

north east history

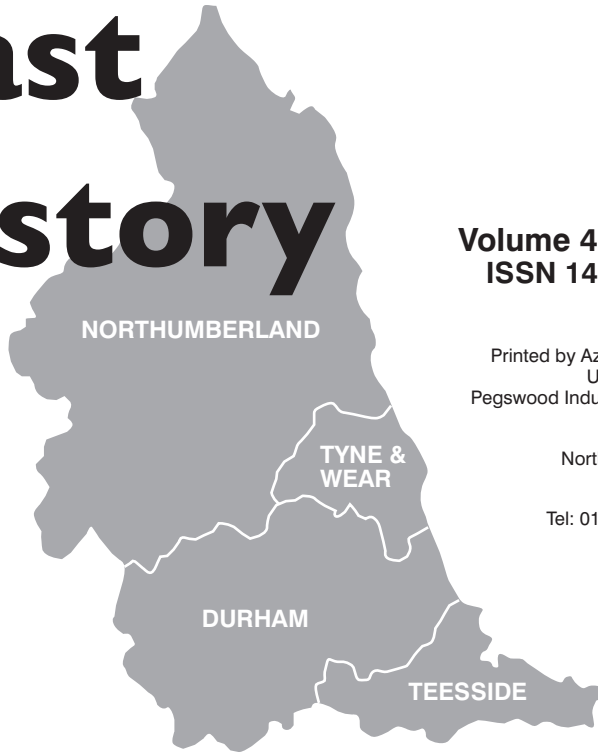
Volume 45 2014



journal of the north east labour history society

north east history

north east history



Volume 45 2014
ISSN 14743248
© 2014

Printed by Azure Printing
Units 1 F & G
Pegswood Industrial Estate
Pegswood
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 6HZ

Tel: 01670 510271

journal of the north east labour history society

www.nelh.net

Contents

Editorial	5
Notes on contributors, acknowledgements & permissions	7
How to submit articles	11

Articles:

Brandling Place Home for Penitent Women - Spiritual shelter 'Sanctimonious Sweatshop'?	<i>Sheila Foster</i>	13
Thirty Years On: A footnote on the history of the regional film archive	<i>Bob Davis</i>	29
Kicking up dust in North Shields: the story of a Home Office experiment in community action in the 1970s and its aftermath	<i>Patrick Candon</i>	43
A Noble Game Became Degraded: The Rise and Fall of Professional Football in Middlesbrough, 1889-1894	<i>Catherine Budd and Neil Carter</i>	63
Interpreting Photographs	<i>Peter Brabban</i>	81
The Concept of the Moral Economy in Mining Communities of the North East in the 1830s and 1840s	<i>Aidan Harper</i>	85
Oral History: Jim Tatters, Usworth Colliery	<i>John Suggett</i>	115
Breaking The Bond: Coal Mining Trade Unionism in Nineteenth Century Sunderland	<i>Stuart Howard</i>	127
The Miners' Strike of 1984-5 with an introduction by	<i>John Stirling</i>	145
Fred Ramsey – more than a stereotype	<i>Peter Brabban</i>	163
A Labour Boyhood	<i>Archie Potts</i>	179

north east history

Their Geordies and Ours (part 2)	<i>Dave Harker</i>	187
----------------------------------	--------------------	-----

NELHS pages

Reviews, news and ‘history in brief’: contributions from projects and members		216
--	--	-----

Book Reviews		217
---------------------	--	-----

Film Review		236
--------------------	--	-----

Projects

People’s History of the North East		238
JMW Turner’s Painting <i>Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight</i>	<i>Terry Welsh</i>	245
Leazes Park: A people’s park	<i>Maureen Dickson</i>	252
W E Adams - Omission from <i>Brief History of Radicalism in North East England for the Popular Politics Project</i>	<i>John Charlton</i>	257
A Banner unearthed!	<i>Don Watson</i>	259
2014 Secretary’s report		261
NELH Officers, Committee and How to contact the Society		262
Consitution		263
Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy		265
How to join the society		266



Shaping the Labour Party Conference 2015

To commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the election of the first majority Labour government in 1945, the School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology at Bangor University will be hosting a Conference on the history of the Labour Party, entitled 'Shaping the Labour Party'.

This Conference will explore the themes and influences that have shaped the Party's direction since its inception and will focus not only on the parliamentary party, but also the wider party, labour movement and other groups and individuals that have influenced development of Party policy and direction, both in government and opposition.

As well as exploring the Party's ideological evolution, the conference will examine regional and local issues and discuss their relevance to party development. In so doing, the conference hopes to build on Bangor University's tradition of stimulate debate and encouraging further research into this vital facet of labour history.

The Conference will take place on Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th March 2015 and will be open to anyone who is interested in offering a paper on the history of the Labour Party but with a particular focus on influences, actions and events that have shaped policy.

For further information contact Marc Collinson at hip20d@bangor.ac.uk or Martin Hanks on m.a.hanks@bangor.ac.uk.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The contributions making up this edition of the Journal cover an impressive range of topics. We have begun with Shiela Foster's description of Brandling Place Home for Penitent Women detailing how it endeavoured to help women, some as young as 14 years old, adopt a healthier and morally acceptable way of life. This is followed by two pieces which deal with more recent history: Bob Davis marks the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of a regional film archive, while Patrick Candon explores the roots of Community Development Projects of the 1970s and the impact on the people and politics of North Tyneside. Catherine Budd & Neil Carter have provided an insight into the rise and fall of Middlesbrough Ironopolis Football Company Ltd during the period 1889-1894.

To mark the thirtieth Anniversary year of the Miners' Strike we have included some personal recollections from Davy Hopper, Mary Stratford, Vin & Pat McIntyre, Bala Nair and Thea Khamis which can be read against the backdrop of the release of Government papers relating to the strike. These accounts deal with bitter memories alongside the sense of solidarity generated in communities across the region. Going further back in mining history Aidan Harper's piece examines how songs and ballads of the 1830s and 1840s often conveyed the values of mining communities - an expression of the moral economy of the day. Stuart Howard deals with nineteenth century trade union action to break the Bond in Sunderland. Finally, the mining theme is completed with a personal history of collier Jim Tatters born in 1921. John Suggett's interview with Jim describes the experience of life underground and conditions for families above ground characterised by poor housing and inadequate health care.

The personal history theme continues with an account of Fred Ramsay's long life which began just after the end of the First World War and ended in 1980 when his poems were discovered. Peter Brabban uses the poems,

personal and family recollections to tell a moving story of Fred, his family and the very individual experiences of his uncle's life. Peter has also supplied us with a guide to interpreting photographs through two contrasting images. Archie Potts shares his recollections of growing up in Sunderland from the 1930s to Labour's victory in 1945. We conclude this issue with the second part of Dave Harker's investigation of the use of "Geordie".

In the Society's section Willie Thompson has co-ordinated a number of book reviews. The Society's current project, A People's History of the North East, is reported on pages 237-255 demonstrating the enthusiasms and research interests of but a few project members.

Judith McSwaine

Convenor, Editorial Board

Brian Bennison	Peter Brabben
John Charlton	Kath Conolly
John Creaby	Mike Greatbatch
John Stirling	Paul Mayne
Willie Thompson	Win Stokes

Many thanks to Sue Ward for her "sub-editing" role; Joan Nicklin for her advice; and proof readers: Maria Goulding, Peter Latham, Johanne McSwaine, Janet Metcalf, Liz O'Donnell, Sarah Rennie, Maureen Dickson, Elaine Pope and Amanda Wintcher.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Brabban was one of the first NHS babies born in Consett, Co. Durham. Leaving school at 15, he has had two distinct careers. Firstly, as a photographer he worked in both commercial (fashion and portraiture) and documentary photography for the labour movement and for Oxfam. He has worked in Zaire (DC Congo), Zimbabwe, the Rwandan refugee camps and lastly in Cambodia. After studying History at Sunderland Polytechnic he began a second career as a campaigner working for War on Want, Oxfam, Age Concern and the National Trust. He is retired and lives in Newcastle.

Dr Catherine Budd is an associate lecturer in modern European history at De Montfort University (DMU). She completed her PhD, 'The Growth of an Urban Sporting Culture – Middlesbrough, c.1870-1914', at DMU in 2012.

Patrick Candon has lived and worked in the North East for over 30 years. He spent over 20 years as a teacher of humanities and social sciences. Before he retired, he worked for 10 years in Education and Children's Services for Sunderland local authority.

Dr Neil Carter is a senior research fellow in the International Centre for Sports History and Culture at De Montfort University. He is the author of *The Football Manager: A History* (Routledge, 2006) and *Medicine, Sport and the Body: A Historical Perspective* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012).

Bob Davis came to the North East in 1971 to work as a sociologist firstly at Durham University and then at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic with the North Tyneside Community Development Project (CDP). Following a spell as a community worker he turned film-maker with Trade Films (latterly Common Features). Still associated with the company Trade Films, he now lives in France.

Sheila Foster created and taught a range of heritage and ICT courses

and specialised in Oral History during her career with Durham County Council's Library Service. Sheila was a Regional Net-worker for the Oral History Society for ten years and, although retired, continues to work as a freelance oral historian.

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.

Aidan Harper graduated with a BA in History from the University of Leeds in 2013 and is currently studying Political Sociology at the London School of Economics. He won the Sid Chaplain Trophy in 2013.

Stuart Howard, B.A., Ph D, (CNA) is a specialist in regional and labour history is currently writing a general history of North East England, 1815-1994. He was responsible for acquiring for the University of Sunderland library the records of the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS). He was also instrumental in establishing a North East England Mining Archive and Research Centre (NEEMARC) to collect and digitise extant regional mining archives.

Archie Potts is President of the North East Labour History Society. A former railwayman and polytechnic lecturer, he has published widely in the area of social and economic history. His books include *Zilliacus. A Life for Peace and Socialism* (2002).

John Suggett is a retired schoolteacher. He was born and brought up in Washington, County Durham, and now lives in Calverton in Nottinghamshire. His father worked underground at Usworth Colliery with Jim Tatters.

PERMISSIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The photographs *Protesters North Shields 1976* are reproduced by kind permission of Ken Grint - www.kengrint.com.



Postcards *Andy & Jack Lawther, Jim Murray talks to Hilary Wainwright* courtesy of Bob Davis.

Photographs *Old man on the Redheugh Bridge, Newcastle, Sunday afternoon, August 1966* and *Old and new residents of Islington, Spring 1971* reproduced with permission of photographer Peter Brabban.

Photo of the late Jim Tatters provided by author, John Suggett.

Photograph of Women's Support Group reproduced with permission of Kath Connolly.

Photographs of Fred Ramsay reproduced with permission of author Peter Brabban.

Image of 1945 Labour Party Manifesto provided by Archie Potts.

Photograph *Richard Ewart and Fred Willey, wearing rosettes, pose with Labour supporters on the steps of the Sunderland Town Hall after their election to the House of Commons on 26th July 1945* provided by Archie Potts.

Photos accompanying *The Felling NUWM Banner in the 1930s* courtesy of Gateshead Local Studies Library. *The Felling NUWM Banner in 2014* courtesy of Don Watson.

north east history

J M W Turner's *Keelmen Heaving Coals by Moonlight* (Front Cover)
reproduced courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington.

JMW Turner's *Shields on the River Tyne* reproduced courtesy of *South Shields Museum & Art Gallery (Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums)*

Image of *Plan of Proposed Public Parks on the Town Moor & Castle Leazes*
courtesy of Newcastle City Library, Local Studies.

HOW TO SUBMIT ARTICLES: HAVE YOU GOT A STORY TO TELL OR RESEARCH TO SHARE?

The Editorial Group would like the Society's journal to reflect the rich history of the North East by encouraging a wide range of perspectives. We are particularly interested in hearing the voices and experiences of excluded groups, for example: working women, immigrant workers and their families, people with disabilities.

If you are researching any of these themes, work with any of these groups or have personal history you would like to share, please contact the Secretary or the Editors who will discuss your idea. Contact details are on page 262.

Details of how to obtain back copies of the Journal can be found on the Society's website: <http://nelh.net/>

A searchable index of articles published to date can be accessed through the Society's website: <http://nelh.net/>



north east history

BRANDLING PLACE HOME FOR PENITENT WOMEN - SPIRITUAL SHELTER OR 'SANCTIMONIOUS SWEATSHOP'?¹

Sheila Foster

Moral reformers and philanthropists throughout the Victorian era were critical of the British penal system. Many of them, however, were also concerned with the welfare of young women accused of sexual misconduct, who were seen as being in danger of becoming further corrupted through incarceration with hardened criminals.² Although not illegal, prostitution was perceived as a great social evil which threatened the health and morals of the nation. As a result of these concerns, a wide range of institutions and legislation were introduced to contain, control or change wayward and deviant behaviour: including the establishment of female penitentiaries, religious homes and reformatories. However, while there has been a growth in the studies of penal institutions in recent years, there remains a shortage of detailed studies into the female penitentiary.³

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to document the history of the Brandling Place Home for Penitent Women and to locate it in the historical context of the second half of the nineteenth century by examining original documents from the Home, parliamentary papers, local newspaper reports, contemporary and modern discourses and scholarly debates. It will focus on the approaches used by evangelical philanthropists and moral reformers to the growing problem of female prostitution in Newcastle and try to

establish how successful they were in helping the 'fallen' women of Tyneside.

Historians and social commentators have approached the problem of prostitution from various perspectives. Nineteenth-century social observers such as William Tait, W. R. Greg and William Acton used statistical data, taken from Police Returns or extrapolated from the Census, to inform the public of the medical and social problems associated with the growth of prostitution. However, these statistics proved unreliable as there were no definitive or consistent methods employed to collect the data. Essentially, Tait and Acton's figures were based on a mixture of guesswork and calculation.⁴

The Victorians' idealised construct of feminine purity and behaviour meant that any deviation from this standard was considered abnormal. Prostitutes, women who had sex outside of marriage or those who had been victims of incest or rape were all classed as 'fallen' women. Societal opinion alternated between the views that 'fallen' women were creatures of innate depravity or poor helpless victims brought down by wicked men. More recent analysis by Walkowitz has challenged the latter assumption. In her view, not all prostitutes should be categorised as passive victims; it was often the urban environment that prompted a woman's movement into prostitution.⁵ This theory, promoted by Walkowitz, is eminently plausible, as the teeming and impoverished urban conditions provided a criminogenic setting in which prostitution and its links to robbery and assault thrived. This idea is also reinforced by Stark's theory of the ecology of crime, which suggests that the essential factors needed for criminal activity to thrive are population density, poverty, mixed use, transience and dilapidation.⁶

Recent scholarship, following in the wake of Pinchbeck's significant research into women workers in the Industrial Revolution, has focused on the socio-economic reasons for prostitution. Pinchbeck's research encompasses a comprehensive array of primary sources. However, her proposition that women's lives actually improved when work normally carried out in the home was transferred to factories seems an over-generalisation of the situation.⁷ Levine and Poovey, on the other hand, both consider that it was 'protective' intervention, in the form of legislation in women's employment

that was a major factor in the growth of prostitution.⁸ Zedner makes the point that in the early nineteenth century, two stereotypes of women existed: '...the honest, restrained, sober and innocent...' and those who were '...deceitful, designing, avaricious and dangerously susceptible to corruption'.⁹ As well as fears of the corrupting influence of prostitution there was also grave concern over the increased prevalence of venereal disease, especially within the armed forces.

