Ouseburn at this time, and in December 1837 Thomas Clarke and Robert Plummer had been called to account by the Superintendent under the Factories' Regulation Act for employing a nine year old child and failing to secure the necessary certificates to confirm the child's schooling.⁶² Nevertheless, by 1850 it appears that most of their workforce consisted of girls rather than men; the census of 1851 records no less than twenty 'flax mill' or 'spinner' workers in Lime Street alone, of which eight are fifteen years old or younger, and only three are over the age of twenty-five. Of these twenty flax mill operatives, all bar four are women or girls.⁶³ Ten years earlier there were just thirteen flax mill workers in Lime Street but significantly they were all men, between eighteen and fifty-five years of age; furthermore, they called themselves 'flax dresser J' or 'flax dresser App', indicating a shared sense of skilled status, which in the 1840s was to be eroded through the substitution of girls. It goes without saying, that in 1841 these Lime Street flax-dressers included Isaac Bruce and John Hall.⁶⁴

Another significant development, especially relevant to the composition of the Ouseburn Charter Association, was the failure of Shieldfield and St Lawrence collieries in 1842 and 1843 respectively.

The Shieldfield Colliery workings ran under the Ouseburn, and its three pit-heads were within a short distance of James & Co.'s lead works, in the northern part of the Ouseburn. The colliery had re-opened in 1838 but closed in 1842. The St Lawrence Colliery had been re-opened in 1832/33 but it too was forced to close, with adverts listing all the colliery equipment to be sold by auction on 4-6th September 1843. This

colliery had also experienced a fatal explosion, not long after re-opening, in November 1834. ⁶⁵

For workers in the Ouseburn, the 1840s were a period in which many managed to hang on to their jobs, despite the prevailing economic downturn both regionally and nationally. However, for some workers, and specifically the flax-dressers and the pitmen, the 1840s witnessed an erosion of their status and jobs, an experience that led at least some of them to radical politics and labour affiliation through the Ouseburn Charter Association.

Labour Affiliation and the Mineworkers' Association

As early as March 1841, the Ouseburn Chartists had agreed to co-operate with fellow Chartists in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland when sending delegates to the Chartist National Convention, and from April they were working closely with the Newcastle Charter Association. ⁶⁶

Of greater significance was the assistance they provided in setting-up a new Charter Association at Byker Hill. In November 1841, John Hebden, an Ouseburn Chartist and collier living in Lawson Street, chaired a public meeting at the Primitive Methodist Chapel at Byker Hill at which those present agreed to become members of the National Charter Association. Also at this meeting were John Hall and Isaac Bruce, who served henceforth as Secretary and Treasurer of this fledgling Association, in addition to their duties at Ouseburn. ⁶⁷

Of the fourteen members of the Byker Hill Charter Association nominated to the Chartist General Council, six were pitmen, as was William Robson who proposed the adoption of the Charter at the inaugural meeting. Byker Hill lies east of the Ouseburn, close to Byker Colliery. ⁶⁸

At the same time, the Ouseburn Chartists proposed that delegates from Northumberland and Durham should meet to co-ordinate activities including fund raising. When the meeting took place in Bishop Wearmouth on New Year's Day 1842, there were delegates from

Table 3. Members of the Byker Hill Charter Association 1841 - 1842

Name	Occupation	Age (1841)	Dependents (age)	Residence
William K Robson	Collier	40	Ann (30) William (12) + Matthew (40) Collier	Byker Hill
William Scott	Labourer	40	Frances (40) John (10)	Lawson Street (Bank Top)
Thomas Croft	Tailor			Byker Hill
Martin Jude	Pitman	35	Ann (40) Nathan (10) Anthony (8)	Nr Byker Bar
George Dixon	Fitter-up			Nr Byker Bar
Thomas Greener	Pitman			Byker Hill
John Hebden	Pitman	25	Mary Ann (25) Mary Frost O'Connor Emmet (b. 1842)	Lawson Street Bank-top
Joseph Kidd	Waterman	40	Margaret (45) Joseph (15) Collier Margaret (10) Mary (7)	Byker-hill
William H Robson	Grocer/ collier	40	Ann (30) William (12)	Byker-hill
John Scott	Smith			Bank-top
George Bell	Waterman	39	Elizabeth (34) Elizabeth (12 days)	Dents-hole
John A Middleton	Grocer	45	John (15) George (4) Margaret (1)	Byker-hill
James Harrison	Pitman	45	Jane (45) Thomas (13) collier James (11) collier John (6) Septimus (4) Jane (20) Margaret (2)	Byker-hill
John Ramsey	Pitman			Byker-hill
Thomas Rand	Pitman	40	Jane (45)	Byker-hill
Isaac Bruce (sub-treasurer)	Flax-dresser	25	Hannah (25) Jane (6) John (4) Hannah (1)	Lime Street
John Hall (sub-secretary)	Flax-dresser	25	Jane (25)	Lime Street NB. Stepney Bank, census

Source: Nominations to the Chartist General Council; Northern Star 1st January 1842, and 1841 Census HO 107/820/1, 2 & 3; HO 107/846/1.

Ouseburn, Byker, Legg Hill, Cramlington, Foreman's Row, Sheriff Hills, Bedlington, North Shields, South Shields, and Sunderland. ⁶⁹

In October 1842, the Ouseburn Chartists not only urged a union of the two county associations, they further recommended that Cumberland should be invited to co-operate: 'the three counties united would be enabled to engage two lecturers, and keep up a continual agitation'. A delegate meeting to be held at Newcastle on 6th November was to decide on this proposal but the outcome of this meeting is not known. ⁷⁰

This move towards closer union of action reflected a similar trend amongst the pitmen of Northumberland and Durham. Anger at the failure of the mine-owners to improve safety, and the threat to wages and hours created by the prevailing economic depression, resulted in growing calls for a national Mineworkers' Association. ⁷¹ This was formally established at Wakefield on 7th November 1842, with Martin Jude as its treasurer and, from May 1843, John Hall as its general secretary. ⁷²

P. M. Brophy was another Chartist with Ouseburn connections who actively participated in the formation of the Miners' Association, and at a meeting during the pitmen's strike of 1844, Isaac Bruce of Ouseburn is recorded as one of the delegates from the manufactories and workshops that were fundraising in their support. ⁷³ This meeting took place on 10th August at the Long Room in the Three Tuns public house in Manor Chare. This public house was one of those managed by Martin Jude, and from 1843 it became the centre for co-ordinating the Miners' Association in the northeast. In September 1843, the Association held their National Conference at the Three Tuns. ⁷⁴

Conclusion

In 1840 the move from Lime Street to Byker Buildings had signaled a shift in emphasis away from the middle class leadership of the Northern Political Union. In 1843, the coalescence of Ouseburn Chartists around the Miners' Association signalled another shift, this time towards a new fusion of Chartism and trade unionism.

When John Hall and Martin Jude, as members of the Association's Executive, put their names to an address to the colliers of Scotland in June 1843, they preached the virtues of unity of action, in contrast to past schism and disunity: 'shall we for ever be disunited, only to be made slaves?' When this address was published in the *Northern Star*, John Hall included a statement that the Miners' Association was 'a completely lawful one, and is in perfect accordance with the Act of Parliament, the 5th and 6th of Geo. IV.'⁷⁵

This adoption of lawful protest was reaffirmed in June 1844 when Martin Jude rejected claims by William Thomason, formerly of the Northern Political Union, who accused the Miners' Association of being an agent of Chartism; Jude 'denied that the association had any political object, and referred for proof to the published rules'.⁷⁶

This shift away from overtly political goals had its pragmatic origins in the drive to unify mineworkers throughout the region but it also reflected a relatively low level of Chartist enthusiasm in the Newcastle area. When trade depression resulted in alarming levels of distress, former Chartists like William Parker became the spokesmen for Newcastle's unemployed working-men. He was to speak as passionately on their behalf as he had previously spoken in support of the Charter.⁷⁷

In November 1840, Edward Alport had criticised John Hall for exaggerating the level of popular support for Chartism in Ouseburn. However, exactly twelve months later, John Hall and Isaac Bruce were instrumental in setting-up the Byker Hill Charter Association, an initiative that doubled the number of Chartist activists in the Ouseburn area. This event also brought the pitman and publican Martin Jude into the Ouseburn Chartist orbit.

Sometime in 1846, John Hall left Tyneside for northwest England, where he served as general secretary of the Lancashire Miners union.⁷⁸ When Hall left this position in August 1847, the Executive Committee of the Miners' Association passed the following resolution:

‘That the best thanks of this committee be given to Mr John Hall, the late general secretary, for his attention to his duties, and the strict accuracy of his accounts, also for his general good conduct while in office’.⁷⁹

Not bad, for a factory hand from Ouseburn.

Notes

- 1 ‘Politics in the Piggery down in the Neighbourhood of the Ouseburn – Chartist pigs are visited with fine and imprisonment for being “disorderly” in the streets; but special constable pigs, we are happy to add, travel about on their privilege’. *Northern Liberator*, 28th September 1839.
- 2 HO 44/52, National Archives, Kew. I am grateful to Philip Thirkell for finding and supplying a copy of this manuscript. For Ouseburn’s alleged predilection towards drink and violence you only have to read the Newcastle Courant, especially that paper’s regular ‘Police Intelligence’. Whilst this was certainly a feature of the area, it was definitely not the whole story.
- 3 Thomas Giordani Wright, *Diary of a Doctor*, ed Alastair Johnson, (Newcastle Libraries & Information Service, 1998), p 23.
- 4 Thomas Toward, boiler and iron ship and tank builder, St Peter’s; Ward’s Directory of Newcastle (1850) and Slater’s Northern Counties Directory (1852).
- 5 ‘A Steam Corn Mill, lately built at the Ouseburn. keels can come up to it at any tide. Apply to Mr Glynn’. *Newcastle Courant* 28th April 1821. Also, ‘Wanted, a shop to let for retailing flour, at or near Barras Bridge. Apply to Mr J. Glynn, Ouseburn Foundry’, *Newcastle Courant* 17th January 1829. In the 1830s, John Glynn is listed in directories as a corn miller and flour dealer at Ouseburn, whilst James Glynn continues his father’s iron and brass works.
- 6 *Newcastle Courant* 14th August 1830 (Toward), 12th April 1834 (Glynn), 19th July 1834 (Glynn), 8th September 1837 (Toward), 26th October 1838 (Toward) and 22nd March 1839 (Toward).
- 7 Advert for ‘that newly erected Spinning-Mill’, *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh) 28th May and 1st June 1801.
- 8 Seymour Bell Portfolio No. 6. Newcastle Libraries & Information Service. The massive stone frame for a large beam engine still stands on this spot today and in January 2004 a dock for a keel or wherry, complete with iron mooring ring, was discovered nearby.
- 9 The additional meaning of heckling, as in the interruption of speakers with awkward questions or abuse, appears to derive from the activities of striking flax workers in early nineteenth century Dundee. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heckler>
- 10 ‘Nuisances in Lime Street’, *Newcastle Courant* 7th February 1845, and Newcastle Corporation Minutes, 5th February 1845. Pearson Mitchinson was eventually

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- forced to close his works following complaints by no less than forty-six residents and property owners in the East All Saints and Jesmond wards. It isn't clear if any of these complaints actually came from residents of the Ouseburn.
- 11 John Charlton, *The Chartists*, (Pluto Press, 1997), pp 4-11.
 - 12 *The London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer* (London) 27th August 1837. The italics are in the original.
 - 13 Ibid, 27th August 1837.
 - 14 D. J. Rowe, 'Some Aspects of Chartism on Tyneside', *International Review of Social History*, Volume 16, 1971.
 - 15 Attwood's soap works was at Mount Greenwich, Gateshead, whilst Doubleday (& Easterby) where at the Close. Thomas Doubleday was a member of a prominent Quaker family; see Ruth Sansbury, *Beyond the Blue Stone* (Newcastle Preparative Meeting, 1998). Blakey's business was at the Side, where Ayre ran The Grapes public house in the 1840s.
 - 16 *The London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer* (London) 27th November 1836, and the *Northern Liberator*, 23rd December 1837.
 - 17 *Northern Liberator* 7th and 14th April 1838.
 - 18 Rowe, *Aspects of Chartism*.
 - 19 *Newcastle Courant* 29th March 1839.
 - 20 *Northern Liberator* 22nd September 1838. For membership of the Northern Political Union, see Table 1.
 - 21 *Northern Liberator* 3rd November 1838.
 - 22 *Northern Liberator* 5th January 1839.
 - 23 Ibid, and *Northern Liberator* 29th June 1839. It isn't obvious at which public house this meeting was held but the Electoral Register for 1837-38 includes 'Middleton, Roger; public-house; Ouse Burn' for the Township of Byker, suggesting that the pub was on the east side of the Ouseburn; *Thomas Wilson Collection, Volume 6*, Newcastle Local Studies.
 - 24 For subscriptions see *Northern Liberator* 8th June 1839. For fund raising see *Northern Liberator* 23rd February 1839. An interesting insight into the mix of middle class sympathies for the Northern Political Union in the Ouseburn area is provided by the donation of £1. 10s. to the Rev. Stephens defence fund and the National Rent campaign by Thomas and Joseph Thompson of the Ouseburn Pottery; *Northern Liberator* 2nd March 1839.
 - 25 Rowe, *Aspects of Chartism*.
 - 26 Spence was discharged, and Tweddell, Stephenson and Brown were released on bail. *Northern Liberator* 24th August 1839. See also the *Courant's* interpretation of this event; *Newcastle Courant* 26th July 1839 ('Mischievous Riot in Newcastle'), and 2nd & 9th August 1839. Benjamin Plummer's brass foundry was at St Peter's; *Newcastle Courant* 4th October 1839.
 - 27 'More Police Tyranny', *Northern Liberator* 19th January 1839. Also, the trial of Thomas Kidd for 'having willfully and maliciously sold hand-bills, headed "General Strike", to persuade the working men to leave off work, and to hatred and discontent

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- of the laws of the present government', *Newcastle Courant* 16th August 1839. A Joseph Kidd of Byker Hill would later become a member of the Ouseburn Chartists.
- 28 William Parker accused Byrne of trying to launch a radical newspaper in competition to the *Liberator*, resulting in 'the most disastrous confusion where all before was unity, concord, and peace'; *Northern Liberator* 5th & 12th January 1839. William Byrne, together with William Cooke, founded the 'Newcastle Chemical Operative Protective Society' (1839) to defend jobs in the alkali trade, then attracting much litigation by farmers and property owners in Byker and Walker; see *Newcastle Courant* 22nd February 1839 and *Northern Liberator* 16th March 1839. This was an issue in which Byrne and Parker were united; see William Parker's letter published in the *Northern Liberator* 23rd March 1839. Byrne's stationary and bookshop at the Cloth Market is advertised in the *Northern Star (and Leeds General Advertiser)* 30th January 1841. The *Northern Star* was founded by Feargus O'Conner, radical journalist and Chartist.
- 29 For example, the evidence of William Patton Henderson, reporter for the *Tyne Mercury*, in the trial of James Ayre, John Mason, and Edward Charlton; *Newcastle Courant* 7th August 1840.
- 30 *Northern Liberator* 15th August 1840.
- 31 See Table 2 for confirmed membership of the Ouseburn Charter Association. At one point, Isaac Bruce claimed that 'there were above seventy payable members in his district', *Northern Star* 30th January 1841.
- 32 *Northern Star* 20th August 1842. Jude was also a publican, and his Sun Inn (Side) and Three Tuns Inn (Manor Street) would later host regional and national meetings of the Miners' Association.
- 33 *Northern Liberator* 23rd February 1839.
- 34 *Northern Star* 2nd October 1841. The Chartists were dubious of the claim that any repeal of the Corn Laws would result in cheap bread, and suspected that the main beneficiaries would be merchants and shopkeepers/bakers.
- 35 *Northern Star* 23rd October 1841.
- 36 As late as 1845 the vicinity of Byker Bar could be described as 'forming a Retreat in the Country'. Advert for Softley's Property, Byker Bar, *Newcastle Courant* 1st August 1845.
- 37 Advert for Joiners Shop, Stable and Premises at Byker Buildings, *Newcastle Courant* 1st November 1806; advert for numbers 7 & 8 Byker Buildings, *Newcastle Courant* 7th November 1835; and 1841 Census, HO 107/820/1.
- 38 Advert for the Misses Fletcher's Boarding and Day School, *Newcastle Courant* 2nd February 1838. It is unknown how successful this venture was but a Miss Fletcher is also recorded as leading a Bible Class at Gosforth Sunday School two years later; *Newcastle Courant* 5th June 1840. An alternative 'Mr Wilson' is Mr J. R. Wilson, the travelling agent of the Sunday School Union of London who was well known in Newcastle in the 1830s; see the account of the Heaton Colliery disaster of 1815 and subsequent history of William Thew's letter to his mother (published 1841) *Thomas Wilson Collection, Volume 9*, Newcastle Local Studies.

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- 39 'Mr Rutter's School Room, Thompson Street, Byker's Buildings'; Chartist Intelligence, *Northern Star* 12th June 1841. When the chapel was booked by Daniel Liddle in September 1841, William Parker is quoted as saying (in writing, to Daniel Liddle) that 'You know Sir, I am poor, very poor, and cannot command chapels, etc., but the working men have a reading-room near Byker Bar...', *Northern Star* 30th October 1841. The inference is clearly that the Reading Room is not at the Methodist chapel but higher up the bank, in Byker Buildings. In the 1841 census there is a James Rutter, Schoolmaster, living in Spring Garden Lane, Westgate, and whilst there are no other Rutter/schoolmasters recorded that night in Newcastle, it isn't clear if he has any connection with either the Primitive Methodists or Byker Buildings. 1841 Census, HO 107/824/7, and *Jubilee of the Primitive Methodist Sunday School, Ballast Hills, Newcastle upon Tyne* (J Bell & Co. Newcastle upon Tyne, 1879).
- 40 *Northern Star* 6th February 1841. The first meeting of the 'Discussing Society' actually met on a Tuesday night but thereafter it was every Wednesday. Mason's lecture was given in late January.
- 41 *Northern Star* 20th February 1841. Dr McDouall was a surgeon and of all the Chartist lecturers he was the strongest advocate of close ties between Chartism and trade unionism. Charlton, *The Chartists*, p.98. McDouall was popular with the men of Ouseburn; when he stood as a candidate for the Chartist National Executive he received the highest vote amongst the Ouseburn delegates, *Northern Star* 5th June 1841.
- 42 *Northern Star* 6th March 1841.
- 43 *Northern Star* 2nd October and 24th December 1841.
- 44 Announcement of the death of Mrs Ann Brophy, *Northern Star* 30th April 1842.
- 45 *Northern Star* 4th June, 29th October, and 10th December 1842.
- 46 *Northern Star* 24th December 1841.
- 47 *Northern Star* 28th January 1843.
- 48 Letter to the *Northern Star* from 'J H, Ouseburn', *Northern Star* 21st August 1841. A survey of radical voters in the Newcastle parliamentary election of 1835 confirms Hall's perception that the Northern Political Union was largely a shopkeeper and tradesmen's movement; Mike Greatbatch, 'James Aytoun's Plumbers. Radical Voters in the 1835 General Election', unpublished manuscript (2012).
- 49 *Newcastle Courant* 23rd July 1841.
- 50 HO 44/52, National Archives, Kew. The wording of the original is slightly different from the version published in the *Northern Star* in its report of the 5th October meeting; *Northern Star* 9th October 1841.
- 51 *Northern Star* 16th October 1841.
- 52 *Northern Liberator* 14th November 1840. The meeting took place on 5th November, and the two other Chartist leaders were Collins and White. John Collins was from Birmingham and George White, an Irishman active in the Leeds, Bradford and Birmingham movement; Charlton, *The Chartists*.
- 53 *Northern Liberator* 12th December 1840.
- 54 *Northern Liberator* 21st December 1839. 'The Blues' recounts the arrest of a man 'for

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the crime of standing on the footpath, at the Ouseburn' whilst the police were free 'to trample on men's liberty'.

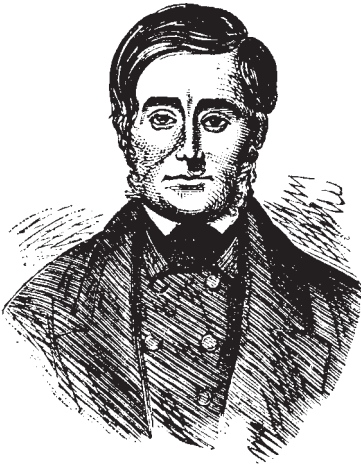
- 55 *Northern Liberator* 4th May 1839.
- 56 Messrs Welsh, the builders of the viaduct gave a 'cold collation to the workmen on the completion of the undertaking'; *Newcastle Courant* 25th May 1839. For the Spital Tongues staithe and associated buildings see the report of Newcastle Corporation affairs in *Newcastle Courant* 11th January 1839, and the report of the initial opening, *Newcastle Courant* 14th January 1842.
- 57 For example *Northern Liberator* 7th September 1839. An earlier advert for 'ready dug' clay for making bricks, claimed that 'the ground is situate near the North Shields Railway Bridge, Ouseburn, Newcastle, where between two and three hundred eligible building sites are now for sale', *Newcastle Courant* 26th July 1839.
- 58 Advert for property on Cut Bank, *Newcastle Courant* 29th August and 12th September 1845.
- 59 *Newcastle Courant* 10th February 1843 and 10th January 1845 for Phoenix Pottery; 19th May 1843, 18th October 1844, and 9th May 1845 for Crowther and Smith.
- 60 *Newcastle Courant* 25th February 1842 and 4th July 1845, for the steam mill and Hargrave's Cocoa Nut Fibre manufactory; *Newcastle Courant* 8th July 1842 for Smith's shipyard, and 8th September 1843 for a general description of St Peter's industrial mix at this time, albeit as an advert for the sale of a public house.
- 61 *Newcastle Courant* 26th January 1849.
- 62 *Newcastle Courant* 15th December 1837. Clarke and Plummer claimed no knowledge of the child who had been employed via an agent. They also provided evidence that 'no child under 18 years should be employed in the mill'.
- 63 *1851 Census*, HO 107. 2407.
- 64 *1841 Census*, HO 107/846/1
- 65 *Newcastle Courant* 11th February 1842 and 18th August 1843. Also, Les Turnbull, *Coals from Newcastle* (Chapman Research publishing, 2009), pp 108-110.
- 66 *Northern Star* 27th March 1841.
- 67 *Northern Star* 27th November and 24th December 1841. See Table 3 for known members of the Byker Hill Charter Association.
- 68 *Northern Star* 1st January 1842; 'Nominations to the General Council'. There were seventeen nominations by the Byker Hill Chartists but three of them, John Hall, Isaac Bruce and Martin Jude, were effectively 'on loan' from the Ouseburn Charter Association.
- 69 The Sunderland Charter Association refer to 'having received a letter from their brethren of Ouseburn, urging the propriety of a delegate meeting for the two counties'; *Northern Star* 1st and 8th January 1842.
- 70 *Northern Star* 15th October.1842 and 29th October 1842.
- 71 For anger at the lack of mine safety see their petition of May 1843; *Northern Star* 20th May 1843.
- 72 Raymond Challinor & Brian Ripley, *The Miners' Association. A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1968), pp 11-16. They make the

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- connection with the Byker Hill Charter Association (pg. 11) but fail to mention Ouseburn or its role in setting-up the Byker Hill group. For the Miners' Association Executive Committee membership, including Jude and Hall, see *Northern Star* 1st July 1843.
- 73 For P M Brophy see *Northern Star* 5th August 1843 and 30th September 1843. For Isaac Bruce see *Northern Star* 17th August 1844.
- 74 *Northern Star* 9th September 1843.
- 75 *Northern Star* 1st July 1843.
- 76 This quarrel took place at the Lecture-room in Nelson Street, at a meeting 'crowded to excess'. *Newcastle Courant* 7th June 1844.
- 77 See his address to the Mayor at the Guildhall in June 1842, *Newcastle Courant* 17th June 1842.
- 78 Hall's contact address is Preston (1846) and Wigan (1847); *Northern Star* 1st August and 21st November 1846, and 9th January 1847.
- 79 *Northern Star* 4th September 1847. John Hall later returned to the Ouseburn; in 1851 he and Jane Hall are recorded in the census, John's occupation being 'Grocer'. He appears to have acted as an advertising agency for local collieries; when the colliery in Jesmond Vale advertised the sale of its winding gear and other machinery, it referred interested parties to 'John Hall, grocer, Ouseburn'. Blacklisted workers often had little option but to set themselves up as independent traders. The last confirmed reference to John and Jane Hall is the 1861 census where John is recorded as 'Bookseller Stationer' at 64, Gilesgate, Durham. There is a registered death of a John Hall in South Shields in 1866, and whilst I cannot confirm the provenance of this record, it may explain why Challinor and Ripley refer to Hall as a flax dresser 'from South Shields'; the census records both record his birthplace as Bishop Auckland. 1851 Census, HO 107. 2408; 1861 Census, RG 9/3741; *Newcastle Courant* 25th April 1856 and 24th August 1860; Challinor and Ripley, *The Miners' Association*, pg 16.

THE PARENTAGES OF MARTIN JUDE AND JOHN BURNETT

Edward J. Davies



Martin Jude

Martin Jude and John Burnett were two trade unionists who were prominent enough to be now included in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB),¹ but whose parentages are said to be unknown. Here, information on their parents is provided.

Martin Jude

The biography of Martin Jude in the *ODNB* states that ‘nothing is known about his parentage or upbringing’.²

Martin Jude, a widower, occupation given as agent, married Caroline Nesbitt, spinster, on 3 April 1851 at the register office, Newcastle Upon Tyne. Martin was then said to be aged forty-five, residing on Sandyford

Lane in Newcastle, and son of a coal miner named Joseph Jude.³ The name Martin Jude is rare, but in any case confirmation that this was Martin Jude the trade unionist is given by a notice in *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* in 1850 giving the same street as his address: 'communications for the "MINERS' NATIONAL ASSOCIATION" must be sent either to Mr. Martin Jude, Sandyford-lane, Barras-bridge, Newcastle-upon-Tyne...'.⁴

Jude died on 30 August 1860 at the Old Highlander Inn, North Shields, when he was variously said to be in his fifty-fifth year, or aged fifty-seven.⁵

Martin Jude was born on 5 February 1804 and baptised on 11 February 1804, when his father Joseph Jude was described as a collier, and Martin's mother was named as Margaret Taylor.⁶ Joseph Jude and Margaret Taylor were married in 1793 at Longbenton, where Martin Jude later married Ann Hunter on 24 November 1827.⁷ Ann died on 14 April 1850.⁸

John Burnett

The *ODNB* states that John Burnett was 'born on 21 June 1842, at Alnwick, Northumberland, of unknown parentage' and also notes that his wife was named Jean.⁹ It is said that at the age of twelve, owing to the death of his parents, John left Alnwick for Newcastle where he was in the care of his uncle.¹⁰

The 1881 census returns show John Burnett, aged thirty-eight, born at Alnwick, living in Southwark with his wife Jean and children. In the occupation column for John is 'Secretary Trade Society'. Furthermore, John's household included his mother-in-law Elizabeth Hardy.¹¹ This confirms that John Burnett was the man of that name who married Jean Wilson Hardy at the register office, Newcastle Upon Tyne, on 25 November 1867. The marriage certificate gives John's father as John Burnett (deceased), a shoemaker. The death of a John Burnett, aged thirty, a shoemaker, son of Cuthbert Burnett, took place on 12 August 1846 at Alnwick.¹² This seemed likely to be the father of the John born in 1842.

The 1851 census returns for Alnwick show a Thomas Tait, aged twenty-nine, a cordwainer, living with his wife Margaret, aged thirty-two, and a John Burnett, aged eight, described as 'Son of Margt Tate' (sic). All three are stated to have been born at Alnwick.¹³ The death of Margaret Tait, wife of Thomas Tait, shoemaker, took place at Alnwick on 3 July 1854,¹⁴ fitting with the statement that John Burnett moved to Newcastle at the age of twelve due to the deaths of his parents.

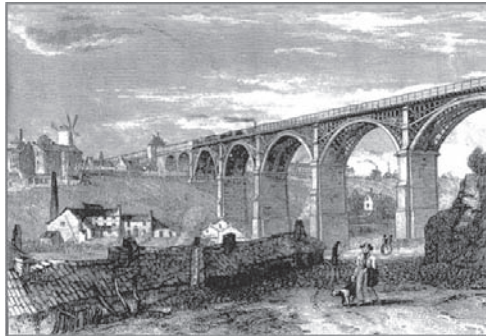
Working from the claim that John went to Newcastle to be in the care of an uncle, a search of the 1861 census returns located a John Burnet, aged eighteen, living on Gallowgate in Newcastle. He was said to have been born in Newcastle, but otherwise he seemed likely to be the man who became the trade unionist. He was described as a nephew of the head of the household, William Vickers, aged forty-nine, a cabinet-maker born in London, who was married to Ann, aged forty-seven, born at Alnwick.¹⁵ The identity is confirmed by the certificate for John's marriage to Jean Wilson Hardy, which shows that he was living on Gallowgate and that the witnesses to the marriage were William Vickers and Ann Vickers. The birth certificate for William and Ann's son Cuthbert shows that Ann's surname had been Burnett.¹⁶ It therefore appeared likely that Ann was a sister of John's father John Burnett, and indeed John and Ann, son and daughter of Cuthbert and Jane Burnett, were both baptised at Alnwick on 12 May 1816.¹⁷

It is clear that the trade unionist was illegitimate. The baptisms recorded in the Alnwick parish registers include John Burnett Anderson, baptised on 31 July 1842. His mother is shown to be Margaret, a single woman, and the name of his father has been entered as John but then crossed out.¹⁸ His birth on 21 June 1842 at Alnwick was registered on 20 July 1842, when he was recorded as John, son of Margaret Anderson.¹⁹

John Burnett

Notes

- 1 The print edition is H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2004), with an updated online version available at <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.
- 2 Raymond Challinor, 'Jude, Martin (1803–1860)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48227>).
- 3 Marriage certificate.
- 4 *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 2 Jun 1850.
- 5 *Newcastle Courant*, 7 Sep 1860; death certificate.
- 6 National Archives, registers of Salem Methodist New Connexion Chapel, Newcastle Upon Tyne, RG 4/2916.
- 7 Northumberland Archives Service, Longbenton parish registers, M886.
- 8 *Newcastle Courant*, 19 Apr 1850.
- 9 Norman McCord, 'Burnett, John (1842–1914)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47331>).
- 10 Floyd D. Barrows and David B. Mock, *A Dictionary of Obituaries of Modern British Radicals* (New York and London, 1989), 67, quoting *The Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 7 Feb 1914.
- 11 National Archives, 1881 census returns, Southwark, RG 11/515, fol. 27.
- 12 Death certificate.
- 13 National Archives, 1851 census returns, Alnwick, HO 107/2419, fol. 381.
- 14 Death certificate.
- 15 National Archives, 1861 census returns, Newcastle Upon Tyne, RG 9/3819, fol. 14.
- 16 Birth certificate (born 19 Jul 1838, Newcastle Upon Tyne).
- 17 Northumberland Archives Service, Alnwick parish registers, M878.
- 17 Northumberland Archives Service, Alnwick parish registers, M878.
- 18 Birth certificate.



Ouseburn 1839

MAPPING POPULAR POLITICS PROJECT: ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS Liz O'Donnell (Oral History Coordinator)

The volunteers in the oral history strand of the Mapping Popular Politics Project used their own networks to fulfil the brief to find and interview suitable subjects in the north-east of England. Most of those identified had devoted many decades of their lives to political and social campaigning. Some volunteers set out to pursue a particular theme, such as political parties of the far-left in the 1970s, but all the interviews are wide-ranging, establishing both personal and public contexts for political action. Oral history interviews often explore topics and experiences missing from the historical record, acting as a corrective to existing accounts. By uncovering the complexity of the remembered past, they offer a sophisticated means of investigating not only 'what happened', but also how that past is understood by each individual. The following observations about the collection can only scratch the surface of the many richly-layered accounts gathered through the project. An entire journal issue would be required to do justice to the diversity and persistence of political engagement over the last sixty years or so as represented in the recordings. There are many, many more people in our region whose stories of political struggle still need to be told and preserved for the future.