However, a sexual dichotomy existed in Victorian Britain, where male sexual activity was tacitly sanctioned but female sexual activity, especially outside marriage, was perceived as deviant behaviour. This double standard was especially evident when a series of Contagious Diseases Acts were introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century in an attempt to mitigate sexually transmitted diseases in the armed services, by reducing or regulating prostitution in garrison towns and ports.¹⁰ While no action was taken against soldiers and sailors because of the Acts, any woman suspected of being a 'common prostitute' could be taken into custody and given a genital examination to check for gonorrhoea or syphilis. If infected, women could be held in a 'lock hospital' until cured. The introduction of these Acts incensed many social reformers and philanthropists and a strong protest movement grew up. The Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, led by Josephine Butler, opposed the Acts because of the powers they gave the police over women, their ineffectiveness at diminishing disease and the fact that men were not penalised for their part in the spread of the diseases.¹¹

Because women were considered to be more impressionable than men it was thought that they would be more responsive to moral reformation and rehabilitation in non-statutory institutions. Female penitentiaries and homes were founded by philanthropists and evangelical groups in order to provide an alternative to prison and lock hospitals. While many of these establishments were well-supported they also had their detractors. Felicia Skene, author and advocate of prison reform, questioned the way in which reformatories and penitentiaries were organised, citing the over-harsh

disciplinary methods used and the 'cumbersome and needless machinery' involved in the running of the homes which exhausted both the funds and the energies of the workers.¹² Yet Ellice Hopkins, a social purity campaigner, extolled the virtues of institutions like the Albion Hill Home for Penitent Girls in Brighton, which she maintained was a shining exemplar of its kind.¹³

To date there has been little detailed modern study into female penitentiaries and homes, the main exceptions being Mahood's study of the Magdalene Homes in Scotland which she combined with a case study of police repression, Long's research into women, work and poverty in nineteenth-century Northumberland, and Finnegan's exploration of York's poverty and prostitution.¹⁴ The general consensus from these studies is that many homes and penitentiaries failed to achieve lasting success in reforming 'fallen' women. Suggested reasons for this failure include the restrictive criteria for entrance to the homes; the demanding, unpleasant and unpaid work the girls were expected to carry out; the lack of employment opportunities afforded them on their release; and the inability of those who ran the homes to understand or attempt to remedy the economic pressures that drove women back to their former situation.¹⁵

The Brandling Place Home for Penitent Women was a non-statutory penitentiary that operated in Newcastle from 1861 until it closed in 1896. Although Newcastle already supported a lock hospital, a workhouse, an infirmary and a female penitentiary, local evangelicals felt that more provision was needed to cope with the growing problems of prostitution. Judicial statistics for 1866 showed that the highest concentrations of known prostitutes were to be found in ports such as Liverpool, Bristol and Newcastle upon Tyne.¹⁶

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Newcastle was the most important commercial port in the region. With direct access to the North Sea, Newcastle was a natural conduit from the Durham Coalfield. As well as exporting coal, local supplies of fuel at pit-head prices powered major industrialisation along both banks of the Tyne. The heavy industries which developed depended, almost entirely, on a male labour force. Even

before the 1842 Mines and Collieries Act was introduced the women of Northumberland and Durham were not allowed to work underground which further limited employment opportunities for women.¹⁷ The employment available to women with no specific skills was usually low status and poorly paid. Wages for occupations such as lacemaking, dressmaking, millinery and domestic service did not always reach subsistence level. Prostitution therefore offered a viable alternative for economic survival.

Housing conditions in the city were also blamed for the poor moral state of the townspeople as there were a significant number of lodging houses which, according to Sir John Walsham, were, "...the most deplorable scenes of profligacy and depravity..." as both sexes were "crowded in together in a manner injurious to both health and morals."¹⁸ Newcastle also boasted several army barracks and this, combined with the influx of sailors and transient men looking for employment, supplied a ready clientele for women who had no work or any means of support. The North East also had a reputation for hard drinking, and figures for the latter part of the century show an extremely high number of proceedings against street-walkers for drunkenness, although Bennison suggests that this may have been an attempt to curb prostitution rather than drunkenness.¹⁹

The Brandling Home was established in April 1861 after some 'poor unfortunate women' attending an evening Town Mission meeting had expressed a 'desire to forsake their life of profligacy'.²⁰ The Town Mission had been introduced in 1846 to bring religion to the poor who did not attend any place of worship or who did not receive pastoral visits due to the lack of clergy in Newcastle.²¹ After a specially convened midnight meeting, which was well attended by their target audience, the Mission had twenty-six 'weeping prodigals' who wanted their help. This meeting followed the format of the Midnight Meeting Movement, which had been co-founded by Theophilus Smith in London in 1860, with the purpose of reforming prostitutes by holding prayer meetings for them during their working hours.²² As the midnight meetings continued the number of girls seeking to reform grew so it was decided to find a house where the girls could stay.

An uninhabited building at 44 Richmond Street in central Newcastle was rented.²³ It became known as the Home Refuge and was the only one of its type in the area to provide a temporary refuge. Initially, women were admitted both day and night into the Home so long as they were penitent although the final decision was left to the discretion of the matron. Later it became necessary to vet the inmates because of their unsocial behaviour. During the first eighteen months, 186 inmates passed through the refuge, including 107 who were restored to society. The house soon became too small and, in 1863, the Home moved to new premises in Brandling Place in Jesmond which had been donated by Richard Burdon Sanderson, a local coal- and land-owner and nonconformist preacher. It was renovated through public subscription.²⁴

As the refuge depended on charitable donations, a board of trustees was elected. The trustees were mostly religious, medical or business men from Newcastle. Many of them had Scottish connections, whether born in Scotland, of Scottish ancestry, or of the Presbyterian persuasion. Dr John Collingwood Bruce was the main force behind the institution. Bruce was a licensed Presbyterian preacher and a renowned antiquarian. He had been the headmaster of a prestigious boys' school in Newcastle as well as being president of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) for more than twenty-five years. Bruce was greatly concerned for the welfare of these young men who came from the country to stay in Newcastle, and who might lose their character, position and health if they succumbed to the temptation of prostitution.²⁵ It may have been this added concern for the morals of the young men which prompted Bruce to undertake the reformation of the 'fallen' women of Newcastle.

A gentlemen's and a ladies' committee were formed to run the affairs of the Home. The ladies' committee was largely made up of middle-aged women, either the wives or spinster relatives of local businessmen. This female participation reflected the growing number of women who became involved in charity work during the nineteenth century. Prochaska suggests that the major reason for this increase in charity work was industrialisation.²⁶

Charitable work became the recourse of many middle-class women who, now that they could afford more servants, had time on their hands. A great number of unmarried women with no household responsibilities also threw their energies into rescuing women less fortunate than themselves.²⁷ The ladies' committee met every fourth Tuesday at the Home to discuss its day-to-day running and to hear the Matron's report. They examined the bills and receipts and wrote cheques to cover basic running costs. Larger financial or operational decisions were made by the gentlemen's or joint committee meetings. Two ladies visited the home at least once a week to make an inspection, and they reported monthly to the gentlemen's committee who met at the Bible Depot in Newcastle.²⁸

At first, the Home was a temporary refuge, but soon it became a training centre doing sewing and laundry work. Although institutions like Brandling Place were funded by public subscription, work carried out by the inmates provided a significant amount of financial support, especially as the workers were not paid for their efforts. The laundry system developed at Brandling Place was similar to that used by the Magdalene Homes in Scotland and Newcastle's Female Penitentiary. Bruce, who had studied in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where the two largest Scottish Magdalene Homes existed, would no doubt have heard of these institutions and was also on the committee for the Newcastle Penitentiary. According to Runstedler, laundry work was symbolic of the spiritual cleansing of the inmates through hard labour and was intended to prepare the girls for domestic service.²⁹ Matrons were hired to see to the religious, moral and domestic training of the inmates, and sub-matrons employed to take charge of the washing. Many of the staff came from Scotland and had previously worked in the Magdalene Asylum in Edinburgh, often leaving their families behind. Drunkenness, however, was a common problem with the staff and this resulted in a high turnover of personnel.

Life in the Home was not easy especially for the new girls. On admission to the Home they were not allowed to mix with the other inmates until the Matron had inspected them for cleanliness and disease. If any of the girls

were found to be sick they were sent to the Infirmary, in the charge of a messenger, and not allowed back in without a certificate. The girls were also closely questioned about their personal lives, their family backgrounds, if they had been “misbehaving” and for how long. They were also asked whether they had been in gaol or had taken refuge in neighbouring penitentiaries or similar institutions as it was not the policy of the Home to admit girls who had been taken in elsewhere. Inmates had to “yield a prompt and implicit obedience to the commands of the Matron”. There was to be no insubordination and no undue levity, nor were they allowed outside the gates unless they had completed a considerable period of good conduct. The inmates had little privacy. The Matron, who held the key to the letterbox, would vet all letters sent and received. Visits from friends and family could only be held in the presence of the Matron and the giving of gifts to the girls was discontinued because it caused aggravation between the inmates.³⁰ The average age of the inmates, taken from the 1871 and 1881 Census Returns, was 18.5 years with ages ranging from the youngest at 14 years old up to 28 years old. Women over 25 years needed special permission to be admitted. Inmates mainly came from Northumberland, Durham and as far away as Cumbria.³¹ There was often friction in the Home; inmates frequently bickered with each other and there were incidents of theft of food or items of clothing sent into the laundry for washing. Many girls ran away, preferring to go back to their old haunts, rather than stay in the Home. The frequent turnover of personnel and inmates as well as the problems caused by staff drunkenness resulted in periods of restlessness and bad behaviour from the inmates. In 1887, in an effort to calm the situation, a system of handing out weekly good conduct tickets was introduced to encourage an improvement in behaviour but to no real avail.

The daily routine for the inmates was long and arduous. They rose at 6 am in order to prepare for work at 7 am. From 8 am until 9 am they had breakfast and attended worship followed by work until 12.30 pm when they broke for lunch. Work recommenced at 1.30 pm until 4.30 pm when they had tea. Work started again at 5 pm until 7 pm, although occasionally

they were required to work until 8.30 pm. On Fridays they had to work until 9 pm and on Saturdays until 3 p.m. They had to go to bed at 9.30 pm.³² Religious services were held on Sundays and on one or two midweek evenings, as long as it did not interfere with the work of the Home. What little free time the inmates had was given over to basic education delivered by members of the Committee. However, they did have access to a small library of books and magazines. For most inmates the stay in the Home was short, although for those who worked hard there was a chance that they would be kept on as paid workers. Inmates were instructed in sewing and laundry work, in the hope that they would gain employment on their release. Many of the girls were sent to situations as domestic servants, but a great many were sent back to their relatives or ended up plying their old trade.

In 1876, the Committee approached Dr Barnardo for advice about emigration, as two of the girls had expressed an interest in order to escape bad company. In 1879, John Craster, Master of the Wellington Reformatory in Penicuik near Edinburgh, was invited to address the Committee on the topic of emigration. Craster explained how he found situations for boys from the reformatory on farms in Canada. As a result of this meeting, it was decided that Craster would arrange to send two girls from the Home to Quebec who, if successful, would be encouraged to repay half the cost of their passage when they could. Although one girl got a position as a nursemaid in Toronto, no further mention was made of other girls emigrating from the Home after this.

As early as 1865, the Home was approached to join forces with the Female Penitentiary to prevent girls working the system by going back and forth between the two institutions. However, the committee steadfastly refused, maintaining that although the Home and the Penitentiary were, 'virtually engaged in promoting the same important work... they were really occupying different departments'.³³ Nevertheless, the Home and the Penitentiary did convene joint committees on occasions and in one particular instance sent a letter to the Borough Magistrates asking them

to 'put down' houses of ill-repute and to suppress street solicitation.³⁴ In 1872, Lady Armstrong, wife of the armaments manufacturer and a financial backer of the Home, strongly urged that a Preventative Refuge be set up at the under-occupied Brandling Place to help girls who had not yet fallen but who were in danger of doing so. After consideration, the Committee decided that while there was a need for such an establishment in Newcastle they did not feel that the character of the Home should change and wanted to continue with their work in the hope that 'when the existing prosperous state of commerce declined...' women, for whom the Home was intended would once more seek admission.³⁵ However in the late 1870s and early 1880s, when Britain faced an economic slump causing great unemployment in the area, the numbers of inmates did not rise significantly. The Home's financial problems increased because of the drop in orders for laundry work.³⁶

Although the Home had been successful in attracting penitents in the early days the numbers started to decline. The late 1860s saw the male and female members of the Committee actively seeking out women to reform and by 1871 Mrs Holland was employed as a missionary to work alongside the local 'Bible women'. Bible women were normally working-class women who acted as part-missionary, part-social worker and, because of their familiarity with the local area, were able to provide a link with the 'fallen' women and those who wanted to help them. The idea of 'Bible Women' originated with Ellen Ranyard (1809-1879) who, in 1857, established the Bible and Domestic Female Mission.³⁷ While Ranyard's missionaries were sent out to sell Bibles and provide domestic advice to wives and mothers, Mrs Holland was sent out to encourage women to come to the refuge. She spent more than 137 hours, over a four-month period, visiting houses of ill-fame on more than thirty streets, as well as making sixteen visits to the Infirmary, but she only succeeded in bringing one girl back to the Home. Eventually, after such poor results, the Committee discontinued this practice.

Midnight Meetings were resumed in 1872. Although more than thirty women attended, due to ineligibility or lack of interest not one was admitted

to the Home. The criteria for eligibility may have been responsible for the decline in the numbers of inmates but alternative reasons were given by one 'fallen' woman who expressed strong dissatisfaction with the food provided in the Home and the lack of remuneration for the work carried by the inmates. The Committee tried to respond to this by providing some variation in the diet, '...even at a slightly increased expense'. They also trialled a remuneration scheme which foundered because of the jealousy it created among those who were not paid.³⁸ Long-standing committee member Thomas Pumphrey, after reading Ellice Hopkins' pamphlet on the Albion Hill Home, recommended changes that could be made to Brandling Place which would make life better for the inmates and encourage admissions.³⁹

In 1874, in another bid to increase admissions, the Committee rented a property in Strawberry Place in Newcastle to be used as a reception house, probationary ward and feeder for the Home.⁴⁰ Peter Walton, who had just been discharged from the 105th Foot after having spent almost twenty-one years in the Army, was hired to manage it.⁴¹ The reception house, however, was all expense and no income and by 1876 the Committee were looking for ways to invest any surplus funds in order to achieve the best return. By 1880, the Home was again facing financial problems and the Committee were forced to sell some of their shares in the North Eastern Railway Company. In order to encourage subscriptions from further afield, it was decided to approach the people of Sunderland as a number of girls seeking refuge in Strawberry Place over the years had come from that area but without any real results. In 1882, Walton resigned as manager of the reception house, and the Committee took this opportunity to close the house down as it was incurring great expense.

The Home also faced competition for inmates, as numerous similar institutions were established in the region. Entries in a local directory included the Newcastle Diocesan Training Home and Receiving House, the Northumberland Association for the Protection of Women and Children and the Wansbeck Home which was the new headquarters of the

Female Penitentiary.⁴² In 1891 the Salvation Army Rescue Home opened in Newcastle and proved very successful in attracting women who wanted to be rescued.⁴³ The philosophy of the Salvation Army was different from that of the Brandling Place Home. It did not enforce the same stringent entrance criteria and the inmates were not so strictly confined. Less emphasis was placed on attending religious services, and, as the Rescue Home was not expected to pay for itself, the inmates did not have to carry out laundry work. The Matron of Brandling Place, when asked to explain the small number of girls present in August 1893, said that 'the opening of new homes especially that of the Salvation Army had drained off the supply from the Brandling Home'.⁴⁴

In 1892, John Collingwood Bruce, the driving force behind the Home, died and four years later the Home was closed. In April 1896 the Committee discussed the transfer of the Brandling Home as a 'going concern' to the Wansbeck Home. The Committee cited the number of other institutions in the area, the enormous expense required to update the laundry machinery and the small number of inmates staying in the Home as being the main factors for its closure.⁴⁵ The premises were eventually sold and the proceeds put into trust for the Wansbeck Home in 1887.

In the thirty-five years that the Brandling Home was in operation, there is no doubt that some good was done by the evangelical philanthropists who gave their time and money to the reformation of the 'fallen' women of Newcastle. However, much of the Committee's energy was expended on the financial aspects of running the laundry without being prepared to invest in new equipment. The restrictive entrance criteria, the emphasis on piety and religious observance, and the Trustees' inability to compromise on their original concept meant that the number of inmates continued to drop away. The failure to raise sufficient funds, and the competition from other institutions with less restrictive rules, contributed to its demise. The Home failed to meet the needs of the majority of its inmates on several levels. They were made to do arduous and unpaid laundry work, insufficient effort was put into obtaining positions for the girls on their release and, finally, no

attempt was made to address the key drivers of poverty and unemployment which drove many of the girls to prostitution.

Within the time available to research for this paper it has not been possible to discuss all aspects of the Brandling Place Home. However, it would be useful to conduct further research into the relationship between Presbyterian and Anglican philanthropists, to discover if there was a power struggle for the souls of the prostitutes of Newcastle.

References

- ¹ Mahood, L., *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 87.
- ² Mahood, p. 3.
- ³ Mumm, S., "Not Worse than Other Girls": The Convent-Based Rehabilitation of Fallen Women in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 29: 3 (Spring 1996), p. 527.
- ⁴ Tait, W., *Magdalenism: An Inquiry into the Extent, Causes and Consequences of Prostitution in Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, P. Rickard, 1840; Greg, W. R., 'Prostitution', *Westminster Review*, Vol.53, 1850; Acton, W., *Prostitution considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects*, London, John Churchill, 1857.
- ⁵ Walkowitz, J. P., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982 pp. 20-21.
- ⁶ Stark, R., 'Deviant Places: A Theory of the Ecology of Crime', *Criminology*, Vol.25: 4 (1987), p. 895.
- ⁷ Pinchbeck, I., *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, London, Frank Cass & Co., 1969, p. 320.
- ⁸ Levine, P., 'Consistent Contradictions: Prostitution and Protective Labour Legislation in Nineteenth-Century England', *Social History*, Vol. 19: 1 (Jan 1994), p. 17; Poovey, M., *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 53
- ⁹ Zedner, L., 'Women, Crime, and Penal Responses: A Historical Account', *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 14 (1991), p. 320
- ¹⁰ Parliamentary Papers, 1864, I, *Contagious diseases - A bill [as amended by the Select Committee] for the prevention of contagious diseases at certain naval and military stations*, pp. 473-481. The Bill was passed and the provisions of 1864 Act were extended in 1866 and 1869. <http://www.historyofwomen.org/cdacts.html> accessed 20/5/2012
- ¹¹ Josephine Butler Memorial Trust, <http://www.josephinebutler.org.uk/a-brief-introduction-to-the-life-of-josephine-butler/> Accessed 27.08.2012

- ¹² Skene, F., *Penitentiaries and Reformatories*, Whitefish, USA, Kessinger Publishing, 2004, p. 5.
- ¹³ Hopkins, J. Ellice, *Work Among the Lost*, London, William MacIntosh, 1870.
- ¹⁴ Mahood, as above; Long, J., *Conversations in Cold Rooms: Women, Work and Poverty in Nineteenth Century Northumberland*, Suffolk, The Boydell Press, 1999; Finnegan, F., *Poverty and Prostitution: a Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- ¹⁵ Mahood, p. 111; Long, p. 177 and p. 192; Finnegan, p. 167 and Runstedler, C., 'Magdalen Homes' in Ditmore, M. H.(ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Prostitution and Sex Work: Vol. I*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2006, p. 268.
- ¹⁶ *Judicial Statistics* 1861, England and Wales, Part 1, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1862.
- ¹⁷ The Mines and Collieries Bill, which was supported by Anthony Ashley-Cooper, was hastily passed by Parliament in 1842. The Act prohibited all underground work for women and girls, and for boys under 10. www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/.../livinglearning/.../coalmines/ accessed 20 May 2014
- ¹⁸ Parliamentary Papers 1842, *Report to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, from the Poor Law Commissioners, on an inquiry into the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain; with appendices*.
- ¹⁹ Bennison, B., 'Drunkenness in Turn of the Century Newcastle upon Tyne', *Local Population Studies Society Journal*, 1994: Issue 53, p. 18.
- ²⁰ Tyne and Wear Archives, Records of the Brandling Place Home, CHX13/10, Summary of Deed Settlement, 1863.
- ²¹ Bruce, Sir G., *The Life and Letters of John Collingwood Bruce*, Edinburgh and London, Blackwood and Sons, 1902, p. 217.
- ²² *The Athenaeum*, No. 1690 (March 17, 1860), p. 358; *The Newcastle Courant*, April 29, 1864, p. 3
- ²³ The National Archives, 1861 Census, RG9/3830, p. 22.
- ²⁴ Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/10, Summary of Deed of Settlement.
- ²⁵ Bruce, p. 225
- ²⁶ Prochaska, F.K., 'Women in English Philanthropy: 1790-1830', *International Review of Social History*, Vol.19: 03, (December 1974), pp. 432-433.
- ²⁷ Harrison, B., 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 9: 4 (June 1966), p. 360.
- ²⁸ Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/6, Brandling Place Rules 1866.
- ²⁹ Runstedler, p. 270.
- ³⁰ Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/1/1, General Committee Meeting Minutes.
- ³¹ The National Archives, 1871 Census, RG10/5108, pp. 22-23; 1881 Census, RG11/5070, p. 14.
- ³² Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/1/1, General Committee Meeting Minutes
- ³³ Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/1/1, General Committee Meeting Minutes
- ³⁴ Ibid.

- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Hartley, C., *A Historical Dictionary of British Women*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 366.
- 38 Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/1/1, General Committee Meeting Minutes.
- 39 Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/11/1, Pumphrey, T., 'Our Penitentiary'
- 40 *The Newcastle Courant*, Friday, June 26, 1874.
- 41 The National Archives, *British Army Service Records, 1760-1915*, available on www.findmypast.co.uk. Accessed 25/5/2012
- 42 *Ward's Directory of Newcastle-on-Tyne and the Adjacent Villages*, Newcastle, R. Ward & Sons, 1898, p. 595.
- 43 Long, p. 181
- 44 Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/1/1, General Committee Meeting Minutes.
- 45 Tyne and Wear Archives, CHX13/1/1, Final Report.

north east history

THIRTY YEARS ON: A FOOTNOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE REGIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

Bob Davis

A key purpose of this note is to link the region's film archive of today directly back to the **Northern Film and Television Archive** established by Trade Films in 1983 – flagging up, in passing, an unmarked 30th anniversary last year. Also outlined is the role of a quasi-trade union agreement – The Workshop Declaration – in helping to create the conditions in which this development took place. In a final section, the significant labour history content of part of that original archive collection is detailed.

The region's film and video archive, now the North East Film Archive at Teesside University and a part of the Yorkshire Film Archive, began life thirty-one years ago as the Northern Film and Television Archive (NFTVA). Established by Trade Films at the company's premises at 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead, on the site of what is now the Hilton Hotel¹, it was one of only a handful of regional film and video archives in the country at the time.²

The background to this initiative was the 1982 *Workshop Declaration* of the Association of Cinematograph Television and allied Technicians (ACTT)³ – an agreement between the union, the cultural funding agencies including the British Film Institute (BFI) and the Regional Arts Associations, and the then new television company Channel 4 (C4). The Declaration ensured ACTT approval for properly funded and staffed

production units seeking to engage in non-commercial and grant-aided film and tape work. It rapidly gave birth to a network of regionally based film and video workshops around the UK, supported by grants and, most importantly, revenue funding from a mix of sources including C4 (through its Independent Film and Video Department). Thus, in such Workshops, independent film-makers could look forward to the prospect of regular employment as opposed to (traditional) intermittent one-off project funding. Furthermore, Workshops could undertake a limited amount of broadcast production for C4 television – a major breakthrough for the independent grant-aided sector - as well as non-broadcast production. Notably, in the context of this paper, the Declaration also recognized and encouraged Workshop engagement in exhibition, distribution, education and other wider community based activities related to film.

Two such workshops – Amber Films and Trade Films – were created on Tyneside, reflecting the significant involvement of the late Murray Martin (Amber) and Stewart Mackinnon (Trade) in the campaign and the negotiations for the Declaration which were to lead to the creation of the Workshop movement. Other workshops in the area were to follow.

In mid-1982 the new Trade Films workshop came into existence with revenue funding provided by C4 and the BFI.⁴ Trade's ambition at the outset was to produce a range of work of relevance to the region which would explore the major forces shaping its industrial, economic and social structure and the working class response to it. To complement this film production activity, and forming a key part of Trade's wider workshop brief, was the idea of establishing a regional film archive.⁵ This early goal we came to broadly define as the establishment of an archive which would build a collection of film and video material relating to the industrial, social and cultural history of the region.

Trade's early growth and development was, crucially, financially assisted by the local authorities, initially in the form of capital funding. In the first instance, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) provided loans and improvement grants under the then Bridges Industrial

Improvement Area scheme to enable us to acquire, restore and refurbish the semi-derelict building on Bottle Bank that was to become our HQ.⁶ Part of the restoration included the creation of space and storage facilities for the archive. Tyne and Wear County Council (TWCC) provided a small capital grant for equipment for the archive, with central government chipping in with regional development support. TWCC's support here was strategically important, as it was the authority responsible for the Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS). Whilst TWAS did hold a few films, which had come into its possession during the normal course of archiving activity, neither the authority nor the then County Archivist had plans to engage in film archiving as such, and so the County was able to throw its weight behind our initiative. This support was to become much more significant a year later, as explained below.

We moved into the building, from our temporary space in council premises hard by the Swing Bridge, around Easter 1983. Almost simultaneously we sought an additional workshop member who would specifically take the lead in the development of this archive, and who was to join us just as the NFTVA was launched.⁷ This was in the late summer/early autumn of 1983, when an invited audience of actual and potential funders, broadcasters, friends and colleagues were given a tour of our building and watched our first Workshop documentary production, *Labouring Under the Law* (Trade Films for C41983).

Not long afterwards, one of our first regional archive activities was at the 1983 Tyneside International Film Festival in October 1983, during the late Sheila Whitaker's tenure as The Tyneside Cinema's director.⁸ We curated the archive strand of the Festival entitled *Britain Can Make It*.⁹ A programme of films from the national archives was screened, focusing on the 1940s feature films, documentaries and newsreels which dealt with the 'post-war dream' of reconstruction by Jill Craigie, Basil Dearden, Humphrey Jennings, Ivor Montagu, and documentary maker Paul Rotha¹⁰ among others.

With our search for financial support continuing, we were able to add

to the staff of the archive in mid-1984¹¹, when TWCC agreed to provide revenue funding, under the authority's Economic Development remit, matched 50/50 by the BFI. This was a major step forward, and gave the NFTVA a fairly firm financial footing as well as a staffing structure. It also enabled us to set up a separate newsreel unit, discussed below.

So in a few short busy and creative years in the early to mid-1980s¹², the Workshop made a range of broadcast and non-broadcast productions which included narrative fiction, analytic documentary, oral history and campaign material; created a specialist unit (Northern Newsreel, which ran for 18 issues between 1984 and 1991¹³) producing a video magazine for the labour and trade union movement; and created a regional film archive, the NFTVA. This latter gained official recognition, first, in principle, in late 1983 or early 1984 from the then BFI's National Film Archivist Clyde Jeavons, with a formal endorsement coming in around 1987.

Film archive work is capital intensive, and requires significant space for preservation and storage under certain conditions. So we installed a temperature and humidity controlled vault deep in the bowels of Bottle Bank, with the electrically powered unit constantly running. We also invested in what would then have been state of the art computer indexing. Archiving is also labour intensive – among other things, people have to be employed to collect material and then, particularly, to catalogue it.¹⁴ In brief, the financial challenges are, therefore, on a large scale.

The late 1980s saw escalating funding problems. In 1986 the Thatcher government abolished the Metropolitan Counties. TWCC was no more. Although funding continued under the auspices of the five constituent local authorities forming the geographical area of Tyne and Wear County, it was designed to taper down over several years to zero. Other funders simultaneously re-prioritised. A major blow came at the end of the decade. C4's Independent Film and Video Department, once our champions, took the decision to end its policy of revenue funding for workshops in favour of funding individual film-makers.¹⁵ The BFI soon followed suit. Northern Arts continued to part fund the archive, but

this local funding, whilst very welcome, was always a smaller part of our overall funding package.