In many cases, the interviewee was known to the interviewer, producing some remarkably relaxed and good-humoured recordings. John remembered the 1951 general election, when, as an eight year old, he took part in the local dominant political culture:

“...the car would come down the street with the loud speakers on all crackly... ‘This is the Labour Party, etc., etc.’, and the kids used to walk behind and we made a thing called basters. Now a baster, if you baste somebody, in the Geordie terminology is, you give them a bash. These basters were a pile of paper which you rolled up into a tight bundle and then you tied a bit of string on and you swing it swung around your head and they were supposed to be to clout any Tories (laughter). Never in the world did we meet one and we used to sing this song which went (he sings) “Vote, Vote, for Mr Smith, he’s the one to win the war for we’ll buy a penny gun and we’ll make the Tories run and they’ll never come to Gateshead any more”.¹

Not everyone interviewed could trace their political awareness back to childhood. Amanda’s politicisation was hastened through experiencing the trauma of the Meadow Well riot in 1991 as a single parent at home alone with a small child:

“All I remember was, I’d put the little ‘un to bed, and there was flames, like bright lights outside and my front door was really hot and when I opened the door the youth club across the road was in flames. And there were loads of people in the streets running round saying there was going to be a riot...which was pretty scary... and they started running into my path and hiding things in me hedge, like videos and God knows what else they’d taken from the shops.”²

The recordings help to map the effect of wider trends in society on the development of the individual’s political identity. During the 1970s, for instance, a distinctive extra-parliamentary political culture gave rise to groundbreaking campaigns around issues of gender and sexuality, and titanic struggles between employers and workers against a background of industrial change. Kevin, shipyard worker and member of the WRP (Workers’ Revolutionary Party), found that activism provided both a political education and a purpose in life:

“It was a massive education for me, and it was wonderful. I was probably going through a period of my life when I was absorbing

things and I was learning things because I finished school at the age of fifteen, went to work from fifteen; never went to college, didn't have any qualifications, just went to work. So learning about things, starting to read political books was an incredible revelation to me and I became like a complete madman who had found something and I had seen the light and had took up my bed and followed. I have a bit of that kind of in me but anyhow it was a marvellous period, I felt really excited about it and threw myself into it and really transformed my life very, very quickly.”³

In reflecting on their effectiveness as political agents, interviewees did not shrink from conceding disillusionment and failure. Sandy, for example, talked about his time in the 1970s flogging the IS (International Socialists) paper to ‘the workers’:

“I used to find some sales just embarrassing. We used to stand outside one or two working men's clubs on a Sunday morning and you'd see the guys rushing in for their pint at midday. You'd stand there for an hour with these people going in and out and if you're lucky you'd sell one paper. One must question, what was the point of that? And your heart sinks when you turn out for something and there's six people from six different organisations selling six different papers and you can't help but wonder what the ordinary punter going past you actually makes of this sight.”⁴

Unsurprisingly, the 1984-85 Miners' Strike featured prominently in the memories of many of those interviewed. Bala summed up the ambivalent feelings provoked by the conflict:

“The miners' strike to me was glorious disappointment. [Laughs] Glorious because the community and everyone came so close together. And there was such a huge linking of people. People of very different backgrounds, thoughts and everything.... I found going to the Asda in Stanley, standing in front with a trolley, and the numbers of people that came and just filled the trolley up... [And] handing out these bits of food to families that were suffering, not one of them felt a lack of dignity or that they were taking charity. They felt they were a part of our community,

taking part of a battle that was essential for the community, and they did not feel ashamed about having to take charity.... But to counter that was the ... absolute knowledge from the day we started that we would lose.... And we realised ... the consequences of that loss. Which meant the serious degradation of rights, the diminishing of the power of unions, the lack of representation of the working class as it should be represented, and a whole variety of these things.”⁵

Involvement in the miners' support group propelled Mary, wife of a striking miner, into political activism. She recalled how the group resisted domination by the union hierarchy:

“I probably feel that was one of the SIGNIFICANT achievements... to stop the Union - ergo MEN - from dominating the whole thing! And it caused us problems in some ways, but it also meant it was a very 'loose' and very motivating...I used to love going to those meetings, we used to meet...I think it was once a week at first and later it became less. But people used to do ANYTHING to go to those meetings, because anybody could turn up and everybody had a voice. You had your VOICE, you could vote! You know, we went with the majority and I think that was the best thing that ever happened because it stopped the Trade Union Leaders or those who were, you know, going to be their figure head, over-taking us. And they DIDN'T LIKE IT, I have to be honest there were some fraught relationships with the NUM through that, but what it meant was that those meetings were very politicised and people came in and stood up and spoke and it was brilliant you know!”⁶

Some of the most prolific interviewees were Co-operators, interested in exploring what had drawn fellow members into the movement and how involvement had nurtured and sustained their political activities. Joan described how participating in the Women's Guild led naturally to standing for her local council:

“Well, as I say, I had been in the Guild for a number of years and I was interested in people and to promote the work of the Co-op Movement... My interest grew and I had been to Geneva with the United Nations

Organisation. The one thing we were concentrating on over there was equal pay for work of equal value. Of course I learned quite a lot while I was there on that course and horrified to find that Britain was not signed up for it. So again with the Co-op involvement and Labour Party involvement finding that sort of situation we were in, you have to do something about it. You can't sit on the outside and be... you can raise your voice but it very often doesn't get heard. You have to be in somewhere to do something about it. Where better to start than at local council level?" ⁷

Trade union activism is well-represented in the collection. Pat, only twenty-three when she became secretary of her union branch, acknowledged its role in her political and personal development:

"So I was a branch secretary in the Co-op Movement, and one of the first things I did as a newly elected branch secretary, I was very quiet then and very shy, I'm not now, thanks to the Union, but I was then. And within a week of me taking over as Branch secretary the staff in the Bishop Auckland Co-op decided to walk out because it was cold and the heating wasn't working. And it was a bitterly cold day and the management came on the phone to say that they'd walked out and I said, "Well what's the situation," and I was trembling, I was very, very shy and very trembling and didn't really know my way around this at all." ⁸

Quite a few recordings explore tactics during industrial disputes in the region, vividly evoking an era when trade union power was at its height. Bob, who had relocated from Bristol with his family in 1971 to work in the design department at Parsons, recalled 'a tremendous battle' after the management issued redundancy notices later that year:

"[...] was at the top of the stairs and he said, well, what have you done about it? And I said, nothing yet, I don't know what to do. And he says, we'll take it back! And, when he was excited, his eyes opened very wide. We'll take it back! So I thought well, take it back. By that time a number of other letters had been handed out, so, I said, we're all going to go into the office, we're all going to take them back, so let's go. There

were four by that time. We crossed the corridor and knocked on the door, but we didn't wait to be invited in, we opened the door and entered. And I was sort of at the front, you know! Not a position I'd been particularly used to previously. But it was ok, I made a little speech telling him we rejected the redundancies, and that we're bringing the letters back. There was no way we would accept redundancies. And he said, I'm glad you came Bob, as I've got one for you as well. So I got my redundancy notice there. And I says, well, you can have that one back as well. So I slapped it on to the table and we walked out." ⁹

Some activists faced physical danger when standing up for their beliefs - on the picket line, during demonstrations, or, like the interviewee quoted below, while confronting police violence and risking arrest at the Greenham Common women's peace camp:

"Anyway, whoever it was, this copper was charging towards whoever was cutting the fence and I thought he was just going to knock her flying because he was enormous and she was tiny. So I moved forward and I was trying to stand between him and her, and also I have to say though I didn't admit this at the time, that she had thrown the bolt-cutters down in the grass and I picked them up and threw them a bit further into the long grass in the hope that they would be hidden (laughs) and that we could recover them later." ¹⁰

Anecdotes recounted in oral history interviews often shine an unexpected – and humorous - light on a familiar story. This description of the dramatic arrival at a bar in Trimdon one day in 1983 of the newly elected Member of Parliament for Sedgefield needs no further comment:

"...suddenly, it was like one of these cowboy films when somebody opens the doors like that and comes in. It was a bit like that. And he stood in the door, kind of thing. And he had an attaché case. And he sort of half staggered over to us, and sat down very heavily, and went ahhh. And Brian said, Tony, what's wrong? What's the matter? And he went, ohh, you would not believe the morning I've had. So Brian said, what happened? All these people, he said. He said, they're coming to me, I had

a surgery and they're coming to me, he says, and this one wanted that, and that one wanted this, and they asked me to do this, and Brian said, Tony, that's the job." ¹¹

Overall, the interviews illuminate an impressive array of political activities, some with purely local interest, others with connections to national movements and campaigns. Internationalism as a driving principle is also clearly evident. The extracts above give only a brief glimpse into this important collection, which stands as a fitting tribute to those whose stories are now preserved for future study but, as stated earlier, the interviewing must continue!

Notes

- 1 John Creaby, interviewed by Kath Connolly (16/04/2012)
- 2 Amanda Normand, interviewed by Elizabeth Burn (4/11/2011)
- 3 Kevin Flynn, interviewed by Peter Brabban (29/09/2011)
- 4 Sandy Irvine, interviewed by Peter Brabban (13/10/2011)
- 5 Bala Nair, interviewed by Pat MacDonald (19/01/2012)
- 6 Mary Stratford, interviewed by Elizabeth Burn (14/04/2012)
- 7 Joan Lamb, interviewed by Kath Connolly (28/03/2011)
- 8 Pat Buttle, interviewed by Margaret Eason (14/06/2012)
- 9 Bob Murdoch, interviewed by David Hiscock (4/12/2012)
- 10 Anonymous woman, interviewed by Judith McSwaine (30/03/2012)
- 11 Pat MacIntyre, interviewed by Pete Winstanley (4/07/2012)

THOMAS WILSON THE GREAT HOARDER (AND POET) 1774 - 1858

Maria Goulding and Judith MacSwaine



Wilson started working at age 8/9 in local pits. He was self-educated and went on to be a clerk with Losh Iron Merchants, later becoming a partner in the firm then known as Losh, Wilson & Bell. By the end of his life he had amassed a considerable amount of material in his large house in Low Fell, Gateshead. This collection of documents reflected what was happening around him in late 18c and early 19c society and his interest in Whig politics. He was also a highly regarded dialect poet, a distinction mentioned in his obituaries.

This short piece will not cover his poetry or his political activity as such, nor the 17 volumes of his collection held at Woodhorn. Rather, we will describe the experience of those volunteers cataloguing only one of the 14 volumes held at Newcastle City Library. Vol 5 relating to May 1835 – Dec 1836 holds 241 items in 3 parts.

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Our first issue was how to summarise what each part contained in a way that could be used by the project for the database. But each part was dealt with separately by different combinations of people. As a result different categories emerged:

Vol 5 Part 1	Vol 5 Part 2	Vol 5 Part 3
Arts & Education	Municipal and Corporation Affairs	Newspaper clippings
Bills/receipts	Industry and Transport	Poems/songs
Sales/Auctions	Finance & Commerce	Election material
Leisure & Entertainment	East India Company Dispute	Miscellaneous
Chartism	Law and Order	
Utilities	The Church	
Election material	Newspapers	
	Ireland	
	Property/Places mentioned	
	People mentioned	
	Organisations mentioned	

Interesting finds to untutored volunteers

As untutored volunteers we brought our own interests and values to the process. We enjoyed seeing aspects of day to day life – the bills and receipts, publicity for entertainments, drawings of the new Grainger Markets, Grey Street and the Royal Arcade. The Calendars of Prisoners caught our attention because of the details of charges on Wednesday 16 March 1836:

- Elizabeth Gibb (single woman aged 21) stealing a great coat valued at £1;
- John Oxley (aged 25) stealing 1 water skeel(?) valued at 1s/6d and a woollen shawl of the value of 2s/6d;
- Jane Pettison (single woman aged 45) stealing one cap value 3d, one cotton handkerchief value 6d, and two cotton aprons value 1s/ and punishments
- Sentences for assault included 3 months imprisonment and fines most frequently of £5.
- Three deserters. John George, William Henderson, John Harris faced sentences of imprisonment with hard labour and solitary confinement.

We were left asking ourselves why he kept such documents. Was he a magistrate? Was he interested in the Justice system? Was he looking for names of people he knew?

What caught Maria's eye was the meticulous statistical table record of punishments by type and by colony in an extract from a speech of the Marquis of Sligo to the Legislature of Jamaica protesting at the treatment of apprentice labourers in plantations. Between Aug 1834 and May 1836, 10,770 out of 260,000 apprentices in Jamaica had been flogged and that wasn't the only punishment that was meted out. Why was Wilson interested in this issue? There is nothing to say what he thought of it – maybe that's in the diaries at Woodhorn.

We were often struck by the language of the day e.g. a list of recipients of Poor Law Relief in Longbenton were categorised as paupers in the workhouse, others as bastard children, others as lunatics.

Thomas was interested in people and organisations that had caught our attention during the project. For instance Daniel Liddell (of whom you can read more in another paper) and Byker Self-supporting Dispensary which Mike Greatbatch could link to his research on the Ouseburn.

At the end of the process we, the inexperienced volunteers, felt we had glimpsed into the life of Thomas Wilson and that we had benefited from having Mike Greatbatch and John Charlton on hand to supply a lot of background information about issues, events, people as we progressed through the material. Nevertheless, we were left wondering about the value of what we had done. Would our cataloguing be of any use? How important is it to have some background knowledge about the person and the topics? Would experienced historians, archivists, or researchers have made a better job of it? Would they have established a consistent set of categories early on? What might be the next step?

We discussed these issues at the N E Labour History “First Tuesday” and were particularly reassured to learn that categorisation is a contentious topic for the professionals and that collection is important and exciting because of the amount of manuscript material it provides for further study and research.

A CEMETERY FOR NEWCASTLE'S DISSENTERS

Sue King



The Among the difficulties facing dissenters in the early nineteenth century was the absence of regulated cemeteries for their dead. All burial grounds protected by legislation were owned and administered by the Anglican Church. In 1824, of the 1454 burials which took place in Newcastle, 805 were at Ballast Hills Burial Ground: over half the citizens of Newcastle were therefore denied 'the civil advantages of burial' afforded to Anglicans. In 1825, a general meeting of Dissenters was addressed in Newcastle by John Fenwick, outlining the need for a new cemetery for dissenters.

The burial choices available to dissenters at this time were few and unattractive. An attempt to create a private burial ground in Percy Street

had failed when the owner of the land died and his heir sold it to the neighbouring Mr Bruce's Academy to become its 'Campus Martius.' While Quakers buried their dead in the grounds of the Meeting House, all other dissenters had to use the burial ground at Ballast Hills. This poorly drained common land had first been put into use for burials by the immigrant glassmakers in Ouseburn, nearby. After more than a century, it was 'emphatically crowded with the dead', leading to 'horrific nightly deprivations' to be committed there. Graves were shallow because of wet ground; the dead were frequently laid in pools of water, making 'dust to dust' less than a solemn sentence. The lack of a boundary wall meant that 'numbers of swine were daily observed working and grubbing among the graves.'

Worst of all, finding a grave space at Ballast Hills involved boring – 'thrusting down a sharp-pointed rod of iron to prove if a coffin be underneath' because no clear registers were kept, either of the identity of the dead or the location of their graves. Two entries in the register demonstrate the problem:

February 28 1793: Droundman not paid.

March 27 1800: A Stiltborn Child in a Wig Box One. Woman she sese hir name is Crosen Live up ye Burn.

Those present at the meeting agreed that money should be raised to buy and equip land for a cemetery by selling 350 shares at £10.00, similar to a successful scheme in Manchester in 1821. In 1828, 3 acres and 9 perches were purchased for £1500 from John Hodgson in Westgate Road and the royalty of the ground was handed to the trustees by Major Anderson, ensuring that the ground and walls would never be destroyed or broken for the purpose of working coals. Further, a Declaration of Trust was presented to the High Court of Chancery pertaining to land ownership, confirming that no one person was to own more than ten shares; those who inherited more than ten were given twelve months

to dispose of them before the committee sold them on. The remaining money raised paid for laying out the cemetery, including houses for the watchman and sextons and the boundary wall. Accounts were to be kept and presented to the AGM so that the surplus could provide dividends to the shareholders.

The first interment took place in 1829. In the first three years after opening, 787 burials took place, exclusive of still-born infants. The cemetery was divided into wards alphabetically and subdivided into numbered graves in parallel lines, with boundaries of the wards marked by short stone pillars. Any grave could be found with a measuring line and no ground was wasted. A special area of the cemetery was allotted to victims of the 1833 cholera epidemic and was marked by a border of trees.

Much of the success of the cemetery project was down to the hard work of a dissenting minister, the Revd. Richard Pengilly. He was therefore rewarded by the Committee with the gift of a grave: 'a double vault in such part of the cemetery as he may select'. The cemetery fulfilled a great social need but was not particularly successful financially. The first and best dividend was 5% paid in 1834. All minutes of the committee meetings were published as tracts, enabling others to copy the idea, so by 1838 competition from the new Jesmond Cemetery reduced the number of interments and therefore the value of the dividends. A lasting benefit of the dissenters' cemetery was that careful record-keeping provided a new bureaucratic standard for dealing with burials.

Bibliography

- NCL Tract Dy2 A New Place of Sepulture (1826)
- NCL Tract Dy39 Address in Westgate Hill Cemetery (1829)
- NCL Tract Dy39 Declaration of Trusts (1832)
- NCL Tract Dy39 1st Report of Westgate Hill Cemetery Committee (1832)
- NCL Tract Dy39 2nd Report of Westgate Hill Cemetery Committee (1833)
- NCL Tract Dy39 3rd Report of Westgate Hill Cemetery Committee (1834)
- NCL Tract Dy39 4th Report of Westgate Hill Cemetery Committee (1835)
- NCL Tract Dy39 7th Report of Westgate Hill Cemetery Committee (1838)

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NCL Tract Dy39 13th Report of Westgate Hill Cemetery Committee (1844)
Morgan A A Fine & Private Place – Jesmond Old Cemetery

Notes

- Book of Common Prayer: The order for the burial of the dead: ‘Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands on themselves.
- Criticism of poor statistical records. E.g. ‘The worshipful fraternity of St Nicholas appoint two old women as searchers who examine bodies to determine cause of death – fee 4d. For an extra tip, the examination need not take place. (John Fenwick: A New Place of Sepulture 1826)
- Example of inappropriate expenditure: £21.10 for taking dead bodies out of the Tyne. At present, money is paid for dead bodies, not live ones. The money would be better spent providing life-saving equipment and better lighting on the Quayside. (NCL Tract Dy39 1829 Letter to the Editor of the Mirror from a ‘Free Burgess’.)
- Old Shotton Quaker Meeting House built in 1796. ‘Shortly after the Meeting House was built a little Negro boy died at the local school. As he had not been baptised the Rector would not allow him to be buried on consecrated ground. And his body was the first to be interred in our graveyard.’ (The Friend. 10 July 1964 p 828.)

DANIEL LIDDELL

Judith MacSwaine

Daniel Liddell appears in two of the tracts we were looking at in Newcastle City Library Archives. He caught my attention because he was writing about the need for education – university and college education for the City and education for miners and their children. He signed himself “Teacher” of Carliol Street. I thought it would be interesting to find out more about him and his background, where his interest in education came from. I think he caught my attention because his ideas were in contrast to some of the other tracts I had read focussing on religious education and the merits of Sunday school - all about teaching right from wrong and keeping the children of working people occupied.

Daniel was actually a Scot (1851 Census) and lived with a housekeeper and her children at Carliol Street. He first appears in Wards directory in 1833 running an academy from his home. In 1836 he was addressing the Mechanics Institute on the topic of education for miners, and education of the working classes. In the same year he wrote a pamphlet on higher education and wrote to the Mayor on the same topic. He was clear that education had benefits beyond the individual – it would be an important part of the economic well being of the area, which, he felt, suffered from poorly educated working people in mines, on ships and in factories.

In 1837, through his role as secretary of the North East England Newcastle upon Tyne, Durham and Northumberland Educational Society he drew attention to the education and training needs of the “deaf and dumb”, this time in a letter to the Newcastle Courant. In the same issue of the Courant I found a paragraph on the suicide of an unnamed “deaf mute” of Shields Road. He also referred to the education of the blind in this letter and compared the provision in Newcastle with that in

Edinburgh, which had an academy, London, which had an institute, and Ireland, where funding for education and training was collected through a “thankful tax”. Daniel was aware that Newcastle needed to do more than provide asylum for this group and by 1850 there is evidence of success as Wards directory of that year registers a Deaf and Dumb Institution at Charlotte Square. The Master is William Neil, another Scot, who eventually became Head of the specialist school. This establishment would later become the Northern Counties School for the Deaf. In 1838 Daniel appears in Wards again this time as one of the Secretaries for the “Assylum for the Blind”.

His own teaching career took him to Friar’s Goose, Gateshead in 1838 and 1839, not long after a riot there in 1832. By 1844 he was running a Classical and Commercial Academy from Carloli Street. However, there is evidence that Daniel was an active in other ways. In the late 1842 he is involved in organising public lectures in Gateshead and the same year contributes to a Commission (under the Great Seal) for inquiring into the Employment and condition of children in mines and manufactories. As in his letters and pamphlets Daniel backs up his argument with facts, figures and comparisons from home and abroad. However, the children interviewed for this report had little to say about their lot, it seems. Hardly surprising, I thought, given the gulf between those collecting the evidence and those being studied. Language, dialect and the strangeness of the inquirers probably struck the lads and lasses dumb!

After this period Daniel turns his hand to work of a more overtly political nature. He becomes Agent for the Anti-Corn Law League and organises trains from Newcastle and Durham to League Bazaars in London and Manchester in 1845. In the Liverpool Mercury he is mentioned picking up the prize in the Free Trade Bazaar Lottery on behalf of the lucky winner (the prize was a portrait of the Queen!). He, as Agent, is mentioned at a meeting in Gateshead Town Hall on 5th December 1845 calling for the repeal of the corn laws. In response to Robert Peel being forced from office, he places adverts in the Newcastle Courant urging

people to become property owners before 31 Jan so that they can vote. He offers to help acquire: 40 shilling freehold can be bought for under £30. interested parties were invited to the Wednesday meetings at Carloli Street. As Agent he organises a public meeting for Cobden and Bright on 5th January 1845 at the Guildhall, as well as trains from Sunderland and back to North Shields for those attending. In August it is Liddell who places testimonials in the newspapers to Cobden and Bright. His work for the League continues in 1847 organising a meeting at the Victoria Rooms, Grey Street on 8th June and attending a meeting of subscribers to the League fund that year. By 1850 he is Secretary to the Registration Association, a role he keeps until 1852 (Wards directory).

He had other political concerns and this time, too. He crops up in a petition to the Mayor (Stephen Lowery) calling for a public meeting against any increase in military spending in 1848 and the following year places a notice for a meeting on National Expenditure and Parliamentary Reform which is held on 26 October and addressed by Sir J Walmsey and George Thompson MPs at the Lecture Room in Nelson Street (2d and 6d reserved seats).

In July 1849 he is looking for interested subscribers to the Elswick Villa Association – whose object is to by land to build 30 villas on the north side of Scotswood Road.

On Jan 17 1851, by now well-established in the circles of “influential gentlemen of the town” he is present at the celebration of the train starting from the Central Station.

In Jun 1852 he is named in a petition to the High Sherriff of Northumberland to convene a meeting of electors to select new candidates to be MP. Later, in September he called for a Poor Law Auditors report at the end of a lengthy meeting of the rate payers of All Saints. A meeting at which the Guardians were taken to task over the rise in expenditure. This newspaper article gives a lot of detail of what must have been a difficult meeting for the Guardians who appear to have increased their rewards while reducing the amount spent on the poor. One of the reasons they

give for this is the “influx of the Irish”. But Daniel is clearly not happy with this and calls for the audit - once again his eye for detail and his interest in facts and figures comes to the fore. His intervention in the meeting is thoughtful and practical.

Although his home and office are advertised for sale in Oct 1852 his name does appear once more in the Newcastle Courant, this time passing on a donation to the Juvenile Crime Reform Association from The Right Hon Lady Noel Byron. However, there is a record of him voting in the South Northumberland election because he owned a house in Jesmond. He was probably the agent for the second (more radical) Liberal candidate, George Ridley, who he supported at election meetings. He split his 2 votes between the two Liberals. The Tory and the moderate Liberal won.

After this my trail goes cold – he doesn't appear again in the Census, I haven't been able to find any trace of a marriage, children or death. Did he return to Scotland? Did he simply run out of energy – he certainly did a lot between 1833 and 1852.

I found investigating the life and times of Daniel Liddell very satisfying. I've been hugely impressed by his range of interests. He seems a practical person, who can organise, communicate and make important links between economic well being of the nation and education for all, including people with disabilities. I could also see what an important tool the local newspaper was to involve people in the struggles of the day.

There are still some leads I can follow –

North East England, Newcastle upon Tyne, Durham and
Northumberland Educational Society
Deaf & Dumb Institution Newcastle
Elswick Villa Association
Friar's Goose, Gateshead
Literary Institute, Gateshead

north east history

William Neil

Lady Noel Byron

Juvenile Crime Reform Association.

Thanks to Sean, Peter Livsey (especially on the 1852 election) and John Charlton for their help with sources.

AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP? LABOUR AND THE SUFFRAGETTES IN THE NORTH EAST.

Sue Jones

The centenary of the death of Emily Davison in June 1913, as a result of her women's suffrage protest at the Derby, could easily be appropriated by the North East as an event of local significance. It is true that she was buried in Morpeth and that her mother lived at Longhorsley where Emily spent some time when recuperating from her apparent suicide attempt in Holloway in June 1912.¹ However, she was never a suffragette activist in the region or recognised as such by contemporaries. Norah Balls, a local activist who, in her recorded interview in 1976, was very keen to lay claim to acquaintance with key figures in the movement, admitted that she knew her mother's informal tea-room in Longhorsley, but did not know Emily herself.² The only recorded event in which she participated was the October 1909 demonstration in Newcastle against Lloyd George, when suffragette figures of national importance, notably Lady Constance Lytton, aimed to be imprisoned as a result of attacks on buildings such as the Palace Theatre and the General Post Office. To the chagrin of Davison, however, she was not imprisoned.³

Nevertheless, Emily Davison's political stance is relevant to an article looking at the relationship between the Labour movement and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in the North East. What is frequently overlooked is that she had strong socialist views and had connections with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the Central Labour College in London, where she took classes on practical issues such as the

trade unions' legal position and protective legislation. In her more romantic frame of mind, she wrote of her participation in the 1911 May Day socialist demonstration in Hyde Park:- 'Socialism – represents the day of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality...I came away from this May Day Demonstration with a glimpse of the vision of the future. Behold I make all things new.'⁴

This combination of militant suffragism and socialism is something which has been underplayed, both by contemporaries and by many historians who felt that the WSPU leadership had betrayed its origins in the Independent Labour Party (ILP). When the Pankhursts founded the movement in 1903, it was first suggested that it should be named the Women's Labour Representation Committee, indicating its links with the infant Labour Party. The rupture between the WSPU leadership and Labour over tactics at the 1906 Cockermouth by-election, followed by the LRC's vote against women's enfranchisement in 1907, led to acrimony which was exploited by polemicists on both sides. Emmeline Pankhurst continued to profess allegiance to the socialist cause: 'We are not going to oppose Socialism ... It is the party we are going to fight.' But this was overshadowed by the hostile stance of her daughter Christabel and by her other daughter, Sylvia's left-wing breakaway movement. This is the picture accepted by many of the 'second-wave' feminist writers, often of socialist persuasion.⁵

This tendency to see an irreparable breach between the WSPU and Labour was reinforced by the 1912 election pact (the Election Fighting Fund) between the non-militant or constitutionalist National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies' (NUWSS) and the Labour Party. Writers have also pointed to the intense debate within the Labour movement about whether a 'sex-war' was more important than a 'class-war': this was in the context of WSPU demands for limited women's suffrage which the Labour Party feared would enfranchise an innately conservative sector of municipal female electors, in spite of the ILP's survey of 54 out of 300 branches that found that 82.5 per cent of that electorate was working-class.⁶ Adult suffrage was the antidote to this fear.

Against the background of these perceptions of an irreconcilable rift at national level between Labour and militant suffragism, regional examination of the relationship is instructive in modifying the perceptions, as it has done in other studies of Liverpool and Leeds for example.⁷ It has been pointed out above that Emily Davison's support for socialism has been hidden by her militant feminist activity and it appears that, in the North East, closer ties were probably 'hidden' by a movement which was bound to prioritise feminist over class issues. This 'hiddenness' and the extent of the ties are examined below.

Many areas were galvanised into the formation of branches after the WSPU's move to its London headquarters in 1906, but this was not true of the North East.⁸ A partial explanation may lie in the lack of female trade union politicisation on which the WSPU could capitalise, in contrast to the North West where it had found fertile ground. However, a clearly definable group was formed in West Hartlepool in 1907, where three meetings were addressed by Christabel Pankhurst in 1905, two organised by the ILP and one by the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG).⁹ The group had a direct Labour link through its first Secretary, Mrs. Amy Norman. She was the young wife of Fred Norman, a railway clerk, and they were both ILP activists. She appeared as Chairman of West Hartlepool ILP in 1906, wrote letters to the Labour Leader, and was one of the signatories of the 1906 ILP Manifesto to women of the WSPU.¹⁰ The Manifesto expressed 'high admiration' of the work done by the WSPU women and support for those in prison for their 'convictions', but its primary aim was to show support for the WSPU from within the ILP and thus to remind men of the importance of women's suffrage within the movement. It is likely that others of the twelve signatories from West Hartlepool were WSPU members but only one other name has emerged in women's suffrage activity. Mrs. Mary Beckett, wife of a schoolmaster but who ran a newsagent's shop on her own account, was Treasurer of the ILP in 1906 and later became active in the Women's Freedom League (WFL), a group which splintered from the WSPU in 1907 as a result of discontent with the Pankhursts' dictatorial

government.¹¹ Amy Norman clearly links the WSPU and Labour and, when she left Hartlepool in 1912, it seems that she made a similar contribution to the Darlington branch, being reported as selling the Suffragette on the streets there on Saturday mornings, not a task for the faint-hearted.¹²

The formation of the Jarrow branch in early 1907 appears to have been of uncertain success. Again, however, its links with Labour are evident. Reports from the Jarrow Labour Herald show that by November 1906 there were efforts to get one of the national figures to address a public meeting and this was achieved in January 1907, with a meeting organised by the local LRC, addressed by Teresa Billington.¹³ The newspaper's correspondent commented that 'to listen to her was an intellectual treat, which one cannot always get in Jarrow' and that there was 'an unusually large proportion of women present.' These somewhat patronising remarks give a flavour of the obstacles presented by male obduracy, not only among Labour supporters. The fact that this Labour-sponsored event does not seem to have had a lasting effect is revealed in an apparent attempt later in 1907 to revive or re-found the branch and has resonances with similar early problems in both West Hartlepool and Darlington branches. In Jarrow's case, this may have been partly due to the turmoil of the 1907 by-election in which the WSPU merely campaigned against the government candidate, while the constitutional suffragists actively supported the victorious Labour candidate, Pete Curran. A difficult problem of public allegiance would therefore have confronted local WSPU/Labour supporters. In spite of this setback, the branch did grow and boasted 80 members by 1911, led by Mrs. Lizzie Crow, wife of a fitter, and a prominent activist, one of only two local women imprisoned for militancy carried out in the region itself. Only three of the eighty members have been positively identified through my research and no firm Labour links can be established, although Lizzie Crow was later to lead some North East women to London for the 1913 WSPU deputation of working-women to Lloyd George and Sir Edward Grey, drawing their attention to the economic plight of working-women and the difference the vote would make.¹⁴ This in itself is not necessarily

an indication of Labour sympathies: there was a large working-class Tory presence in parts of the North East, for example in Elswick where the interests of the Armstrong workers lay in support of defence contracts.

Inevitably, Newcastle became the centre of suffragette activity in the region after a branch was set up in 1908. There is shadowy evidence of some demonstrations in the city before this but a formal organisation was only established after an internal split in the North Eastern Society for Women's Suffrage (NESWS) which had been an umbrella group for those either of constitutional or militant persuasion. The two key figures in the WSPU group were long-standing activists, both aged 55 at the time of the split, Mrs. Mona Taylor, the wife of a wealthy coal-owner of Chipchase Castle, and Mrs. Jane Atkinson, the wife of a mining engineer and Inspector of Mines and Quarries, living in comfortable middle-class Newcastle. Mrs. Taylor, the leading light in North East suffragism since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was recorded as having donated to the WSPU in 1907 and later recalled how 'captivated' she had been by the 'cleverness of the WSPU of opposing any government in power' which did not support women's suffrage.¹⁵ Jane Atkinson's sympathies with the WSPU were also not new. In March 1907, she was part of the deputation to the House of Commons and was arrested and fined 20 shillings, but chose imprisonment for fourteen days.¹⁶ Her militancy had caused concern from the veteran campaigner, Mrs. Spence Watson, a stalwart Liberal, who dissociated herself from the tactics of 'recent prominent women' and nostalgically recalled the more 'academic' nature of the movement in the 1860s. This caused some debate within the NESWS, with one lady pointing out the success of suffragette meetings in Newcastle without arrests and another saying she would rather have 'distrust and dislike than contempt.'¹⁷

There is no evidence that either of these women had direct Labour links, but perhaps some evidence of sympathies. Jane Atkinson's daughter, Mabel, was an activist in the area only intermittently as from 1908 she was a lecturer in Economics for the WEA and King's College, London. She was a socialist activist and from 1911 was Chairman of the Fabian Women's

Group Suffrage Section. In this role, she maintained a typically Fabian gradualist approach of lobbying MPs while continuing to support militancy through her subscriptions to the WSPU until 1913. As she continued to visit the North East and made waves in Liberal circles, it is likely that her stance met with her mother's approval.¹⁸

Mabel Atkinson photographed by George Bernard Shaw at first Fabian Summer School, 1907.



Jane Atkinson and her other daughter Mildred were joined in their WSPU activities by Mrs. Margaret Brown and her daughters, Kathleen, Nora and Sydney, who were cousins of the Atkinson daughters. One can speculate about whether there was a wider left-wing family sympathy.

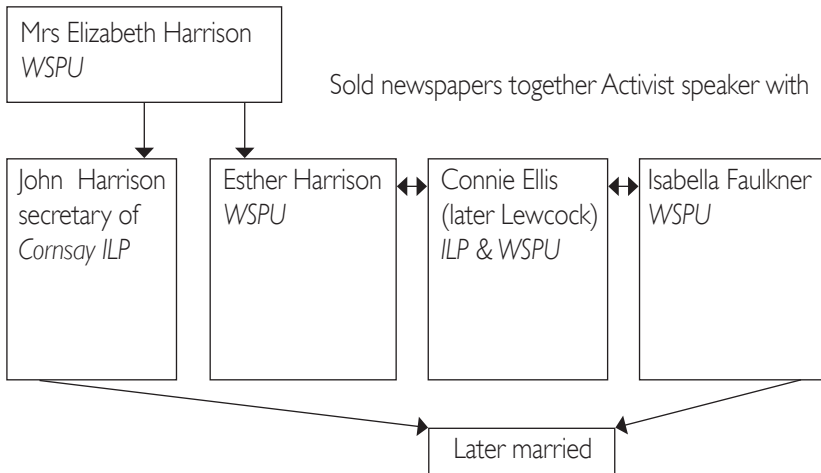
Mrs. Mona Taylor presents a differently nuanced picture. She was a member of the Women's Liberal Federation until she resigned in 1908 because 'I could no longer be connected with a body of women who showed themselves so feebly subservient to their party leaders.'¹⁹ This did not then automatically cause her to ally herself with any other party and the Labour Party did not include female suffrage in its programme until early 1912, but her letter of resignation from the WSPU in October 1912 stated not only her opposition to the new level of militancy but also 'I cannot oppose the new policy of opposing the Labour Party as a whole, and especially of opposing such tried friends as Mr. Philip Snowden, Mr. Will Crooks and Mr. Henderson.'²⁰ This is an interesting perspective on a local WSPU leadership which has been portrayed as in the national anti-Labour mould. Mona Taylor reiterated her support for Labour in a subsequent meeting at Willington Quay where she prioritised it above her abhorrence of the escalation of property destruction by suffragettes. In December 1912, she again emphasised that 'the Labour Party was the

only one which placed votes for women on its programme and through whom they hoped to get the great body of working-class opinion on their side.’²¹ It can be seen that she followed her principles in changed political circumstances with a stance developed to best serve her primary aim of women’s suffrage.

If links between Labour and the WSPU at leadership level are slight or doubtful, are they in greater evidence at grassroots level? It may be significant that there were only 4 signatories from Newcastle to the 1906 ILP Manifesto to the WSPU when there were 12 from West Hartlepool and 11 from Gateshead. Moreover, two of these 4, Margaret Shaw and Mary Eliot-Harrison, later allied themselves with the non-militant NUWSS. However, it is useful to look further afield than Newcastle itself. The Newcastle branch became a magnet that drew women from a distance and which organised their activities. In doing so, I have uncovered some women who emerge from the pages of local and national suffragist press but who have not been given much attention as individuals. Amy Walker Black, a teacher of shorthand and typing before her marriage, was a member of Newcastle ILP by 1905. By 1906, she was in Chester-le-Street a very active member of the ILP there and one of two branch signatories to the ILP Manifesto to the WSPU. As her daughter born in that year was named Marion Pankhurst Black, one can assume that her mother was a WSPU supporter! However, this association did not last. She moved to the NUWSS and became more active in the Women’s Labour League (WLL) after 1909. An article she wrote for the *Northern Democrat* in 1907 on ‘Overworked Housewives’ indicates the direction which she was taking. She advocated a new system of co-operative domestic labour through a socialist, rather than a feminist, vision of central kitchens.

Perhaps more interesting is evidence that there were more Labour (and working-class) supporters of the WSPU than appear in formal records. Connie Lewcock (nee Ellis) became a local Labour activist in Newcastle in later years but, when young, was a WSPU activist in County Durham. In an unpublished memoir and oral interviews from the 1970s, she provided

details of her activities. Although much of this was probably coloured by some desire for self-publicity and a perspective filtered by the distance of some sixty years, it has been possible to trace some of the people she mentioned through the suffrage and Labour press together with census material. This has revealed an interesting network in one small area of Durham.



(Compiled from database)

Connie Ellis was a single, elementary school teacher working in the mining village of Esh Winning. She was already a WSPU supporter when she arrived from Lincolnshire, but in Esh Winning she became involved with the ILP. Although of middle class origins herself, she became friendly with the Harrison family of miners from nearby Cornsay. The family was politically active: Mrs. Elizabeth Harrison held a WSPU meeting in her house in 1914 and her daughter, Esther, also a pupil-teacher, sold *The Suffragette* with Connie Ellis on Framwellgate Bridge in Durham.



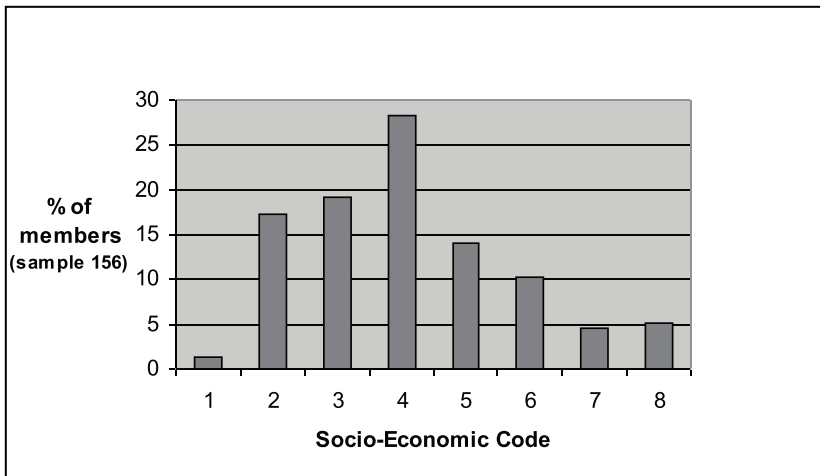
(Source: *Bridge Studios* Esther Harrison on left, Connie Ellis on right)

Esther's brother, John, was secretary of the local ILP and later married Isabella Faulkner, another WSPU friend of Connie and fellow speaker. She was from a Durham mining family but was by then a teacher in Chester-le-Street. The WSPU/Labour links in this friendship network are revealing and yet it is only Isabella Faulkner about whom there is substantial evidence in the formal contemporary records.²² It is unlikely that this type of network was unique and demonstrates grassroots WSPU support amongst young aspirational working-class women, something previously 'hidden' from view in the region.

How far was this working-class support typical of the WSPU in the region? An answer to the question might help to decide whether a picture of a wealthy leadership who ensured that Labour and the WSPU were divided by class differences is justified. In the absence of branch records, names of 240 women involved in the WSPU have been collected into my database from the women's suffrage and local press, but so few details were given that it has been difficult to trace them, either via census or directory

information or a combination of the two. However, 65 per cent of the women named have been assigned a socio-economic background. As shown in the graph below, the WSPU in the North East was dominated by the higher socio-economic groups, the merchants/industrialists with 17 per cent (2), higher class professionals with 19 per cent (3) and lower professionals with 28 per cent (4), making a total of 64 per cent.

The Socio-Economic Status of WSPU members



(Compiled from database)

However, the ‘hiddenness’ of working-class women is a factor. They are often unidentifiable because of the transience of working-class families, particularly where mobility for mining or shipyard jobs was necessary to maintain or improve economic security. Evidence in compiling my database has shown frequent instances of different addresses within a small area for households in 1901 and 1911. Furthermore, details were given in suffrage press reports about, for example, women who hosted parlour or drawing-room meetings and these were inevitably middle-class women. Working-class women may therefore be under-represented.

That statement holds true even when analysis of donations, published in the suffragette press, *Votes for Women* and *The Suffragette*, is undertaken. Fear of loss of ‘respectability’ and of shame at the relatively small amount they could afford deterred working-class women from making public named donations. When compared with analysis of donations in the Liverpool area, however, it does seem that the North East had less support from the less wealthy, 38 per cent under 5shillings compared with 47 per cent in Liverpool.²³

Donations from North East women named in *Votes for Women* and *The Suffragette*

Value of donations	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914
£5 + over	4	4	20	14	19	11	4
£1 - £4 19s	1	6	18	12	28	30	7
10s – 19s 11d	1	2	20	17	20	16	2
5s – 9s 11d	0	3	23	8	31	22	11
2s – 4s 11d	0	5	29	25	29	54	17
1s – 1s 11d	1	1	16	6	6	13	5
Under 1s	0	0	5	0	0	2	0

*(Source: analysis of *Votes for Women* and *The Suffragette* 1908-14)*

Of the mere 7 donations below 1 shilling (out of a total of 569) between 1908 and 1914, only one of the donors is traceable, Miss Margaret Bousefield, who gave 6d in 1910. Census records show that she was a domestic servant in 1901 and a machinist in an engineering works by 1911, presumably Armstrong’s which had 500 women by 1905.²⁴ Political and militant consciousness among women factory-workers was therefore possible, but there were so few of them in a region dominated

by heavy industry and mining that they do not emerge as an active group, even when tapped by the WSPU.

The WSPU in the North East did make efforts to garner working-class support. It has already been seen that Mona Taylor claimed a pro-Labour stance and, in her 1905 pamphlet, *To Women Who are Well off*, she set the tone of much of the subsequent Newcastle activity. She challenged moneyed women, of whom she was one, to think about women's suffrage for the benefit of working women or 'poorer sisters', realised through issues such as taxation, temperance and the laws affecting 'morality'. The Newcastle meetings might feature Lady Parsons, Lady Blake and other very wealthy women, but Mona Taylor saw as its objective the liberation of working-class and lower middle-class women's lives, although there is some obfuscation between 'working-class' and working-women'.

It is not therefore surprising that the North East WSPU campaign consistently paid attention to working-class audiences, particularly in Newcastle. Significantly, outdoor meetings were held at key venues, often traditional Labour sites, such as the Bigg Market and the Big Lamp on Westgate Road. At the by-elections of Jarrow and Newcastle in 1907 and 1908 respectively, this outdoor format was unexceptional even though not national policy until 1908. Moreover, the Newcastle by-election provided the opportunity to speak at daytime meetings to those hit by the unemployment and depression in the engineering industry. Mrs. Pankhurst was invited to address trade union meetings, which were described as 'an entirely new feature of the world of the WSPU.'²⁵ Shipyard and factory-gate meetings, frequently during dinner-hours, became a prominent feature of campaigning outside election periods. Norah Balls, a middle-class activist from Tyneside from 1908, later described how 'wherever there were works, there you would get a gathering without difficulty' and that 'no district was too rough for us to tackle...our favourite pitches were outside the great engineering works on Tyneside.'²⁶ WSPU women were contesting more aggressively the public spaces which were traditionally gendered as male.

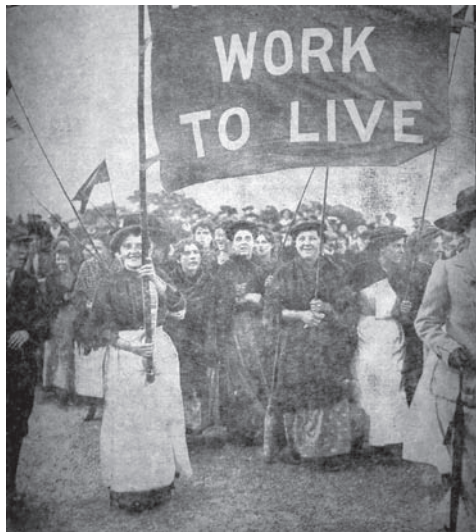
Using similar tactics, mining villages away from the industrial centres were targeted, especially in summer campaigns, for example north of Newcastle in 1909, in north Durham and east Northumberland in 1910. The apparent intensification of this type of campaigning in 1913-14 may have been a response to the NUWSS-Labour election pact. What is more significant is the greater use of known working-class speakers, for example Lizzie Crow from Jarrow and Isabella Faulkner, Connie Ellis' friend, alongside the more established middle-class speakers such as Jane Atkinson and Norah Balls. Consideration of the audience was therefore taken into account in order to maximise the WSPU's appeal.

There is some evidence of miners' support for the WSPU. Mrs. Pankhurst was listed in the 1908 Durham Miners' Association (DMA) nominations for Gala speakers: 'the following gentlemen (sic) have been nominated ... Mrs. Pankhurst.'²⁷ There were also WSPU stands and newspaper-selling at the Tynemouth Miners' Galas of 1909 and 1911 and the Walker Colliery band pledged itself to play for free at WSPU events, as at the release of women prisoners after the demonstration against Lloyd George in 1909.²⁸ It must be remembered that this is during a period when the DMA had finally affiliated to the Labour Party and Lib-Lab'ism was fading among miners. Moreover, although the miners voted against women's suffrage at their 1912 national conference, both 1914 miners' gala meetings passed resolutions condemning forced feeding of suffragette prisoners and supporting equal voting rights.²⁹ Connie Lewcock also recalled how her mining friend and ILP member, Jos Craddock, acted as her physical guard and champion at Liberal meetings where she was ejected, something experienced in other parts of the country where young socialist men offered protection to WSPU women.³⁰ Jack Parks, a local ILP Secretary, miner and fervent socialist, who was proud to recall his chairing of a noisy WSPU meeting at Prudhoe during the 1907 Hexham by-election, encountered a rather different experience. In Prudhoe, the miners were known to be 'rabidly Liberal' and so Parks' support, which he maintained to 1914, even after he had become a syndicalist, was more

unusual during the earlier period.³¹ He had, however, been ‘educated’ in feminism by Amy Walker Black (see above) who had lent him a copy of Mary Wollstonecraft’s ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’, so demonstrating another grassroots link between Labour and the WSPU.³²

While much effort was directed at male audiences, the few major centres of women’s employment were also targeted by the WSPU. The women rope-makers at Willington Quay were canvassed but, as the meeting was organised by Mrs. Kate Haggie, a WSPU activist but also the wife of their employer who had Unionist connections, their response might have been politic. However, the women at the Ropery works in Sunderland, owned by another member of the Haggie family, responded enthusiastically and the photograph of women workers at the Sunderland demonstration of September 1911 is a quasi-romantic portrayal of a positive working-class attitude to the WSPU.

Sunderland Demonstration September 1911



(Source: Newcastle Illustrated Chronicle, September 11th 1911)

The slogan 'Work to Live' is not overtly connected to the WSPU cause but, however staged the participation of these working-women or the photograph itself may have been, the fact that the local group wanted this aspect of their campaign to be featured demonstrates that an alliance with working-class women was not shunned. Meetings were also regularly held outside two other places of female employment, the Electric Lights Company in Benwell and the rabbit skin factory on City Road, Newcastle.³³

Evidence of attempts by the WSPU to court the working-class does not necessarily indicate Labour sympathies as the Tory working-class presence already cited might suggest different relationships. However, there are organisational links which suggest the gulf between Labour and the WSPU at national level was replicated regionally. A number of ILP branches continued to invite WSPU speakers throughout the period 1908-12, and there were also WSPU appearances at Newcastle Socialist Society and Socialist Sunday School meetings. In Wallsend, a closer institutional link was forged as regular WSPU meetings were held in the ILP Institute. In 1911, a local request was published for invitations to address meetings of the WCG, ILP, trade unions and the WLL.³⁴ Newcastle WSPU, like groups in Liverpool, Huddersfield and Leeds, did not see left-wing groups as necessarily hostile.

The fact that no WSPU meetings with the ILP were reported after the national NUWSS-Labour electoral alignment in early 1912 indicates local toeing of the national line, at least in published reports. Whether this was from both or only one side of this line is not revealed. However, a fascinating comment in November 1912 suggests that both sides in the North East regretted the rift: 'A feature of open-air meetings has been the interest and understanding shown by working men on the policy of the Union towards the Parliamentary Labour Party.'³⁵ This was expressed at the time when Sylvia Pankhurst, with her Labour supporter George Lansbury, were threatening to break from the Pankhurst grip on the WSPU, so tensions were high. The North East WSPU ignored the tension and

both Sylvia Pankhurst and George Lansbury spoke in the region in late 1912 and early 1913 at North Shields, Jarrow and Newcastle. Lansbury's meeting in Newcastle Town Hall had a good response from 'local labour (sic) women'.³⁶ The local WSPU was therefore prepared to welcome the more left-wing face of the national WSPU and to ignore its imminent split from the leadership of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst.

The emerging picture is thus mixed. What has been shown is that the assumption that Labour links with the WSPU were lost after the Cocker-mouth by-election is invalid. In common with other areas, links remained at grassroots level as demonstrated in the micro-study of the Ellis-Faulkner-Harrison network in the mining villages of County Durham. Moreover, the probable Labour roots of the West Hartlepool and Jarrow branches created a different kind of WSPU from the image of the Newcastle organisation. The WSPU's London leadership could not take North East branches with it in its antipathy to Labour and the focus on campaigns among industrial workers and at traditional Labour speaking sites proves that the North East WSPU knew that the gulf at national level did not exist at local level. The fact that the links with the ILP and working-class support were not as close as in other regions, such as the East Midlands or the cities of Leeds and Liverpool, does not detract from the existence of links.³⁷ However, just as the national leadership pursued its policy of not being beholden to any political party, so the dominant local personalities of Mona Taylor and Jane Atkinson both subdued party in the interests of a 'higher' cause, women's suffrage, as indeed did Emily Davison, something which the Labour women in constitutional suffragism in the region found harder to achieve. But that is another story.....

Notes

- 1 Morley, A. and Stanley, S. *The Life and Death of Emily Davison*, London, Women's Press, 1988, p. 168.
- 2 Harrison tape 27, 15 April 1976. Women's Library.
- 3 Letter from Emily Davison to Miss Williams, WSPU organiser in Newcastle, 14 October 1909. Museum of London collection
- 4 Morley and Stanley, op. cit., pp. 170-1.
- 5 Emmeline Pankhurst, *Daily Herald*, 19 October 1912.
- 6 Rosen, A., *Rise Up Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-14*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp. 34-5.
- 7 Cf. Cowman, K., 'Mrs. Brown is a Man and a Brother!' *Women in Merseyside's Political Organisations 1890-1926*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2004, and Liddington, J., *Rebel Girls. Their Fight for the Vote*, London, Virago, 2006.
- 8 By February 1907, there were 58 branches. WSPU First Annual Report, February 1907.
- 9 *Labour Leader* (LL), 22 August 1905.
- 10 *LL*, 6 April 1906. ILP Manifesto to the WSPU, p. 2. Manchester Reference Library BR324.3M.26. Census material.
- 11 The WFL was a self-styled militant group, which in most areas co-operated closely with Labour, but its presence in the NE was very limited and its profile was distinctly middle-class and, in the case of the Sunderland branch, populated by discontented Liberals.
- 12 *Suffragette*, 27 February 1914, 7 August 1914.
- 13 *Jarrow Labour Herald*, 30 November 1906, 18 January 1907.
- 14 *Suffragette*, 20 December 1912, 1 February 1913.
- 15 WSPU 2nd Annual Report, Museum of London Collection. 'The Making of a Militant Suffragist' *Votes for Women*, 23 September 1910.
- 16 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 22 March 1907.
- 17 *Ibid.* 19 January 1907.
- 18 In 1908, she addressed the East End (Newcastle) Liberal Club and was bitingly criticised for undoing 'whatever good her paper might have done in the meeting by her pointed reference to the Liberal party as a party of opportunists.' *The Newcastle Liberal Monthly* April 1908.
- 19 'The Making of a Militant Suffragist', op. cit.
- 20 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 31 October 1912.
- 21 *The Vote*, 14 December 1912.
- 22 *Suffragette*, 7 March, 4 July, 25 July, 22 August, 19 September, 17 October, 31 October, 7 November 1913, for example.
- 23 Cowman, K., ' "The Stone Throwing has been forced upon us". The function of militancy within the Liverpool WSPU, 1906-14'. *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 145, 1995, p.187

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- 24 Lecture by John Clayson, Keeper of Science and Industry, Tyne and Wear Museum, 21 October 2008.
- 25 *Votes for Women*, 17, 24 September 1908.
- 26 Harrison taped interview, 16 April 1977, Women's Library.
- 27 *DMA Minutes*, 3 April 1908.
- 28 *VFW*, 6 August, 5 November 1909.
- 29 *The Suffragette*, 24 July 1914.
- 30 For example, Molly Murphy in Manchester and Sheffield, whose political hue was also Labour/WSPU, wrote about her experience of this. Murphy, Molly, *Molly Murphy: Suffragette and Socialist*, Salford, Institute of Social Research, 1998, p. 28.
- 31 *Memories of a militant*, North East Group for the Study of Labour History, no. 9, October 1975. *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* 15, 17, 19 March 1907. *The Suffragette* 21 June 1914 lists Jack Parks as giving 2s.6d. to support a Town Hall meeting.
- 32 *Memories of a militant, op. cit.*
- 33 *VFW* 4, 11 August, 13 October 1911, 19 April 1912.
- 34 *Ibid* 17 November 1911.
- 35 *Suffragette*, 15 November 1912 – a report from the North East though in the national suffrage press.
- 36 *Ibid* 17 January 1913.
- 37 See fn 7 above and Whitmore, R., "The Shrieking Sisterhood" – Membership, Policy and Strategy of the WSPU in Leicester and the East Midlands 1907-14,' PhD, de Montfort University, 2000.

The British Association for Local History Awards 2012

Harry Barnes, 'The birth of Easington Colliery'

(Journal of the North East Labour History Society vol.42, 2011)

Harry was given this award for the first part of his Easington trilogy.
The Society would like to congratulate him.

EASINGTON COLLIERY 1919-1935: YEARS OF DEFINITION

Harry Barnes

By 1919, Easington Colliery had acquired the key characteristics of what was then a modern Durham mining community – estates of colliery houses, a local Co-operative store, a railway passenger station, brick built infant and junior schools, a miners' welfare, workingmen's clubs, two hosteleries, a Mission church, two Methodist chapels, two cinemas, a ten mile charabanc service to Sunderland, a range of shops along two adjoining streets and extra housing for miners and those who served the pit community.¹



A football team of miners from the colliery houses in the background c.1927

Housing Shortage

Some 90% of its housing was situated within 600 yards of the pit – some of it being immediately opposite the pit yard.² The area was even more confined than these measurements indicate, for none of this accommodation was situated to the east of the pit, as this led to the sea. Although there were some non-mining families living mainly above shops, it was mining families who dominated this area in some 1,000 colliery houses. The tightly packed and often overcrowded terraced buildings were provided rent free by the Easington Coal Company³ as a substitute for part of miners' wages. It was a means of attracting labour and tying miners to their employment. Only a few of the house, which were mainly for officials, had small gardens. For the rest the only outside facility was a yard, with a brick built outside toilet and a coal house; there was also a nail hammered into a dividing wall between the neighbouring properties to hold the bath tub.⁴

To the west of miners' homes were several other streets. These included an extension of the main shopping area as it moved up the area's main thoroughfare, Seaside Lane. Then there were some other rows of terraced houses close to Seaside Lane. One was on its southern side and the rest to the north of the Lane, close to the schools and the Co-op. There were also other terraced houses, but these were situated slightly further away from the pit. The Easington Coal Company was often involved in their building. Such houses tended to be used by those who provided teaching, entertainment and other facilities for the mining community. Some miners would also make use of such facilities, often as lodgers or by renting "rooms" for their families, as they waited for the Coal Company to house them in the miners' enclave.

The only additional street of terraced houses was situated near the south east of the miners' homes, close to the railway station. These were eight houses for railway workers and their families. There were also a small number of properties which stood in their own grounds. These included the homes of the colliery manager and his under-manager. Although handsome properties, they were also tied to the work which their occupants undertook

on behalf of the Easington Coal Company. Other individual properties in the area included long established farm houses. Finally, some three quarters of a mile from the pit there was the “Waterworks”, a pumping station established in 1890s before the sinking of the pit. It was situated on what was then the outer-limits of Easington Colliery.⁵

The area was becoming increasingly overcrowded between 1919 and 1923 due to (a) a lack of building other than a further club, another Methodist chapel, a Mission hall and a Catholic church,⁶ (b) a rise in the post-war birth rate and (c) a 10.7 % increase in the numbers on the local electoral register – indicating a steep rise in the population. The Easington Coal Company was reluctant to act on the housing problem not just out of its economic interests, but also due to the unstable political and industrial situation. The mines were subject to a form of Government control from 1917 to 1921 which meant that the mine owners were reluctant to invest in housing until they took back full control. Then there were major disabling industrial disputes in 1920 and 1921.⁷

Housing Boom

Before Easington’s pit was in operation, the Durham coal owners had moved into a position where miners to whom they did not provide free colliery housing, received payments towards their rent. This arrangement excluded the surface workers, who were only added in 1920. By 1928 these payments amounted to 10p per shift.⁸ When applications for house building began to re-emerge from 1923, the Easington Rural District Council, the Easington Colliery Coal Company and their chief builder H.E. Pitt became deeply involved in the private market. By 1926, eight streets of terraced houses were in place to the north of Seaside Lane. These included six streets in an area known as “Wembley”, which contained 189 houses and was also part of a Government subsidised housing scheme.⁹

The next major move was for the Easington Coal Company to operate a programme of “scheme” houses. By 1928, seven terraced streets accounting for 261 such homes were then occupied on the Holme Hill Estate, which

was known locally as “Canada”. The scheme is described by W.A. Moyes: “The colliery made all the building arrangements, advanced the deposits and organised mortgages for the capital”.¹⁰ Housing subsidies were also utilised due to a series of Housing Acts which operated in the 1920s and which had initially been used to aid working people taking rented properties.¹¹ These were now utilised in the purchase of the scheme houses. The new estate was situated just a short distance north of the colliery housing enclave.

The subsequent expansion of housing mainly took place alongside Seaside Lane, as it moved in a westerly direction towards the ancient settlement of Easington Village. Yet even by 1935, nobody in Easington Colliery lived more than a mile from the pit.

There were purchasers of houses in Tyne and Wear Terrace (north of Seaside Lane) who also participated in the “scheme”. These houses first appear on the electoral register in 1927. In September 1929, Mr. A. Duff acquired 10 Tyne Terrace at the price of £385, including stamp duty and other costs; but less a government subsidy of £87. He made a deposit of £5 and initial weekly payments of 8 shillings 6 pence (42.5p) for six weeks. He then paid at the rate of 7 shillings (35p) per week until December 1948 when he paid off the balance of just under £61.¹² Developments were also aided by the input of the Easington District Council, who began to provide housing for those they represented. In 1927 the first Council Houses to be occupied were at Cavell Square, next to “Wembley”. These were the first homes occupied by miners, which were not terraced houses. They were semi-detached houses with gardens. The first tenants were selected on behalf of the Council by a small selection committee which met in the colliery offices under the chairmanship of T.A. Lishman the colliery manager and which included George Walker who was president of the local miners’ lodge. A teacher, a cinema manager, a labourer, a butcher, a window cleaner, a railway porter and two women (with no job descriptions) were selected as tenants along with nine miners and a stoneman.¹³

A major development of private housing also emerged on the southern side of Seaside Lane in the vicinity of the waterworks and there was also a

major council housing programme in operation by 1930 in this area. Aged Miners' Homes were later amongst the homes added by the council and by 1935 the council housing estate had reached 224 houses. Many miners rented council and private housing (or "rooms" in private houses), using the allowances from the coal company as a contribution towards their rents.

Additional provisions to housing included the 1924 opening of an east coast road from Easington Colliery to its south, which at last linked easily with the neighbouring mining colliery of Horden whose development had many similarities with Easington's. The year before that, the cemetery was opened. It would come to hold a large section for the graves of most of the miners killed in the colliery's huge mining disaster in 1951. Other developments included the opening of numbers of extra places for worship – a Catholic church, the Anglican Church of Ascension, a Baptist chapel and a Salvation Army hall. A third Methodist chapel for the Primitives had opened in 1920. A miner's hall had been established back in 1912 and it began to show films in 1925. It then burnt down in 1929 and was replaced by a substantial new building in 1934, which was opened by the colliery manager. A third and more modern cinema, the Rialto, was opened in 1935. The Comrades Club and the Constitutional Club were also formed in this period, although the latter was taken over from the Buffaloes.¹⁴ A fine recreation ground had been established under the Miners' Welfare Fund, which had been established under the Mining Industry Act of 1920. In 1923, the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) agreed to the use of the fund to initially purchase the necessary land and to provide a pavilion, fencing, a bowling green, tennis courts and a children's playground. Other facilities were added including the main football ground which was opened in 1929 by the Prime Minister, whom as we shall see, was then the local M.P.¹⁵ After a major pit disaster of 1951, 83 trees were planted along the walkway at the entrance of the grounds, to commemorate those who had been killed.

Pros and Cons

In 1935, 46.8% of the houses in Easington were still the original colliery houses. They were still without bathrooms and the pit head baths had not yet been opened. There were hardly any jobs yet for women, who were kept especially busy looking after the home. Coal had to be brought in from the outside coal house to boil up water for weekly use in poss-tubs on wash day and for the tin baths when the men (often on different shifts) returned from work. Meals had also to be provided, often round the clock. The roles of men and women were thus separately defined. By 1935, over a period of thirty-one years, 52 men had been killed at the local pit¹⁶ and the pursuit of compensation cases for those injured or suffering from the impact of dust was a standard pursuit for the lodge officials. When in 1920, J.C. Robson a 19 year old labourer on the screens was killed from a fall, his family received £100 under the compensation procedure; although the Coal Owners Association initially offered only £6 to cover funeral costs.¹⁷ The offer of £6 was the normal practice, although the standard compensation finally granted for older underground workers was usually £300.

Miners were, however, attracted to Easington and many settled there for life, due to a number of factors. It was a long-life pit which seemed to supply a secure future and it developed into a large community compared to many traditional inland mining areas. This led to it providing a wide range of shops, entertainments, sporting facilities, clubs, pubs, places of worship and other social provisions which have been indicated above. In 1921, Kelly's Directory already listed 89 commercial services operating in the colliery, nearly all of them being situated in Seaside Lane and its smaller adjunct of Bede Street which formed a dog-leg at the bottom of the Lane's shopping area.¹⁸ Yet this variety of provisions operated within the framework of a compact community. Easington is also situated next to sea cliffs, a beach and nearby wooded denes. This environment harboured facilities for nature lovers, children's play areas, family outings, fishermen and gambling schools. On top of which for further outside pursuits, there was the extensive recreation grounds, known as the "Rec". Then, although

it detracted from the areas concerned, the Colliery tipped its waste first of all down the cliffs and finally in 1931 via an aerial tip onto the beach and then directly into the sea.¹⁹ At least this meant there was no unsightly and dusty pit heap affecting its tightly knit housing. Above all, when Easington was fairly fully developed in the 26 year spell from 1909, it was a modern community by the standards of many Durham pit villages. It did not require a slum clearance programme, which was a common experience of many working class areas in that era.

Nationalisation

By February 1917, the Wartime Coalition Government had taken over a form of control (but not full ownership) of the entire coal mining industry in order to utilise production for the war effort.²⁰ When the war was over the miners felt that they had made major sacrifices, whilst the owners had profited financially from the high demand for coal. In 1919, the miners decided to try to correct matters and voted overwhelmingly to strike in pursuit of wage increases, shorter hours and full nationalisation.²¹ To buy time, the Lloyd George government set up a commission to look into the situation. The miners were, however, strong enough to be able to obtain four places on the commission for their appointees plus two further appointments agreed between the government and the MFGB. The latter (showing the strength of the miner's influence) turned out to be the leading socialist intellectuals R.H. Tawney and Sidney Webb. A countervailing group was appointed containing coal owners and their sympathisers. Justice Sankey was appointed to chair the commission and he went on to become Lord Chancellor in the 1929 minority Labour government. Sidney Webb, in particular, made effective use of the commission to advance the miners' claims. The findings of the commission led the government to make concessions which improved the miners' conditions. But even though the vote of Sankey tipped the commission's majority position in favour of nationalisation, this proposal was never enacted. The government had done enough to prevent the miners' from acting upon their threat of militancy.²²

In the lead up to the work of the Sankey Commission the Labour Party also began to advance its case for nationalisation. In the 1918 General Election it acquired 22% of the vote, compared to 7.6% at the previous election in 1910. Although it only gained 63 seats compared to the Lloyd George Coalition's 478 seats, it became the largest opposition party.²³ Whilst many Labour MPs represented coal mining areas, this was not yet the case in the strong mining area of Seaham which embraced Easington – matters were in transition. Eleven months before the election, Labour had adopted a clause in its constitution calling for the “common ownership of the means of production”, together with a programme entitled “Labour and the New Social Order”, which spelt out the case for public provisions. Both the new Clause 4 proposal and the new programme were drafted by Sidney Webb.²⁴ As will be shown later, his role in the labour movement and on the Sankey Commission did not go unnoticed amongst influential miners’ in Easington.

On 27 September 1919, the DMA ran 20 mass meetings to press the case for nationalisation. Amongst the speakers at the Miners’ Hall at Easington was Vernon Hartshorne M.P., a member of the National Executive of the MFGB who went on to become the President of the South Wales Miners.²⁵ But just a year after the DMA’s nationalisation campaign, the miners became focused instead on the wages and conditions issues, due to what C.L. Mowat called the “pent up dissatisfactions of the last five years”.²⁶

When the mines were eventually nationalised in 1947, the Minister for Fuel and Power responsible for taking the matter through parliament was Manny Shinwell. He was the local M.P. for Seaham, which included Easington and he had a massive 32,257 majority. On vesting day on 1st January 1947, he attended a ceremony next to Easington’s pit.²⁷ The pit remained as part of the National Coal Board until its closure in 1993,²⁸ just a year before the nation’s remaining 15 pits were privatised.