Many other developments took place in this period (1986 to mid 1990s) as other and potentially rival collections of archive material were launched in the region. A collection of BBC North East news film, at one time stored at Beamish Museum, was deposited at Teesside University by the then Head of BBC in the North East.¹⁶ At Tyne and Wear Archives, with TWCC a distant memory, the arrival of a new County Archivist in the early 1990s brought about a change of policy, and a film archive was also started.

Although the remaining Northern Arts funding did allow us to keep the archive alive on a reasonable care and maintenance basis well into the 1990s, the mounting and successive financial constraints led to cutbacks in both our staffing and in the extent of our activity. But it would be true to say that the establishment of other collections with not dissimilar 'film archive' names led to a diffused, if not confused, intra-regional picture. The other archives were also to find the financial going tough. Eventually, and with the encouragement of Northern Arts, the realities pushed the different key parties (ourselves, Tyne and Wear Archives and Teesside University) into forms of collaboration. The first, in the mid-1990s, was the founding of the Northern Association of Film and Television Archives whose members included other parties with collections, such as Cumbria County Archives Service and Tyne Tees Television library. Then, most significantly, later in the 1990s, came the creation of a single film archive entity under the auspices of a franchise awarded by Northern Arts and backed by the BFI. Potential applicants for the franchise were encouraged to think of possible collaborating organisations.

It was at this point that Trade Films, Tyne and Wear Archives (through its lead authority Gateshead MBC) and Teesside University came together as a consortium of three partners to take the franchise and to establish a single entity. This was **The Northern Region Film and Television Archive (NRFTA)**, at first based at Tyne and Wear Archives at Blandford House,

Newcastle. It was not long after this that the original NFTVA collection, thereafter referred to as the Trade Films collection, was formally deposited with the NRFTA at Blandford House. Our building on Bottle Bank, having been acquired by developers, was to be demolished to make way for the Hilton Hotel.

The creation of the consortium also allowed this new consolidated venture, of which we were an integral part, to employ qualified film archivists. Both of those who held the post were graduates of the East Anglia University MA course in film archiving.¹⁷ It was also during this period that funding was acquired by Teesside University to construct a dedicated film storage unit. At the end of the 1990s, the NRFTA became based at Teesside University. It was around this time that, with the re-organisation of regional arts funding, the film and audio visual



Andy and Jack Lawther

Two brothers from a famous Durham mining family talk about their life, work and union activities. Brought up in Chopwell - one of Britain's 'Little Moscovs' - they discuss their assessment of the Labour movement today.

responsibilities exercised to that point by Northern Arts thereafter came under the wing of the new Northern Film and Media (NFM) the regional arm of the UK Film Council. At that point NFM became the key external funder of the archive.

This is, of necessity, an extremely potted version of a history spanning some thirty years, and particularly of the more recent (post-millennium) period. I will not go into any more detail on the long and complex reorganization of the structure and management of the archive. However, to cut to the present day, it suffices to say that in a much more recent re-organisation and restructuring (2012), this time involving the Yorkshire Film Archive, the Teesside based NRFTA has been re-named the **North East Film Archive**. The audio-visual material from the original Trade Films/NFTVA collection now forms part of that North East Film Archive at Teesside University, although many of the NFTVA and Trade Films papers (including for example donations by the Lawther family (see below)) remain in the Tyne and Wear Archives at Blandford House, Newcastle.

There may well be competing narratives about the archive's development from other quarters. However, I don't wish to enter into any polemic here. My main intention is to underline the historical fact that the regional archive originated as a Trade Films Workshop project in the early 1980s. Trade Films' involvement at practical and policy (including Board) level in this long, complex and, at times, frustrating process, has run right through this history, until the birth of this latest, and hopefully lasting, incarnation. Today's North East Film Archive can trace its ancestry directly back to the Northern Film and Television Archive created by Trade Films.

I would like now to change tack and to remind labour and social historians, members of the NELHS and readers of this journal, of some of the original content of the NFTVA, as it specifically addressed aspects of working class and labour history. Here, then, is a selection:

Extended interviews with local labour movement figures.



Jim Murray, for over 20 years Works Convenor at Vickers factory on Tyneside, talks to Hilary Wainwright (co-author of 'The Workers' Report on Vickers') about the shop-floor movement inside the multi-national company and its eventual inability to stave off mass redundancies and factory closures.

Works Convenor. Jim Murray, well-known and leading Tyneside shop steward, and Convenor of Vickers Elswick shop stewards until its closure and his own redundancy in 1983, talking with Hilary Wainwright¹⁸ about the shop steward movement, its victories and defeats.

One compilation and four supporting master tapes. Trade Films 1983/84.¹⁹

Harriet Vyse. A woman activist who also became Convenor of shop stewards in a multinational electronics company, Plessey, in the 1970s and 1980s.

One compilation and supporting master tapes, approximately 5 hours. Trade Films 1984.²⁰

Organising the Public Sector. Interview with Tom Sawyer, then Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Public Employees.²¹ Discussion includes organising the low paid public sector workers as well

as the ambulance workers' strikes and the so-called 'winter of discontent'. Compilation and 2 hours of master tapes. Trade Films 1984.

Lessons of the Class Struggle. Jack and Andy, surviving members, of the famous coalmining Lawther family from Chopwell, interviewed by Ray Challinor in 1984.

4 parts (4 x30 mins) interview based tapes; with 6 hours of master tapes. Trade Films 1984.

Non-broadcast video productions

The NUPE Tape. A trade union (N.U.P.E.) day school about the Thatcher government's anti-trade union legislation.

2 hours of master tapes. Trade Films 1983.

Northern Newsreel. A long running video magazine for the Labour and trade union movement, mainly interviews with labour movement activists about current issues and concerns, 1984-1991.

2 pilot tapes and 18 issues, each approximately 30 minutes; each with approximately 2.5 hours of supporting master tape material. Trade Films 1984-1991

Save our Shipyards. A workers' campaign against threats to the shipbuilding industry in the North East.

2 campaign tapes, each 30 minutes; 12 hours of master tapes. Trade Films 1988

Real Resources. Trade Unions and the Environment.

Tape made for the European Trade Union College, plus masters (made in France and Italy as well as the UK). Trade Films 1994.

We also recorded events like the Tyneside Centenary May Day March of 1990; and the brass band 'farewell concert' at the North East Miners HQ

at Redhills, Durham, as the days of the coalfield drew to a close in 1993.
Material on the 1984-85 Miners Strike

Interviews with activists - leading women activists as well as North East Miners leaders and grass roots activists.

7 hours of tapes. Trade Films 1984.

Demonstrations by miner's wives against the policy of the electricity supply company in cutting supplies to miner's families in default of payments.

2 hours. Trade Films 1984.

Durham Rally in support of the NUM 1984 (instead of the annual Durham Gala). Speeches by Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield, Dennis Skinner, etc. Trade Films 1984.

Miners Campaign Tapes. Trade Films co-produced with Platform Films of London which won the 1985 Grierson Award at the British Film Institute Awards. Contributory material includes interviews and footage shot in the North East.

4 hours of tapes.²²

In connection with the Miners' strike, we also collected films and videos from third parties, both professionally made and amateur footage.

Labour Party.

Interviews in 1983, 1987, 1992 and 1997 with local Labour supporters about the Labour Party.

Approximately 50 hours of tape.

Who'll Keep the Red Flag Flying here? film made for C4 in 1983. Trade Films 1983.

Deposits made by third parties;

National Coal Board (NCB) Film Unit. One of our first major archive activities, working in part with Dutch film historian Bert Hogenkamp, was to bring back to the region broadcast-standard tape copies of the many films made in the North East by the National Coal Board's own film unit, particularly those made for the long running monthly cinema magazine programme *Mining Review*, between nationalisation in 1947 and the closure of the unit in 1983-84. Whilst this portrays life in the coalfield and promotes the nationalised industry, it includes various important interviews with miners' union leaders and, in the early days, reports from the Annual Conference of the NUM.

Light Out of Darkness.

The Archive also produced and undertook several touring exhibitions of selections of the films around the Northern coalfield, under this title.

We also interviewed on film three key members of the NCB Film Unit – the documentary film-maker Donald Alexander, Head of the Unit from its early days and through its heyday, Francis Gysin, his deputy and successor and the last head of the Unit, and Wolfgang Suschitzky, veteran cinematographer, who shot a number of the Unit's films.²⁴ Trade Films 1986.

This body of NCB material proved the inspiration for several of our subsequent films:-

An Island Built on Coal (Trade Films for C4 1985/86),

Landscape (Trade Films for C4 1988/89) and

Down Colliery Way (with Mike Elliott) a Tyne Tees 4-part series
(Trade Films for Tyne Tees TV 1994, copyright Tyne Tees TV Ltd.)

Newcastle Centre Against Unemployment. Film footage of the Opening of the Newcastle Centre Against Unemployment, 1978.

A final note of clarification – there still exists a Trade Films company, in which is vested any intellectual copyright that exists in original material produced by Trade Films. Some of the above content falls into this category, while other items, for example those produced by other parties, clearly do not. However, all of the above content is now housed at the NEFA at Teesside University, to which all inquiries should be addressed:-

North East Film Archive, Teesside University, Middlesbrough,
TS1 3BA Tel. 01642 384022
www.northeastfilmarchive.com

References

- ¹ Gateshead artist Charlie Rodgers' painting of Bottle Bank, used as the exhibition poster for the 1999 Gateshead Art Exhibition at the Shipley Gallery, prominently depicts the building, pre-Hilton Hotel and, sadly, surrounded by dereliction.
- ² A very useful guide – The Researcher's Guide to Film Archives - has been published from time to time since 1981 by the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC). The NFTVA regularly featured in editions from the mid-1980s onwards. A 7th edition was published in 2006 – The Researcher's Guide: Film, Television, Radio and Related Documentation Collections in the UK. London, BUFVC 2006. The Guide has now gone online, as **The Researcher's Guide to Screen Heritage**, a directory to UK archives and collections of artefacts relating to the history of moving image and sound. This resource is delivered in open access (see <http://bufvc.ac.uk/archives>).
- ³ For the ACTT's own account of the Workshop Declaration, see *Action: Fifty Years in the Life of a Union*. ACTT 1983 pp. 163 – 165. A revised edition of the Declaration itself was published by ACTT in June 1984. Following various film, broadcasting and entertainment trade union mergers the union is now the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU).
- ⁴ An earlier partnership involving Stewart Mackinnon, Roger Buck and Paul Marris was dissolved as Mackinnon founded the new workshop company, with me and Paul Marris named in various founding documents as workshop members. We were soon to be joined by Ingrid Sinclair and John Eden. Liz Wild initially did our books and went on to become our long-serving admin person.
- ⁵ The original idea is attributable to Mackinnon.
- ⁶ Parts of the building could be traced back several centuries; a veteran Gateshead councillor once told me that it had been variously a doss house, where people slept sitting with arms draped across a rope for the price of a penny a night, and then some sort of children's home.

- 7 Derek Stubbs joined Trade Films in September 1983.
- 8 Paul Marris curated this on our behalf. See the festival programme *Making Waves: New Currents in World Cinema, The Sixth Tyneside Film Festival 12 -23 October 1983*. Tyneside Cinema 1983.
- 9 See obituary by Clyde Jeavons, *The Guardian* 2 August 2013
- 10 In fact, in September 1982, we had produced, in collaboration with Lynne Fredlund of Oxford Film and Video, an extended video interview with Paul Rotha, which can be found in the archive today. In relation to this, Paul Marris edited a monograph on Rotha for the BFI: Marris, Paul (ed), *BFI Dossier Number 16: Paul Rotha*, London: British Film Institute, 1982.
- 11 Belinda Williams and Sue Kennedy were appointed in mid-1984.
- 12 See *A Guide to Gateshead*, Gateshead MBC, 1987, pp 35-37.
- 13 At this time the core team of Northern Newsreel was Martin Spence, Penny Woolcock, John Adams and Gary Craig.
- 14 We did seriously and systematically catalogue – and it's good to note that our particular collection was recognized to be the best indexed long after it was merged with other collections under subsequent regional initiatives. The quality of this cataloguing is due to the diligent work of Kevin Brown, a qualified archivist who joined us in 1985.
- 15 The then Head of the Department, Alan Fountain, was heard subsequently to regret this decision as a mistake.
- 16 In the early days of our existence, we had received indications that this might come to us. I can only speculate as to why it did not - but not here.
- 17 Firstly Chris Galloway, who was based at TWAS, Blandford House, Newcastle, and then Leo Enticknap, based at Teesside University
- 18 Now Editor of the magazine *Red Pepper*
- 19 See McSmith, Andy, *Faces of Labour: The Inside Story*, London, Verso 1996. Chapter 3 'The Shoppie on the Scotswood Road' is devoted to Jim Murray "who, by a combination of pure chance and the power of the block vote, once held the future of Labour in his hands" and draws in large measure on this recorded interview. See also Beynon, Huw, and Wainwright, *The Workers' Report on Vickers*, London Pluto Press 1979.
- 20 See also *North East History*, Vol 36 (2005), pp131-139, Oral History section, for Jacqui Apperley's interview with Harriet Vyse.
- 21 Later General Secretary of the Labour Party and now Lord Sawyer of Darlington.
- 22 A DVD of the 6 titles made from this and other material, which were widely distributed on VHS during the year-long strike, is now available from the British Film Institute, together with an illustrated booklet on the making of the tapes. And an anecdote: in November 1998, representing what was by then the NRFTA, I went to Rome to participate in an International Conference of European Audiovisual Archives - *A Century of Labour History* - organised by the Audiovisual Archive of the Labour and Democratic Movement, and supported by the Italian Ministry of Heritage and Culture. As there was also to be an exhibition of films, delegates were asked to bring a few appropriate examples from our collections. My selection included

The Miners' Campaign Tapes, in which Dennis Skinner MP features prominently. On the first morning, as I hurried to the Conference Centre along an almost deserted Via Nazionale, a lone man was approaching from the opposite direction. As he loped into view, I was astonished to make out the unmistakable features of - Dennis Skinner. It was only half an hour later, sitting in the hall and reflecting on it, that the full force of the coincidence hit me - that I had passed within a foot of the living embodiment of the person whose electronic video images (and by the thousands) from some 14 years earlier were in the bag slung over my shoulder. If I'd been quick enough to realise that, at that uncanny juncture in time, I would have stopped him, introduced myself and explained this most bizarre of coincidences. As it happens I did later drop him a note via an MP friend, but whether he got it or not I never found out. (It was him by the way - he was glimpsed again by others later that day - obviously on a weekend break, and nothing whatsoever to do with the film archive conference).

²³ We published a catalogue of this material in *A Catalogue of Films and Videotapes produced during the 1984/85 Miners' Strike* NFTVA Gateshead 1985.