Disputes

A national mining strike took place from 16 October to 4 November 1920. In East Durham, 12 pits were involved with an estimated 25,000 miners participating out of a total population of 80,000.²⁹ Some 2,500 miners worked at the Easington pit at the time. Strike pay at £1 per week was around 25% of the average pay for a five day week.³⁰ Two days after the strike, negotiations took place between officials of the Easington Lodge and the local management about safety measure. Three enginemen were allowed to sort out shifts amongst themselves, but it was decided that no onsetters were required,³¹ the onsetters being responsible for controlling the coal tubs as they operated to and from the cage at the bottom of the shaft. The government tactic was to use its emergency powers on the one side and to offer the miners a temporary settlement involving a 2 shillings (10p) shift concession, whilst awaiting the setting up of a National Wage Board for future determinations. When the deal was put to the miners it was accepted. With a 56.4% vote in favour by Durham miners.³²

However, within five months, industrial strife re-emerged when the Government ended its controls over the industry on 31 March 1921. On the following day a million miners were locked out by the owners. The Government adopted emergency powers and it returned troops from Ireland. The MFGB had hoped to gain backing for their case via sympathetic action from the transport and railway unions, with whom they had formed the Triple Alliance for such common purposes in 1914. But on what became known as Black Friday, it was decided that the support would not be forthcoming. The dispute continued for three months. By 29th April, Scott (the butcher) on Seaside Lane at Easington was reported to have supplied families with 80 gallons of soup and the use of his premises for at least three days a week, whilst Fairs (the fish monger) on Vane Street, supplied fish and chips to 200 children twice a week.³³ It was also reported that the Education Authority were feeding 600 children daily and officials at the colliery were contributing 10 shillings (50p) per week to a relief fund. In addition a further relief fund for fire coal and scrap-wood was also being

supplied to the workmen by the owners of the Colliery, whilst “sports of all kind was being indulged in”.³⁴ The miners were finally defeated and returned to work after accepting a £10 million subsidy for the industry from the Government to provide a temporary limit to the extent of the proposed cuts in miners’ wages.³⁵



Easington Colliery Council School 1926 Lockout

Building upon its experiences of a three week strike in 1920 and a three month lock-out in 1921, the miners entered a massive industrial struggle in 1926. In Easington the dispute lasted from 1 May to 6 December, with 3,104 workers being involved and a loss of 505,952 working days. These figures illustrate the size of the pit at the time. The numbers of days lost was the fourth highest in County Durham out of a total of 156 pits. Only Easington’s immediate neighbours south at Horden, north at Dawdon and north-west at Murton, lost more days work.³⁶ All four pits were part of the Easington Rural District which formed one of the eleven Poor Law Unions

in County Durham. From July to November, the numbers of people in this area who were in receipt of Domiciliary Poor Law Relief was higher than that for any of the other areas; peaking at 49,577 in the November.³⁷ The 1921 pattern of shopkeepers feeding children continued, whilst soup kitchens were run from a yard of the council school.³⁸ It was not, however, the only site to provide such facilities. The feeding of children was also undertaken by the Durham County Educational Authority under the provisions of the 1921 Education Act. Ramsay Reed wrote about when he was a child at Easington, saying that “the young children of the colliery paraded with spoon and basin to the Methodist chapel where a soup kitchen had been set up. Here at long trestle topped tables we sat spooning up soup like rows of *Oliver Twists*, and we also looked for more..... I spent days fishing (with his Grandfather H.B.) from the beach with a hand line trying to coax a fine cod out of the North Sea....fish and chip dinners we had whenever we struck lucky”.³⁹ Day to day, it was mainly a matter of communal self-help, with George Walker (the Lodge President) as a member of the Easington Board of Guardians, persistently seeking to obtain aid for those in need.⁴⁰ Outside help continued for miners, however, from a national Miner’s Relief Fund which functioned also after the end of the strike, until at least the end of June 1927; with two-thirds of its funds coming from overseas.⁴¹ Only four weeks before the end of the strike, George Bloomfield the Easington Lodge Secretary wrote to the DMA on behalf of his members stating “We desire a loyal and strong adherence to the policy of no increase of hours, no reduction, and no district settlement.”⁴² But the end was in sight.

The years following the strike “were some of the worst the miners had ever experienced”.⁴³ In real terms Durham miners’ earnings fell by 16% from the period leading to the strike, up to 1929. Easington also experienced short-time working and earnings would only return to their 1914 level in 1938.⁴⁴ By March 9th 1933, normal output had fallen at Easington Colliery by almost 50% and 200 men received their notices.⁴⁵ From the nearest dates for which figures are available, there was a local decline of underground employment of 660 between 1930 and 1935.⁴⁶

Yet although numbers of families are said to have left the area, the evidence from electoral registration figures from 1933 to 1935 is that the total adult population remained almost static.⁴⁷ It wasn't easy to find alternative work.

Politics

At the start of 1911 and at the age of 32, George Bloomfield became the Secretary of the newly established Easington Colliery Miner's Lodge. It was a key position which he held until 1939. In March 1911 he was elected also as checkweighman.⁴⁸ He eventually moved into a home provided for those holding the position; "Olive House" on Seaside Lane was in the midst of what was then a thriving local shopping complex. In more ways than one, he was at the heart of his community. He arrived from Easington from the neighbouring colliery of Horden where he had been Compensation Agent and also secretary of the local branch of the Independent Labour Party, which was at that time affiliated to the Labour Party itself.⁴⁹ He took a strong line on behalf of the ILP, being a leading member and a spokesman for their Durham Forward Movement, which pressed to democratise the DMA and to turn it in a socialist direction.⁵⁰ When the ILP adopted an anti-war stance, he took an opposing position⁵¹ but his difference of opinion did not, however, move him out of the I.L.P. In 1918 the Easington Colliery Branch of the ILP was the biggest in the Seaham constituency with a membership of 30.⁵² The ILP along with the DMA, were the main bodies supporting the Labour parliamentary candidature of Jack Lawson - who was also in the ILP, although he had fought in the First World War.⁵³ Bloomfield acted as Lawson's agent.⁵⁴ They not only held ILP Membership in common and support for Britain's involvement in the war, but they had both been active in the Labour Forward Movement and were both committed Methodist lay preachers. Furthermore they had a strong commitment to adult education for working people. Lawson had studied for two years at Ruskin College from 1907, whilst Bloomfield had attended science classes at Rutherford College in Newcastle and then became an executive member of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in the

North East.⁵⁵ At Easington, Bloomfield participated in the organisational work of the WEA and the running of the Easington Colliery Adult School which was held in the United Methodist Hut in the late 1920s, where he contributed a talk on the “Aim of Discussion – To show the Search for Truth as an Expression of the Divine Word.”⁵⁶

After Lawson was defeated in the 1918 General Election, Bloomfield joined with five others in a meeting at the Murton’s Miners Welfare to set up a Seaham Constituency Labour Party⁵⁷ under the recent arrangements adopted by the Labour Party conference, with Bloomfield being appointed as secretary pro-tem. George Walker was also present and he was later to become president of the Easington Lodge and was another Methodist lay preacher.⁵⁸ The new Labour Party structure added individual membership to its affiliated arrangements; whilst its ideological stance came from provisions drafted by Sidney Webb – the miner’s hero on the Sankey Commission. The area’s miners then began to write to Webb to press him to become their Labour candidate. He was reluctant to cut across the wishes of the DMA, who saw the seat as being suitable for a nominee from amongst their membership, but when it became clear to him that the miners’ spokesmen in the Seaham Constituency were overwhelmingly his supporters, Sidney with Beatrice Webb visited the area and he decided to seek and then accept endorsement.⁵⁹ Sidney then moved (along with his wife) to build up support within the mining communities. In a period of 25 days from 27 November 1920, a programme of 29 Lectures were delivered throughout the constituency in church, school, temperance, mission and miners’ halls.⁶⁰ At Easington Colliery, Sidney gave two talks on Tuesday 7th December at the Miners’ Hall. One was at 10.30 am. on “The Rights of Englishmen and Irishmen – and also their duties” and the other at 7pm. was entitled “The Ethical Basis of Socialism”. Beatrice then gave a talk in the same Miner’s Hall just three days later on “The Possibilities of the Co-operative Movement”. Beatrice also encouraged the setting up of Labour Party Women’s Sections in the mining communities and later sent these a series of newsletters.⁶¹ Sidney and Beatrice (normally together) adopted a

pattern for a number of years of visiting the constituency three times a year on extended and busy visits.⁶² The work which they (and their supporters) undertook got across a message which led to clear electoral victories in 1922, 1923 and 1924; Labour receiving 59.9%, 71.3% and then 65.5% of the vote. Easington now seemed to be solidly in the Labour camp. When Sidney Webb went to the Lords in 1929, the seat was so attractive for Labour that he was replaced by its leader, Ramsay MacDonald who went on to obtain 72.5% of the vote in a four sided contest. With women, for the first time, exercising the parliamentary franchise on the same basis as men; the increased numbers produced a majority of 28,794 for MacDonald, who pointed out that this was then “the biggest majority ever recorded in the history of British elections”.⁶³

Bloomfield had first become a Labour district councillor for his community in 1914, transferring to the role of county councillor in 1926 and then becoming an alderman. He became agent to Sidney Webb for the 1923 Election⁶⁴ and was constituency secretary when MacDonald became the candidate.⁶⁵ He held central positions in the Seaham constituency Labour Party and his lodge regularly nominated him for DMA positions and (after early failures) he came to hold executive and delegate posts. On behalf of his lodge he regularly placed items on DMA agendas, spoke to them and wrote letters to various authorities.⁶⁶ Many of these matters would now be seen as covering ‘bread and butter’ (yet important) issues, but on behalf of his lodge he also wrote to A.J. Cook and George Spencer (then the left and right-wings of the MFGB, before Spencerism split from the MFGB over the 1926 lock-out) attacking the “spleen between two responsible men like yourselves”. A further missive went to the Daily Herald on the issue.⁶⁷

Since Sidney Webb won the Seaham Seat in 1922, Easington has always been part of a Labour Constituency – apart from the special case of the 1931 General Election. In facing the economic crisis of that time, Ramsay MacDonald had moved from being a Labour Prime Minister to being head of a National Government dominated by Conservatives. When he stood as National Labour against the scratch Labour candidate in 1931, there

was both much confusion and some areas of clear support for him from past Labour voters. MacDonald held the seat by 5,951 votes. In Easington itself, nine miners wives wrote to MacDonald pledging their “loyal support no matter what the Seaham Labour Party say”.⁶⁸ Six of these women came from close neighbouring territory in Allan Street and the adjoining Austin Street, which were colliery houses.⁶⁹ The majority of these were members of the Women’s Section of the Easington Colliery Labour Party.⁷⁰

In 1935, however, Labour easily recaptured the seat from MacDonald, when Manny Shinwell defeated him by 20,498 votes. During the campaign when MacDonald “addressed audiences of 1,000 at Easington Colliery and Horden (sic)...there was a good deal of booing and interruption”.⁷¹ Things got worse when, after only 20 minutes, a meeting had to be abandoned at Deaf Hill. In his own words, Shinwell claimed that prior to the election he had “spent every possible weekend in the constituency” and “MacDonald continued to neglect Seaham whilst I continued to nurse it.”⁷²

In the 71 years from the initial election of Sidney Webb in 1922 up to the closure of its pit in 1993, Easington linked itself strongly to the Labour Party – except when it first faced the candidature of the man that it had previously helped elect to become a Labour prime minister. In 1994, a year after mining ended at Easington and throughout the Durham Coalfield, the remnants of the UK coal industry was de-nationalised. This occurred 47 years after the hopeful day when Shinwell as Minister of Fuel and Power, had led the cheering at the vesting day ceremony at Easington Colliery. Then, only 15 days after the Bill to privatise the Coal Industry became law, Tony Blair was elected leader of the Labour Party and the following year Sidney Webb’s Clause IV favouring public ownership was removed from the Labour Party Constitution. In just a two year period, a line was drawn under a whole communal, industrial and political era.

Acknowledgements

There are numbers of people with past or present associations with Easington Colliery whose knowledge I have drawn from. I am especially grateful for information and help from Ann Barnes, Mary N. Bell and Dr. Nyra Wilson. Again I am grateful for the help of the staff of the Durham County Record Office. Valuable internet access was also obtained to the North East England Mining Archive and Research Centre, thanks to the help of staff at Sunderland University Library. I am alone responsible for any shortcomings.

Notes

- 1 For further details see my previous articles in this Journal in Volume 42, pp. 88-108 and Volume 43, pp. 76-94.
- 2 Throughout this article, the quantity and extent of housing is drawn from local electoral registers as related to a map of Easington Colliery in the *District of Easington Street Plan* (Wallington: Burrows Communications, c 1997), pp 26-7. The relevant electoral registers from 1918 to 1935 are at the Durham County Record Office, reference series M/67, numbers 144, 154, 165, 174, 178, 184, 192, 197, 203, 206, 208, 212, 215, 218, 222, 225, 228-9, 232. A basic source setting the scene for subsequent developments is the 1911 Census: Easington Civil Parish <http://www.1911census.co.uk/> (National Archives).
- 3 The wide range of involvement by the Easington Coal Company in building houses is shown in the Easington District Council's Building Plans from 1909 to 1946, Durham County Record Office, RD/Ea 172 for the index.
- 4 The dimensions of a typical colliery house are given in my article in Volume 42 of this Journal, p 99.
- 5 *The London Gazette*, 21 November 1890, <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/26108/pages/62324/page.pdf>
- 6 Reed, W.R., *A Father's Legacy: Memories Of A Miner At Easington Colliery* (Easington District Council, 1992), pp 70-1.
- 7 Arnot, R. Page, *The Miners' Years Of Struggle* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), pp 170-181 and Chapters VII-X.
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- 9 Durham County Record Office RD/Ea 172 ref 1029.
- 10 Moyes, William A., *Mostly Mining* (Newcastle: Frank Graham , 1969), p 139.
- 11 Especially the *Housing, &c, Act 1923 c24*
- 12 Information kindly provided by Mary N Bell from her father's payment book.
- 13 Durham County Record Office RD/Ea 81 (74).

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- 14 Reed, W.R., pp 71-2.
- 15 North East England Mining Archive and Research Centre, Sunderland University Library, NUMDA/1/6/48 (-33057) and NUMDA/1/6/49 (-32589) and http://www.itnsource.com/shotlist/BHC_RTV/1929/09/23/BGT407141611/?v=1
- 16 Unpublished records compiled and kindly provided by Mary N Bell.
- 17 North East England Mining Archive and Research Centre, NUMDA/1/6/45 (23754).
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- 19 Hopper, Eileen. *Easington Through The Years* (Newcastle, Summerhill Books, 2011), pp 64-5.
- 20 Arnot, R. Page, pp 170-3.
- 21 *ibid*, p 187.
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- 23 Butler, D., and Freeman, J, *British Political Facts 1900-1967* (London: MacMillan, 1968), p 141.
- 24 Pelling, H., *A Short History of the Labour Party* (London: MacMillan, 1968), pp 43-4.
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- 26 Mowat, Charles Loch. *Britain Between The Wars 1918-1940* (London: Methuen, 1959) p 42.
- 27 Durham County Council <http://ppparchive.durham.gov.uk/photos/picviewer.asp?next=400>
- 28 Durham Mining Museum <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/e002.htm>
- 29 Durham Chronicle, 22 October 1920, p 5, Durham County Record Office M57/60-1.
- 30 *ibid* and Garside, W.R. *The Durham Miners 1919-1960* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971) p 314.
- 31 Durham County Record Office NCB 30/Box 41/6.
- 32 Arnot, R. Page, p 274.
- 33 Durham Chronicle, 29 April 1921, p 2, Durham County Record Office M57/60-61.
- 34 *ibid*, 27 May 1921, p 10.
- 35 Garside, W.R. Chapter IV.
- 36 Mason, Anthony. *The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham 1918-1931, with special reference to the General Strike of 1926* (Hull University, Ph D thesis, 1967) pp 467-471.
- 37 *ibid*, p 459.
- 38 Hopper, Eileen. p 18.
- 39 Reed, W.R., pp 6-7.
- 40 Durham Chronicle, 12 June and 21 August 1926, Durham County Record Office M57/60.
- 41 Arnot, R. Page, p 520.
- 42 Bloomfield, G.W. to Richardson, W.P., 10 November 1926, Durham County Record Office.

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- 43 Williams, J.E., *The Derbyshire Miners* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1962) p 734.
- 44 Garside, W.R. p 314.
- 45 *ibid*, p 242.
- 46 Durham Mining Museum <http://www.dmm.org.uk/colliery/e002.htm>
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- 48 Durham Chronicle, 9 October 1926, p 7, Durham County Record Office M/57/60.
- 49 Independent Labour Party Annual Reports, 1910-21, London School of Economics Library, MF 13.
- 50 Durham Chronicle, 19 July 1912, p7, Durham County Record Office M/57/53.
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- 61 Passfield Papers, London School of Economics. IV 15: 11-15, 18-26, 33-61, 64-127.129-167.
- 62 *ibid*, IV 1-174.
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- 64 Blackwell, J. H. p 2.
- 65 Marquand, David. *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997) pp 482-3.
- 66 Substantial sources showing the range of Bloomfield's industrial and political activities are held at (a) the Durham County Record Office (b) the North East Mining Archive and Research Centre and (c) the Durham Mining Museum.
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- 68 Marquand, David, p 653.
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Oral testimony by Irene MacManners who became a Labour County Councillor for Easington.

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72 Shinwell, Emanuel, *Conflict Without Malice* (London: Odhams Press, 1955) p 128.

A BATTLE NOT FOR JOBS, BUT FOR LIVELIHOODS: POLICING THE MINERS' STRIKE OF 1984 TO 1985 IN THE COUNTY DURHAM COALFIELD.

James English

For Tom Donkin and Alan English.

The Strike

The Miners' Strike of 1984 to 1985 defined lives and communities across Britain. From its official beginnings on the 5th of March 1984 at Cortonwood Colliery in Yorkshire, the strike dominated the industrial landscape of Britain until its end on the 3rd of March 1985. The strike was supported and initiated by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and NUM President Arthur Scargill, and was opposed by both the Conservative Government led by Margaret Thatcher and the National Coal Board (NCB) under the leadership of Ian MacGregor. During the dispute, or 'civil war' as others have described it, the NCB continually re-asserted its view that certain pits across the country had to be closed because they were deemed as unsafe and 'uneconomic'.¹ Neither the NUM, nor Mr Scargill in particular, were prepared to compromise on their opposing view that pits should remain open in order to serve communities and provide jobs for future generations.

Consequently, the strike lasted a whole year. Miners and their affiliates from across Britain were forced to survive only on what they had saved, or had made available to them. The strike was particularly unique due to the bitterness that emerged within the NUM itself; certain pits, particularly in the Nottinghamshire area, chose to remain working during the strike and

in Nottinghamshire the breakaway UDM (Union of Democratic Miners) was founded.² These men were known to the NUM as 'scabs' and as the strike wore on and hardships began to stretch families and communities, the phenomenon of 'scabbing' became increasingly commonplace; in February 1985 a figure estimated at 36% had returned to work.³

By the 3rd of March 1985, the NUM and the miners accepted defeat and returned to work with banners aloft and marches of solidarity, all in honour of a dispute that had divided Britain since its beginnings in March 1984.

A Flawed Historiography

The Miners' Strike of 1984 to 1985 has been documented extensively in British historiography. Most studies have looked at the strike from a 'national' perspective and in doing so have identified national trends and understandings of the strike in Britain. A comprehensive understanding of the chronological events of the Miners' Strike has been realised, along with various insights into the workings of the media, police and community support groups during the strike.⁴ Such studies have held particular value in uncovering the origins of the strike; for example, it is now clear that the Conservative Government and Margaret Thatcher had prepared for a strike for a number of years before the event.⁵ Aside from this, however, much historiography has failed to understand the participants of the strike itself. Miners, communities and families have for the most part been left behind.

Historiography on the strike is often guilty of an unwavering focus on high profile figures, such as Arthur Scargill, Margaret Thatcher and Ian MacGregor. Crick's work, for example, is entitled 'Scargill and the Miners', collectivising all miners behind the will of Arthur Scargill before, during and after the strike.⁶ Even Beckett and Hencke's recent 2009 work, in itself an intriguing analysis of the strike, barely stretches its focus further than the movements of Scargill, Thatcher and MacGregor, in spite of the array of interviewees consulted in researching the work.⁷ Samuel is correct to suggest that historians should be immediately 'on guard' when approaching such

top-down representations; these national studies are driven by the actions of a few, not the experiences of many.⁸ Alongside this, the vast majority of works are tainted with such a degree of political bias that the unique nature of the Miners' Strike, and the experiences of those who lived through it, becomes unforgivably forgotten. Jones, Macintyre and Wilsher's study entitled 'Strike', for example, documents an entirely one-sided picture, something only furthered by Adeney's work that appears to exist simply as a celebration of the Conservative Government.⁹ Obviously, such bias is not restricted to one side of the argument; the accounts of Douglass and Sutcliffe and Hill that view the strike from the miners' perspective are similarly tainted with a bias and a sense of martyrdom from the outset.¹⁰ The Miners' Strike is seen in such studies far too simply; the miners were either right, or wrong. Those who fought, suffered, protested and stood together within mining communities become lost along the way.

By largely ignoring the voices of those who participated in the strike, historians have been able to build a wall of national trends and understandings that are naively assumed to have existed in every coalfield. Historiography has time after time re-asserted and explored the same themes in the same fashion, leading to the same generalised conclusions; relations between the police and miners deteriorated as the strike progressed; a definite media agenda existed; and mining communities were upheld by support for the miners, but intensely divided by violence and the question of the strike breaker.¹¹ It is time that this changed. In many regards, the flaws of these continual assumptions are rooted simply in the fact that they are applied nationally. Experiences are only deemed valuable if they fit the agenda of a national trend, in itself a strong generalisation, and consequently great swathes of individual coalfield and community experiences are disregarded. To do so is to underestimate entirely the complexity of the dispute and its variety in coalfields across Britain; as David Douglass has suggested, 'there are 150,000 individual stories of the strike' waiting to be explored.¹²

This Study and The Extract

In its full form, this study covers multiple facets of the Miners' Strike between 1984 and 1985 in the County Durham Coalfield. ¹³ In doing so, it attempts to understand the uniqueness of the strike in the County Durham Coalfield. Local research and arguments are founded on a selection of nine interviews with different people across County Durham, all of whom had different perspectives and recollections of the strike. Not all interviewees were miners, yet all were involved in the workings of the pit and were affiliated to the NUM. Such methodology has already helped to move Miners' Strike historiography, in some part, away from the staleness of 'national' assumptions. Both Keith Pattison's and Raphael Samuel's works stand unrivalled in this regard. Both attempt only to understand the strike locally, and use interviews, photographs and local documentation in order to emphasise not only the importance of the strike in the respected communities, but a sense of uniqueness and variety that exposes the near impossibility of making definitive generalisations on this topic. ¹⁴

The extract below is taken from the exploration of just one of these facets: the relationship between the police and striking miners in the County Durham Coalfield. National perceptions and understandings of the role of the police during the strike are considered, and then critically compared to local experiences and events in the County Durham Coalfield. In doing so, the fragility of national assumptions becomes glaringly apparent.

The extract emphasises a central theme of the wider study: that there is a different interpretation of the strike to be found in County Durham, and this is one shaped by its people and their communities. The real Miners' Strike was a local strike, defined by local people, interactions, emotions and perspectives and can only be understood this way.

The extract sits as part of a study rooted in the County Durham Coalfield. It does not even promise to be the definitive answer to the role of the police during the strike across the 1,033 square miles of Durham, but rather just a perspective; an insight into the role of the police in the strike in Durham and a story told largely by those who have yet to be given a voice

in Miners' Strike historiography.

The Role of the Police: the National Line

'I will never negotiate with people who use coercion and violence to achieve their objective ... they are the enemies of democracy'
(Margaret Thatcher).¹⁵

The national picture of the police has, and remains, shrouded in political subjectivity. During the dispute the police can be viewed as either the defenders or aggressors of the state: a necessary force of protection or an unnecessary force of provocation.

Certain trends, however, have transcended political standpoints to become well established in Miners' Strike historiography. Historians have long emphasised an absolute decline in relations between the police and striking miners during the dispute.¹⁶ Accusations range from a 'national police force' to a 'national riot force', largely due to the extensive measures and tactics used by the police during the strike, for example, in May 1984, 120 police were airlifted to Nottingham.¹⁷ Such an emphatic label has, in the eyes of Goodman, had the 'tendency to stick' amongst popular conceptions of the strike.¹⁸ To many the police were employed not simply to regulate the strike, but rather 'in a partisan and political way... simply to break the strike'.¹⁹ Police tactics away from the picket line have come under particular scrutiny in this regard. On numerous occasions, police detained or blocked 'assumed pickets' from entering areas such as Nottinghamshire and the Dartford Tunnel with little evidence of wrongdoing.²⁰ Indeed, on occasions in Yorkshire, individuals were arrested for simply collecting money for the strike.²¹ Such tactics have been seen by some as 'over-policing', by others as blatant 'breach' of human rights.²²

It is on the picket line, however, that the police have faced the vast majority of popular and historical criticism. It is readily acknowledged that, during the dispute, the police were subject to violence and provocation

from the miners.²³ However, although the ‘miners tactics invited a strong reaction’, the response from the police on the picket line ‘suggests that in far too many instances ... it was the police who exceeded both their legal authority and their practical duty’.²⁴ Instances of ‘unjustified police violence’, ‘flagrant taunting’ and the use of overly aggressive tactics accompanied by ‘humiliation’ in strike historiography are commonplace.²⁵ The most obvious example of this is the violence witnessed at Orgreave, in which police aggression came under national scrutiny; the photograph of a policeman striking a defenceless miner became a national sensation.²⁶

As Anonymous Policeman recalled from the time, he saw

‘rioters running away, police running after them ... I’m thinking if they’re running away police have done their job ... so why chase them?’²⁷

However, Orgreave is not just an exception to the rule. The most damning condemnations of police behaviour can be found within independent enquiries on the strike. The National Council for Civil Liberties reported the ‘rhythmic drumming of batons on riot shields’ and the ‘waving of pay packets’ at mass picket lines, whilst a ‘Sheffield Police Watch’ group documented numerous cases of unprovoked violence and ‘police dog attacks’.²⁸

Such evidence, therefore, has not only moved ‘national’ historiography to scrutinise the actions of the police both on and away from the picket line, but also in many instances to condemn inappropriate and sometimes violent actions toward pickets and striking miners during the strike.

The Police Experience in County Durham

An examination of the strike in the County Durham Coalfield, however, demonstrates that such a national picture proves far too simplistic. The policing of the dispute locally was dictated by individuality, personality and isolated instances of violence and disturbance. For this reason, generalisations on police behaviour prove difficult in County Durham.

Initially, it is important to understand that such ‘national’ perceptions of the police, particularly after scenes of violence at Orgreave, shaped local perceptions of the police within the County Durham Coalfield. In part, this is due to the mass media, but also as a consequence of the connections between miners up and down the country. Both Councillors Alan Napier and Robin Todd spoke of mining acquaintances in Nottingham, whilst events such as the Durham Miners’ Gala of 1984 drew people from all over Britain united in the same cause.²⁹ Word must have spread, and tales must have been swapped on the role of the police in the dispute. An account by Anonymous Policeman on duty the day of the 1984 Miners’ Gala demonstrates the point absolutely:

‘So anyway I was stood there, and unfortunately the whole parade comes to a standstill at particular times for particular bands to play music in front of the County Hotel ... and there was all these chants and that going off about the police. Anyhow, by chance the Orgreave banner stopped directly in-front of where I was ... and I took so much stick it was unbelievable and I was just thinking just stop playing the friggin’ tune and go shout at some bugger else!’³⁰

Evidently, national accusations of police aggression, intimidation and violence can be drawn from this particular incident in County Durham.

Alongside this, certain incidents within County Durham do adhere to the national picture of the police during the strike. John Simpson, Councillor Alan Napier and Davey Hopper all stressed how normal observations of law and order were changed, or simply ignored, by police policy during the strike in County Durham.³¹ John Simpson suggested that ‘everything was just swept under the carpet’ with regard to certain laws, in turn making it highly difficult for miners to express their right to protest.³² Davey Hopper stated that he was prevented from travelling abroad, and was harassed indirectly through the arrest of his 14-year-old son 7 times, despite never actually being found guilty for any charge.³³ Similarly, Councillor Alan Napier was arrested during the strike for putting his head out of the window during a traffic jam driving back from the picket line. Alan recalls that the

‘next thing I knew I got dragged out the car, tie raps on and threw (sic) in the back of the van and taken to Gateshead Nick (sic).³⁴

Therefore, the national question of individual freedom amongst striking miners appears relevant in County Durham. John, Alan and Davey were undoubtedly the most active NUM members that I interviewed and perhaps such activity warranted scrutiny in the eyes of the police. The Durham NUM responded to such police action with concern; on the 17th of April 1984, a letter was drafted to the Chief Constable in Durham ‘expressing our alarm and dissatisfaction with certain aspects of police intervention in our democratic rights’.³⁵ Incidents such as these within County Durham tend to fit the ‘national’ line, and in doing so suggest that ‘the police weren’t particularly bothered about the law’ or the democratic freedoms of the individual striking miner in County Durham.³⁶

However, to attribute such a conclusion to the collectively actions of ‘the police’ bypasses any complexities entirely. Instances of harassment and brutality can be seen to have taken place in County Durham and can be can be seen to advocate the ‘national’ line closely. Yet, the police did not exist as a mass body or a national force. Rather, it was a body made up of individuals, each with their own perceptions, thoughts and understandings on the strike itself. To recall the experience of Anonymous Policeman underneath the Orgreave banner at the Durham Miners’ Gala, how were those shouting abuse to know where he was from or what his understanding of the strike was? The truth is that they did not. Their anger was directed towards the police collectively, the state-machine organisation so often cited in ‘national’ perceptions of the strike. An Easington miner snubbed a bravery award in February 1984 in response to ‘police behaviour during the strike’, not the behaviour of certain individuals.³⁷ In ways such as this, the miners overlooked actions of the individual. This is not to be condemned; their reaction in the wake of the incidents at Orgreave and other violence is entirely understandable. This study, however, aims to show that there is more to such a simple understanding of the police in

the County Durham Coalfield. It will demonstrate that when the focus shifts to the individual, such trends can very easily be contested or even reversed. Would those miners have reacted differently if they had known that Anonymous Policeman on duty at the Miners' Gala in 1984 had worked formerly as an electrician at a colliery in County Durham? The answer is difficult to deduce.

In truth, the picture of the police in County Durham is extremely complex. Much of the anger towards the police was actually directed towards those police forces originating from outside of County Durham, a subtlety that is inevitably ignored in those studies that attempt to understand the police as a collective unit. Most interviewees suggested that police forces from outside areas were both heavy handed and overly aggressive throughout the strike. Councillor Robin Todd, for example, vividly recalled a Carlisle Policeman kicking over the picket line brazier during winter, whilst Councillor Alan Napier spoke of being 'whacked across the stomach' during a peaceful picket with only seven others by a member of the Toxteth police force.³⁸ Such criticism was reiterated by Labour MP Tommy Callan who, during the August of 1984, claimed that it was 'those lads from other areas who are kicking our lads about' during the strike.³⁹ The reasoning behind such actions appears simple as Anonymous Policeman suggested

'somebody coming up from the Met ... doing a job and well paid ... if they mistreat somebody; oh! what the hell, they were going back down to the Met once it had finished'.⁴⁰

Perhaps this attitude was due to a simple lack of understanding or, indeed, ignorance; Councillor Robin Todd recalled overhearing a Metropolitan (Met) Police Officer describe the dispute in a shop near Liverpool Street in London, in which

'... this bloke had this totally false idea. These little people who go

down these pits in little tiny holes who crawl about ... he couldn't be further from the truth! ...'⁴¹

It was also suggested that such an attitude did not just have an impact on striking miners in County Durham. In the Durham Police offices instances of theft increased heavily during the strike and the general consensus was that it was those from the Met who were culpable.⁴² There appears to have been something of a carefree attitude amongst those police from other areas and, at the same time, an abject ignorance of the consequences that violence and intimidation could have within the communities of County Durham. Anonymous Policeman suggested that this was far from the case for those police forces from inside the County. He suggested that

'Durham Area Police and Yorkshire Police were pretty much the same. They knew that ... there was a major problem here being dealt with, it had to be dealt with, they were there whether they liked it or not ... it was their area it was happening in'.⁴³

After the strike, local police from County Durham knew they would have to return to their communities; outside forces did not have to overcome this problem. Perhaps, therefore, in County Durham it can be suggested that those instances of brutality and attacks on personal freedoms were more commonplace amongst forces from outside of the area, thereby dismantling the notion that the police can simply be understood as a single collective unit in opposition to the miners cause.

Indeed, positive interactions between local policemen and striking miners can actually be found to have taken place in County Durham, further discrediting the 'national' line. These positive interactions were rooted in the ties of local community in County Durham. John Simpson recognised that some 'coppers were great' and had a 'good bit banter' with striking miners.⁴⁴ From personal experience, Anonymous Policeman recalled at Inkerman Pit that

‘my mate who I used to work with from Brandon ... he’d be there ... and we just sat, he’d get his flask out and his sandwiches and just have a bit chat’.

Whilst on another occasion when picket numbers were slightly higher he

‘saw other lads up there who I used to work with ... and a particularly big lad ... he made a beeline for me and said ‘divvn’t worry if anything happens, you’ll be alright ... then he stood next to me when everything was getting a little bit nasty’.⁴⁵

An appreciation of these positive recollections is only possible with the understanding that interactions between policemen and striking miners were often not the violent and large-scale confrontations that dominate ‘national’ historiography. In reality, few pickets were ever actually ‘violent’ and, in fact, ‘picketing during the dispute consisted of a small two or three man presence’ predominantly.⁴⁶ At a local level and on a smaller scale, interactions between policeman and miner, therefore, took on a highly personal form. For those policemen from inside County Durham a typical picket might have involved policing a friend, or a former colleague or a friend of a friend. In the case of Anonymous Policeman, for example, it was his personal ties, friendships and attachment to the community of County Durham that made him an individual, not simply a member of the police as a collective body. Such individuality resulted in an experience in which miner actually took care of policeman; a far cry from the picture of hatred and division inferred by ‘national’ literature. The role of individuality and personality amongst the police was therefore of absolute importance, particularly for shaping the experiences of those individuals from communities within County Durham. Once again, such a complication highlights the unique nature of the strike at a local level and the flaws within the ‘national’ picture of the police during the strike.

It can be easy to forget that picket line disturbances were fundamentally examples of crowd violence and the implications of this are vast. Picket

lines were intimidating environments where emotions ran high and much depended on the temperament and mindset of the individuals involved. In County Durham, Paul Wilkinson's lone return to work in Easington was an instance of mass picket line violence during which the actions of police simply cannot be viewed collectively.⁴⁷ During the Paul Wilkinson affair, Anonymous Policeman emphasised that

‘...you can think of a million places to be rather than there ... bolts and everything were flying over’.⁴⁸

The police, at times, would have been subjected to intimidation and ‘sometimes local lads with nothing to do with the pits would go along’ with the sole intention of using the power of the crowd to cause trouble.⁴⁹ To deal with such troublemakers, the police developed a ‘snatch squad’ tactic, in which individuals would be singled out as troublemakers and arrests would be made.⁵⁰ Once again this, just as with any other crowd dynamic, depended on the individual judgement of the policeman in question at the time. In order to further understand the role of the police at violent or mass picket lines, it is important to take away the cloak of the Miners’ Strike dispute in County Durham; it was at times simply a volatile mass of people, and reaction to this depended entirely on the individual’s temperament, personality and perception of the strike.

It is hoped that this extract has shed light on the complications of police relations within the coalfields of County Durham. It has been shown that certain ‘national’ trends can be seen events in County Durham. At the same time the importance of the role of the individual has been stressed, undermining the assumption that all police can be viewed collectively as ‘national’ literature tends to suggest. Not only have instances of positive interaction between striking miners and the police been demonstrated in County Durham, but the role of outside police forces and the implications of crowd dynamics have been discussed. It would be incorrect, of course, to suggest that the trends that this extract has explore were true throughout

County Durham. As stated at the beginning of this study, they simply provide a unique insight and a greater understanding of the role of the police during the Miners' Strike of 1984 to 1985 in County Durham.

James English

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Extract taken from Durham University Undergraduate History Dissertation, submitted in March 2012.

Notes

- 1 Interview with Davey Hopper (11 October 2011) and David John Douglass, *Ghost Dancers* (East Sussex, 2010), pp. 30-35.
- 2 Andrew J Richards, *Miners on Strike: Class Solidarity and Division In Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 199-200.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 4 See, for example, on the evolution of the strike, Francis Beckett and David Hencke, *Marching To The Fault Line: The Miners' Strike and the Battle for Industrial Britain* (London, 2009), or Martin Adeney, *The Miners' Strike: 1984-5, Loss Without Limit* (London, 1986), or Geoffrey Goodman, *The Miners' Strike* (London, 1985). On the media, see, for example, Granville Williams (ed.), *Shafted: The Media, the Miners' Strike and the Aftermath* (London, 2009), on the police see, for example, Jim Coulter, Susan Miller and Martin Walker, *State of Siege: Miners' Strike 1984 Politics and Policing in the Coal Field* (London, 1984), or Bob Fine and Robert Millar (eds.), *Policing The Miners' Strike* (London, 1985), and on the community see, for example, Chas Critcher, David Waddington and Maggie Wykes, *Split at the Seams? Community, continuity and change after the 1984-5 Coal dispute* (Buckingham, 1991).
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- 6 Michael Crick, Scargill and the Miners (Middlesex, 1985).
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- 8 Raphael Samuel, 'Introduction', in Barbara Bloomfield, Guy Boanas and Raphael Samuel (eds.), *The Enemy Within: Pit villages and the miners' strike of 1984-5* (London, 1986), p. xii.
- 9 Michael Jones, Donald Macintyre, and Peter Wilsher (eds.), *Strike: Thatcher, Scargill and the Miners* (London, 1985) and Adeney, *The Miners' Strike: 1984-5*.
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- 13 REFERENCE FULL STUDY VERSION. The full study includes an exploration of the 'national ballot question in the Durham Coalfield', the role of the media and the role of the community and Labour Party during the strike.
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- 15 ITN News (ITV 1, 1984), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMKIPssMF2E>.
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- 30 Interview with Anonymous Policeman.
- 31 Interview with John Simpson (4 October 2011) and Interview with Councillor Alan Napier and Interview with Davey Hopper.
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- 35 'NUM (Durham Area): Minutes Of Special Committee Meetings', (17 April 1984).
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- 37 'Striking Hero snubs Police', *Sunderland Echo*, (5 February 1985).
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- 41 Interview with Councillor Robin Todd.
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- 44 Interview with John Simpson.
- 45 Interview with Anonymous Policeman.
- 46 Douglass, *Ghost Dancers*, p. 46 and Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes 1983 To 1985*, p.142.
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OWENISM IN ACTION: ASHINGTON AND HIRST CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY IN THE 1920s

Thomas Quincey

This article discusses the role the Ashington and Hirst Co-operative Society played in its mining community in the 1920s. In particular it shows how the Co-op's influence was much wider than the shops and the dividends they provided to members but extended to support for the provision of welfare and recreation. It saw this as part of its core function, following the example of the pioneering Rochdale Co-op. In doing this it, at times, worked closely with the Coal Company and the Miners' Federation to improve the lives of the miners and their families.

The National Picture

The 1918 General Election heralded a partial restoration of pre-war normality, when wartime economic controls were lifted. The pre-war class divide remained, even though the war had created a climate where this could have been challenged. The capitalist system and its associated social inequalities did not change. ¹ The Great War, 1914-1918, and the post-war period, affected the lives of the nation disproportionately. The 1920s was a period of prosperity for the middle class, yet their experience differed from the millions of working class 'heroes' who had fought in the war. The war had seen restrictions on everyday life for all and nationalisation of key industries. The miners were in favour of reinstating nationalisation throughout the inter-war period because it would ensure stable employment levels. The Great War changed the lives of the working class substantially but, more importantly,

changed their social outlook.

The post-war availability of work was largely geographically determined, with different regions depending on particular industries. Coal was the primary industry of North East England although ship building was also a major employer and a vital source of revenue. ² North East England suffered more from the consequent high unemployment brought about by national industrial decline, linked to both crippling government debt and a return to the gold standard. ³ Economists in central government had not anticipated the decline that the returning gold standard would generate. Unemployment in the 1920s North East was almost double that of the South East, and was above the national average from 1924 onwards. ⁴ The narrow industry base within the region was not prepared for the post-war downturn. The workers had to seek welfare support from local benefactors. In the case of Ashington these were the Ashington Coal Company, the Ashington Miners Federation and the Ashington and Hirst Co-operative Society.

The Ashington Coal Company and the Ashington Miners' Federation

Ashington began as one of many mining shafts in the vast Northumberland coalfield. The village of Ashington was created by the Priestman family, who in 1867 sank a shaft at nearby Bothal. It was formerly known as 'Fell-em-doon' and hitherto was a relatively insignificant village. Capital investment by the Coal Company developed it into a thriving pit village by 1920, with its own schools, churches and hospital. The pit owners changed the name of their company in 1898 to the Ashington Coal Company (Coal Company) which oversaw the sinking of the following shafts:

Table 1: Shafts sunk in Ashington, 1873-1896 ⁵

Year	Shaft
1873	Carl Upcast
1873	Carl Downcast
1877	Bothal Relief Shaft
1885	Duke Downcast
1890	Bothal Downcast
1894	Woodhorn
1896	Linton

The Ashington Coal Company dominated the decision making that would affect the village population. Since it was a new pit village, the company was responsible for housing, amenities, and, to some extent, entertainment. In the 50 year period from 1851 onwards, Ashington's population exploded, growing by over 800 percent from 85 people to over 6,000 by 1901, and by 1921 to 30,000. ⁶ The Coal Company were happy to take the profits that such a rapid explosion brought but struggled to build adequate infrastructure for its inhabitants. This gave scope for the Ashington Miners Federation (Federation) and the Ashington and Hirst Co-operative Society (Co-op) to act. The people of Ashington struggled with the same issues that affected working class people elsewhere in post-war Britain; poverty, ill-health and unemployment.

Yet an analysis of the Coal Company actions during this period demonstrates a positive concern, by contemporary standards, for welfare. Their governance during the 1920s saw the Coal Company donate funds to the establishment of welfare services. It organised 27 football teams and a welfare competition on Saturday afternoons, 18 cricket teams, 2 rugby teams and 3 hockey teams. ⁷ This variety meant a majority of the miners were occupied at the weekend. By the 1920s football had become a proletarian-dominated sport employing professionals at the highest level, unlike cricket

and rugby which were both amateur and gentlemanly.⁸ The Coal Company used sport to cultivate a sense of community and togetherness, by promoting teams that would inevitably become the talk of the pit.⁹ This generous provision was a low cost way of keeping the miners occupied and also encouraged fitness amongst the workforce. It is often assumed that fitness was the obsession of the fascist states that were to emerge in the next decade, but Britain too had an inter-war fascination with a fit population.¹⁰ The Coal Company also built Institute Centres at Ashington, Hirst, Linton and Lynemouth. Again this paternalism had a motive: miners were occupied and encouraged to self improve. Workers with time on their hands were more likely to turn their efforts to the Federation and politics.¹¹

The Ashington Miners Federation was a branch of the Northumberland Miners Federation, with a committee of representatives from Woodhorn; Ellington; Lynemouth and Linton collieries. It made decisions with regards to the unionised workforce in cases of strike actions and industrial disputes. Its role was to act either on behalf of the whole community, or one individual, representing them and supporting them in negotiations with the Coal Company. At a time when jobs were being cut, and request was interpreted as protest, the Federation provided a crucial link between employer and employee. The committee met approximately once a week discussing how to distribute and manage the miners' monetary contributions.¹²

The Co-operative Movement

A further potential influence upon the miners' community was the Co-op. They had a committee that ran the shop according to the Co-operative principles laid down by the Rochdale Pioneers, informed by the specific needs of the Ashington community. Not everyone in Ashington was a member as the dividend system had the potential to out-price people.¹³ The committee decided how and where the shop's profits would be spent, and, with a separate education committee branch, had the potential to influence both education and general welfare of its members.

The Co-operative movement was born out of Owenite principles of

community and provision of services for the locality. Owen believed that businesses should be managed with a view to providing for, and self-empowering, local people. The Rochdale pioneers, who set up the first successful Co-operative store in 1844 (many previous attempts had run straight into financial difficulty by providing credit they could not afford) saw Co-operation as an opportunity to give people a control of a local business and a share of the profits through the dividend. To shop at a Co-op one had to be a member, paying ever so slightly higher prices to contribute to the dividend, which was paid out quarterly. The idea was to provide a distribution of wealth, good food at reasonable prices, and education into the local community. The Co-operative movement valued self-help, democracy, equity and solidarity.¹⁴ Each member was entitled to one vote, no matter how large their investment. The movement was progressive, with women being able to vote 80 years before they could do so in parliamentary elections.

The attraction of shopping with the Co-op was the dividend. Customers were members, their purchases recorded and the dividend shared. People got a dividend that was proportionate to their spending at the shop. In practice, it acted as a form of savings at a time when it was very difficult for working people to generate any surplus income. The higher prices of the Co-op have led to the belief that Societies were the shopping destination of the richer working, and middle, classes. Although this is a micro-history that does not represent the national picture, it does underline the Co-op's prominence in a large working class community and contravene the assumptions about the Co-op's customers.

The Co-op, Politics, and Mr Wallace

Perhaps the most important man in Ashington in the 1920s was Mr. Wallace. He was re-elected as the Labour Chairman of Ashington Parish Council. Wallace provided the key link connecting the Co-op, the Council and the Union. Not only did he chair the Council but he was also Chairman of the Federation and on the board of the Co-op. Through him the three establishments were intrinsically linked. His position meant there was

no need for formal correspondence between the institutions. He was not Chairman of the Co-op, but did, in the absence of others, chair meetings. For the committee having the Chairman as part of their business was vital to attracting customers. The Co-op also had a master hewer on their committee, representing both their relationship with the miners, and the master miner's special position. The Co-op sold mining equipment.

Politically, the Co-op was affiliated to the Labour Party, lending its premises for campaign purposes and its shop windows for posters. They rejected similar facilities to independent candidates and other parties. Wallace's position was a micro-reflection of the position of the Co-op and Labour movement nationally. The Co-op sought to be an equal partner in a three way labour movement, alongside the Labour party and the unions. Whilst nationally it found itself struggling to be seen as an equal, in Ashington it was a major player. The national picture saw the Co-op attempting to dispose of its image as a stuffy place to shop and incorporate itself fully into the labour movement, which it saw as the best way of living the Owenite principles on which it was founded.¹⁵

The Co-op's Local Influence

In Ashington the Co-op committee was perhaps the most powerful board outside the Coal Company, which had far greater financial muscle. The two bodies did negotiate as equals, co-operating, for example, over the fixing of a manhole which was outside the Co-op shop but owned by the Coal Company. This relationship shows that the Coal Company acknowledged the Co-op as a local influence, whilst the Co-op exploited its position within the community to become more powerful through an apparent equality with the Coal Company. The Coal Company even turned to the Co-op in the hope it would fix a broken mine shaft, offering them the chance to have a stake in their customers' identity and source of pride; the mine itself. Coexistence of the two provided the Ashington residents with an invaluable support network.¹⁶

There was no greater demonstration of the Co-op's power than its relations with the local police. Routine, but unannounced visits by the police caused offence as the committee felt the shops were being violated. They wrote to the police and told them to arrange such inspections, to which the police agreed. This showed that even the constabulary respected the status of the Co-op and bowed to its standing.¹⁷

The Co-op represented the Ashington miners, who regarded themselves as skilled workers, which explains its high membership within the town. The committee's main functions were to monitor the prices within its shops and to manage the shops. This was done through direct meetings between The Secretary and the store managers, who were served with management directives. Complaints from customers were directed to the committee itself, demonstrating loyalty to customers but more importantly its reliance upon the mining community. One poor public relations incident with a miner could jeopardise the Co-op's standing in the community, and its future as a business.

The Role of the Committee

The committee regulated store prices which were extremely important as they ultimately decided the quarterly dividend. The Co-operative movement's success had been built on the reasonable prices of staple products, and this was reflected in committee decisions. Whilst meat prices were allowed to fluctuate, prices of bread, milk and potatoes were kept down. Milk was the main product that the Co-op strove to regulate in terms of price and quality. Stale milk would drive away custom. People who could afford Co-op prices were helped by the regulated prices of staple products.¹⁸ Their control over prices was illustrated during 1926 with the miners locked out for much of the year. The committee acknowledged the need to lower prices as miners' wages were reduced. Further, during hard times a reduction in prices was necessary to attract and stimulate trade. Recruiting new members was not a priority, but retaining the custom of present members was. In a community where three quarters of the inhabitants were skilled workers of one trade and one union, maintaining their custom was vital to its existence.

Difficult Times

The Co-op experienced difficulty during the increasing industrial unrest in the build up to the General Strike. Whilst the strike itself lasted only 9 days, the miners were on the picket lines throughout 1926. This is demonstrated by the bank activity which saw the society moving thousands of pounds from its savings account to cover slowed trade.¹⁹ Flexible pricing was halted when the national Co-op issued price freezes, much to the Ashington branches surprise. Prices were monitored not only to maintain custom but to produce an attractive and fair dividend, as the customers judged the Co-op on the dividend it produced. Credit was not socially acceptable during the 1920s. The Co-op was not meant to be a trading organisation, but to serve its members, giving them back a dividend.²⁰ Other local businesses were resentful of the advantage this gave the Co-op, as its higher prices made other businessmen envy its position.²¹ The dividend was a form of savings giving members a proportion of every pound spent in the quarter, which became every half year in 1926:

Table 2: Dividends 1924-1927

DATE	DIVIDEND (POUNDS/SHILLINGS/PENCE)
December 1924	0/1/6
April 1925	0/1/3
June 1925	0/1/3
October 1925	0/1/2
January 1926	0/1/4
July 1926	0/1/0
January 1927	0/1/4

This table shows that the dividend was low in the build-up to and during the General Strike when compared to 1924, which saw the highest payout of any dividend at the AHC during the 1920s.²² The Co-op described this as the most difficult period in its history, with unemployment amongst members up to 12%. Although the dividend of July 1926 was low, the Co-op tried to take a positive approach with its members, thanking them for their loyal support and discouraging the withdrawal of savings. There was a worry that mass withdrawal of savings could bring about the collapse of the shop. When compared to national dividends the figure in Ashington is quite acceptable, suggesting its average dividend in previous years was high. In 1925 Birmingham yielded 0/11/0, Leicester 0/1/0 and London 0/0/11. It must be noted these figures were from city centre shops, rather than anything comparable to a village. Yet they do demonstrate that the members of the Co-op in Ashington did not fare badly.²³

During 1926, the Co-op and the Coal Company agreed a contract specific to the Ashington collieries. This contract specified that miners could buy food from the shop on credit, which at the end of the stoppage would be paid for through the miners' wages. The contract required the signature of a Coal Company official.²⁴ This may seem altruistic on the part of the Co-op, but it was designed to guarantee custom during the stoppage and maintain levels of income. It was interesting to note that the contract specified that if a miner was released by the Coal Company, they were still expected to repay what they owed.

The Co-op had to come to some sort of agreement with the miners during the stoppage, as their loyalty lay with the union. This was a reflection of the change in British society since the turn of the century; the working class was more militant and no longer submissive. Trade unionism had peaked in the aftermath of the First World War, and the union and the Co-op had developed alongside each other, but class consciousness was within the trade union movement, not with the Co-op. This is a micro-example of the Co-op attempting to work alongside, and accommodate, a union, reflecting the national trend of attempted solidarity.

The Public Image and Reality

There were two conflicting dimensions to the Co-op during 1926. There was the private Co-op and the public Co-op. The public Co-op lent its support to the miners, allowing them use of its facilities for meetings and making donations to the Federation relief fund. It offered reductions to social clubs that were setting up soup kitchens, and persuaded the joiners who were on strike to continue to make coffins just for the Co-op, so that its funeral service could operate. The national Co-op distributed vouchers for free food, which were to be issued to the impoverished. The Ashington branch gave the impression it was behind the miners. In private, the Co-op was a very different organisation. There was deep concern on the committee as to how long the stoppages would last, and how they would survive them. The staff as a body faced wage reductions as profits dwindled. The management began to find excuses to sack workers and the shops released 7 employees. There were regular special finance committee meetings held as the it looked to cut costs, and the final batch of free vouchers sent from the central Co-op were not distributed as the Ashington branch could not afford to give away more free stock. Only through good relations with the Coal Company did it survive; thanks to a contract that was very much in the interests of the shop and not in the immediate interests of the miner. If the Co-op had not taken appropriate action and consequently folded, this would mean they had not served the community at all. It had the foresight to act prudently, if somewhat pragmatically, to ensure its future in the longer term. By providing credit during stoppages, it ensured the miners and their families had access to food during sustained periods of no pay. This underlines their role as a welfare establishment, providing miners with vital supplies when money was not available.

The Regional Picture

When compared with other Co-ops from the North East, the Ashington and Hirst Co-op seems to have encountered more difficulty than other branches during 1926; they did not necessarily receive support from other Co-ops.

Wallsend Co-operative Society's customers were mainly shipbuilders. They did not agree with the Ashington control of supplies and limits on the amount each member could buy. They did support the miners and moved to encourage Newcastle City Council to help the miners.²⁵ Newcastle worried that the dispute was a danger to the country's constitution as the miners were not striking alone; they had the entire labour movement behind them.²⁶ Throckley Co-operative Society did not suffer too much from the stoppages, with shop and donations operating as normal.²⁷ The differentiation between the running of the Ashington Co-op, and other local societies, was the former's reliance on workers of just one trade. No other local concentration of population was more reliant on just one industry.

A Progressive Employer

Despite the sackings during 1926, the Co-op was a good employer, and dismissals were the exception and not the rule. There was no legislation during the 1920s which allowed workers a paid holiday and indeed the miners were regarded as revolutionary for requesting holiday during the strikes.²⁸ Yet the Co-op allowed employees paid holiday and were sympathetic when workers were absent through illness. If a miner was absent, he relied upon the hospital to get him fit and return to work to earn. At the Co-op serious illness warranted half pay. It employed a lot of young women, which was important as Ashington was a village of men with a mining identity and it gave girls an opportunity to earn until married. It also gave the Co-op a paternalistic countenance, caring for women of the community ensured their custom.

Co-op's Role in the Community – Owenism in Action

Like the Co-op nationwide, the Ashington branch was not simply a food store, but provided furnishings, clothes and funerals. Other than easing the situation for the miners during the strike the Co-op also provided health insurance. The Co-op and its healthcare services did not cover the especially poor, but some miners could afford it given their position as skilled workers. During the inter-war years the Co-operative Health Insurance held greater



Ashington Co-op

appeal as unemployment meant healthcare could become unaffordable. The shop was an important organisation to Ashington, being one of the main social benefactors of the village. By 1929, 50 percent of villagers were members of the Co-op.²⁹

The Co-op used grants from its profits to act as a predominant social benefactor alongside the Federation. Ashington was unusual in its position as a new village of rapid growth. During the 1920s social care provided by the government still carried the stigma of the workhouse and was regarded as humiliation, so funding to Ashington health and welfare services helped prevent the embarrassment of turning to the State. The Co-op donated regularly and substantially to the Ashington Hospital, generally giving more than £50 at a time.³⁰ The hospital was vital to the mining community as out of work miners were not earning so their health was imperative. Funding the hospital ensured a good relationship with the miners, whilst providing them

an acceptable healthcare service. The impact of Federation funding was the same.

The Secretary of the Co-op headed the Ashington Hospital Committee, and in doing so both ensured that Co-op money was spent correctly, and evidenced the Co-op's influence within the community. It chaired the board of the facility the miners needed whilst working alongside the Coal Company and the Federation. Like the Federation, donations were not just to Ashington Hospital, but also to specialist hospitals in Newcastle. This concurred with the Co-operative ideal of providing social security. The Royal Victoria Infirmary also had a member of the Ashington Co-op on its committee. Positions on hospital committees demonstrated not only philanthropy but responsibility and commitment to clientele.

Philanthropic grants did not just go to health services. One of the main beneficiaries was education, to which the society strove to donate no less than one shilling per member each year. Education was part of the Co-op's utopian ideal of social evolution and these grants ensured that the Co-operative principles were adhered to as far as was possible. Sums were given not just to schools, but to book clubs and adult learning, which was particularly important during times of unemployment as it kept out of work miners occupied. Another major beneficiary of Co-op money was the Women's Guild. This represented gender equality in a community where the men held the identity and the work. Such gender awareness was important to the shop as the men might have earned the wage but the women were its customers. This approach correlates with the shops employment of many young women. Donations not only served utopian ideals but ensured further income and encouraged customer loyalty. The Co-op did not readily embrace all requests for donations, rejecting organisations that were against their ideology, such as the War Veterans Association. Such was the importance of the Co-op within the community that it was able to flex its financial muscle by making loans to the local councils. By funding local government, the Co-op demonstrated to the community it was acting in their interests whilst gaining leverage within council circles.

Social Clubs were also important for local associational life. There has been little mention of them during this piece as there is insufficient evidence to draw concrete conclusions. However, financial accounts of Middle Market Working Men's Club reveal a relationship with the Co-op.³¹ This means that the miners who were perhaps not Co-op members themselves were indirectly linked to the Co-op. The club also made charitable donations itself, albeit not on the scale of the Federation or shop, demonstrating a wider class consciousness with social centres used to provide for the community.

Concluding Remarks

Evidence suggests that the Co-op, like the Federation, were responsible for actions that affected Ashington community life. Not only did they provide food but also a dividend that benefited those members. They controlled prices, carried out quality assurance and were keen to be seen to be acting in the interests of members. Moreover, they supported Ashington through various donations and out of work miners through less formal educational investments.

With no centralised education or health facilities during the 1920, the Co-op, the Federation and the Coal Company operated as local benefactors, donating vast sums to care for the elderly, to the hospitals, and to children's sports. The three combined in a way atypical of the time, creating a proto-welfare state in the village. Such funding gave Ashington residents a support network. The interdependence of Ashington's three main bodies was brought about by their mutual reliance on coal – whether it was to make profit, pay wages or provide income. This study has illuminated the associational life of the biggest pit village in England, and offered an understanding of the influence of the Co-op and the Federation on the miners' lives. Miners were fighting for a better standard of living, and through the Co-op dividend, members were provided with extra money for essentials such as clothes at set times during the year. The Federation and Co-op investments and committee work bettered the lives of the community. The Federation used levies to fund sick pay and provided for the unemployed, injured and elderly. The Co-op

had a similar welfare and impact. Their role within the community was vital. This was facilitated by their positive relationship with the Coal Company. It was the Coal Company who held the power of miners' livelihood, and it was the Co-op, helped by the Federation, who improved the miners' life quality.

Notes

- 1 WR, Garside. *British Unemployment 1919-39* (Cambridge 1990)
- 2 Norman McCord. *North East England: The Regions Development 1760-1960*, (London) The North East industries did not recover from the 1920s unemployment rise. McCord argues that the region was and is hit disproportionately hard during times of depression.
- 3 Kenneth O.Morgan. *The Oxford History of Britain*, (Oxford, 2001)
- 4 Peter Dowey. *War and Progress: Britain 1919-1945*, (New York, 1997) In 1924 North East unemployment was 10.4%, close to the national average. This was the last time during the 1920s that there was to be any similarity.
- 5 Mike Kirkup. *The Biggest Mining Village in the World: A social history of Ashington*, (Morpeth, 1993) I owe a great deal to this work by Mike Kirkup, it provided an informative and general overview of the history of Ashington and was of great importance throughout my research. Whilst I do not agree with his perception of the Coal Company, I owe a lot to his work, which informed and educated me about the town.
- 6 LM.Dent. *The Influence of the Coal Industry on the Geography of Ashington and Bedlington*, MA Thesis, Newcastle University, 1981.
- 7 Kirkup, p.38
- 8 Martin Pugh. *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars*, (London, 2009)
- 9 Alan Metcalfe 'Sport and Community, a case study of mining villages of East Northumberland 1800-1914', in Hill & Williams (eds.) *Sport and Identity in the North of England*, (Keele, 1996)
- 10 Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41, 4 (2006) p.600.
- 11 BA Hetherington. 'Ashington Colliery Past and Present, Presidential Address', *Transactions of the Institution of Mining Engineers*, 141 (1981-82) p.355
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COMPETITION, CONFLICT AND REGULATION: THE TYNE FOYBOATMEN c.1900-1950

Adrian G Osler

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century the berthing and mooring of ships entering the major ports of Britain was carried out by curiously-styled watermen, the Mersey ‘Gigboatmen’ and the Tyne ‘Foyboatmen’ among them. Common to all was an ethos of unbridled competition allied to a willingness to engage in an



Foyboat, seeking

arduous and inherently dangerous occupation, their livelihood gained in the shifting and often troubled commercial interface between land and sea. Unlike pilot fraternities, the story of these lowly watermen has barely troubled labour historians, their presence on Tyneside rarely noted by local authors – contemporary or modern.^{1 2}

Occupational Evolution to 1913

On the Tyne the work of the early-nineteenth century foyboatmen was casual and opportunistic, heavily dependent upon the vagaries of trade. Their independent nature and hardihood were well acknowledged, and for those whom age or accident rendered unfit there was always the fallback of operating one of the river’s rowing ferries (scullerboats).³ During the second quarter of the century however, the shift towards marine steam propulsion increasingly affected the foyboatman’s way of life. Although the Tyne’s first



Foyboatmen, South Shields

recognised steam vessel, the low-powered *Perseverance* (1814), proved a business failure as a passenger carrier, four years later it was successfully re-deployed for towage purposes, expediting merchant ship movements to-and-from sea. This and similar ventures proved so practical and profitable that, by the 1830s, 'steam tug' towage characterised all Britain's major rivers, especially the Tyne.⁴ Consequently, the foyboatmen's ancient monopoly of shifting ships by boat towage under oars was progressively broken, for the convenience and speed of a steam tug often outweighed its greater hire costs.

Conversely, by the third quarter of the century the nation's increasingly steam powered industrial economy began to work in favour of the foyboatmen. True, the need for manual ship-towage had disappeared, but there was a more than compensatory demand for the foyboatman's routine skills, in particular the mooring of ever increasing numbers of coal carrying vessels. The four-fold growth of the Tyne's seaborne coal trade between 1850 and 1900, combined with massive improvements in the river's navigability and facilities, more than ensured the continued need for foyboat services. The port's expanding complex of docks, coaling staiths and cargo quays, together with the laying down of dozens of tiers of mooring buoys (for waiting ships)

all enlarged the opportunities for men practiced in the responsible business of securing and un-mooring seagoing vessels. For example, in 1886 over 15,000 merchant ships (61% steamers) entered the port.⁵ All had to moor and un-moor, added to which many shifted their berth during the loading or unloading process, and most such movements required a boatman's services. It was during this late-nineteenth century period that the practices and role of the Tyne foyboatman became formalised.

Operationally, there was aggressive competition between foyboatmen. Each crew of two proceeded independently to sea by day or night in purpose-built, sixteen-foot, open boats propelled by lug-sail and oars, 'seeking' (ranging) along the steamer lanes of the 45-miles of coast between Newbiggin and Hartlepool. Racing to an incoming ship, the crew 'hooked on', bargained a 'foy' (service payment) with the master and towed back alongside the vessel to the port of Tyne. There, they rowed and sculled the ship's heavy mooring warps over to shore-side bollards or mid-river buoys, making them secure.⁶ The foyboat crew then had the right to 'farm' (attend) this ship, servicing all its subsequent moves, including departure; if for any reason they were unable to do so, they had to supply a substitute crew. Shipmasters paid for these services with a signed 'bill' (receipt) cashable at the agent's or shipowner's local office, a form of payment which, through third party discounting or acceptance *in lieu* by publicans and retailers, provided crews with immediate, flexible currency.

This competitive open market for their services was attractive to industrious, risk-taking operatives, but its internal reliance on customary practice and word-of-mouth agreement left it peculiarly open to acrimony, partisanship and dispute. Inter-crew conflicts regularly occurred afloat when 'seeking', for the competition to be first to hook onto an incoming ship resulted in intense, underhand and potentially dangerous practices, especially if the prize was a large (i.e. well paying) vessel. And disputes within the port's environs were commonplace too, especially when crews overextended themselves farming vessels, and their chosen substitutes subsequently tried to enforce, or contest, the monetary terms of the verbal sub-contract – settlement was frequently

physical! There is no formal record of the numbers thus employed at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was likely around 150 regulars (75 crews).

The early years of the twentieth century saw foyboatmen express concern over the unrestricted growth in boatmen's numbers and the correspondingly perceived decline in occupational competence. In February 1903, J.A. Straughan, a foyboatman of South Shields, wrote to the secretary of the Tyne Improvement Commission (TIC) following "a representative meeting of Tyne Watermen (commonly known as foyboatmen)", saying that "the men are very anxious that your Commissioners should control and protect their calling." ⁷ Two months later, a letter signed by no less than 75 foyboatmen presented a well argued case to the TIC suggesting ways in which occupational controls could be introduced and emphasising their unique professional aptitudes:

We beg respectfully to submit the following for your favourable consideration –

1. The work of the boatmen is a very important one, requiring some amount of skill and judgement, very often great damage is prevented by the quick work of a good boatman. Masters of ships and pilots can testify to this.

At present the work is open to any that are inclined, the question of fitness is never thought about, each man is to some extent a law unto himself, the consequence is that often men who are not accustomed to the work offer their services to masters and pilots, further a great deal of wrangling takes place when such services are to be paid for.

The object in view is to put an end to this unsatisfactory state of affairs. The men therefore ask the Commissioners –

2. To licence and control the Tyne Foyboatmen. The licence to be issued at a small cost... ⁸

Three inter-linked matters were also raised: that licenses should be issued only upon the recommendation of a committee of six boatmen, who

would judge applicants by “age, fitness to do the work, etc.”; that subject to the approval of the Commission, a benevolent fund and a working rules committee would be established; and finally, that to avoid “wrangling” the shipping tariff should be agreed and formalised, since at present “some men charge one fee and some another... [and] some shipmasters pay a certain sum while other masters of ships of similar tonnage refuse to pay such a sum.”⁹

This letter, and a subsequent deputation, clearly spelt out the concerns of a significant body of foyboatmen to introduce a system that would ensure competence, lessen sources for dispute, provide a standard tariff for services and, through a measure of self help, provide the mutual benefits common in other trades. These proposals may well have been modelled upon the example of their professional and social superiors, the Shields-based Tyne Pilots, whose working practices were broadly comparable but who had achieved a position of considerable autonomy during the late nineteenth century.^{10 11} Correspondingly, the turn-of-century period witnessed a bitter struggle between the increasingly influential seamen’s and docker’s unions and the shipowner’s organisation established in 1890 to oppose them, the Shipping Federation (hereafter, Federation). This confrontation, and eventual rapprochement, of unionised labour and capital was well memorialised on the North East coast.^{12 13} There is no indication though, that the foyboatmen of 1903 thought in terms of unionisation or (as with the pilots) of control under a separate commission. Rather, they wished the port authority, the TIC, to restrict numbers through licensing whilst effectually leaving other occupational matters in their own hands. But the expectation of prompt acceptance of these worthy aims by the institutionally experienced TIC and the hard-headed local shipowning constituency was naive. Significantly, the men articulated no desire to relinquish competitive seeking, satisfied to leave each man’s earnings dependent upon the hours and hardships he was prepared to endure at sea. Pragmatically, this maritime piecework system – characteristic of pilotage and towage too – suited both the TIC and the shipowners. They obtained an essential port service at minimal administrative cost to themselves.

In order to agree a tariff, the TIC, whose membership included local “Shipowner’s Representatives”, now referred the foyboatmen to the North of England Steamship Owners’ Association (NESOA); so, in June 1903, the foyboatmen commenced discussions with the NESOA’s “Foyboatmen’s, Riggers and Lumpers” sub-committee. ¹⁴ Inevitably, the scales of payments based upon ‘customary practice’ drawn up by the two sides did not coincide. And when the NESOA quoted a recent police court judgement in support of their proposals the foyboatmen broke off negotiations, retaliating through a public circular detailing their own proposed rates. Conciliation eventually took place in December when the newly-styled Tyne Foyboatmen’s Provident Society (TFPS) accepted the advice of their new secretary, W. Steel, to come to some amicable arrangement with the shipowners. But the gap between men and owners remained large, with the men being accused of basing their key rates on special cases. Similarly, the NESOA was reluctant to give any concessions on rates for vessels of up to 3,000 tons, the class most commonly deployed by local owners in the East Coast trades. Eventually however, the NESOA conceded improved rates for 1,000- to 2,000-tonners, a measure of some benefit to the men for these steamers were regular (if low paying) visitors. However, the apparently generous increase in tariff for ships of large tonnage was a giveaway product of NESOA self-interest – its members deployed few such vessels. ¹⁵ Further tariff detailing included a flat rate ‘foy’ (11s.; £0.55) for every shipping move within the river, half foy for intermediate moorings when a ship moved ‘on the same tide’, and full compensation for men ordered to a ship but finding their services not required.

A comprehensive agreement was concluded early in 1904 and, in retrospect, its framework and provisions formed the basis for all further negotiations during the rest of the period under consideration: 1904-1950. Nevertheless, when this hard-fought tariff agreement was placed before the TIC in March 1904 the men were astounded to hear the commissioners unexpectedly declare that the TIC had no authority to licence or control foyboatmen. Why they had not advised the men that licensing was *ultra vires* when first approached in June 1903 is unclear: oversight or intent? The

former seems unlikely since a related legal precedent had been set in the mid-1890s with their formal decision that “they had no power to license sculler-boats”. But whatever the TIC’s reasoning or failings, two outcomes stood, and both would promote the smooth working of the port: the agreed foyboat tariff; and a more coherent, engaged labour community.¹⁶ Retrospectively, it is debatable whether the kind of TIC-administered licensing system sought by the men in 1903-04 was practicable; even thirty years later it proved inherently challenging.