²⁴ Wolfgang Suschitzky, of course, also famously shot the film *Get Carter* (Mike Hodges, 1971) now of cult status and probably the most famous film ever shot in the North East. Alexander and Gysin have long since passed away, but at the time of writing, the remarkable Suschitzky is alive and will be 102 in 2014. He was still sending letters to the BECTU journal as recently as three years ago, whilst a current photograph of him featured in a recent issue (*Stage Screen and Radio*, BECTU October/November 2013, p. 26).

KICKING UP DUST IN NORTH SHIELDS: THE STORY OF A HOME OFFICE EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTION IN THE 1970s AND ITS AFTERMATH.

Patrick Candon

Introduction

'Kicking up dust' is a colloquial term, often used to mean: 'to create a fuss' or 'be a nuisance'. It can also refer to a short burst of activity that initially gets attention but eventually things return to the way they were. This story is framed by events in North Shields in the 1970s and 1980s when there was a brief period of radical political activity in the locality, much of it emanating from the activities of the North Shields Community Development Project. The unfolding events during this period will be analysed not just through the contextualised local and national circumstances of those times but also by way of contrast with the dispirited state of local politics in the North East today.

This story is a historical case study that begins in 1971, when the people of North Shields became participants in a unique Government anti-poverty experiment in community action - the Community Development Project (CDP). This experiment led to some unintended outcomes, both for the Home Office civil servants who devised it and for the local authority who hosted it. It describes what happened in the early stage of this social experiment when the Home Office apparently lost control and the community project workers took it over - and radically shifted its direction - and how these events had implications for the style of local politics in

North Tyneside in the 1980s, following the project's unceremonious closure.

A decisive point in this story is the situation which led the North Shields CDP team, once in post, to reject the original policy intentions of the Home Office and to reinterpret their role from a radical structuralist perspective, coloured by a Marxist analysis. The project team then proceeded to facilitate a range of controversial political activities and produced a series of critical reports that eventually brought them into conflict with North Tyneside Council. The ongoing disputes between the CDP team and the Labour-led Council was much publicised at the time in the local press. Councillors became increasingly vociferous in their disapproval of the role of CDP workers, particularly after they overtly criticised the local authority's housing programme, openly started up a campaign of politicisation in the area, which led to a series of local protests, and went on to expose North Tyneside Council for its attempts to cut expenditure on welfare provision.

The story continues after the end of the experiment in 1977 when some of those who worked within the CDP team - and many who supported its structuralist perspective - participated in a radical re-engagement with local politics. They moved from working outside the formal structures of local politics and began to play a role from within. The effects of this influx of newcomers was eventually to bring about a shift in the style and political direction of formal local government politics in North Tyneside in the mid-1980s, moving them emphatically to the left.

The national backdrop to the CDP experiment

Tynemouth County Borough Council, incorporated into North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) in the 1974 reorganisation of local government, was one of the twelve local authorities offered the opportunity to sponsor the Community Development Project, an action-research, area-based anti-poverty programme. There was much national

controversy over the choice of geographical location of each project area. The general wish of the Labour Government was to target areas where there was evidence of poverty but also the potential for 'social growth'.¹ The Tynemouth wards of Percy and Trinity in North Shields (and specifically the Meadowell housing estates within them) were chosen as the project area because they displayed all the stark indicators of 'multiple deprivation'.

Announced in 1971, the North Shields CDP was one of the last of the national projects to be implemented. The Director was appointed in October 1972 and the Project team began to take shape in 1973. The Project had two parts, an Action Team and a Research Team. Its Research Team was based at Newcastle Polytechnic, and the Action Team was employed by North Tyneside MBC. Most of the money to pay for the CDP came from the Home Office. They paid all the costs of the Research Team and 75% of the costs of running the Action Team. The CDP was responsible for its work to a Management Committee of the Council. The project was planned to last five years and scheduled to close in 1977.

Much has been written about the origins of the national CDP experiment, particularly by Martin Loney, who has attempted to put it into a political and historical context.² For Loney, the CDP was more than an initiative to overcome the pockets of poverty in inner city or declining industrial areas, it was a unique experiment in social engineering. Loney suggests that the origins of the idea emanated from the senior civil servant Derek Morrell, who believed that the Government could play a more decisive role in breaking the 'cycle of poverty'. For Morrell, Assistant Under-Secretary of State in charge of the Children's Department, who was moved to the Home Office on the request of Roy Jenkins, there was also a concern with the growth of rigid bureaucracy and a loss of community; he wanted a project that "would kick the system".³

The architects of the CDP consciously followed a fashion spread to British Government from across the Atlantic for community projects as a form of experimental reform. CDP was like their American counterparts (War on Poverty), in that it reflected an ambiguous political commitment

to the eradication of poverty. Although the political will to highlight and announce the CDP lay with politicians, according to Loney, there is little evidence to suggest that Harold Wilson himself dreamed up the idea of the CDP as a response to Enoch Powell's, so called 'Rivers of Blood' speech (made in April 1968) within the climate of a moral panic about race and urban riot.⁴ The main principles of the CDP lay not only in the desire to shake up local systems of welfare distribution but also as a new method of social control. At the Ditchley Park Conference (July 1969), called to discuss CDP in the light of the American poverty experiments, a representative from the Home Office, Miss Stevenson stated: "In other words, one of its aims was to prove that there was an alternative (to disorderly behaviour in urban communities), to impose control as a solution to social problems".⁵ It is no surprise then, that the Home Office, rather than another government department took such a keen interest in this social experiment from the start.

This assumption of a causal relationship between social pathology and social control needs stressing. Established as an experiment in developing community action strategies for supporting families living in areas of multiple deprivation, the CDP's focus was on changing the culture of the poor. For the Home Office in the late 1960s, the family and crime were linked. The problems of delinquency associated with areas of poverty could be resolved by activating people in these areas to access appropriate support services. That poverty continued to exist in the late 1960s, despite the ever-increasing growth of the welfare state, was perceived to be the result of both the fecklessness of the poor and the long-term inefficiency of local government administration. It is ironic, therefore, that the national bureaucracy that was to overview this experiment - the Home Office - suffered, too, from organisational inefficiency.

Certainly, the Home Office malfunctioning that was to follow and the breakdown of any effective central co-ordination of the CDP led to demands from CDP workers for greater local project autonomy. Much of this national administrative breakdown appears to have originated from

the fact that Morrell died in 1969, and that there was no civil servant of equal calibre to provide the philosophical underpinning and vision for a project of this nature. As a consequence, many of the local projects found it difficult to interpret the original Home Office CDP papers.

This shift in the locus of power was paralleled by the development of a more radical approach to social analysis by some of the CDP teams in the twelve national project areas. The trend towards a more radical structuralist approach emerged as many of the local project teams found themselves increasingly isolated, and their position in the community progressively untenable, when they attempted to implement the original Home Office brief. Many contradictions to orthodox community work emerged. CDP workers began to contest a model of community work that sought to blame the poor for their own poverty, pinning responsibility on a deviant sub-culture, whilst ignoring the structural determinants of capitalism, particularly the cyclical impact of unemployment. Some CDP teams rejected their role as the crusaders of morality and pluralism; saw the local people being “sold down the river and lied to”, and started to revise their community action strategies.⁶ What also emerged was the view that class action rather than government co-opted problem-solving, was the most effective instrument for social change.

The North Shields CDP team was heavily influenced by the structuralist perspective and moved emphatically towards a social change model they described as *radical reformism*. Although many of the other national project areas continued within a traditional community action perspective, North Shields CDP, along with at least five other project areas, started to develop a more radical analysis of urban problems. So did the central information unit which was set up to co-ordinate the various local projects. These projects eventually produced a series of reports that moved away from explaining deprivation in terms of the characteristics of the poor in particular local areas, and instead switched attention to an analysis of broader political and economic processes. The influence of Marxism was evident in the analysis of the CDP inter-project publications which

examined the politics of de-industrialisation, housing, the changing nature of the welfare state and the implications these developments have on the local area. In September 1974, a national CDP Workers' Organisation was established. In the same month project workers and their supporters established the Political Economy Collective (PEC). The intended role of the PEC was to inform and guide the work of local projects. It played an important role in stimulating a Marxist critique, in effect offering a macro analysis of local problems through an analysis of the dynamics of capitalism. This analysis contrasted sharply with the original Home Office focus on the social characteristics of 'problem people in problem areas'.

If the original idea from the Home Office was to stir up ineffectual local councils, then this aim at least seems to have been achieved. There is no certainty, however, that the conflict that was to emerge was what was imagined by the Home Office and certainly not for many Labour Councillors in North Tyneside, for whom the conflict element of the CDP work had not been clearly spelt out to them.

So what actually happened at the local level to cause such conflicts? In a sense it can be traced to a change that took place between May 1973 when the nucleus of the North Shields CDP team was just in post and August 1973 when a document entitled *Initial Strategies for Tynemouth* CDP was discussed. The structuralist emphasis of the August document reflected a clarification of the role of CDP workers, which ran parallel to the publication of the *National CDP Inter Project Report*.⁷ The August document was a discussion of the community action work strategies taking place on the North and South Meadowell Estates. Such strategies meant a decisive rejection of the social pathology perspective and the adoption of a class model for social change. The model of *radical reformism* adopted by the North Shields team established that the problems of the Meadowell estate (and other estates like it) would only be significantly improved if there was a substantial change in capitalist society. The assumptions behind *radical reformism* was that certain defined objectives could be achieved through working-class action, which meant

employing strategies for empowering the working-class through locality-based collectives and by revitalising the local Labour Party.

Politicisation became the long-run objective, and this meant encouraging local people to join the Labour Party, so as to activate the largely moribund local ward organisation and thereby developing independent community working-class organisations in order to have impact on a range of the *social reproductive* issues, such as housing and welfare. This inevitably included developing strong links with rank and file workers within North Tyneside, attempting to integrate industrial and community issues. At the same time reports were published by the North Shields CDP research team, which offered a dialectical historical critique of local problems, particularly how political actions in the past continued to dominate the present and the future. There were five reports, which devoted a considerable amount of effort to understanding the working class political culture of North Shields. They made use of class analysis in order to explain the process of de-industrialisation and how this impacted negatively upon the lives of people in the locality, particularly women's lives.⁸ It could be argued that the CDP team were functioning in a rudimentary sense as 'organic intellectuals', working with a specific audience - the Labour and trade union movement and the overlapping interests of the dispossessed people of North Shields.⁹

A whole chapter in the North Shields CDP Final Report: *Volume 3, North Shields - Organising for Change in a Working Class Area* is devoted to describing the conflict that developed between the CDP workers, the Housing Action Groups - who had become very prominent, vociferous and effective as urban protesters - and North Tyneside MBC. Initially, North Shields CDP was enthusiastically supported by the Labour Group, who somehow saw the team as "super social workers" but this attitude changed as their style of community work with the tenants and local people began to challenge the role and authority of the Local Authority.¹⁰ As it became clear to the Council what the strategies of CDP were, there was an attempt to gain tighter control over them. Publication of the national

Forward Plan in 1975 only accentuated the Councils' anxieties, (this was a report requested by the Home Office) and became the focal point of conflict. The document was perceived by the North Tyneside MBC CDP Management Team as bearing closer resemblance to a political manifesto than a community action programme.¹¹ There was a real concern that North Shields CDP was becoming overtly political. Further attempts to control of the work of the North Shields CDP included:

- banning *Housing Action News*.¹²
- a request that future copies should be submitted for legal comment prior to publication;
- attempts to stop a planned Housing Conference taking place (this eventually went ahead, sponsored by Tynemouth Constituency Labour Party);
- instructing the North Shields CDP team not to work with certain groups (i.e. the Housing Campaign Committee and the Working Women's Charter Group); and
- calling for the premature closure of the Project.

One local Labour councillor called for the whole CDP team to be sacked because of their left-wing aims and their attempts to make the council "a laughing stock". He stated, "They are just using people for their own political ends which are to undermine democracy as we know it ...This council has given them warning after warning but they have all been ignored."¹³ Also, as the, then, Leader of the Council stated: "At first CDP were very helpful, but they got themselves involved in other things, branching out of their own area into aspects which were not their responsibility."¹⁴

The biggest areas of contest were in housing and planning. For North Shields CDP workers, housing was identified as an immediate problem area and an arena central to the process of politicisation. Agitation, much of which was co-ordinated through the, CDP-initiated North Tyneside

Housing Campaign, reached a heightened state and included:

- a series of demonstrations at Council meetings;
- the publication of *Housing Action News*, which criticised the North Tyneside MBC's housing policy;
- propaganda campaigns through the local media; and
- a sit-in at a local rent office.

These strategies caused much embarrassment for the ruling Labour group and resulted in a good deal of hostility. When it was revealed that South Meadowell was not included in the Council's plan for a housing improvement scheme, the conflict became more intense. The Housing Department had to deal not only with extremely articulate advocates of the Housing Action Groups, but also with vociferous tenants from the estate turning up in groups, armed with information gathered during education sessions with CDP workers, demanding housing rights and resources.



Community Development Project housing protest 1976

A detailed description of this conflict is well documented in the five volumes which made up the North Shields CDP Final Report. It was also sensationally described in local newspaper reports from that period. Despite attempts by some Councillors in 1976 to prematurely close down the North Shields CDP, the social experiment eventually came to a "prickly end" in September 1977, when after a prolonged period of negotiation, CDP workers on permanent contracts were promised alternative employment within the local authority.¹⁵

CDP comes to a prickly end

Council looks back in anger

By SHEILA MATHESON

THE biggest thorn in the side of North Tyneside Council will be plucked out this week.

After five painful years of confrontation and pressure, the Community Development Project will end on Friday, with leading council officials hearing sighs of relief.

The CDP should have been the authority's best friend, working in deprived areas of North Shields, focusing on needs and helping to resolve social problems. But within months of being set up in 1972, it became apparent that they were not doing that.

Expectations of a "super social work" team were dashed — implicit support and the tacit mistrust that flourished has haunted premises alike, heightened by an aggressive approach to council policy and politics.

A Home Office edict in-

mitted that concentrated on grassroots questions. They moved into an area of high unemployment, declining industry and accommodation problems. The housing waiting list had been closed for several years by the former Tyneside Housing Council on demoralised families lived in grim conditions with no prospect of moving.

A CDP survey last summer showed male unemployment had risen to 16 per cent, excluding this year's crop of school leavers now on the dole.

Communities like the Meadow Well Estate were almost unrecognisable, according to which level would be modernised, who would be rehoused, and who were unable to get approval for housing areas in the central North Shields blighted by long-term planning.

Research director Dave Byrne, and joint director of the contract team, Penny Renshaw said the first step was to discover the attitudes to their conditions, what social amenities were available and what the people wanted.

Street action committees were encouraged to organise themselves so that residents became pressure groups.

At policies were exposed and immediate improvements demanded. It did not asserting that council and officials reversed such questioning and objected to meetings being disrupted by hecklers of covered interest. It was the more galling that CDP were claiming employees apparently being the hand that fed them.

What was important was getting the people together, to get what they wanted, said Penny Renshaw. "Policies and participation had got them nowhere".

They said: "Two groups went through the system, submitting reports of what they wanted, but it got them nowhere."

form action groups, to organise, to be aggressive. You get nothing by going cap-in-hand and asking someone to help people back. This forcing of issues concerning the equality of the Labour-controlled council, which prided itself on representing the working class, was a bitter pill. Housing was the dominant issue during CDP's existence. They attributed success to having South Meadow Well made an improvement area, and speeding up rebuilding from clearance areas at North Shields centre and Percy Main, to their constantly belittled attitude.

they claim included organising flaggroups, summer play schemes and information shops which was a source of advice on welfare rights. The research group produced for the House Office information on the industrial and unemployment. They worked with the unions and consolidated problems in housing, generally with Housing Action Neighbourhoods. But CDP fought on a publicly political stage — a public council officials expected to follow guidelines from elected members. They believed tenants were suffering from policies that were politically motivated, that allocation of resources in a political sense.

The only way to secure was by tackling problems at a political level, so they intended anger, not only from officials, but from councilors who felt they were being told how to do their job.

To what extent was every new nail in their coffin? CDP was set up with the expectation that after five years their projects would be absorbed by the local authority. Their only surviving scheme will be the information shop at the Meadow Well Estate; it has reluctantly been taken over for an interim period by North Tyneside Council. Grant, Frank, Rogers opposed the takeover and spoke for many when he said recently: "It makes me deeply suspicious of anything connected with the future survival of the CDP in its present form."

The "only" long-term success will be the street which tenants have fought in groups of organising themselves as pressure groups, refusing to take as face value. Will these tenants stand up and be counted when they feel they are being unjustly "eaten" or will

Evening Chronicle 29 Sep 1977

The aftermath

It is difficult to offer an unbroken linkage of influences, but it would certainly be true to say that in the decade following the closure of the Home Office experiment, the legacy of North Shields CDP was to have important repercussions for the functioning of local politics. The claim of this account is that the CDP had a significant influence upon North Tyneside Labour Council's shift in a leftward direction in the 1980s. Although it is impossible to present a neatly quantifiable definition of what exactly is meant by a left

wing council, North Tyneside Council became associated with this political position, particularly its attempts to explore the potential of municipal socialism. In fact, in this period there were many references (mostly puerile) in the local press identifying North Tyneside as 'loony left'. Nicholas Ridley (then Secretary of State for the Environment) used North Tyneside as an example of a northern council with a 'loony left' reputation. From the opposite perspective, Hilary Wainwright describes the emergence of 'the new left radical regime' in North Tyneside as part of her analysis of local socialism. For her, the move towards a local form of socialism could be seen as 'unpredictable explosions' and 'exotic bursts of small firecrackers' going off in areas like North Tyneside.¹⁶ Discounting some infantile media and Conservative claims of this movement being lunatic, it would be true to describe North Tyneside as a left-leaning council and as part of a nation-wide process in the 1980s, which saw the emergence of left-wing Labour councils such as the Greater London Council, Sheffield, Edinburgh and Liverpool councils.

'Loony Left' claim slammed

A TOP official of North Tyneside's Labour Party has hit out at allegations of left-wing extremism in the borough.

Dr. Peter Taylor, newly-appointed party secretary, said the claims being made were diverting attention from the real issues.

By SUSAN WEAR

He is a candidate in the new Benton Ward and at a campaign meeting he said: "We cannot afford to waste time on defending ourselves against gross misrepresentation.

"Our job is to place before the people the real issues—cuts in housing, social services and education which are lowering the living standards of ordinary people in our area," he said.

Former secretary Coun. Alf McManus was not re-selected as a candidate for the Riverside ward and he claimed this was an organised coup by "people of the loony left."

Evening Chronicle 2 Apr 1982

John Gyford has coined the term 'the new urban left' to describe party activists, community workers and Labour councillors and local government officers who in the 1980s had a shared interest in the socialist potential of local government. Gyford does not suggest that the new urban left was a formally organised grouping, but he identifies in particular how CDP workers - as the result of their experiences in radicalising community development work - were crucial in outlining the theoretical foundations of local socialism in the 1980s. For Gyford, the CDP's publications produced a mass of data, some 200 reports and 'opened the way for the attempted use of the local state for radical ends'.¹⁷ Many ex-CDP workers penetrated the local government system and brought with them experiences, practices and a set of ideas about the potential of radically engaging in local politics. Gyford notes how this new breed of councillor and officer often showed disdain for formal procedures. The new urban left represents an identifiable new departure both for British local government and for British socialism.

Struggles in North Tyneside Labour Group

The next stage of this story is an account of the internal struggles within the Labour Group of councillors in North Tyneside in the 1980s as a consequence of the developments described above. According to Byrne, the Labour Group that were in control of the North Tyneside authority in 1974 were traditionalist and conformist, with a history of being moderate spenders with no particular political focus. From the late 1970s the Labour Group began to change: an older faction – not so much industrial workers but people with a collaborationist attitude to central government – were replaced by a younger group (of both public sector professionals and industrial workers with a recent and continuing history of trade union activism) and people drawn from community activism of the CDP in North Shields¹⁸. By the mid-1980s, both the ex-Project Director of North Shields CDP and his ex-Assistant Project Director had emerged

into positions of power within the ruling Labour group in North Tyneside.

The story that unfolds in North Tyneside MBC in this period is of how one group of councillors, who could be described as the 'old school', was superseded in a power struggle by a younger, more confident, radical, set of councillors and supporters. The crux of the struggle between these two schools of councillors was during an episode in the mid-1980s when the Council decided to confront the Conservative Government and chose to defer setting a Rate, although its roots were really in the boundary revisions of 1982 and their impact on the composition of the Labour Group on the Council. The number of seats on the Council went down from 78 to 60 and Labour's numbers dropped from 44 to 32. Many of the 'old school' of councillor lost their seats, which left the way clear for an offensive by the newer set of councillors who had gradually been taking over seats.

Throughout 1984, at the same time as the miners' strike, a strong national campaign got under way involving those local authorities who had been rate-capped. The rate-capping campaign was a national response by left-leaning local authorities to the Conservative government's Rates Act (1984), which set a legal limit on the level of rates that specific 'overspending' local authorities could raise. In March 1985, North Tyneside MBC, in support of this campaign, decided to confront central government over inevitable spending cuts and voted to defer setting a Rate. As a consequence of this action, the Labour group in North Tyneside split. Numerous articles in the local press describe the sensation at the council meeting when thirteen Labour councillors voted against their own party. However, the split between this minority group and the rest of the local Labour Party did not finally occur until weeks later when, at an annual meeting of North Tyneside Council, some (but not all) of those members voted against the majority decisions of the Labour Group. To all intents and purposes this group of councillors rebelled against the anti-cuts protest and joined the Conservatives to set up an administration that meant that Labour was to lose control of the Council.

In response, the constituency Labour Parties of Wallsend and

Tynemouth agreed unanimously that these councillors should no longer be allowed to be members of the Labour Party. The NEC upheld this decision on the grounds that the rebel councillors had co-operated with the Conservative opposition to set up their own administration.

LABOUR EXPELS REBEL DOZEN



Coun. Tom Bryson



Jim Bamborough



Coun. Mollie Riley

TWELVE members of a Tyneside council were today expelled from the Labour Party.

The North Tyneside councillors, including council leader Coun. Jim Bamborough and Mayor Tom Bryson, were judged by the party's national leadership to have set up a non-Labour administration in the borough.

In June, Tynemouth and Wallsend local parties voted to expel them after policy splits in the council chamber.

Outside

Now Labour's national executive committee has voted to reject appeals for reinstatement by the 12. Peter Taylor, secretary of Wallsend constituency party, today said: "The 12 are now definitely outside the party and should no longer be referred to as Labour councillors."

"This was, of course, inevitable, given their action in depositing their own Labour administration."

"It is a matter of regret that these councillors, some of whom have given decades of services to the Labour movement, should finish by being thrown out of the party."

Important

"Nowhere else in Britain has a group of councillors crossed the floor of a council chamber to vote with the Tories to depose their own Labour leaders."

There are now 21 Labour councillors in North Tyneside, 20 Conservatives, six Alliance and the who were today expelled.

The 12 hold leading positions on the council as chairmanships of the important committees.

Coun. Bamborough as neither he nor the other expelled members received official notification of the Labour executive

Evening Chronicle 26 Sep 1985

Accusations between the expelled councillors and the now minority Labour Group filled the pages of the local press. The secretary of the Wallsend Constituency Labour Party described the actions of the expelled councillors in this way: "Nowhere else in Britain has a group of councillors crossed the floor of a council chamber to vote with the Tories to depose of their own Labour leader."¹⁹ The leader of the expelled councillors counter-attacked the next day by claiming, "What do the people of North Tyneside want? I know what they want. They don't want to go down the same

road as Liverpool.”²⁰ The leader of the expelled councillors also claimed in another statement to the press, “I have been in the Labour Party for 25 years and my record, along with that of my colleagues stands against those behind the expulsions”.²¹ He also argued that, “expelled members had not left the Labour Party, but that the official Labour group had left them”.²² For the Conservative group, in an informal coalition with the rebel group, this was a period of time of unexpected control over the Council. The leader of the Conservatives stated, “Ultimately, the only solution to this problem is through the ballot box ... but in the meantime we have got to achieve the most reasonable solution for the next twelve months. I am voting for the less of two evils ... against (the Leader of the Labour group) and his revolutionary politics of the past twelve months”.²³

Eventually, the ballot box did decide things. In May 1986, seven of the expelled councillors stood under the banner of *Labour Against Militant*. All those wards were won back eventually by the official Labour Party. With many of the ‘old school’ gone, the new councillors that filled their place consolidated the left leaning position of the North Tyneside Labour Group.

Conclusion

This historical case study provides an insight into a brief radical period of political activism in North Shields which emanated from a government sponsored experiment in community activism. It is a story about an era - that seems somewhat distant today - when a group of educated professional workers were purposely deployed to kick up dust in order to shake up the administration of local authorities. It is clear from this account that the type of dust that was kicked up by the North Shields CDP team was not quite what was originally intended by the Home Office, yet was still ambiguously endorsed by them. This story poses all sorts of questions about the real purpose of this social experiment and the legacy of its unintended outcomes. In particular it questions whether state funded community

work professionals - no matter how radically they interpret their role - can ever replicate the role of a revolutionary political party or radical social movement?

In contrast, the part played by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) in North Shields in the 1920s and 1930s comes closer to that radical praxis²⁴. The underlying social control element of the CDP experience is also interesting, particularly the desire by the Home Office to gain information on - and regulate - the urban poor. The potential for urban disorder in areas of poverty was more than a latent consideration when the CDP experiment was being contrived in the late 1960s. According to the CDP report *Gilding the Ghetto*, there is a relationship between expenditure on welfare programmes and the fear or actuality of social turmoil. 'If capital was to operate smoothly and profitably, a stable society and an orderly and disciplined workforce was essential.'²⁵ Coincidentally, the two urban areas in the North East which hosted CDP projects (the Meadowell estates in North Shields and Benwell in Newcastle) both witnessed serious rioting in 1991. It is also interesting that the rhetoric of social pathology was never far from the surface in the social policy debates that followed these riots.

The conflict generated by the North Shields CDP workers bears an interesting comparison with earlier events in North Shields, in the 1920s and 1930s, when the agitations of the National Unemployment Workers' Movement (NUWM) led to significant and sometimes violent local conflict. Much like the North Shields CDP workers in the 1970s, the NUWM in North Shields critically questioned the structural framework of capitalism and contested the principle of blaming the unemployed for their own demise. Best known for their organisation of Hunger Marches, the NUWM also fought against inhumane methods for distributing welfare benefits to the families of the unemployed. Although not the only group to support the cause of the unemployed, Watson in his detailed history of the NUWM in the North East, describes the conflict generated by the NUWM

in North Shields. Mostly fronted by the Communist Party - in particular, the leadership of Alec 'Spike' Robson and Walter Harrison - the NUWM organised mass protests against the means tests and cuts in unemployment benefits, which sometimes led to violent confrontations with the police on the streets of North Shields. However, it was their community work and advocacy in areas like The Ridges (the Meadowell Estate) that the NUWM earned their greatest respect from local people. Acting like 'working class lawyers', they supported the unemployed through a hostile benefit system and took up their cause with the authorities. In North Shields, their leaders went to prison rather than accept the courts' offer to avoid it if they agreed not to take part in future demonstrations. Alex 'Spike' Robson commenting in the mid-1970s on the similarity of the work of the CDP in North Shields and the role of the NUWM, suggested that the role of the community worker is no different, it just that the community workers get paid and did not have to go to prison. (See Byrne, D 1989. Page 14)

Subsequent governments learned much from the CDP experiment. In particular: never again²⁶. The Area Bases Initiatives that followed on from the CDP were all much tighter controlled.²⁷ The CDP has proved to be a one-off: the one that got away. For the Government and to some onlookers, the radical stance adopted by some CDP teams was no more than posturing. Although there were questions being asked in Parliament at the time about the publication of slick Marxist tracts, there was also facetious comment about the fact that all that was left after £5 million had been spent on research into urban problems was a part-time lady selling booklets in the Department!²⁸

This case study would suggest, however, that the impact of the CDP in North Shields was more profound, at least for a brief period following its closure. In the 1980s, despite a prolonged period of Thatcherite hegemony in central government, many people felt compelled to enter local politics in order to confront cuts in public expenditure and to explore the potential of municipal socialism; the influence of the CDP on this political phenomenon should not be understated.

However, after all the dust had settled, what followed on from this short burst of local radicalism was an extended period when central government reasserted its tutelage over truculent local authorities. Today local authorities in the North East are experiencing the consequences of a lengthy period of national austerity, many of them being forced to make deep cuts in spending. Acquiescent in their response to this onslaught on public services, many local authorities are hoping to manage the cuts by tactically 'commissioning-out' services which had previously been provided by public sector workers. With no clear ideological opposition to austerity in sight and with the resurgence of a more vitriolic version of social pathology being used to blame and tame the poor, hollowed-out local authorities in the North East remain buried under the pervasive dust of neo-liberalism.