Organisational Developments, 1914-1950

The situation remained unchanged until the First World War (1914-18) when, after objections by the military about boats seeking at sea, a compulsory rota was instituted under the auspices of the District Committee of the Shipping Federation (DCSF). After hostilities ceased this shipowner-organised rota system continued, but some men then broke away in order to re-commence seeking, presumably looking to exploit opportunities during a short-lived shipping boom. By July 1924, with shipping demand collapsing, the DCSF moved to create a joint control board to regulate the foyboatmen’s tariff, working methods and dispute procedures. This initiative was underpinned by the Federation and the NESOA having gained administration of the foyboatmen’s National Health and Unemployment Insurance (NHUI) contributions, with subscriptions deducted – contentiously – from each outward foy by the men’s ‘collector’, W. Steel.¹⁷ The move for a control board was clearly pre-emptive since, under a Parliamentary Act then in preparation, the TIC proposed acquiring the power to license foyboats. Despite the opposition of the shipowning interest and the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER; proprietors of Tyne Dock and Dunston Staiths), the Commission succeeded.

Under the Tyne Improvement Act, 1925, the Commissioners obtained the power to license foyboatmen employed on the river and at their own quays, and to deal with misconduct or incompetency; but, critically, they had not sought powers to limit numbers or influence tariffs.¹⁸ These latter

points and others encouraged the DCSF to pursue the formation of a Joint Control and Conciliation Board (JCCB), an objective quickly achieved (February 1926). The TIC was reluctant to participate in this in case it might be construed to lessen or interfere in any way with their new licensing power. But pragmatism prevailed and a month later the TIC's Assistant General Manager was appointed as the Board's first chairman. Since the Commission had already issued 242 licences, whilst membership of the TFPS was merely 120, it is unsurprising to find that its secretary was soon (November) requesting a limitation on numbers and, less expectedly, suggesting the reintroduction of a rota. For the first time the men raised professional safety issues, pointing out that although fourteen individuals had been lost at sea during the previous five years only two of them had been recognised foyboatmen. The other twelve were casuals, attempting the task owing to recession in their trades ashore, risking their inexperienced lives and helping deprive regular foyboatmen of a livelihood.¹⁹ Though supporting the rota request the JCCB reiterated its incapacity to advance personal earnings until licence numbers were restricted – and this the TIC could not do.

Four years later, in May 1930, an impasse was reached when the shipowners' representatives resigned from the JCCB on the grounds that the TIC was still not curtailing licence numbers, resulting in the men's average earnings being so low that for the past two years they had refused to discuss tariff changes. The signal sent by these Joint Board resignations led to a foyboatmen's deputation meeting with Federation representatives, with discussions focussing upon a registration system for 120 men who would agree to work a three-shift rota if, in return, given exclusive rights to handle SF members' ships. This proposal created a bitter rift inside the foyboating community, and two years elapsed before such a system was realized.²⁰ Then, in 1933, with another Tyne Improvement Act pending and owners worried about the efficient working of their ships within the port, the Federation finally persuaded a group of foyboat operatives to establish a rota system of just 100 men. Self-interestedly the Federation considered that this number would provide just sufficient men to run a full and efficient service whilst,

justifiably, pointing out that a rota comprising the whole of the licensed foyboatmen [c.250] would barely provide for one job per week, well under a living wage.²¹ Clearly the Federation anticipated trouble, requesting (rather impudently) that the TIC should control matters through the River Police, preventing interference with rota men at their 'Hut' on the Commissioners' land near the Groyne (South Shields) or harassment of foyboatmen afloat.

To supervise the day-to-day operation of the new rota system the Federation appointed a four-man committee of foyboatmen and a collector/secretary. This last job was hard to fill since the post-holder would be required to resolve – sometimes physically – angry disputes over money and working practices. The rota system, in which incoming ships were taken by men strictly in order of turn, operated simply in theory but proved logistically complex to manage in practice; for example, a crew still retained the right to farm a ship during all its sequential moves. Advantageously, rota men no longer had to go out seeking, since the 'partners' (crew) next on turn took the first ship that passed the system's agreed entry point, Lloyd's Hailing Station, well inside the harbour entrance.²² They re-entered the 'turns' system again when their ship passed West-end-of-Gut outward bound. Earnings however, largely resulted from luck: was a ship large or small, would it require few or many moves? Although formal rules (incomprehensible to laymen) were evolved to meet various eventualities, inter-crew altercations and feuds persisted, for a week's earnings or suspension might rest upon a rule's interpretation. 'Disputed bills' where, for example, a crew apparently overcharged or a shipmaster claimed unsatisfactory service, were referred to a Federation-convened meeting attended by the rota men's committee and secretary, and a Transport Workers' Union (TWU) representative. Indeed, the near unanimous decision of the newly established rota foyboatmen to join the TWU had been supported by the Federation, who saw it as in their interest to legitimise the rota system. Soon, this local TWU official was handling many of the men's grievances and, more ambiguously, was supporting Federation and TIC attempts to ensure payment of NHUI contributions.

As anticipated there was fierce opposition to the rota system, with the

adversarial organisation that was formed, the Tyne Boatmen (TB), unkindly being dubbed 'the tuberculars'. But the rota's newly designated Shipping Federation Boatmen (SFB) undeniably held the advantage, for masters and pilots of vessels owned by the Federation's membership were instructed to engage only those crews flying the SFB's yellow flag. As a consequence the independent TB proved short-lived, and its demise marked the beginning of the end for seeking. Indeed, the two factors that best united those who were opposed to the rota were, firstly, a sincere belief in an individual's right to competitive earnings and, secondly, an intangible collective measure of independence and pride. Feelings later eloquently expressed by a participant as: "What annoyed us when we finally came inside [i.e. joined the rota], you didn't mind coming inside sharing your living with men of your own metal that went out [seeking] with you as a challenge, but you did mind fellows coming, no doubt good hands in a boat, but they wouldn't go and seek, so now there was a swarm of we, instead of being thirty or forty there was a hundred- and-odd."²³ The hardened active foyboatman, used to continuously seeking at sea, had enjoyed a good if risky living and – with some reason – felt that the rota system degraded the occupation to the detriment of its elite. As feared, many experienced and deserving men lost employment through not being selected, a situation acknowledged by the SFB committee as constituting a real hardship; their awareness illustrated in the reply to an unsuccessful applicant in January 1934:

*...the fact that it has not been possible to find places on the rota for decent boatmen like yourself has worried the committee considerably... before establishing the rota the committee took the greatest possible care to establish who were the men who had been longest at this kind of work and who were the most deserving cases having regard to whether they were married, size of family etc. Even then there is a good many decent men had to be left off simply because there was not enough work to provide a reasonable living... owing to the heavy falling off of trade in the port... there was only work for 100 if the men were to be assured of a bare living of £2 per week.*²⁴

The committee also stressed its continuing effort to increase numbers by

opening up the work of the TIC's quays, and privately owned staiths, to rota boatmen.

Meanwhile, during a period of severe shipping recession, the TIC was preparing a new Parliamentary act, one which contained clauses giving them, not the Federation, the power to fix the port's maximum foyboat tariff.²⁵ Most commissioners understood the urgent need to resolve the situation of dual control where the responsibility for issuing licences rested with the Commissioners, whereas the shipowners were liable for all charges for wages on the tariff, compensation, and National Insurance. But individual opinions about achieving a resolution varied. For example, commissioner Sykes of South Shields – who quoted pilotage as a precedent – strongly recommended that the TIC should obtain control over the tariff as well as licensing. Conversely, the vociferous (former shipowning) commissioner for Newcastle, liberal Sir George Lunn, worried that any new powers might curtail the men's freedom to engage in seeking, and favoured leaving the Federation-managed *status quo*.²⁶ Predictably, the SFB largely endorsed the latter approach, suggesting that licensing should pass to a reconstituted Joint Council. And their independent views were progressed through union channels to a point where the Labour Party threatened to block the entire parliamentary bill unless given assurances that the TIC's ensuing bye-laws would be approved by a committee equally composed of foyboatmen and shipowners. Unwilling to be seen to act as the Labour Party's allies the Federation swiftly reached an understanding with the TIC, giving the bill the shipowning constituency's support. This understanding meant that the Federation would continue to scrutinise foyboat service payments, control the men's National Insurance 'stamps', and negotiate tariffs direct with the SFB's representatives: fundamentally, the *status quo*.

Although there was to be no new joint body, the Labour Party did gain formal assurances from the TIC that, prior to the submission of germane bye-laws to the Board of Trade, the Commission would receive the men's representations.²⁷ On these three-way compromises, the relevant sections of the Tyne Improvement Act, 1934, were finally agreed. As enacted it

consolidated the TIC's powers over foyboating, enabling it to: flexibly limit numbers "as circumstances required"; provide (optimistically) for the men's "good government", ensure satisfactory conduct and performance; determine the supply system; punish breaches of bye-laws; and, most critically, "fix a schedule of maximum charges".²⁸ True to promise, the subsequent bye-laws were approved by both the Federation and the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), with the former continuing its administration of the rota system, whilst the secretary of the Rota Foyboatmen (RF) dealt with its tortuous day-to-day workings. And, as prophesied by Sir George Lunn, seeking soon became obsolete, although for reasons of cost and conservatism the mundanely attired foyboatmen continued to work under oar-and-sail until the 1950s.^{29 30}

Nevertheless, one outstanding (above-mentioned) matter still lay unresolved. Ever since the TIC Act, 1925, boatmen's work at designated quays and staiths was allotted either to TIC employees or to those of the private interests concerned – mostly railway and colliery companies. The RF's first breakthrough was at Newcastle Quay where, supported by the TIC's quaymaster, it instituted a shift system that included servicing the frequent, scheduled North Sea cargo/passenger vessels berthing there. Notwithstanding this, in 1936 the mooring work at the TIC's big new staiths at Jarrow produced controversy, requiring a time-consuming, four-way agreement between the TIC, the Federation, a colliery company, and a major shipowner. Subsequent to this, the RF took over work at Pelaw and Harton Staiths (Pelaw Main Colliery Co.; Harton Coal Co.), whilst upriver, at Dunston and West Dunston (LNER; TIC, 1937) the rota and staiths' boatmen concluded a formal, if sometimes fraught, division of 'territories'. Less positively, staiths work added greatly to the complexity of the rota's operation, involving a separate volunteer 'staiths list'. However, the RF left work inside the Tyne's three wet docks unchallenged, presumably because of their employee's allegiance to Tyneside's old-established (1888) National Amalgamated Union of Labour. Overall, it was recognised that staiths work had considerably improved the incomes of the rota men, a situation improved

by minor tariff concessions like that which required ships of >1,779 tons to be serviced by two boats – a rare instance where the foyboatmen advanced safety considerations. On the other hand, after the Federation's support over working Newcastle Quay and Harton, the RF reluctantly gave in to pressure for a small increase in rota numbers.

In 1937, following completion of the TIC's new (1934 Act) suite of bye-laws, the Federation formally requested the TIC to assume total responsibility for the river's foyboat service. The commissioners immediately responded by setting up a "Foyboat Sub-Committee". This, after meeting the Federation's foyboat committee and the RF's committee, recommended that, having regard to the requirements of the port, the commission should institute a rota of a limited number of foyboatmen whilst leaving all other matters as they stood. Despite the Federation's previous insistence on its right to arrange the delivery system (i.e. rota), it now suddenly asked the commission to assume full control and run the organisation – provided it was at no extra cost to shipowners. Covertly though, the Federation sought to retain direct influence by persuading the TIC to pass an enabling bye-law authorising a new committee comprised of two Commissioners (both shipowners) and four Federation members, to: negotiate tariffs; control the rota, or alternative systems; exercise discipline; and determine crew numbers and areas of operation. They implied that this action would show a concerted front, forestalling any attempt by the unions to exploit the current situation. Though such manoeuvrings continued, the exigencies of wartime intervened. Post-war, the TIC determinedly proceeded, acquiring further bye-laws, and approaching the Federation to share the cost of the resultant body, one that involved not only the appointment of a new Foyboat Supervisor but, in conjunction with the Federation and TGWU, improved machinery to deal with complaints and discipline.³¹ Although these post-war arrangements did not always work out as expected, there is no doubt that for the Tyne's foyboatmen they signalled the end of a long, unsatisfactory regulatory era and the welcome prospect of a potentially more collaborative future.

Conclusions

In small compass, the development of the Tyne foyboat service exemplifies Milne's view that although the nineteenth-century river commissions were extremely important in managing the maritime North East, it was typical of the time that their powers were limited and continued to be subject to the rights and jurisdictions of others.³² Seen in this context it is explicable that the Tyne's own commission took nearly fifty years to recognise, negotiate and consolidate the management of this essential port service. Throughout, the local shipowning organisations – with members embedded in the commission – continued to exercise their perceived rights as the foyboatmen's de facto employers, concerned only to expedite the coal trade. There is great irony in the fact that it was the self-interested rota system introduced by these same proponents of the free market that divisively undermined the foyboatmen's own long-established, competitive economy.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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- 12 J. Havelock Wilson, *My Stormy Voyage Through Life*, Vol.I, London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1925
- 13 W. Runciman, *Before the Mast – And After*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924, pp.261-71
- 14 TWAM, 1070/3; Minutes of the North of England Steamship Owners' Association, 1903-04
- 15 A.G. Osler, 'The Tyne Foyboatmen: a Labour History', Ms. in Newcastle Library, 1981, pp. 8-10, Table 1.
- 16 The normally antagonistic North- and South-Shields-based men voluntarily trialled collaborative working, taking ships by 'turns' (selected by lot or sequence) during severe weather and/or at night, i.e. conditionally giving up seeking.
- 17 Oral information from a participant who requested anonymity.
- 18 Tyne Improvement Act, 1925 (15 & 16 GEO.5), section 17
- 19 Anon., 'River Tyne Foyboat Service', unpublished report, Tyne Improvement Commission, 1960
- 20 This suggested exclusivity, and the accompanying reduction in competitive seeking, mirrored arguments over 'constant' pilots in the 1880s.
- 21 TWAM, microfilm; Minutes of the Tyne Foyboatmen's Association, 1933-34
- 22 The particularly gruesome loss of two young foyboatmen seeking at night had recently (21st December, 1932) highlighted its dangers; their 'rented' boat eventually washed up in Norway.
- 23 TWAM (Newcastle Discovery Museum), Oral History Recording R38A-B, 1977
- 24 TWAM, microfilm; Minutes of the Tyne Foyboatmen's Association, 1933-34
- 25 *Proceedings of the Tyne Improvement Commission*, 1932-33, pp.443-46
- 26 *Proceedings of the Tyne Improvement Commission*, 1933-34, pp.38-48
The TIC Chairman's irritable premise that "[our] object in commencing this business [licensing] was to save these men risking their lives" appears disingenuous.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p.459
- 28 Tyne Improvement Act, 1934 (24 & 25 GEO.5), sections: 73, 74, 75
- 29 A.G. Osler, 'Tyneside's Riverworkers: Occupational Dress', in *Costume*, No.18, 1984, pp.74-82
- 30 Osler in Cunliffe, *Pilots* Vol.2, p.273
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THEIR GEORDIES AND OURS –

Part I

Dave Harker

What's in a name? ¹

There are several myths about the origin of 'Geordie', but little hard evidence. This article traces its uses in standard historical sources, especially digitised newspapers, but also in poems, songs and stories, to try to answer a series of questions. When, where and why were 'Geordies' first so-called, and did the meaning change over time? Did 'Geordieland' include all of North Britain, only northeastern England or only Tyneside, and did 'Geordies' take their 'Geordie-ness' with them when they left? If 'Geordie-ness' is a sense of 'identity', how can 'Geordies' be sure they have the same subjectivities? Is there a 'Geordie' dialect or language, and can native speakers of other Englishes and foreign languages learn it and pass as 'Geordies'? Is 'Geordieness' a myth that divides communities, and, if so, whose interests does it serve?

Were the first Geordies 'Scotch'?

'Geordie' has been a pet name for George for centuries. In 1600, the Graham's, a border clan, faced charges of theft, and their leader's petition against deportation included a list of those that 'Geordie answers for'. ² Every George on both sides of the border was answerable to a Scots or an English monarch until 1603, when Queen Elizabeth died childless. King James of Scotland also became King of England, and George Heriot, a goldsmith, followed him to London, loaned him golden coins and was nicknamed 'Jingling Geordie'. ³

George Stoodle had lived on Gateshead Moor and in Newcastle, but stole horses and cattle and hanged in 1610. In London, Henry Gosson published *A lamentable new Ditty, made upon the death of a worthy Gentleman, named*

George Stoodle, set to 'a delicate Scottish Tune'. It called Stoodle 'George', 'Georgy', 'Georgie' and 'Gorgy',⁴ but as it travelled north, Scots singers used 'Geordie'.⁵ In 1688, catholic James II was deposed and a Dutch protestant became William III. In 1694, Henry Atkinson of Hartburn in Northumberland wrote the notes of *Gingling Geordie* in his manuscript tune book,⁶ and in 1700, Henry Playford included *Ginleing Georde* in *A Collection of Original Scotch-Tunes*, the first printed book of 'Scotch' violin music published in London.

In 1701, the Act of Settlement barred catholics from the throne, but when Queen Anne died in 1714, she had no surviving children, and the Elector of Hanover, a member of the Welf family, became George I. In 1715, supporters of James Stuart, the catholic son of James II, raised an army in Scotland, but fewer than 300 Northumberland 'Jacobites', including 200 servants, tenants and dependents of catholic gentry, 'rode out' to support him.⁷ Sir William Blackett, a rich merchant and a Newcastle MP, encouraged 700 keelmen to arm. The Jacobites steered clear, but Blackett was 'strongly suspected' of supporting the Stuarts and a warrant was issued for his arrest, so he kept a low profile,⁸ probably at his estate at Cambo in Northumberland. After the inconclusive battle of Sheriffmuir, the rebellion petered out, but Thomas Whittell of Cambo wrote *The Midford Galloway's Ramble* to the tune of *Ranting Roaring Willie*. It was nominally about 'Geordie', a feckless Northumbrian who had taken a horse taken from some Jacobites. It ran away, but eventually returned. The piece remained in manuscript for almost eighty years,⁹ and may have been about Blackett.

In 1727, George I died and his son became George II. In 1741 Sir Walter Calverley Blackett of Wylam, William's grandson, adopted *Gingling Geordie* as a signature tune in his successful campaign to become a Newcastle MP, but renamed it *Wylam Away*.¹⁰ In 1745 Charles Stuart, son of the 'Old Pretender', raised an army in Scotland; but Newcastle was secured for King George and there were 'the greatest rejoicings ever known' in the town for 'Butcher' Cumberland's 'decisive victory' at Culloden in 1746.¹¹ The Jacobite song, *Though Geordie reigns in Jamie's Stead*, showed both disrespectful and

affectionate familiarity.¹² In 1748, in Stonehaven Goal, the Reverend John Troup reportedly sang lyrics that hinted at the George's preference for one of his mistresses, to the tune of *The Sow's Tail to Geordie*. (It appeared in print in Edinburgh thirty years later, in Alexander McGlashan's *A Collection of Scots Measures*.) *A Collection of Loyal Songs*, published in Edinburgh, included Highland Laddie, whose lover refuses to marry one of 'Geordi's Louts'.¹³ *Geordie Whelps' Testament* alluded to his family name and compared him to an ill-behaved puppy,¹⁴ and Scots border shepherds called ragwort 'Stinking Geordie'.¹⁵

George II died in 1760 and his grandson became George III. In 1779, a privately printed Edinburgh songbook, *The True Loyalist, or, Chevalier's Favourite*, included *Pr[in]ce C[harle]s is come o'er from France*, about 'G[eor]die' – George II – first hearing of the arrival of the 'Young Pretender'. Around this time, the Irish Gaelic poet, Eoghan Ruadh O Suilleabhain, used 'Geordie Whelps' as a generic term for an invader.¹⁶ In 1783, many blamed George III for losing the American colonies and the murderer of 'Cockle Geordie' hanged in Durham.¹⁷ Golden guineas bore George's head and Robert Burns' *Twa Dogs* called them 'yellow Geordies' in 1786.¹⁸ In 1787 the Edinburgh music engraver James Johnson's *The Scots Musical Museum* included *The Mucking o' Geordie's Byre*, which described the filthy habits of 'Geordie' and the hazardous task of cleaning the shed where his 'cows' – mistresses - lived. In 1788, doctors diagnosed George III as mad and 'Geordie Whelps' had become a common term of abuse in Scotland by 1790. In 1791, Burns was 'absolutely crazed' about 'collecting old stanzas' of Scots songs, but probably wrote at least two-thirds of the thirty verses he sent to Johnson,¹⁹ who published them as Geordie in the second volume of *The Scots Musical Museum* in 1792.²⁰ In 1793, Joseph Ritson, a Stockton-born lawyer in London, included *The Midford Galloway's Ramble in The Northumberland Garland*, an upmarket chapbook printed in Newcastle.²¹ That year's execution of Louis XIV persuaded the British government to declare war on republican France and the northeast coalfield became strategically vital.

Bob Cranky

For a century before 1793, northeast *pitmen* – coal miners - had signed or put their cross on a bond to work in one colliery for a year. Breaking the contract could result in imprisonment or a hefty fine, but it guaranteed a basic daily wage of around two shillings for *hewers* – coal-face workers. From 1793, impressments, especially into the Royal Navy, reduced the available labour force around the Tyne and Wear and worsened the bargaining position of the coal owners' cartel; so on the annual *binding* day in 1800 colliery managers paid skilled hewers up to twelve guineas.²²

Henry Robson was born in Benwell, a mile west of Newcastle, in 1775, and later became apprenticed to the Newcastle printer, Margaret Angus.²³ Pit-villages had more single young men than women and on the fortnightly Pay Saturday, affluent young pitmen dressed up and set off for a day of eating, drinking and courting in Newcastle, where they represented serious competition for young townsmen saving to set up in business and hoping to marry.²⁴ Printers normally used 'standard' English, but around 1800 Robson put vernacular words in *The Colliers' Pay Week* and used 'generic' names, including 'Bob Cranky'. 'Jack Hogg' drinks a lot, asks a young townswoman to dance, and she asks the fiddler to play *Jigging for me*, but a Willington 'callant' throws Hogg on the fire and his 'breeks' are 'torn and burnt off his a[rs]e'. Robson advised 'collier callants' to 'Beware when you fuddle together, Of making too free with strong beer', but his poem did not appear in print for over a decade, presumably for fear of reprisals.²⁵

In 1802, during a brief peace, an Aberdeen paper published sentimental lyrics to the tune of *The Mucking of Geordy's Byre* and Edinburgh Freemasons sang it after a loyal toast.²⁶ When hostilities resumed in 1803, George III needed more sailors and soldiers and war-related industry needed more coal. More impressment caused a serious labour shortage in the northeast and some pitmen formed an illegal 'Brotherhood'.²⁷ In 1804, when the export trade was busiest, they forced up wage-rates by up to forty percent and binding money up to fourteen guineas on Tyneside,²⁸ twenty on Wearside,²⁹ and 'near thirty' at Plessey in Northumberland.³⁰

Robson may have set type for *Bob Cranky's 'Size Sunday*, 'A Favorite Comic Song', which Angus published on a large sheet with an engraved tune arranged for the pianoforte and to be played 'Allegretto Pitmanale'. 'Bob' dresses in his finery, goes to Newcastle on Assize Day and disdains to walk with 'Geordy', a neighbour dressed 'not half se fine' and not as universally talented as himself. 'Cranky' gets drunk, fights and ends with two black eyes and a tear in his new suit, but promises himself a new one on binding day.³¹ The 'phonetic' lyrics mimicked the vernacular for the benefit of those who did not speak it or who would find it amusing. The anonymous lyricist, 'a Gentleman of Newcastle', was twenty-year-old John Selkirk, who had been born in Gateshead, the son of a hairdresser who worked in the Close, Newcastle, and was now a Newcastle Quayside clerk,³² while the anonymous musical arranger was Thomas Train of Gateshead.³³ The song was successful in their social circles, so Angus published a 'Second edition' without the tune on a smaller sheet.³⁴

The formula caught on. George Cameron was a hairdresser in the Close and a volunteer sergeant. When the French army was at Boulogne, waiting to invade England, he wrote *The Pitman's Revenge against Bonaparte* and sang it to fellow volunteers in the Three Indian Kings on the Quayside. His 'pitman' volunteer, 'loyal Tom' was determined that 'nyen but George shall reign', but 'Willy Dunn' ridiculed volunteers in a phonetic version of Scots vernacular: 'Geordy winna hae yor help, / Ye're sic kamstarie folk, man'. It appeared as a slip song in Newcastle,³⁵ a town that now attracted ambitious young men from across the north.

John Bell was born in south-west Northumberland in 1755, into a prosperous farming family, and his father took him to Newcastle to apprentice him to a land-surveyor in 1770. In 1782, John married a woman from a well-to-do Durham family and John junior was born in 1783. Solomon Hodgson from Penrith, an ardent political reformer, had a bookshop in the Groat Market, and employed Bell senior in 1785. By the early 1790s, Bell was an independent surveyor, but Hodgson transferred the bookshop to him in 1794, and he trained two sons in both trades. By 1803, John junior

had a Quayside bookshop and collected songs and poems from printed, manuscript and oral sources.³⁶ One by a Quayside clerk, James Stawpert,³⁷ was about 'Geordy Swanny', and the 'pitman' narrator in the anonymous *The Pitman at the Play* swore 'Smash Gordy'.³⁸ Bell's 'A Glossary for Newcastle, Durham and Northumberland' defined 'Crankey' as 'checked Flannell worn by Pitmen – hence they get the Name of Bob Crankeys – as mentioned in the Song of Bob Crankey',³⁹ though the pitmen's golden days were over.

In 1805, the Joint Durham and Northumberland Coal Owners' Association agreed not to 'poach' each other's men and limit binding money to three and a half guineas on Tyneside and six on Wearside. In 1806, they cut binding money to one and two guineas, respectively and had cut it even more by 1810.⁴⁰ The pitmen struck to prevent binding day being moved from April to January, when their bargaining position was weaker, but lost,⁴¹ and inflation reduced their spending power.⁴² In 1811, J.M. Clarke of 'Collierly Dykes' wrote *Colliers of Wear & of Tyne*, which sympathised with pitmen, though the narrator 'had not one picture of Geordie' on a coin, while Clarke's *Bessy in Mask* called guineas 'nice yellow Geordies.'⁴³ Doctors diagnosed George III as completely insane, so his libertine grandson George became Prince Regent and a target of satire, especially for constitutional monarchists and republicans.

Geordy Prince Rex

In 1812, John Bell junior published *Rhymes of Northern Bards*, hoping to save these 'simple, yet popular effusions' from 'the yawning jaws of oblivion'. He included *Bob Cranky's 'Size Sunday* (with two verses of his own), *The Pitman's Revenge against Bonaparte* and *The Midford Galloway's Ramble*,⁴⁴ yet Bell had another version of *The Original Bob Cranky* which did not mention 'Geordy' or end with 'Cranky' getting into trouble.⁴⁵ In 1814, the timber merchant Thomas Thompson wrote *Jemmy Joneson's Whurry*, whose narrator was one of 'Wor Geordies' from Newcastle who had an eventful boat trip to Shields and 'spoke' a 'phonetic' vernacular, while John Selkirk's *Bob Cranky's Leum'nation Neet* referred disrespectfully to 'Geordy Prince Rex'.⁴⁶

The war ended in 1815. Around that time, Robert Toppliff, a north easterner who worked as a London church organist, published *A Selection of the most popular melodies of the Tyne and the Wear ... arranged for the piano forte*, and 'respectfully inscribed to the gentlemen of the Durham County Club, with the highest sentiments of deference & esteem by their obliged humble serv[an]t'. Thirteen tunes had lyrics, but not *Cockle Geordie*.⁴⁷

In 1816, Glasgow police stopped an unemployed tradesmen posting bills for a musical entertainment, found the lyrics of *Geordie Sits in Charlie's Chair* and locked him up; but the magistrate thought the song was 'not jacobitical but jacobinical' – republican – and discharged him.⁴⁸ Many Scots had moved south. Robert Emery was born in Edinburgh in 1784, but his family soon moved to Newcastle and he became an apprentice to Margaret Angus. In 1812, Emery probably helped Robson set type for Bell's *Rhymes*,⁴⁹ and was inspired to write his own. In 1818, the 'pitman' narrator of *The Pitman's Dream* tells about Princess Caroline and her father-in-law, 'Geordy the Third', drinking wine at a tavern near Newcastle Leazes, and stressed that, 'As sure as maw nyem's Cranky', her husband, 'the fourth Geordie' to be, was just 'as clever'. 'Cranky' had also spotted George III in 'Hell's Kitchen',⁵⁰ a back room of the Flying Horse in the Groat Market, where the poker was securely chained to stop 'beggars, tramps and loafers' hitting each other.⁵¹

In 1819, the poet James Hogg published the First Series of *The Jacobite Relics* in Edinburgh. It included *The Sow's Tale to Geordie*, *At Auchindown*, which refers to 'cuckold Geordie', *Kirn-Milk Geordie*, about 'Geordie' beating 'Jamie', and *The Rebellious Crew*, which makes odious comparisons between the Stuarts and 'your Geordie'. *Cam ye o'er frae France* called George I 'Geordie Whelps' and accused him of 'Riding on a goosie' – mistress – while Scots courtiers 'skip and dance / O'er the bum o' Geordie'.⁵² Years later, Gavin Greig found a version of its lyrics in a 'book lent by Will. Walker, Aberdeen', and thought it a 'Jacobite song (from an old chapbook – about 1796-8)'.⁵³ Walker's 'Index' of Greig and Duncan's 'Folk-song gatherings' also described it as a 'Jacobite Song' 'from Chapbook c.1796'. This publication has not been located in Aberdeen University Library, or in the part of

Walker's collection in Florida University Library, though the lyrics appear in a later Falkirk chapbook. Hogg later acknowledged that he wrote Donald Macgillavry and he may well have written *Cam ye o'er frae France* around 1819,⁵⁴ when it would have had a topical anti-royal resonance. Late that year, radical reformers in Paisley carried a flag inscribed with 'The mucking of Geordie's byre'.⁵⁵

In 1820 George III died. Prince George wanted to deprive Caroline of the title of Queen and got a Bill annulling their marriage through the House of Lords, but decided not to proceed to the Commons for fear of exposing his own adulteries. George IV's coronation took place in 1821. According to a radical whose parents were from Scotland, 6,000 Tyneside men signed a petition supporting Caroline, 7,000 women signed a congratulatory address and there were five 'Queen Caroline' female benefit societies. Newcastle Corporation's celebration of the coronation led to drunkenness and disorder,⁵⁶ but George Angus, Margaret's son and successor, printed *Geordie Craggs*, which compared the 'Q[uee]n' at St. Paul's to a 'w[hor]e at christi'ning'.⁵⁷ In Edinburgh, the Second Series of *The Jacobite Relics* included *Though Geordie reigns in Jamie's Stead, O My Bonny Highland Laddie*, which called George II 'Geordie', *Geordie sits in Charlie's Chair*, *The Bee-Hive*, in which 'Geordie' wins but 'Jamie' claims a moral victory. *A Lamentable Ditty on the Death of Geordie*, which was very like *A lamentable new Ditty*, 'To a delicate Scottish Tune'.⁵⁸ In 1822, Walter Scott's novel, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, featured 'Jingling Geordie', James I's banker, and soon after Sir Walter organised the celebrations when George IV became the first Hanoverian monarch to visit Edinburgh. The Theatre Royal audience sang the loyal 'New National Ballad', *Welcome Royal Geordie*, and The Times of London reported that 'peasants' 'threw up their hats for "Geordie"' in the streets; but another London paper advertised George Cruikshank's satirical engravings of 'the Northern Excursion of Geordie, Emperor of Gotham',⁵⁹ a reference to the old story of *The Mad Men of Gotham*.

Thou's a real Geordy!

William Purvis was born in a village near Edinburgh in 1784, into a tailor's family, but they moved to Newcastle in 1787. 'Billy' was later apprenticed to a carpenter and became a Freeman; but in 1816 he offended Kenton pitmen with 'The Pitman and the Magistrate',⁶⁰ in which one uncouth 'pitman' called another 'Gordy' disparagingly.⁶¹ By 1823, Purvis was a showman, and encountered a former pitman 'coming out strong with his imitations and his Geordies' at Newcastle races.

'Ah man,' I would say to him, 'Whe but a feul wad hae gyen an' seld off his furnitary an' left his wife to be a feul? Noo yor a *fair doon reet* feul, not an *artificial* yen like Billy Purvis! Thou's a real Geordy! Gan an' hide thysel' for Lord's sake. Gan and get yor picks agyen. Ye mevies may de for the city, but never for the west end o' wor toon!'