References

- ¹ Higgins, J., Deakin, N., Edwards, J. and Wicks, M. (1983) *Government and Urban Poverty* London: Blackwell. pp.21-26. This account describes the heavy handed way the Home Office selected areas they considered 'socially deprived' to host the Projects. Not surprisingly, many local councillors objected to the way the people in their areas were being labelled.
- ² Loney, M. (1983) *Community Against Government. The British Community Development Project, 1968-78 - a study of Government Incompetence*. Heinemann Educational Books. London.
- ³ Loney, M. (as 2) p.45. Fries, Richard, 'Morrell, Derek Holtby (1921-1969)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66860>, accessed 9 May 2014]
- ⁴ Loney, M. (1983) p.17. Without any clear policy guidelines, Harold Wilson announced an urban programme from the steps of Birmingham Town Hall on 5th May 1968 in what he saw was a response to Enoch Powell's recent polemical speech, in which Powell made a link between immigration and urban unrest. However, Loney states that work on the CDP, which was already going on within the Children's Department in the Home office, was used in an opportunistic way by civil servants to make policy sense out of Wilson's idea.
- ⁵ Loney, M. (as 2) p.38.
- ⁶ Kraushaar, R and Loney, M (1978) *Requiem for Planned Innovation: the case of the CDP* in Brown, M. and Baldwin, S. (eds) (1980) *The Year Book of Social Policy in*

- Britain. Routledge and Kegan Paul. p.238
- 7 CDP Information and Intelligence Unit (1974a) *The National Community Development Project* - Inter-Project Report. London
- 8 The five volumes which make up the North Tyneside CDP Report are as follows:
- North Tyneside CDP (1978a) *North Shields: Working Class Politics and Housing 1900-77*. Final Report. Vol.1. Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
 - North Tyneside CDP (1978b) *North Shields: Living with Industrial Change*. Final Report. Vol.2. Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
 - North Tyneside CDP (1978c) *North Shields: Organising for change in a working class area* Final Report. Vol.3. Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
 - North Tyneside CDP (1978d) *North Shields: Organising for change in a working class area: The action groups*. Final Report Vol.4. Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
 - North Tyneside CDP (1978e) *North Shields: Women's Work*. Final Report. Vol.5. Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
 - North Tyneside CDP (1978f) *In and out of work, a study of unemployment, low pay and income maintenance*. Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.
- <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm/search/collection/CDP/searchterm/North%20Tyneside/field/projec/mode/all/conn/and/order/nosort/ad/asc/cosuppress/0>
- 9 Byrne D. (2011) *Applying Social Science. The role of social research in politics, policy and practice*. The Polity Press. Bristol. UK. p.168.
- 10 Evening Chronicle (29th. September 1977)
- 11 *The National Community Development Project Forward Plan 1975-76*. Published by CDP Information and Intelligence Unit (1975)
- 12 *Housing Action News* was sold throughout the area to describe the local housing situation: how tenants were organising to combat particular housing problems and news of important national developments. The first issue (June 1975) sold over 2,000 copies. This news-sheet was written and published by North Tyneside CDP. The second issue (July 1975) brought the Project into conflict with the Council because of the newsheet's open critical stance towards the Council's record on rent rises and house improvements. Issue 2. was held up by the Special Management Committee Meeting (5th. August 1975) but eventually sold with issue 3. (August 1975).
- 13 The Journal (9th January 1976)
- 14 The Evening Chronicle (29th. September 1977)
- 15 The Evening Chronicle (29th. September 1977)
- 16 Wainwright, H. (1987) *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties*. The Hogarth Press. London. pp 94-161.
- 17 Gyford, J. (1985) *The politics of local socialism* (Local government briefing,3) George Allen and Unwin Ltd. p.36.
- 18 Byrne, D. (1989) *Beyond The Inner City*. Open University Press. p.12

- ¹⁹ Evening Chronicle (26th. September 1985)
²⁰ The Journal (27th. September 1985)
²¹ Evening Chronicle (6th. June 1985)
²² Evening Chronicle (12th. June 1985)
²³ The Journal (10th. May 1985)
²⁴ Watson, D (2014) *No Justice Without A Struggle*. The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in North East England 1920-1940. Merlin Press Ltd London.
²⁵ CDP Inter-Project Editorial Team (1977a) *Gilding the Ghetto, the State and the Poverty Experiments*. p.45
²⁶ Brynmor John (Labour MP for Pontypridd) told the House of Commons in 1977 that the CDP projects had had a negative result. Yet they were valuable in that they teach us 'what not to do' (Hansard 17th November 1977: col.742). As cited in Loney, M. (1983) page 183.
²⁷ See, Hohmann, R, P (2013) *Regenerating Deprived Urban Areas*. Policy Press. pp 23-40. From 1979 onwards, Area Based Initiatives reflected not so much a distrust of local authorities but rather a greater emphasis given to projects that directly addressed local economic issues in cooperation with the private sector, rather than experimental 'social' projects which had low levels of central accountability.
²⁸ Loney, M. (as 2) p.177

‘A NOBLE GAME BECAME DEGRADED’¹: THE RISE AND FALL OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL IN MIDDLESBROUGH, 1889-1894

Catherine Budd and Neil Carter

A ‘hotbed of football’ is often the cliché used in reference to the North East of England. Professional football, though, came late to the region. Clubs from Lancashire and the Midlands had been in the vanguard and six clubs from each region made up the original Football League when it was established in 1888. Formed in 1876, Middlesbrough is actually the oldest senior club in the region, compared to Newcastle United (est. 1892) and Sunderland (1879). However, it only joined the Football League in 1899, some time after its local rivals.

This does not mean that professional football – as opposed to the amateur game – was not played before this date in Middlesbrough. This article examines the brief life of Middlesbrough Ironopolis Football Company Limited, between its formation in 1889 and its subsequent liquidation in 1894. In 1889 the membership of Middlesbrough Football Club acrimoniously split, leading to a breakaway club, Middlesbrough Ironopolis. As a consequence of Ironopolis turning professional, the ‘mother club’ did likewise. After a disastrous short spell in the Football League, Ironopolis folded. This left Middlesbrough the remaining senior

club, in the town but rather than replace Ironopolis in the professional ranks, it had already reverted back to amateur status.

Much of the rhetoric and debate over the split revolved around the virtues of amateurism against the allegedly morally degrading effects of professionalism and commercialism, which reflected contemporary and competing sporting ideologies.² However, these debates were never straightforward nor can they be crudely divided along class lines. In the case of Middlesbrough, while the rhetoric of amateurism was strongly evoked, pragmatism and the desire for survival were the crucial and overriding factors in shaping the direction of the town's two main football clubs.

The brief life of Middlesbrough Ironopolis provides insights into this amateur-professional debate and can also act as a lens into both the town's sporting culture and the nature of class relations in late Victorian Britain. Moreover, the split in Middlesbrough football highlights the importance of leisure to the town's population. As Jeff Hill has argued, sport and leisure have had 'a determining influence over people's lives'. In this sense, leisure is political and not something that simply reflects social change. Instead, Hill continues, leisure practices act as cultural agencies 'with a power to work on their participants and consumers ideologically'.³ The debates, rhetoric and actual events surrounding this episode, therefore, reflect not only the importance the town's – mainly male – population attached to its leisure time, but also how the populace shaped it.

A case study of Middlesbrough Ironopolis, therefore, can reveal the diversity of working-class culture 'in the face of standardising pressures' and allow for an investigation of the effects of leisure on different communities and classes and demonstrate the 'staggered rhythm' of continuity and change.⁴ As Beaven has shown with Coventry, efforts at rational recreation contrasted sharply with the growth of mass commercial leisure. He argues that working men showed 'a remarkable propensity to manipulate the entertainment offered to coincide with their own cultural preferences'.⁵ This type of agency, whereby the working classes were able to shape their own leisure practices, was important in the rise of professional football in Middlesbrough.⁶

Middlesbrough's Early Sporting Culture

Although football came to be the town's dominant sport amongst the working classes this had not been inevitable, and its rise needs to be seen in light of the town's changing social and economic environment. Huggins has provided a useful three stage chronological framework for the history of sport and leisure in Middlesbrough between 1830 and 1914, which is linked to shifting notions and attitudes towards respectable and non-respectable leisure.⁷ The first period between 1830 and 1860 covers the 'turbulent urban frontier'. During this time the town's leading citizens – the Owners of the Middlesbrough Estate, the ironmasters and other industrialists – exercised substantial paternalistic power in shaping both working- and middle-class leisure. During the second period of 1860-c.1874, an economic boom and a rapid growth in population saw an expansion of commercial leisure activity as well as respectable middle-class leisure forms, including sport. Moreover, the previous paternalism of the élite declined as a growing middle class became more active in shaping the town's leisure culture. In the final period, 1874-1914, cyclical depression marked the town's economic fortunes. As a consequence, there was an increase in the provision and importance of commercial leisure because the insecurity of social life placed an emphasis on short-term immediate excitement. Huggins has noted that this transition was never straightforward and that while 'some sports worked hard to maintain a respectable, amateur, middle-class ethos, others embraced professionalism'. The split in Middlesbrough football club, therefore, can be located not only within this period, but also within this tension between a desire of those to maintain an amateur ethos and a growing commercial imperative within Middlesbrough leisure that was linked to this wider social and economic change.

Initially, Middlesbrough's middle-class had dominated the sporting scene both as administrators and participants. Despite the exponential growth in its population, the town's middle class remained relatively small

during this period with the vast majority of the workforce employed in primary and manufacturing industries.⁸ However, there was a growth in variety of occupations and professions up to 1914. In particular, a 'shopocracy' emerged, made up of an aspiring lower middle class, which had a growing influence on the local political scene and in local sports clubs.

Sport itself became an important part of Victorian civic culture. Initially, across the Victorian urban landscape, along with civic architecture, there had been a proliferation of societies and institutes that formed the basis for middle-class political, social and cultural networks.⁹ Amateurism was another important feature of middle-class identity. Holt states that amateurism comprised a set of distinctive sporting practices and values, emphasising 'voluntary association, active and ethical participation, and repudiating both professionalism and gambling.'¹⁰ But amateurism was also based on the tenets of social distinction and exclusion – namely from the working classes – and was reflected in the nature of Middlesbrough's early sporting culture. Amateur sport gave Middlesbrough's bourgeoisie another means of differentiating themselves from the overwhelming working-class populace. As a consequence, an amateur ethos initially predominated as the town's working classes were largely excluded from amateur sports and many of the club officials, especially presidents and vice-presidents, came from the town's élite. The birth of Middlesbrough Football Club in 1876, therefore, can be seen in this social context.

Early Football on Teesside, 1876-88

Following the formation of Middlesbrough FC, between 1877 and 1881, the number of football clubs on Teesside increased from 9 to 35.¹¹ In terms of the future direction of football in the town it was perhaps important that Middlesbrough FC joined the Sheffield Association in 1879 as it ensured that they would play under association rules rather than the rugby code.¹² Football clubs were not businesses but subscriber democracies and

part of the amateur-voluntary tradition.¹³ Early players in Middlesbrough were predominantly young, unmarried, recently arrived and mostly drawn from the professions and commercial middle classes.¹⁴

The early middle-class, amateur nature of football in the town was reflected in the establishment of the Cleveland Association in 1881. Alderman Dunning, its first chairman, not only sought to promote the virtues of rational recreation but he was also a long-standing member of the temperance movement.¹⁵ In 1887, further highlighting its élitist pretensions, the Earl of Zetland was chosen as the Association's honorary president while two years later the president and one of its vice-presidents were solicitors, William L. Carrick and Albert Borrie – later the secretary of Middlesbrough FC.¹⁶ In the early 1880s Middlesbrough FC was similarly in the hands of the professional and manufacturing middle classes. The President, Samuel Sadler, was a chemical manufacturer who lived outside the town while the other four officials were from the professions.¹⁷

But, as Huggins has pointed out, the middle-class minority who wished to espouse amateur, respectable values could only do so where there was little working-class spectatorship or where working-class participants could be excluded: this was not the case with association football due to its increasing popularity. Instead, the game entered a new phase where it was predominantly played and watched by the workers. This meant that the club's management was increasingly forced to compromise its amateur sentiments. By 1882 there were 69 clubs on Teesside and after 1886 there was a rapid increase in numbers following the extension of the Saturday half-day holiday.¹⁸ In addition, there had been a dramatic rise in the number of spectators now watching the town's principal team, Middlesbrough FC. In October 1880 an estimated 2,500 spectators had watched the Sheffield Association Challenge Cup tie between Middlesbrough and nearby Redcar. A rivalry between the two emerged not only stimulating public interest through the growing column inches in the local press on their matches but also indicating for the first time a growing working-class presence in Teesside football.

Because of the rapid growth in numbers watching Middlesbrough, the club was forced to move its games from a local park to the grounds of the cricket club on Linthorpe Road. Significantly, as a prelude to commercialism it began to charge an entrance fee.¹⁹ As local rivalries developed, clubs chased success i.e. 'pot hunting'. They sought better players who increasingly came from working-class backgrounds. The emergence of spectatorism was at odds with the prevailing amateur ethos amongst those governing the game in the region. It was the clash of these middle-class values against an increasingly assertive working-class culture which would set the scene over the emergence of professional football in the town.