Purvis evidently felt himself a cut above the keelmen's 'city' of Sandgate, patronised 'Pit Jennies and Geordies' at Houghton Feast,⁶² wound up potential customers with 'Are ye cumin in te see wor show, Geordy?'⁶³

In 1825 *Edgar's Collection of Odd Songs*, published by master-printer Robert Edgar for the Oddfellows, included Robert Emery's *Hackney Coach Customers*, which satirised 'Geordy Bell', a Newcastle 'pitman' who paid half-a-crown to ride to Gateshead Fell to 'cut a bit swagger'.⁶⁴ In 1826, Purvis went to Glasgow: 'Ah, man, aw did 'lectrify the Scotch Geordies'. Evidently, it was his favourite term for the manual workers who formed most of his audiences, though it probably retained some nationalist connotations in Scotland,⁶⁵ and it had spread south thanks to the coal trade. London people reportedly referred to collier ships and their crews as 'Geordies', while MPs found it difficult to understand George Stephenson, the Tyneside engineer.⁶⁶ In 1827, hard-line Tory MPs refused to serve under a moderate Tory Prime Minister, but Whig MPs supported him; and a reference to *The Mucking o' Geordie's Byre* followed a toast to 'His Majesty's Ministers' at a dinner for Berwick's Whig MP.⁶⁷ In Newcastle, the radical young bookseller John Marshall admired the 'moral and physical character' of 'our Keelmen', but was wary about a political alliance with pitmen who he thought '[s]ervile in their

habits and manners'.⁶⁸ John Bell found *Mally's Blister*, a song about 'Geordy Hall' of Gateshead, who allegedly drank too much, fell asleep sitting on his wife's poultice for constipation and suffered the consequences.⁶⁹ In 1829, the grocer William Oliver's *The Bonassus* recalled 'Geordy's Coronashun';⁷⁰ and the second edition of the wealthy liberal lawyer John Trotter Brockett's *A Glossary of North Country Words*, published by the Newcastle bookseller Emerson Charnley, noted that 'Geordie' meant 'George', a 'very common name among the pitmen', and a general greeting, as in 'How! Geordie man! How is't?'⁷¹ Yet he provided no supporting evidence.

In 1830, George IV died and his brother became William IV. In Newcastle, a former Gateshead pitman wrote *The Pitman's Pay*, and referred to a pub landlord called George as 'Geordy'.⁷² In 1831, thousands of unionised pitmen refused to accept the binding conditions and colliery managers locked them out, but they won a twelve-hour shift for boys and cash payment.⁷³ Marshall printed their propaganda, none of which referred to 'Geordies', and he did so again in 1832, but a second lockout broke both the union and him.⁷⁴ In 1835, William Chatto noted that superstitious northeast sailors called a cockle-seller a 'Bad Weather-Geordy' and saw him as a harbinger of dangerous seas.⁷⁵ William IV died in 1837 and his niece, Victoria, succeeded. In 1838, Henry Perlee Parker, a Plymouth-born artist, painted 'The Pitmen at Quoits', and the Tory *Newcastle Courant* noted that 'Geordie's face' was 'well-nigh hidden with coal dust and shadow'.⁷⁶ In 1839, in spite of a huge numbers of signatures on the Chartist petition, most MPs refused to consider it,⁷⁷ and a Leeds paper published a story.

Two colliers a little to the west of Newcastle, having a colloquy upon the anticipated appropriation system taught by the Chartists, one of them addressed his 'marrow,' "Hey, Geordy," says he, "when we hes wor grand levelling I think I'll just be content wi' Hamsterley Hall for my share." "Hamsterley Hall," rejoined his comrade, "far less will de for me, I'll be varra content wi' Weddle's close and thy cow." "How," said the first spokesman, "what hey thou to de wi' ma cow?" when his friend coolly replied, "*Why, just has much has thou has to de wi' Hamsterley Hall.*"

A Liverpool paper reprinted the tale as '*A poser for a Chartist Leveller*'.⁷⁸

In 1844, the National Miners' Association supported the northeast struggle against the bond, but none of the versified propaganda written by strikers, their wives and supporters mentioned 'Geordies'.⁷⁹ Evictions, blacklegs, police, troops, courts and hunger defeated the strike, but the new bond allowed for one month's notice either side.⁸⁰ London papers reported the 95 lives lost at Haswell Colliery and mentioned Stephenson's 'Geordy lamp', as did a radical Leeds paper. The *Newcastle Courant* called it the 'Geordie' lamp, but changed that to 'Geordy' in 1845.⁸¹ In 1846, the third edition of Brockett's *Glossary* noted that 'pitmen have given the name of *Geordie* to Mr. George Stephenson's lamp',⁸² and the Liberal nonconformist *Newcastle Guardian* claimed that 'Nature' 'niver myeks a "Geordie" without a "Jenny"'.⁸³ In 1847, the Newcastle painter, John Wilson Carmichael, had 'much difficulty in making himself understood in London society' and 'a lady asked him how long he had lived in England'.⁸⁴ James Halliwell's *Dictionary*, published in London, defined 'Geordie' as 'George'. North [of England],⁸⁵ as did Frederick's Dinsdale's *Teesdale Glossary*, published in London in 1849.⁸⁶ The Newcastle schoolteacher, Joseph Philip Robson's *Songs of the Bards of the Tyne* included *Geordie's Letter frae Callerforney*, in which a bragging 'pitman' tells of the hazards he had faced, before becoming 'King o' Callerforney'. In Robson's *The Pawnshop in a Bleeze*, a Newcastle woman cries, 'Wor Geordey's breeks is gyen, aw fear'.⁸⁷ Billy Purvis paid Robson to write his biography and explained to potential customers: 'Aw's selling maw Life, Geordie, to keep life in maw pluck'.⁸⁸ A railway linked Newcastle to London, and travelling shows faced competition from permanent concert halls, but some performers made the transition.

Wor Geordie and thors

Edward Corvin was born in Liverpool in 1829, to émigré Irish parents, who soon moved to Newcastle. In the later 1840s, 'Ned Corven' joined Billy Purvis's company and wrote *He wad be a Noodle*. His 'Geordie' enlists in the volunteer yeomanry, who had suppressed workers' struggles for decades, and

so is a 'slaverin cull' - a foolish fellow - yet 'Geordie' and the narrator have the same mother - 'Wor aud wife' - so he was part of a working class family, and 'Wor Geordie', not *thors*.⁸⁹

By 1850, a railway linked Newcastle and Edinburgh. In 1851, an Edinburgh paper reprinted a *Sunderland Herald* tale about 'pitmen'. After visiting the Great Exhibition in London they 'dropt into a concert-room' and 'thought it was not fair for the professionals to have all the singing for themselves'. One sang a song, but the audience could not understand him. Liberal London papers reported sympathetically that pitmen witnesses at an inquest into colliery deaths preferred the 'Geordy' lamp to the 'Davy'.⁹⁰ In 1853, the Newcastle Journal published *Lines on the Death of the Far Famed Billy Purvis*, which noted that 'the "Geordies"' loved him.⁹¹ The 'pitman' narrator in Corven's *Astrilly*; or, *The Pitman's Farewell*, was determined to emigrate in spite of the 'greet politickshinist', 'Geordie Hall', who would 'suiner hev a reed herrin' at hyem than a beef-steak at Asstrilly'.⁹² In 1854, Corven changed his name to Corvan and the 'pitman' narrator of *Geordie's Letter frae Callerforney* claimed to vanquished a 'cannibal' 'Ingin' king and become 'George the First', not 'Geordie'.⁹³ B. Joseph & Co, the Grey Street tailors, advertised in the *Newcastle Courant* and referred to potential customers as 'Geordie'.⁹⁴ In 1855, a general merchant in southern County Durham noted that 'Crankies' was the local 'proverbial name for pitmen',⁹⁵ but it was dying out. *The Gateshead Observer* published a tale about a 'pitman' in that area 'overheard by a gentleman'. 'Geordy' lamented that his wife was worse than 'a perfect devil'. The Tory *Newcastle Journal* claimed that 'Jingling Geordie's Hole' in South Shields was the 'favourite haunt' of a smuggler with 'a wooden leg well shod with iron, which emitted a peculiar sound as he walked'. In 1857, an Oxford paper reprinted a *Shields Gazette* tale in which 'wor Geordie' tells other 'pitmen' that he would wait until after the predicted comet before he built a 'rabbit cree' in case 'the world comes tiv an end!' A Liverpool paper reprinted a Gateshead Observer story about 'Geordie', a 'pitman' who aimed to go to Australia, but was involved in a railway accident before he reached Liverpool. The *Newcastle Courant* review of Smiles' *Life*

of George Stephenson noted that pitmen preferred the 'Geordy' lamp to the 'Davy'.⁹⁶

Around 1860, 'Geordy Dodds', the old 'pitman' in Corvan's *The Sword Dancer's Lament*, felt like a 'blunted pick of former times'.⁹⁷ In 1861, a London paper reported that a prostitute asked a sailor for a drink in a Ratcliffe Highway pub and he called her an 'Irish cat'. She persisted; he hit her, but she hit him back and called him a 'North Country Geordie'. The court officers explained to the magistrate that 'North Country sailors were generally called "Geordies," but not as a term of reproach'.⁹⁸ In 1862 a Gateshead songwriter advertised 'Geordy's Ridley's concert' in *Blaydon Races*,⁹⁹ while Corvan played 'Geordie the Keelman' in a Newcastle concert hall. In 1863, the *Newcastle Guardian* distinguished between 'country cousins' and 'Geordies' - pitmen - going to see warships in Sunderland harbour.¹⁰⁰ The Newcastle bookseller Thomas Allan's *Tyneside Songs* contained many pieces about 'Geordie',¹⁰¹ and in 1864 Allan claimed that a 'big' 'Gyetside lass' called 'Cushey Butterfield' protested to 'Geordie' Ridley 'ageyn bein' myed a sang on'.¹⁰² *Chater's Comic Almanack* was marketed with the slogan, "'Tis a Corker Geordey', while the *Newcastle Daily Journal* acknowledged that 'Geordie' pitmen were 'successful in the vegetable show'.¹⁰³ Joe Wilson, a Newcastle printer turned concert hall singer-songwriter, wrote *Keep Yor Feet Still*, in which 'Wor Geordey' and 'Bob Thompson' shared a bed in 'a little lodjin hoose that's doon the shore'.

Keep yor feet still! Geordey, hinny, let's be happy for the neet,
For aw maynit be se happy throo the day,
So give us that bit cumfort, - keep yor feet still, Geordey lad,
An' dinnet send maw bonny dreams away!

'Wor Geordey' was evidently less thoughtful than 'Bob Thompson' and not worthy of a surname.

In 1865, Wilson's *Aw wish yor Muther wad cum; or, wor Geordy's notions about men nursing bairns* satirised a father with a sexist attitude to domestic

labour and no parenting skills.¹⁰⁴ The former Secretary of the Tynemouth Tradesmen's Society and Mechanics Institute Library Committee was comfortably off, but fondly recalled his boyhood, when 'Geordies came from far and near' - including County Durham - to see Purvis's show.¹⁰⁵ In 1866, when Old Prudhoe pitmen repulsed bailiffs, the *Newcastle Guardian* called them 'Geordies'. A bookseller wanted six shillings for *Bob Cranky's Size Sunday*,¹⁰⁶ while the German-US journalist, Charles Nordhoff, called northeast English sailors 'Jordies'.¹⁰⁷ In 1868, a Leeds paper stressed that the only means of getting coal was 'the brawny arm of "old Geordy"', but the *Newcastle Guardian* caricatured 'a Geordie from Benwell'.¹⁰⁸ In 1869, a Commons Committee interviewed Northumberland miners, but needed an 'interpreter'.¹⁰⁹ *The Slang Dictionary*, published in London, defined 'Geordie' as a 'general term in Northumberland and Durham for a pitman, or coal-miner. Origin not known; the term has been in use for more than a century'. It gave no dating evidence or for 'Smash-Man-Geordie' being a 'pitman's oath'.¹¹⁰

This way to Geordie-land

In 1871, the editor of the *Newcastle Courant* welcomed the crushing of the Paris Commune, but the first Durham Miners' Association Gala horrified him.¹¹¹ It took place in Wharton Park, above the railway station, but the DMA hired forty police to encourage shopkeepers in the town-centre to stay open. In 1872, 40,000 people attended the Gala at Durham racecourse.¹¹² Rowland Harrison's *Geordy's Deeth* was about a landlord called George and his *Geordy Black* sentimentalised a former hewer picking stones out of coal on the surface.¹¹³ The *Courant* published a tale about 'Geordie', a gullible 'pitman',¹¹⁴ and Thomas Allan's *A Choice Collection of Tyneside Songs* included *Geordy's Disaster*, about a thieving keel skipper, and dozens of old songs about 'Geordy' 'pitmen'.¹¹⁵ In 1873, the Northumberland Miners' Association decided to support Liberal parliamentary candidates.¹¹⁶ The *Courant* carried a story about a gullible 'pitman' called 'Geordie'. It welcomed 'the improvement in the habits and tastes of Geordie', but wished to see 'improvement in other

things besides those relating to drink and personal ornament', particularly when 'Geordie' was 'not appearing in the public-house or the police court,' or at horse and dog races. 'Geordie' was 'showing himself everywhere equal to the new social position into which his command of wealth entitles him,' and champagne wedding breakfasts were allegedly 'the fashion in Durham mining villages'.

Geordie! Don't be a fule! Thy wine comes somewhat rarely from the sunny vineyards of France. Stick to Primitive Methodism and pianos, beef and beer, and get them all good of their kind; then shall thy days be long in the land; and thy children, eschewing the pits, may rise to intellectual vocations...

Scots 'Geordies' 'canter over the country in their abundant leisure' and 'regularly ride to work, while the stables and grooming 'must be provided at the expense of the colliery'. 'I shall next hear of him, I suspect, as going across the country in scarlet,' aping foxhunting gentry. In 1874, the *Courant* bitterly lamented that pitmen's relative prosperity had led to the erosion of class distinctions and compared the marriage of Queen Victoria's son and the Czar's daughter to that of 'the unregenerate Geordie' pitman and his bride.

In the full flush of coal prosperity last year he brought home his bride in a carriage and pair from the church to a rent-free cottage, kindly placed at his occupancy by the colliery owners, and who thereafter received a fortnightly income that provided liberally for all normal wants, and for the luxuries of a piano, revolvers, and champagne, with also a seat in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, or a couple of dogs, according as piety or sporting characterised his Sunday life...

Geordie just calls on the parish clerk or the union registrar, and signifies his intention to marry, paying a small fee for making the announcement public, and three or four weeks thereafter, with more or less of state as may suit his modesty or finances, he proceeds to

church or registry office...

When the unregenerate Geordie takes to himself a partner of his heart and home, he does not often trouble himself as to the contingencies and consequences; and even when he aspires to a higher life than that of the insensate brute, the companion of his leisurely strolls, and has hopes beyond the life that now is, he is content to leave the future of his present life unprovided for by any special contract or bargaining... ¹¹⁷

In reality, northeast pitmen had to accept a ten per cent pay cut, ¹¹⁸ but two in every five Englishmen had the vote. Thomas Burt, the teetotal NMA Secretary, was unopposed by a Liberal and soundly beat a Conservative to become Morpeth's MP.

In 1876, the merged *Newcastle Weekly Courant and North of England Farmer* published a story about real pitmen who had a five-hour drinking session and a snowball fight outside. One man called George Hunter 'Geordie', and Hunter shot him dead and hanged. The *Courant* noted that 'provident' pitmen's wives returned from Newcastle to Pelaw Main and Swalwell by train with 'Geordie's backy carefully stowed away in the corner of their baskets'. When Joseph Cowen 'talked in the Tyneside tongue' in the Commons, Benjamin Disraeli claimed that he 'did not understand' and other MPs thought it was Latin, ¹²⁰ but the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined 'Geordie' as 'a north east pitman'. In 1877, the *Courant* carried a story about a 'stalwart Geordie' at Newcastle Station in 'the affectionate stage of drunkenness', who 'lovingly embracing a companion who vainly endeavours to point out that his train is just leaving'. In another *Courant* tale, a 'pitman' reading a newspaper asks another, "I say Geordie, what's fortifications?" Geordie unwilling to betray total ignorance replied, "Why aw divvent know, unless it be two twenty-fications." Yet another *Courant* story told of a Newcastle magistrate fining a 'pit lad' 'called Geordie', but he escaped without paying. In 1878, the *Courant* reprinted a London paper's tale. "Geordie," says one pitman to another, "Is t'agang to the Moor to-day?" "To the Moor? What for?" "What

for? Why, there's to be a devilstration there." "Devilstration! What's that?" "Well, I don't know myself; but Joe Cowen's to be there, that's enough for me." The *Courant* reported that 'Geordie' was the 'native of the Island' in Newcastle Theatre Royal's 'Robinson Crusoe' pantomime, not 'Friday'.¹²¹ After pitmen lost a strike, the *Sunderland Daily Echo* printed stories about an 'inebriated Bob Cranky' and other 'Geordies'.¹²² In 1879, the *Courant* quoted a London report about snow being dangerous to "'Geordie", who at this season is rather given to drink', and published a tale about a strike.

A gentleman being accosted in Newcastle by one of the performers in a band of pitmen on strike, remembered Mr Crawford's warning to the public against unauthorised applications for aid, and replied, "But are you a *bona-fide* pitman?" The applicant replied. "Oh, no, sir, I'm a real bred pitman!" "Well," said the gentleman, "that is exactly what I mean; are you really a pitman, and not an imposter?" the musician, greatly relieved, at once answered. "Yes, sir, I am; but I didn't know what you meant" a *bona fide* confession, at any rate. No doubt Geordie thought a *bonny feydie* pitman meant a swindling vagabond and imposter.

According to the *Courant*, 'Jingling Geordie's Hole' was the haunt of a gambler who disappeared mysteriously.¹²³ The Newcastle *Daily Journal* published Heslop's pseudonymous *Geordy's Last*, written in 'Newcastle folk-speech', in which 'Geordy' the South Shields 'pitman' gets drunk, falls asleep in a coal wagon and wakes in Annfield Plain, resolving never to drink again.¹²⁴

The second part of this article, which will appear in North East History volume 45, will deal with political activity among Geordies under the title 'When Geordie Got the Vote'

Notes

- 1 My thanks to David Atkinson, Paul Baker, Val Bold, Jean Crocker, Dave Douglass, Vicki Graham, Dianne Leggett, Cathlin Macauley, Thomas McKean, Adam McNaughton, Ian Olson, Murray Pittock, Sarah Rennie, Ian Russell, Keith Skakle, Malcolm Taylor, Robert Thomson and Willie Thompson.
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- 32 Allan, *Illustrated Edition*, 84-7.
- 33 Bell, *Rhymes*, 25.
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- 42 Colls, *Pitmen*, 49.
- 43 Harker, *Bell*, xii, 91-3, 119-20.
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- 45 Harker, *Bell*, 123-5.
- 46 Bell/White 2, NUL
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RENE CHAPLIN

Michael Chaplin

From my father's novel *The Watchers and The Watched*, published 50 years ago, about Tiger Mason, a young blacksmith who works by the Scotswood Road, near the home of his mother and ailing father:

'Five minutes later she drew the blanket over him, finger to her mouth, gravely regarding her man, noticing the pain marks around his eyes, the yellowness of his skin. Suddenly she was lifted into the inevitable moment when he would be lying thus and she standing thus and all changed. Her body shivered. A solitary tear rolled down her cheek and touched her finger, and was impatiently brushed away. Without looking at her husband she resumed her seat by the fire, hands folded in her lap. Her rocking ceased and she leaned forward, listening for his breathing. Satisfied, she sat back, but no longer rocked, unconsciously breathing in concert with the sleeping man. After a time she slept.'

When the novel was re-published after Sid's death, Stan Barstow's introduction described this passage as 'infused with impending grief, yet such is its beauty the grief trembles on the brink of joy'.

I'd like to thank you for coming to this ceremony of farewell and celebration. Holy Trinity has played an important part in the Chaplin story: Gillian was married here to David, Chris and I paraded the flag of the 15th Newcastle Scout Troop up this nave; and it was the setting for the funerals of both Rene's father Andrew and our father. I hope you will join us afterwards for refreshments at the People's Theatre, an institution revered and supported by Sid and Rene for many years. Champagne will be served at Rene's specific request, made a few years ago after I'd investigated an almost forgotten life insurance policy, taken out in February 1940, when she was 20. When I

mentioned the small death benefit, she said ‘Oh well, you can spend it on bubbly for my funeral’, threw back her head and laughed in girlish glee, partly at the non-conformity of the notion, mostly at the identity of the insurer: the Assurance Society of the Salvation Army.

In that first year of war Rene was living in Ferryhill with her parents Andrew and Annie at 5 Wolseley Street, a smoky terrace of pit houses sloping down to the London-Newcastle railway line and Mainsforth Colliery, where the year before my grandfather had lost his left arm in a rather terrifying accident. The following months were difficult, and Rene, who worked at Stapleton’s store, helped her mother supplement the family income by baking to order – pies, tarts, scones and cakes. As we’ve heard, Rene was good at pastry.

Then came the event that shaped her life. One Sunday evening she went to the Methodist chapel in the nearby village of Kirk Merrington and listened to a young lay-preacher and pitman. She thought he was rather too pleased with himself, but a few weeks later on a chapel picnic found herself walking beside him. Rather shyly, he asked her out and she responded by slapping his face. If this seems harsh, she mistakenly thought Sid was already going out with a girl called Sadie. But oh that fateful slap! The great story yet to unfold was almost snuffed out before it began and the people down here would never have existed. But Sid persisted and Rene relented, and things went on from there. She listened as he spoke of the stories in his head and his dream of becoming a writer. She came to adore her man, and he returned it, knowing full well that everything he wrote, everything he did, would not have been possible without her. After they married, Rene never worked outside their comfortable and welcoming home. Just as her father hadn’t quite seen the point of allowing his intelligent daughter to stay on at school, her husband was reluctant to have a working wife. Rene accepted this – and committed herself to their joint project, whatever it took, through thick and thin. Her support went way beyond the domestic: my father wrote like an angel, but was sensitive, sometimes prone to self-doubt. As well as being – his phrase – ‘my first and most unerring critic’, I believe Rene gave him the confidence necessary to make the journey from self-educated colliery belt-fitter to revered

man of letters. She stiffened his sinews, by his side to celebrate the good days, and nurture him on the bad. On his death, her greatest grief was simply that when he went, she was not there with him.

After, her courage saw her through. The love and care in which he had basked was spread among an ever-widening constituency of family and friends. One day, fortified by flask of coffee, she got in her white Beetle and drove from Kimberley Gardens to our home in London for the first time without Sid; hard, she admitted, then added with a smile that maybe the navigation was better. Another time she came to London the day we had tickets for an Elvis Costello concert at the Festival Hall. Rather hesitantly I got one for her – enthusiastically accepted – elsewhere in the auditorium. We periodically looked to see if she was OK; every time she seemed to be laughing and joking with the long-haired hipster next to her. Rather irritatingly she seemed to be having a better time than us. Afterwards I asked her about the boy: ‘Oh, canny lad. He comes from South Gosforth. I know his gran.’

The story is typical. Rene had in abundance what we now call emotional intelligence; more plainly, she was brilliant with people, of all ages. Her talk was always vivid, confirming her English teacher’s report comment that ‘Irene’s oral work is very good’, but she was just as good at listening. She was in the best sense curious, like the poet Les Murray, ‘only interested in everything’, her opening remark likely to be ‘What’s the news?’ She drew her rather wry wisdom from a life packed with experiences, good and bad, and gently comforted her friends when they needed it. Among her many other gifts was an almost photographic memory: of every branch, twig and leaf of not one but two statuesque family trees; the lay-out of Tolstoy’s study, imprinted during the moments when her awestruck husband sat at his hero’s desk; productions seen at Stratford East in the 1950’s; what LS Lowry wore when she first met him, evidently a good top coat and pair of stout boots, which she cannily explained after a moment’s thought: ‘Well, you see, he’d been a rent collector most of his life.’ It seems to me Rene forgot nothing but underneath her sharpness had the forbearance to forgive just about everything.

Three months ago I went to the RVI the night she was admitted in pain

for surgery on her broken hip. Gillian and Chris had been with her, but I did the late shift. Rene lay asleep on a trolley in a corridor, but eventually came around. She could barely see me but smiled. She knew this was the beginning of the end, but was unafraid, serene in fact. She said that when she couldn't sleep, she lay in the darkness thinking. I asked what she thought about, and for the umpteenth time was quietly amazed by her reply: she pondered all the wonderful things that life had given her – her husband's love, her bairns and grandbairns, that golden night when she and Sid ate bacon sandwiches and read glowing reviews of *The Day of the Sardine*. Oh Michael, she crooned: 'And the time I came to visit you and Susan in New York and I stood on the top of the Empire State Building.' Before she fell asleep she clutched my hand: 'Tell them I love them all very much.' So this is how I think of her: in the Arrivals Hall at JFK that December night in 1999, suitcase in hand, in tweed coat and pillbox hat, smiling her impish smile – this plucky, pint-sized traveller through life.

But what of those left behind? It's hard to imagine life without her. The rock that is family seems cracked. Where's the centre of gravity now? Two courses of action: to remember the wisdom of my grand-daughter Eve who wrote to me, 'If you feel sad, then think of something nice.' Second, to look down here at Rene's five grandchildren and partners, who like her are substantial people – smart, resourceful, hard-working, loving, with sense of humour and moral compass. Then there are her nine special great-grandchildren – the cause of this smile (on the order of service), for on that sunny Easter day in Coquetdale she was surrounded by them.

All this explains why I mentioned that paragraph of Sid's, and Stan Barstow's response to it, for what I feel now is of course grief, but given Rene's remarkable life, character and legacy, a grief that trembles on the brink of joy.

Bless you, my friend. Thank you, Mother.

Michael Chaplin

September 22, 2012

PETE STEFFENS

Tony Wild

Pete Steffens, who died on Vancouver Island on 23rd August 2012, was a true friend and comrade to all who knew him, as well as being an unwavering opponent of greed, cruelty and dictatorship, especially in those forms that hide behind the covers of freedom and democracy.

Paul Mayne, who served as Treasurer at the History Society of Sunderland, where Pete's twinkling eyes helped to light up so many lives, wrote to me that his main memory, apart from his good humour, was of Pete's optimism and unwavering sense that things could be improved and the world made a better place. His contributions to debate at "HISS" in the city where he had taken up temporary residence with his wife, Valerie Alia, were always subtle and interesting. His lecture to the society on his journey through Iraq gave real insight into the country, and his comment on the cruelty that he saw there, and his inescapable feeling that Saddam Hussain had played a crucial role in worsening it, lingered on very strongly.

Because he was more than an armchair political pundit, Pete made sure that he was in Sunderland Market Place whenever HISS members and others were out campaigning against the Bush and Blair invasion. Despite being well into his seventies and not in the best of health, he never faltered in his opposition to what he knew was a hypocritical enterprise that could only have evil consequences. His very presence was a great encouragement to younger people and let them know that age need not weary our radicalism, nor condemn us to despair or cynicism. Pete conveyed the feeling that he could be at home almost anywhere.

Wherever Pete Steffens went, he left waves of good feeling in his wake.

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He was not just an erudite and fluent public speaker, deep intellectual, and political activist, but a good companion, who kept in touch with those he had left behind in the North East. Because, he had ceased to send his witty comments on life and reflections on the news to the mates he had made, we realised that he could not have much time left, but his death still came as a blow to those who were wondering how he was. We all feel sad that we will not be able to meet him and his welcoming smile in some Nanaimo coffee bar, catch up with his reflections on international politics, and gain insight into the local scene.

Pete saw much and made many friends. As one of those who had the privilege of being able to call him a firm friend in the evening of his long life, I can only regret that he is no longer around to sit down to eat, drink and chat, and set aside my attempts to pay with a smile and the sweep of his generous hand.

Tony Wild

A PRAYER FOR THE LONERS

Keith Armstrong

The dejected men,
the lone voices,
slip away
in this seaside rain.
Their words shudder to a standstill
in dismal corners.
Frightened to shout,
they cower
behind quivering faces.
No one listens
to their memories crying.
There seems no point
in this democratic deficit.
For years, they just shuffle along,
hopeless
in their financial innocence.
They do have names
that no lovers pronounce.
They flit between stools,
miss out on gales of laughter.
Who cares for them?
Nobody in Whitley Bay
or canny Shields,
that's for sure.
These wayside fellows

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might as well be in a saddos' heaven
for all it matters
in the grey world's backwaters.
Life has bruised them,
dashed them.
Bones flake into the night.
I feel like handing them all loud hailers
to release
their oppressed passion,
to move them
to scream
red murder at their leaders -
those they never voted for;
those who think they're something,
some thing special,
grand.
For, in the end,
I am on the side of these stooped lamenters,
the lonely old boys with a grievance
about caring
and the uncaring;
about power,
and how switched off
this government is
from the isolated,
from the agitated,
from the trembling,
the disenfranchised
drinkers of sadness.

TURN THE TELLY ON Billy Hunt-Vincent

Like withered, dried twigs scattered on the ground
Fallen from a sun dehydrated tree
Fly covered humans on our screen are found
For want of food they are life's sad debris.

Press the button, off with this agony
Let us glimpse the Manhattan high-flyer
Pampered with makeover, gorged with money
Fighting the flab while her weight creeps higher.

Emaciated to skeleton form
Mother and child lit awaiting Death's hand
As we sit gazing far from the foul storm
Safely in a righteous, civilised land.

Outraged eyes encompass heartbreaking grief
As mother smooths her wrecked and dying son
Eyes now witness and struggle for belief
At other woman on her slimming run.

Brown is the colour of the tight, stretched skin
Holding together a life's fading light
Pink is the blusher that always will win
Praise from the flyer to keep her world right.

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Hopeless mother lies slumped in the dust
Lifeless boy turns circumspection to farce
While high-flyer with care adjusts her bust
And then studiously she powders her arse.

If we feel sick while viewing the nauseous
While frivolous waste treats despair with scorn
The telly will expel the blues for use
With religious programs on Sunday morn.

God almighty is in his heaven high
Ubiquitous, omnipotent, with grace
Cast asunder the starving children's cry
As we all join in with the "Songs of Praise"

Billy Hunt Vincent

REVIEWS

Chris Foote Wood, *T. Dan Smith: Downfall of a Visionary* (Chris Foote Wood, publisher, 2010) 347pp. ISBN 978-0-9553869-9-2, £14.99 pbk.

I was minded when re-reading this book, having read it in 2010, of the words spoken by Mark Antony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar... 'The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones'. In the late 1980s, I was Vice-Chair of the Regional Council of the Labour Party (LP) when we readmitted T. Dan Smith, to the Party, but was astounded that previously, after serving his sentence in 1977, a previous Executive refused his application for membership. The good he had done (apart from his bureaucratic approach and the morality issues later) was, if not 'interred with his bones', often totally disregarded after his sentencing for corruption. But Tyneside, in fact the North East, has shown no such disregard! He is remembered as 'Mr. Newcastle', even appearing in the local newspaper amongst its '100 Greatest Geordies' in 2012. About the same time a well attended photographic and text display was put on in the Lit & Phil. (1)

In 2010 when Chris Foote Wood spoke to the North East Labour History Society to launch this book, reflecting on the man he knew, it raised many recollections from the audience's memories of T. Dan Smith. I recalled him speaking at a Young Socialists meeting in 1961. We youngsters were impressed by his vision of a modern Newcastle, a semi autonomous NE Region and, of course, his ideals of socialism in bettering the lot of the working class. He was Leader of the Council and Chair of Housing and Planning, but, unlike most local Councillors, was a brilliant orator. An appraisal of this book was held over with the expectation of another book being produced, to be reviewed alongside it. So this review is long

overdue, if for no other reason than to recognise Smith's place in the history of Newcastle and the North East.

Using references, archival material, Smith's own notes, autobiographies, as well as media, personal recollections and opinions, it appears to have four purposes: to indicate his early left political roots through to Smith's development into a dynamic local political leader; his personal life, tribulations and corruption trial; the prison and post-prison activity. All this is coloured by the fact that Foote Wood, a local Liberal Democrat and County Durham Alderman, obviously admires Smith's vision and that in the five years as Leader of the Council he 'transformed Newcastle upon Tyne from a backward-looking, decaying and neglected city into a dynamic modern metropolis'. With regard to the corruption issue, this was due to, in the author's words, 'rough justice'. In two trials Smith was acquitted, and his pleading guilty at the last trial was after 'being ground down and beaten'. Even though he pleaded guilty, Smith claimed to be innocent. The author argues that 'Smith was NOT GUILTY AS CHARGED'. Finally after prison he returned to his community /political roots outside mainstream party politics. However it is the assertion of corruption that is often tied to Smith. The author attempts to balance this against 'the good' Smith did for the North East.

Early left political roots.

Smith was born in 1915 into a poor Wallsend working class and a left wing political family. His father, a miner, a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and his mother, a Christian socialist, in the Labour Party were both anti-war. His early working life, mirrored others who left school at 14 years in the 1920s, in and out of work, eventually beginning his working life as a painter and decorator. Smith followed his father into the ILP and, an acknowledged speaker at rallies and soap box oratory, rose in the ranks of this party to become a paid organiser by the mid 1930s, He was also a lecturer for the National Council of Labour Colleges. Active in the Peace Pledge Union, he was an active war resister in 1939. As a Trotskyist he was against

what he termed 'the bosses' war'. Although declared unfit for conscription, and therefore not a registered conscientious objector, he was an outspoken anti-war advocate. It was around this time in the Newcastle ILP, that there was a small group who were in agreement with his political stance. When they eventually surfaced in the Labour Party, at least two others, referred to in the book, became Councillors; Jack Johnston and Ken Skethaway. No information is given why this little group were expelled from the ILP and joined the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), a Trotskyite group. However it seems to be related to the Trotskyist opposition to the Second World War as a 'bosses' war'. They were then expelled by the RCP for what Smith claimed was, 'centrist deviation'. There is no explanation of this; possibly none exists in the collection held by Foote Wood's reference point, Amber Film archives. Although Skethaway claims in the book that the RCP was disbanded it would be interesting to establish if it had anything to do with the debate in Trotskyist circles about entryism into the Labour Party! Along with this small group from the 'expelled/disbanded' RCP, loyal to him, Smith joined the LP, also returning to his trade as a painter/decorator. He rose with great speed, becoming a city councillor in Newcastle in 1950 and a leading figure in the Party. His commitments to his local community is shown by his refusal to consider becoming an MP, take a seat in the House of Lords or to head up a nationalised industry after he had become a political celebrity. This commitment to the North East and particularly Newcastle echoes throughout the book. But whether his achievements were a result of compromise, or collaboration leading eventually to corruption is the question.

The dynamic local government Leader

The book leaves no doubt that Smith was a charismatic local politician, who brought a dynamism to the local politics. The city was depressed and in a region that was suffering the damaging effects of unemployment. By 1960, with Smith as Leader of the Newcastle City Council and also Chairman of Housing, Planning, Finance & Policy Advisory Committees things changed

in the city. He successfully advocated comprehensive education, Newcastle as a university town, establishing Newcastle University from the University of Durham campus and a Polytechnic now Northumbria University. Through the compulsory purchase of land he included these as a part of the city centre redevelopment, with a central motorway to resolve its traffic problems. This put education at the heart of the city. The development included the plans for a shopping district, which the author claims secured Newcastle's future position as a major shopping city. Although Smith is often castigated for elements of the development, the author cites instances where this planning saved the city including restoring and preserving the historic City Walls, its towers and gardens within the scheme. Furthermore he was 'attacked for 'wasting ratepayers' money' by buying out existing planning permission. Two in particular were crucial: proposed new offices for the Midland Bank in Grey Street and Barclays Bank in Collingwood Street which would have meant two big modern blocks destroying the architectural beauty of the area. 'In 1963 Local Government Minister Sir Keith Joseph supported the Council in both cases'. Smith vision, often expressed, was to see Newcastle as the 'Brasilia of the North': a modern vibrant city.

On housing development, Smith gave hope by initiating a massive slum clearance programme, claimed to be the first to clear all the slums, the back-to-back hovels, house-building and renewal schemes for older homes. Even though his moves for tower-block development now has less of a feel-good factor, nonetheless at the time, as I recall, it was seen as progress from these slums. Also, it claims, the Grade II listed Byker Wall is still highly regarded. Labour having taken control in 1958, ended a long Conservative rule which in Smith's opinion (and the people's) had done little to help the Newcastle working class.

Smith, despite his work contracts with the housing department, was also Chair of the Housing Committee, raising questions about his senior role in this local authority contracting committee. However the author answers this by declaring that Smith was very scrupulous about declaring an interest,

being absent or leaving the room when any of his firm's contracts were discussed. This was a common practice where Councillors have a conflict of interests, a compromise within the system. This raised concern even among his supporters. Nevertheless, he was given the nickname 'Mr Newcastle' for his enthusiastic championing of the city, not only in the media, but also the communities. However retaining this Chair, raised concern in what is termed 'The Crudens Affair'. This is referred to throughout the book with a specific chapter. Crudens had their contract accepted in 1961, but afterwards there was questions about 'whether something of an improper nature had occurred in the transaction of Council business' and the contract was awarded to another company. This is an interesting account involving not only Smith, but also the Minister Sir Keith Joseph (his family firm Bovis had strong connections with Poulson). The changing positions brought about an inquiry into the issue. Smith's denial of commercial connections with Crudens, although admitting to having had negotiations, to no avail in the end, to do their PR work, became the link to what became the Corruption Issue.

The 'Crudens Affair' had now moved across the River Tyne to Felling, the local council fiefdom of Ald. Andy Cunningham, leader of Durham County Council, and amongst many other public sector agencies, the Durham Police Authority. Particularly he was the Northern Regional Secretary of the General & Municipal Workers Union, (largest trade union in the North East, now the GMB), which gave him significant power in the LP. He was its Northern Regional chair, on the National Executive and National Treasurer. Cunningham emerges here as a formidable and unsavoury character. And from my memory, he certainly was. Crudens had built in Felling, against some professional advice, with Cunningham's support. John Poulson was the architectural consultancy, one of the largest in Europe, with one of Smith's PR firm involved for another builder.

However Smith had been doing PR work for Poulson since 1962. Recognising the government's push for public sector housing build and development, Poulson knew Smith could provide personal introductions

to important councillors locally, regionally and nationally. Smith was now a political personality at those levels. Having brought Tyneside authorities together to clean up the River Tyne and in the Region to develop Newcastle Airport into international status, Smith recognised the need for a regional approach for Newcastle to prosper, more depended on the fortunes of the North East. He was now a regional figure with the necessary strong national links.

Regional and national figure

Smith resigned first as Newcastle Council Leader and then later as a Councillor in 1965. By now he was nationally recognised as an important regional political figure by the media and governments. With extensive LP connections, I recall, he was now seen to be on the right of the Party with his advocacy of entry to the Common Market and links to Gaitskell, Labour Leader of the Opposition. With the return of a Labour government under Harold Wilson he had advanced his influence through work for the Party especially during the election. Smith had met George Brown MP, deputy leader, during that period. So when Brown became the Minister of Economic Affairs, he offered Smith a national role which he declined. Smith had an ambition to establish a decentralised regional government, so accepted the role of Chair of the Northern Economic Planning Council (NEPC) 1965-9. He was now a powerful figure in the North East. 'While most of his counterparts in other regions contented themselves with appointments one or two days a week, Dan was effectively a full-time chairman'. He made great effort to establish the Regional identity, it is suggested that Newcastle Civic Centre was built within this in mind. But when the NEPC produced their plan, the report 'Challenge of the Changing North' advocating regional government, Brown could not deliver. By this time also questions were being asked about PR transactions and monies paid (Foote Wood argues that some were exaggerated amounts) all outside the North East.

The man, the entrepreneur

Throughout the book the author maintains that Smith wasn't motivated by the money or to become wealthy. Foote Wood argues that as elected public servants were not paid then, as they are now, a leader like Smith who gave a full time commitments still needed an income from painting and decorating companies and then found a forte for public relations work. Over time, Smith owned seven different companies that carried out painting and decorating contracts for local authority across the north of England, some quite substantial. Smith earned sufficient to have a good lifestyle, bought his house, holidays abroad, a Jaguar car (always recognised DAN 68), and sent his children to a private schools – a man devoted to his family. To supplement his money from the painting and decorating companies, Smith set up more than 20 PR companies, all listed in the book. So that he could continue his political work, he hired others to manage them. However it was from this arena that his tribulations began, leading to his corruption trial.

Corruption

The issue of the PR link came to a head when Poulson filed for bankruptcy in 1969, although Smith had by then severed connections. Police investigation for fraud began. The working arrangements of the past were opened up in the Wandsworth Council, London, corruption case in 1970-71. This resulted in Sydney Sporle, a councillor, accused of taking bribes, going to jail, but Smith acquitted of procuring a contract for Poulson. From this trial the Cunningham link was further exposed. To bring him into the scheme of things, Smith had employed Cunningham's wife in a meaningless job, paid, with Poulson's money, from 1966-69. Further examination of Poulson's accounts revealed a web of unexplained payments affecting local councillors nationwide and in the North East.

In 1973 Cunningham, Poulson and Smith were all charged with corrupt practices. The author gives no real indication of the arguments and calls for an inquiry in the Labour Party regionally with only brief references to

Eddie Milne, left MP for Blyth. Milne was deselected by his constituency Labour Party on the eve of the 1974 Election for initiating and supporting calls for an enquiry. This showed Cunningham's power and influence within the Labour Party not only avoiding an enquiry, but it would appear to also affect deselection and selections. No mention is made, in the book, of the trade unions' support for enquiry except for the quoted newspaper headline (not commented on) 'unions set the pace for graft enquiry', but is outlined in Milne's book about this period of corruption in public life.(2)

Also reference is made to the involvement of Reginald Maudling MP, Home Secretary and also a chairman of one of Poulson's companies. This made his ministerial position untenable and he resigned amidst speculation. I remember Paul Foot's Footnotes in Private Eye on this whole saga in the early 1970s. In my opinion, insufficient reference is made to Maudling's links since the late 1960s, as more evidence is now available.

Smith's guilty plea is claimed to be due to the tribulation of being at the centre of this claim of corruption, the stress of the four years, the harassment by police and media alongside ill-health. Using statements including those from the court hearing, Poulson and Cunningham are both shown to be corrupt, but Smith emerges in a more considerate light. Basically, no longer a politician, Smith acted as, what we would now know as a lobbyist. But in 1974 this was seen as morally suspect and having been told he might get six months, 'Mr Newcastle' was jailed for six years on charges of corruption. Foote Wood suggests that this controversial regional labour leader was the scapegoat to avoid further censure of Sir Keith Joseph and, particularly, Maudling.

Prison and after

In prison Smith had time to reflect and returned to his communitarian roots, assisting prisoners with his expertise in approaching the establishment, continued his painting and involvement with learning and amateur dramatics. On release from prison, after 3 years, he became involved with the Howard League, advocating a more sympathetic and concerned

approach to prisoners and particularly ex-prisoners. He also became active with community projects and pensions issues; he was campaigning again.

Conclusion.

My review of the book's subject was, to a degree, hampered by its unfortunate confusing style and lack of elemental editing or proofreading including repeated paragraphs and statements. The book, for instance, has an interesting approach of interspersing profiles of, or submissions by, the people who appear in the text, which can be off-putting when it refers to individual not in that chapter. However these are, in themselves, very informative, as are the chapters, but they too often suffer from deviation from the subject under consideration and a lack of historic sequence. The Time Line, the 'Who is Who', Company Register details and Council Positions, at the back of the book, provide background to the research Foote Wood carried out. But the questions of whether Smith was a collaborator with the establishment, corrupt to 'line his pockets' or one who saw the need for compromise to establish progress will be forever debated. This book, however, for me, gives the answer that he compromised, possibly too much, which led to his downfall. Whether this commitment to his locality, community causes and complexity of character outweighs this is still a central issue. Nevertheless this book does go some way to addressing the balance needed to offset the easy 'visionary or villain' categorisation, replacing it with a human being, not a bad person, a man with faults who, despite the legal troubles in which he finally involved himself, is remembered for bringing benefits to an area that had been depressed for so long. Certainly as the most well-known North East local politician he should be remembered as a great council leader and this book helps to do that!

- 1) *Evening Chronicle* August 10th 2012
- 2) Edward Milne. *No Shining Armour* (Platform Books 1976) ISBN 0 7145 3514 1 £1.95, pbk. Withdrawn due to Milne & publisher losing libel case

John Creaby

Jim Phillips, *Collieries, communities and the miners' strike in Scotland, 1984-85* (Manchester University Press 2012), 194pp. ISBN: 978 0 7190 8632 8, £52 hbk.

The mining areas of Britain had diverse cultural and political histories and therefore their major national struggles – of 1921, 1926, and 1984-85 – deserve to be analysed coalfield by coalfield. The point is amply demonstrated by this important work which studies the Scottish dimension to the last great struggle, a dimension that was distinctive and whose political consequences in Scotland were far-reaching.

Jim Phillips draws on National Coal Board minutes and correspondence, records from the Prime Minister's Office, and his National Union of Mineworkers Scottish Area material comes from both the Executive and the individual collieries. He also makes use of contemporary strike diaries, interviews that were recorded at the time (principally by Willie Thompson) and more recently. He is well aware of the issues involved in using oral evidence and discusses them fully. His introduction includes a useful historiography of the 1984-85 events which notes the need to understand them at the workplace level and not the Thatcher versus Scargill level which usually preoccupies journalistic commentators.

Phillips builds a convincing model of factors that helped to make up what he calls 'Potential Strike Endurance' and shows that PSE compares accurately with the 'Actual Strike Endurance' of each of the 12 collieries in Scotland. Relevant factors for PSE included the proportion of households where the miner's wife was in a job, and also where they were tenants of a Labour Council; those authorities deferred rent collections until the strike was over. Besides these economic factors pit-level strike histories need to include the character of pre-strike industrial relations and how far certain attitudes were embedded in communities.

Moral economy

For example it is significant, and in marked contrast to the Nottinghamshire

coalfield, that in Scotland the strike was more solid at collieries that were the most 'economic' in Coal Board terms. Here miners were concerned with what Phillips calls the 'moral economy': the objective of the National Union of Mineworker Scottish Area was always to secure stable and reasonably well-paid employment in which it was accepted that workers should be treated with fairness and dignity, and that they should have a central role in decision making. There was also the view that jobs were community resources that should not be in the gift of individuals or management. All this had come under increasing threat after 1979 when the Thatcherite insistence on 'the manager's right to manage' meant that half of Scotland's miners were already in some form of dispute with their management by March 1984.

Another important and distinctive factor in Scotland was the position of the Ravenscraig steelworks, at the time the major market for Scottish coking coal. There was a cross-party consensus in Scotland about the importance of the plant remaining open and producing steel for other industries. Therefore it became a target for NUMSA pickets who were thwarted only by legally dubious police intervention. Further, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Norman Tebbit overruled Scottish Office efforts to accelerate coal imports for Ravenscraig until it became clear that this would not provoke a dock strike. Workers at some major ports in England, like the steelworkers at Ravenscraig, were not going to support action which they believed would threaten their own jobs. In the event, of course, their jobs would disappear before long in any case.

Women's support

Phillips's discussion of the role of women in the strike notes that although their participation was occasionally problematic in a male-dominated industry there were many examples of women emerging as leaders and spokespeople in their own right. Indeed he demonstrates that pit-level strike commitment was most pronounced where women had a positive economic and political role. In Scotland the area leadership of the NUM wanted to open membership of the union to women on the same terms as men in

recognition of their role in the dispute; this was blocked at a federal level by the NUM nationally.

Elected members of the NUMSA Executive included several Communists and Phillips refutes criticisms of their leadership from commentators who are further to the left of the political spectrum. As regards the vexed question of the strike ballot he points out that a series of delegate and pit-head meetings had given the NUMSA Executive the authority to call a strike and, in contrast to England, the High Court in Edinburgh ruled that this was lawful under the rules of the union. Interestingly too, he disposes of the idea that any essential outcomes might have been different had Mick McGahey rather than Arthur Scargill been in control of the strike. Given the insistence of the Thatcher government on no negotiation but an unconditional surrender on Coal Board terms that is, as he says, just wishful thinking.

Devolution had long been an objective of the Scottish labour movement, including the NUMSA. The defeat of the strike meant that victimisation, colliery closure and general de-industrialisation – including, of course, the end of the Ravenscraig steelworks – took place at a noticeably faster and greater degree in Scotland than elsewhere in Britain. This in turn helped to accelerate the demise of the Scottish Conservative Party to a position of electoral irrelevance in the country. It also added force to the case for self-government for Scotland, reflected both in the devolution campaign up to 1997 and the current movement for independence. In a way this book helps to explain why, if the Scots decide on independence next year, the decision will owe much to their experiences of Conservative policies that were decided in England but never supported by Scottish voters.

Those who were involved in the dispute in Scotland will find the book especially interesting but expensive hardbacks like these are destined solely for university libraries. I hope that the author has managed to negotiate a paperback edition

Don Watson

Derek Gillum, *Banners of Pride: Memories of the Durham Miners' Gala* (Summerhill Books, Newcastle, 2009) ISBN 978-1-906721-10-7 £4.99 pbk.

'The Big Meeting is almost as much a part of our mining life as the Cathedral is of Durham City' noted Jack Lawson in his celebrated autobiography *A Man's Life*. The Big Meeting is now perhaps the only part of the region's mining history that breathes, moves, feels – truly lives.

What is it? It was founded in 1871 as a demonstration of mining culture mediated through organised labour, the strands tangled together like the strongest rope. The Big Meeting was and is a yearly gathering of the clans, where the values, history and aspirations of the people of the coalfield are celebrated, symbolised and dramatised by Banner and Band, the soul and spectacle of the Gala. The Durham Miners' Gala was also a great social event, an enjoyable and emotional experience, a place of family reunion, friendship and love, even if, among young men, village rivalries and a pint or two, could occasionally lead to fisticuffs. On a national level the Gala is best known as a political platform, *The Times* for example frequently covered it as an expression of the will of Labour, its list of speakers, from the radicals of the nineteenth century to giants of the Labour Party after the First World War testify to the place of the Durham Miners, indeed all miners, in the making not only of Labour history but national history.

Derek Gillum captures all of these aspects of the Durham Miner's Gala not least in the title of this book *Banners of Pride*. The book comprises a mixture of photographs and anecdotes, memories of the Gala. The images record, largely, the postwar era and depict the lodge banners and bands, but also the dancing, beaming people, holding the baby, standing with granddad in 1950, resting on the 'Racecourse', euphonium to the side. The collection begs a bigger question – why do we not collect and collate all of the images available and store them at Redhill, before it is too late? The anecdotes are drawn from a range of published and unpublished sources, from these, stretched over a longer period of time, emerge more sombre

recollections, such as the black ribbons which far too often adorned the lodge banners, a reminder that violent death frequently stalked those that dared to dangle from a pit rope.

In his account of the Big Meeting Lawson asked, ‘What has given birth to this thing? What is it that has brought these hundreds of thousands of people, dominated by a communal spirit more eloquent than the greatest speech?’ My answer to these questions is, all of the above, for The Durham Miners’ Gala is a thread that runs through the modern history of the coalfield, it represents County Durham’s, perhaps the region’s, greatest tradition.

Derek Gillum has been tireless in restoring banners and recording the mining history of the region, for this we owe him a dept of gratitude. Buy this book.

Stuart Howard

University of Sunderland

Peter Ford Mason, *The Pitsinkers of Northumberland and Durham*
(The History Press, 2012) 160 pp. ISBN 978 0 7524 8094 7, £12.99 pbk.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as pumping technology enabled coal seams to be reached at ever deeper levels the men who sank the pits became a technological elite. From the first exploratory boring to the finished lined, secured and operational shaft their role was crucial to a colliery’s development and safety, something that the owners and lessees of mineral royalties were well aware of. The sinkers were there before the pitmen arrived, living in makeshift accommodation and usually moving on once their contract was completed. Theirs is a fascinating and up to now little researched story and Mr Mason as the descendant of North Eastern pitsinkers is well equipped to tell it. The chapter devoted to the evolution of shaft sinking technology and equipment and the details of contracts illustrates both the complexity of the sinkers’ practical tasks

and the difficulties of dealing with the expectations of employers. There is some useful coverage of the sinkers' role in mine rescue most notably in the aftermath of the New Hartley disaster and of the transferability of some of their skills and technology to tunnel building. The study is splendidly illustrated with both engravings and photographs, many of them from the Beamish NEIMME, and other local archives. Sadly, although there is a comprehensive bibliography and some useful appendices, the study is without specific references and the index is at best patchy.

However these are not the main problems. For whether by personal choice or at the behest of his publishers the author has cast his net too wide. In addition to being a study of the technology of pitsinking in the North East and the living and working conditions of the men so employed it aspires to tell the story of 'mining and mining society in general' which leads to the introduction of random information from secondary sources, a loss of focus and jumbled chronology. There is also evidence of poor proof-reading if not error, and this surely relates to the modern processes of publication. It is difficult to believe that had he had the chance to read the text at proof stage the author with his background would not have known that the Clanny lamp was invented by William Reid Clanny, not 'Clancy' or that the ex miner who became MP for Morpeth was Thomas not 'John' Burt or that the man who designed a lifeboat at South Shields was William Woudhave not 'Woolhave' that Blanchland lead mines were nowhere near Shildon or that the surname of J.U.Nef the author of the seminal 'Rise of the British Coal Industry' has only one 'f'. This is a shame and spoils what should have been a valuable contribution to the complex story of North Eastern coal mining.

Win Stokes

Jane Bowen (ed), *Further Aspects of Belford*, (Belford, 2011) 256pp. ISBN-13: 978-0956990914, £12.00 pbk.

Local history books were often thought to be exercises in sentimental whimsy put together by amateurs with no research experience. Though there was academic snobbery in this view the genre produced relatively few volumes of distinction. Recently however there has been a flowering of local studies from outside university departments though sometimes retired academics have been involved. To an extent such publications also reflect the remarkably good health of local history societies. There are a hundred in Northumberland and Durham, several of which have seventy to one hundred members.

Further Aspects of Belford produced by Members of the Belford and District Local History Society is a second volume from that source. Aspects of Belford was reviewed in NEH 2011. Like it the new volume consists of a series of essays on aspects of Belford history. None of the pieces are slight, reflecting a substantial research effort. Jane Bowen's chapter on public and private education from the 18th to the mid-twentieth centuries is a very significant contribution to the history of education in Northumberland. It is very strong on the later part of the story where the records are fuller. The section covering the headship of Richard Davison is particularly enlightening as it covers the Edwardian period, the Great War and the nineteen twenties. It is good on pupil teachers, the limitations of the buildings, the trauma of the war years and the ongoing problem of attendance affected by the farming season.

A second chapter which catches the eye is Ian Main and Jane Bowen's moving and painful account of the impact of the First World War on this relatively remote and sparsely populated rural community. Its boys were present at, and many died, in the set piece carnage at Gallipoli and the Somme. In the latter 600,000 lives were lost with 36,000 dead on the first day. The names and family relationships add a grim immediacy to 100 hundred year old events. The disruptions to ordinary life are told – but

imagination suggests that the historian can never know the half of it.

Valerie Glass pursues relentlessly the remarkable story of the Belford Abolition of Slavery petition of 1792. She pieces together from disparate fragments a heartening story of local outrage at the horrors of colonial slavery in a period when communications were apparently so limited. This essay is a welcome contribution from a rural setting to national abolition studies.

Each essay is worthy of note and include a piece on Belford as a Post Town, an early 19th Century woman's diary with commentary, a detailed account of quarrying, the trials of early railway development and the mixed experience of second world war evacuees from Heaton in Newcastle.

The strength of this volume and its predecessor is that it effectively relates the local stories whilst illuminating national issues.

John Charlton

Mick Neave & Susan Lynn, *Blaydon & Winlaton Through Time*, (Amberley, 2012) 96pp. ISBN-13: 978-1445602899, £14.99 pbk.

Collections like this tend presumably to confirm what we already know and anything else is a bonus. Blaydon and Winlaton thrived, inasmuch as they did, on the backs of the first industrial revolution and the majority of photographs depict the factories and the social life which we associate with sapping manual work. Working class housing, lower middle class shops and the grand houses of the employing classes are all here with some hint of what happened to them over time.

Landscaping is a fairly modern art with surprisingly few variations and we find a few examples of the environmental tinkering in the widening of roads, the replacement of stone by brick, the rehabilitation of an impressive percentage of shops, pubs and houses and even new functions for a least some of the major institutions.

Much remains fairly familiar among the physical change but of course the inhabitants have changed dramatically. House and car ownership, classless styles of dress and both sexes benefiting from the replacement of heavy manual work by white collar and service jobs are precisely as we would expect. No doubt many of those of working age will commute to Newcastle and the towns will take on many of the features of dormitory life. Brown's corner in Winlaton indeed appears to be experiencing unexpected rush hour traffic.

Social changes

For there is another revolution in progress and Blaydon and Winlaton will probably find themselves struggling to keep open pubs, small shops (other than betting shops) and many of the schools. Small tradesmen will survive alongside doctors and dentists propped up by the needs of the growing relatively affluent. Churches will become flats and commercial outlets and the National Trust will mop up those (if any) great employer houses which have not fallen down. It was a neat idea by the authors to position drinkers old and new outside their favourite haunts and reminds us that the great social changes have brought obvious benefits to such typical post-industrial towns

One response to such social changes in other locations would be 'place' marketing. But this is not Chipping Norton and there may be no great events (excepting newly created flower shows and the like) to enjoy. Perhaps commemorative plaques would help, with Admiral Samuel Hood of Winlaton and Geordie Ridley of Blaydon on the shortlist. Blaydon Races itself ought surely to be officially remembered.

What attracts people to the two towns at the end of the day is reasonably cheap housing, access to jobs in the great city and even the acceptable performance of surviving state schools. Some of these developments are hinted at in the photographs confirming for the moment the survival of post offices, local bus and train services, and residential homes. Closer inspection reveals satellite dishes, ample car parking provision, traffic management

and some landscaping outside shops. One imagines restaurants are thin on the ground (although there has to be a local chippy!) and commuter life in the old industrial redoubts of Blaydon and Winlaton appears to be firmly home-centred. Would the healthy crowds cheering on the Blaydon rugby heroes be replicated now on a cold Saturday afternoon? The rugby ground was replaced by cooling towers and they themselves, helpless to resist the march of time, have gone too, replaced by housing – but at least Blaydon RFC has a new ground and satisfaction reigns.

The reader would possibly want to know more about the more complex social class system of the two communities, what provision there is for young people, is there any evidence of southward migration and is depopulation on the cards? But this is a slim book: not everything can be illustrated and the existence of the nostalgia industry itself is a reminder that social change goes on remorselessly. Finally, although Winlaton in its heyday had of the two a greater industrial base it is significant that in the twenty-first century they have succumbed in similar ways to the ‘tertiary’ onslaught.

Roger Hall

Tyne View. A Walk around the Port of Tyne by Michael Chaplin will be reviewed in 2014.

At the back...

SECRETARY'S REPORT 2012 – 2013

Don Watson

This will be my last Report to the Society because I am standing down as Secretary after the AGM in September 2013. It has been an interesting and busy three years but I now believe that it is time for someone else to take over.

Once again the Society organised an extensive programme of talks and discussions over the last year. It reflected the range of our members' interests and also the research work that many of them carry out. For example Mike Greatbatch is the leading authority on the history of the Ouseburn area and this was demonstrated when he described his research into the early labour movement there. He had found records relating to local Chartist activists and organisations of workers that were formed as the area was industrialised during the nineteenth century. Mike was able to follow a trail through both local and national documents of the time to tell their story.

Our speaker at the 2012 AGM was Professor Jim Walvin. He described - in a talk entitled "Now and then: the rise and rise of history over the past 40 years" - how popular history was becoming, as seen in the remarkable amount of television coverage being given to it, the engagement with local and family history and the mass sales of books. Social change such as immigration to Britain since the 1950s had affected how people saw their history and the debates over the anniversary of the abolition of slavery were a good example. All of this had been reflected in the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony. It meant that, unlike in earlier decades, there would always be a more widespread reflection on how social history should be understood and presented. The opportunities this would present were

grounds for optimism.

The Society has always enjoyed close links with the Chaplin family: local miner and novelist Sid Chaplin and his wife Rene were early members. The tradition is maintained by their son Michael, who now presents the annual Chaplin prize and who launched his new book, *Tyne View*, at our meeting last November. The book is based on a long walk along both banks of the river taking in local characters and social and economic history together with current realities and possible futures. In so many respects the Tyne is a symbol of the region as a whole.

The miners of Allendale have largely been neglected by historians but Professor Tim Barmby helped to set the record straight with a presentation on what the archive evidence about their earnings can tell us about the motivations and ambitions of these workers in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Although the Durham coalfield is extinct the opposite is true of the annual Durham Miners' Gala. This in fact goes from strength to strength as a trade union event to celebrate coalfield history and modern struggles. The reasons for its resurgence and the role it continues to play for former mining communities were analysed by sociologists Carol Stephenson and Dave Wray. Both speakers are experts on the consequences of de-industrialisation but in this case the continued flourishing of the Gala and the preservation of collective memory associated with it are grounds for hope.

Nigel Todd, who has years of experience as an elected member of Newcastle City Council, gave a talk about some of the anti-cuts campaigns that have been waged in the past. These included Poplar in the 1920s and Liverpool and Lambeth in the 1980s. This subject is unfortunately topical as well as historical and so there were plenty of opportunities to explore links and differences. One of the roles of a Society like ours is to help to maintain the historical memory of past struggles and the traditions of which they are a part.

The 'First Tuesday' meetings continue on the first Tuesday of each

month at the Tyneside Irish Centre. These are an opportunity for people to present and discuss something that interests them in an informal setting. This can be work in progress, and idea to explore, themes from a working life and so on; they certainly aren't expected to be polished and completed work.

Over the last year we have had three sessions where visual images were central. Terry Welsh showed examples of how working people and their environment in the North East were portrayed in the nineteenth century, using material from his own research in local archives and publications together with the internet. Similarly John Millard gave a presentation of how the famous Tyneside artist and woodworker Ralph Hedley portrayed local working people at that time. Peter Brabban analysed the failure of the campaign to save the Consett steelworks in 1980, and his account was supported by the photographs he took of the campaign at the time. This session attracted one of two people who had been involved themselves and led to a useful oral history follow-up.

'Family history with a difference' has appeared in First Tuesdays before and Godfrey Duffy continued this with the tale of how he discovered that his ancestors had been involved in a fatal brawl in nineteenth century County Durham. His research raised the possibility of an Irish Fenian dimension to the story that was missing from the modern published account.

The Bensham Grove Settlement has been promoting adult learning in Gateshead for many years. Shirley Brown gave an account of its origins and early work, including some little-known links between the settlement and some literary figures. Sue Jones traced the connections between the labour movement and the suffrage movement in the region before 1914, showing the overlap between some organisations and how some women were key figures in both. The effort to organise domestic servants was one example.

The Popular Politics Project, reported on elsewhere in this issue, is another example of preserving the memory of previous struggles and

campaigns. Over the last year members of the Project have talked about their activities. Mike Greatbatch analysed the 1835 election in Newcastle in terms of the opportunities open to radical voters after the 1832 Reform Act. Project volunteers Maria Goulding, Judith McSwaine and Maureen Dickson presented their work on the 19th century self-made man Thomas Wilson of Gateshead. This described the huge collection of contemporary material he left behind and how it is a source for popular history.

The Society's trip to Wallington Hall was preceded by Lloyd Langley's talk on the Trevelyan family. This provided a background and context for the political activities of the Trevelyans in the 1930s as well as those of their nineteenth century ancestors. The trip itself, organised by Liz O'Donnell and favoured by excellent weather, was enjoyed by more than twenty members. The guided tour of the Hall led to one or two challenges to the 'official' version of the role of the Trevelyan family with the slave trade and the Irish Famine.

In the final meeting of the year John Stirling and Willie Thompson led a 'book-club' session to discuss E.P. Thompson's classic *The Making of the English Working Class*. The session demonstrated the enduring relevance and influence of this work and its approach to history fifty years after the first publication.

The historian, political activist and former President of the Society Ray Challinor died in 2011. In conjunction with his old workplace, the History Faculty of Northumbria University, the Society organised a day conference to commemorate and explore the main themes in his work. This well-attended event featured talks by former students of Ray's who are now professional historians; it attracted his family, friends and former colleagues alongside Society members and history students. Chartism, Tyneside radicalism, political movements in the coalfields and the I.L.P. were discussed as well as the workers' occupation of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971. His oldest friend the retired Labour M.P. Stan Newens demonstrated how Ray's historical concerns grew out of his engagement in active politics.

The Society was represented at Newcastle May Day, local events such as ‘Tomorrow Belongs to You’ at Durham County Hall, and at several outside talks given by members. These can be good opportunities to showcase our work and make new contacts, and we are grateful to everyone who gave some time to run the stalls or to take part. Thanks also to John Creaby for so ably representing the Society when he spoke at the meeting to commemorate the 140th anniversary of the establishment of the Newcastle Trades Council.

The Committee is always keen to explore ways of making Society meetings more accessible, for example through the use of digital recording. We would also like to develop our website further and to make it more interactive. We would appreciate any ideas – and, more to the point, volunteers – to make this happen.

Finally I would like to thank all the Committee members who keep the show on the road in several different ways: bringing out North East History, providing refreshments at the AGM, keeping the books, selling journals, chairing meetings and planning future activities. Can I stress that we are an open Committee? If any members have suggestions for speakers or activities, or would like to do something, then please get in touch.

Future Main Meeting Dates:

2013: November 19th

2014: 18th February, 22nd April, 17th June, and 23rd September (AGM)

Don Watson

Secretary 2012/2013

NORTH EAST LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY

Officers & Committee

President:	Archie Potts
Vice President:	Maureen Callcott
Chair:	Paul Mayne
Acting Vice Chair:	John Creaby
Treasurer:	Mike Cleghorn
Secretary:	Don Watson
Journal Editor:	Sarah Rennie

Committee Members:

Peter Brabban (Newcastle)
John Charlton (Newcastle)
Kath Connolly (Chester le Street)
Kevin Davies (Blyth)
Mike Greatbatch (Newcastle)
Lynda Mackenzie (Newcastle)
Steve Manchee (Newcastle)
Liz O'Donnell (Morpeth)
Sue Pearson (Newcastle)
Sarah Rennie (Newcastle)
Ben Sellers (Durham)
John Stirling (Morpeth)
Wyn Stokes (Tynemouth)
Willie Thompson (Sunderland)
Nigel Todd (Newcastle)

THE SID CHAPLIN LABOUR HISTORY TROPHY



Past winners

1988	Kit Pearce	2004	Craig Turnbull
1989	Elaine Knox	2005	Craig Armstrong
1990	Sylvia Clark	2006	Elsbeth Gould
1991	Martin Searles	2007	Candice Brockwell
1992	David Ridley	2008	Ruth Blower
1993	Pauline Lynn	2009	Rob Doherty
1994	Kathleen Smith	2010	David Reed
1996	Reg Brown	2011	Deborah Smith
1997	Angela Goldsmith	2012	James English
2000	Robert Hope		

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.

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 AGM shall be held open to all members of the Society.

Subscriptions:

The annual subscription shall be determined by the AGM 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 AGM.

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 AGM. 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 AGM and not subject to re-election. There shall be one or more Vice Presidents elected at the AGM 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, North East History. 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 AGM, and a motion outlining proposals for change must be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 28 days before the date of AGM.

north east labour history society

I would like to join the society

rates

institutions £25

individual (including overseas) £15

concession £5 (student/retired/unemployed)

subscription includes journal

£2 p&p

address

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email:.....

cheques payable to North East Labour History

send to: Mike Cleghorn (Treasurer),
17 Woodbine Avenue
Gosforth
Newcastle on Tyne
NE3 4EV

north east labour history society
STANDING ORDER MANDATE

(Please return to the Treasurer, NELHS, 17 Woodbine Ave., Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 4EU)

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BRANCH TITLE	Birmingham
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AMOUNT IN FIGURES	£15.00
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DATE OF FIRST PAYMENT AND FREQUENCY	1 st October 2013 and thereafter every year on 1 st October until you receive further notice from me in writing.
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Gateshead Local Government Branch

We fully support the
North East Labour History Society Journal
and wish it continued success
within the Labour Movement

Terry Edwards (Branch Secretary)
Dave Walkden Branch Chair

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Popular Politics Project Final Event March 2013



The north east labour history society holds regular meetings on a wide variety of subjects. The society welcomes new members. We have an increasingly busy web-site at www.nelh.org Supporters are welcome to contribute to discussions

journal of the north east labour history society

<http://nelh.org/>