Furthermore, the legalisation of professionalism by the FA in 1885, and then the formation of the Football League three years later, ushered in a more competitive and commercially-driven approach amongst football clubs. Clubs not only paid players but they also increasingly 'imported' them, especially from Scotland. However, professionalism took time to spread from the Lancashire clubs to other regions, and, as Taylor points out, in many cases it was slowed down by the strength of the amateur ethos among administrators and players, a point that would seem to apply to Middlesbrough.²⁰

Professional-Amateur Tensions in Middlesbrough Football

In order to gauge the debates and tensions over professionalism from both sides a brief survey of the local newspapers – using columnists and readers' letters – has been conducted. Newspaper columnists at this time provided an overwhelmingly middle-class perspective on events. By contrast, working-class attitudes in general have been more difficult to uncover due to a lack of these sources.²¹ However, letters to the newspapers – which had grown enormously since the abolition of stamp duty – did act as an organ for the working class to increasingly shape political debate and discourse, especially at the local level. The coverage of sport was also

increasingly important to newspapers, with the press constructing reality as much as reflecting it.

i. Newspaper Columnists

By the start of the 1888 season opposition to professionalism in Middlesbrough football was being marshalled in the local press. Newspaper columnists, in particular, mixed a defence of amateurism with a growing feeling of inevitability on the coming of professionalism and its perils. There was a sense that if Middlesbrough did not start to pay players, who were now mainly working-class, the club would lose its pre-eminence in the region. The *Northern Review* columnist, 'Rambler', for example, was actually a member of Middlesbrough FC. In September he bemoaned that,

It is no use disguising the fact that the clubs who are attempting to exist on purely amateur lines are seriously handicapped by the importing clubs. I do not want to see the day when the clubs in this district seek assistance from professional ranks, but I can't help seeing that the current is turning in that direction. Will the amateurism of Middlesbrough, Stockton and Darlington stand constant beating by Sunderland, Newcastle East End, West End, and other local clubs?²²

By contrast, a month later 'The Tout', also writing in the *Northern Review*, was still vociferous in his distaste for imported professionals, stating that he would 'rather see the [Middlesbrough] club at the bottom of the list than win matches with the aid of foreigners, who have no sympathy with us as a club; who play for their pecuniary benefit'. However, he also called for the rules to be altered to allow a player to be refunded for loss of earnings whilst playing in a match – the issue that would eventually split rugby into two codes in 1895. He reasoned that this had not been carried out already because 'many of our football legislators are gentlemen, or

employed in offices, therefore have never a day's pay stopped', and were unable to sympathise with footballers.²³ When it was reported in 1888 that South Bank FC had become the first club in Cleveland to register a professional player, 'Rambler' reflected that, 'I feel sorry it should have been found necessary'. The writer was quick to state that the player would in fact not receive any remuneration and had already asked to be reinstated as an amateur.²⁴

Nevertheless, there was a growing sense of inevitability and reality that if Middlesbrough FC was to maintain its position in the North East football pecking order some form of change was required. In early 1889 'Rambler' even suggested that club should begin importing players 'who in return for work at their own trade, will devote Saturday afternoons to football'. But rather contradictorily he pointed out that importation 'savours too much of "pot-hunting" matches to be won by hook or crook', and which would lead to a 'morbid unhealthy desire to win'. However, it was acknowledged that standards of play were slipping and the desire to win so great that it was suggested that the club needed to 'do as our neighbours, and sink for a season the high principles which have previously guided the club' in order to ensure that the supporters did not "fall away like chaff in the hour of humiliation and defeat".²⁵

Opposition to professionalism amongst columnists also reflected wider discourse over working-class leisure, which revolved around commercialisation, drink and the threat of disorder. Under the name 'Referee', one writer demonstrated the strength of feeling amongst those who favoured amateurism. It stated that whilst football was:

a healthy, noble, manly pastime, there were a number of aspects that should be changed, so long as men are paid for being footballers; so long as men are imported from other parts of the country and work found for them... because they are footballers; so long as there is the 'gate'; so long as publicans are groundkeepers [sic]; so long as the headquarters... is at a public house, and the landlord can

offer inducements to win; so long as there is any remuneration for playing football... so long as these palpable evils are permitted to associate themselves with football, so long will many people... condemn football and everybody associated with it.²⁶

ii. Readers' Letters

While the professional-amateur debate provided a sub-text, the opinions of contributors to the letters' section of local newspapers offered a contrast to those of the columnists. Here the focus was mainly on the quality of football played and the price of admission, indicating not only the shift towards commercial leisure practices but also its growing importance in working-class culture. While the fortunes of Middlesbrough FC might be considered politics with a small 'p', its importance – as Beaven and Mason have argued – should not be underestimated because of the importance working men attached to their leisure time.

One letter, from John Wilkinson and his 'fellow workmen', complained that Middlesbrough were the only club in the area that charged 6d for 'ordinary' matches, and the 'third-rate football... [that] juniors would be ashamed of' was not worth such a steep fee.²⁷ Another letter agreed that it was 'a shame to ask working men who are not members of the club to pay 6d', and suggested that either prices should be lowered, or standards of play increased. The author of this letter was not opposed to importation:

Now that the game is so much thought of here, and right well patronised, if we cannot depend upon native talent, then by all means let us have some of these stray Scotchmen who can be picked up so easily by our neighbours. Has the noble game, now that it has got such a hold on the public, to die out, and have we to dwindle into a fourth rate club after all our grand achievements? In conjunction with hundreds of others, I say no.²⁸

Another letter to the *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* reminded the Middlesbrough FC committee that as ‘caterers for the public amusement’, they had a ‘duty to perform to the outsiders who contribute so largely to the financial success of the club’ rather than thinking solely of the ‘privileges and comforts of the members’.²⁹ The final comment was perhaps instructive in that rather than a defence of amateurism it indicated that the main reason for the resistance of the members to turning professional was that they would lose control of the club. Yet these debates further reflected not only the growing popularity of the game amongst the working classes but also how they increasingly appropriated football through their growing ‘voice’ and the public pressure they could now assert on the club’s hierarchy.

A letter from ‘A Working Man’ in the *Northern Echo* ironically invoked amateur values regarding health and masculinity in supporting the club turning professional. He argued that ‘witnessing a struggle between teams worthy of each other, and who play to win, excites in the breast healthy, manly, and altogether refreshing feelings and affords an enjoyment that in this dull, weary, work-a-day time I could ill afford to lose’.³⁰

Middlesbrough Football Club’s Great Split

Tensions between the two opposing elements eventually came to a head at the club’s AGM in April 1889. Reflecting what Savage and Miles have identified as ‘the politics of everyday life’, 700 people attended to discuss a proposal to introduce the payment and importation of players.³¹ The proposal was defeated, however, and the club remained amateur. One member, a Mr Kedward, who was resistant to change, had argued that the importation of players would mean the club ‘would at once lose their good name as gentlemanly players, for if they paid a man to win he would win at no matter what cost’.³² His views and the thwarting of the proposal continued to find support in local papers. The *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette* argued that importations and payment would have led to the replacement of gentlemanly play with brute force and that ‘the large

body of ladies who weekly take up their position on the grandstand and round the ropes would... leave the field in disgust'.³³ However, a split was still recognized as a possibility. The *Northern Review* posed the question, 'Will the professionalists form a new club on their lines, or continue to endeavour to filch the Linthorpe Road Ground?'³⁴

Indeed the issue was not going away and matters on the pitch began to dictate those off it. In September 1889 Middlesbrough lost to Newcastle East End, following a performance which drew much press criticism. It became clear that the club's predominantly working-class players had effectively gone on strike during the game as a few days later it transpired they had sent a petition to the committee requesting that they be paid for playing. The club had rejected their proposals.

Local newspapers were full of contempt for the players' petition. The *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette* thought that it would have been better if the players 'who think they have risen to such a standard ... as to deserve recompense', had left the club when professionalism had been rejected at the AGM. Instead, these 'willful schoolboys' had conspired to deliberately lose the game at Newcastle.³⁵ This was familiar anti-professionalism rhetoric. However, the reaction was not unanimous. The *Athletic News* – the effective mouthpiece of the professional Football League – pointed out that that 'dissension has been rife amongst their supporters as to the advisability of strengthening their team with professional help'.³⁶ For the supporters, therefore, the issue was not so much about the professional-amateur divide, as about watching a winning team they supported and one which provided good entertainment. In October 1889 a further meeting attended by 1,800 people, split the club's membership in two and within a week a professional club had been formed, Middlesbrough Ironopolis Football Company Limited.

The formation of Middlesbrough Ironopolis FC

The formation of Ironopolis highlighted the expanding role of commercial leisure in the town and, as Collins has argued, in Victorian society more

widely.³⁷ Moreover, it not only reflected the increasing spending power of the working classes but also their role in shaping the nature of leisure in Middlesbrough. Ironopolis was constituted as a limited liability company, Middlesbrough Ironopolis Football Company Limited in November 1889 and there was a distinct difference between the social make-up of the new club's board of directors and that of the officials of the old club. Whereas Middlesbrough FC's officials were predominantly from the town's professional middle classes, Ironopolis' directors were more representative of both the town's lower middle classes and its large working-class population.³⁸ It was an example of what Asa Briggs has described as 'intermediate social classes' who came into greater prominence in the running of the town; the most prominent of whom were local shopkeepers. This 'shopocracy' not only had an increasing influence on local politics but played an increasingly important role as officials of sports clubs.³⁹ The split in Middlesbrough FC should not be looked at purely in terms of differences between middle-class and working-class elements; it was also a conflict within the middle class.

Despite their amateur pretensions, Middlesbrough FC's response to the formation of Ironopolis was to turn professional themselves. However, the main explanation for this conversion was one of pragmatism: if they didn't turn professional the club would have gone out of existence. In this sense, it could be argued, amateurism had been only a veneer, a way for its officials to maintain their control of the club. As a consequence, there followed five years where two professional clubs competed for the patronage of the town's football supporters.

Because of the growing financial risks involved with running a professional club, Middlesbrough FC's officials had been forced to convert it into a limited liability company – Middlesbrough Football & Athletic Club Company Limited – in May 1892. A board of twelve directors was appointed and changed the social composition of the club's management. Tellingly, only four had previous involvement in the club. Whereas the professional middle classes had previously dominated the club's

management, the majority of directors were now from the lower-middle classes and included a number of shopkeepers as with Ironopolis.⁴⁰

Both clubs initially drew sizeable crowds and for matches between the two the attendance topped 10,000. The first game between them drew a crowd of 12,000 in April 1890 for the Cleveland Charity Cup Final. For their first Northern League match there was a crowd of around 10,000-12,000 at Middlesbrough's ground. In 1889 the local *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette* eagerly stated that:

Already the spirit of rivalry is taking hold of the football community, and matters promise to be exceedingly lively during the remainder of the season. One thing is certain, the supporters of the game in the town will be treated to a much superior exhibition than has been the case for the past two seasons.⁴¹

Interestingly, it seems that the rivalry between the two teams was relatively benign and difficult to derive any meanings. Geography seems to have been a negligible factor as the clubs' grounds were less than half a mile apart. Both were capable of attracting sizeable crowds many of whom probably just wanted to watch entertaining football and did not necessarily associate themselves with one team or the other.

The introduction of professional football in Middlesbrough was a recognition of working-class tastes. After the clubs' first match it was commented that there was now 'a general alertness and go-ahead spirit in catering for public patronage' as well as a 'manifestly improved standard in play 'for the delectation of the ... public'.⁴² Seeming to confirm this, an editorial in the *South Durham & Cleveland Mercury* stated that the popularity of the game was evidence that for 'the majority of people attendance at football matches is not a practice in need of defence'. The public demand for professionalism could not be denied, as spectators 'grow more and more connoisseurs in the niceties of the play, and more and more exacting in their expectations from the players'. It followed

that the game's 'highest exponents must be provided for by the proceeds of the game itself'.⁴³ The Athletic News suggested that the formation of Ironopolis had forced Middlesbrough to improve their own team, stopping their inexorable decline, whilst the *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette* had to concede that 'the game is taking a deeper hold of the public than ever, and it will be many seasons before our popular winter game begins to show any signs of being on the wane'.⁴⁴

There were still some opponents of professionalism who wished for a return of amateurism. Despite repeated calls throughout the year for improvements to the team, an editorial in the *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette* now argued instead that:

professionalism had turned football into a mere medium of speculation... a rivalry between town and town, in which the one competes with the other, not in the prowess of its own sons, but in financial resources which enable it to hire paid champions from without. It is difficult, however, for an individual club to resist the widespread professional tendency... professionalism degrades every form of sport which it touches, and renders it a potent power for evil.⁴⁵

Despite the high profile of these dissidents, however, they were increasingly marginalised in the light of the game's popularity in the town.

The End of the Professional Football in Middlesbrough

Initially, both clubs had done well and doubts as to whether the town could sustain two professional clubs seem to have been unfounded. But in the long run it did not make economic sense, particularly in light of the town's periodic trade depressions, and there were attempts to amalgamate in 1890 and 1892, reflecting how pragmatism was at the heart of the management of both clubs. On the second occasion, however, Middlesbrough had

pulled out of the talks because it refused to back an application to join the Football League.

In 1893 Middlesbrough reverted back to amateurism, mainly because it could no longer afford to pay players. By contrast, also in 1893, Ironopolis joined the Second Division of the Football League but its first home match against Liverpool only attracted 2,000 spectators. Because of the now low crowds, the increased costs of travelling to away matches and players' wages, the club was unable to sustain itself financially. Ironopolis played its final game in April 1894 before it was liquidated.

There was an outpouring of *schadenfreude* amongst some of those who were pleased about the demise of professionalism and Middlesbrough's reversion to amateurism. For example, when Middlesbrough were presented with the Cleveland Charity Cup in 1893 by shipbuilder Waynman Dixon, he remarked that their return to amateurism was 'a great satisfaction to many of the old supporters'. He stated that when professionalism encroached on sport 'it tended to lower it', and it was no longer 'pursued for those health-giving and ennobling qualities which they desire to see'.⁴⁶ But these decisions had been based purely on economic reasons. Rather than the triumph of the amateur ethos, the demise of professional football in Middlesbrough was an example of the failure of a commercial leisure venture.

Conclusion

In 1899, after winning the FA Amateur Cup on two occasions and also the Northern League twice, Middlesbrough FC once again turned professional and this time joined the Football League. There was little resistance on this occasion to the club's decision. Professional football was now both well-established as the game of the masses across the nation and as an industry in its own right. In the light of the popularity of football amongst the working classes it should be remembered that initially football in Middlesbrough was very much like any other sport in the town: it was

dominated by a self-selecting amateur, middle-class élite who, in general, sought to exclude the working classes from their leisure activities. There was no sense when Middlesbrough Football Club was established in 1876 that it would become part of a mass, sporting phenomenon.

However, the game in the town swiftly transformed itself into the sport of choice for Middlesbrough's predominantly working-class population who now had more money and time to spend. Thus this article, through an analysis of the split in Middlesbrough FC, not only provides a lens through which to focus on wider debates over professionalism and amateurism, but also gives an insight into the changing nature of social relations at this time. First, the working classes were becoming more assertive, class tensions spilled over into the arena of leisure. Second, the split was not a simple middle-class/ working-class divide, as the middle classes were never a monolithic group and were part of both sides of the argument. Ultimately, however, the conversion to professionalism was borne out of pragmatism. In order for football in Middlesbrough to survive and prosper, in light of developments in the game, many realised that better players were required who would provide an entertaining brand of football that would satisfy the demands of the supporters.

References

- ¹ *Northern Echo*, 4th May 1894.
- ² For debates over amateurism in British sport, see Holt, Richard, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989; Mason, Tony, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980, chapter 3; Porter, Dilwyn, 'Revenge of the Crouch End Vampires: The AFA, the FA and English Football's "Great Split", 1907-14', *Sport in History*, 26, 3 (December 2006), pp. 406-28; Collins, Tony, *Rugby's Great Split: Class, culture and the origins of rugby league football*, London, Frank Cass, 1998.
- ³ Hill, Jeffrey, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 2.
- ⁴ Bailey, Peter, 'The Politics and Poetics of Modern British Leisure', *Rethinking History*, vol. 3 (2) (1999), pp. 146-7, 154.
- ⁵ Beaven, Brad, *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945*,

- Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 39.
- 6 Of course, the working classes were never a monolithic group. See Davies, Andrew, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-class culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1992.
- 7 Huggins, Mike, 'Leisure and Sport in Middlesbrough 1840-1914' in A. J. Pollard (ed.), *Middlesbrough: Town and Community*, Stroud, Sutton, 1996, pp. 128-9.
- 8 Yasumoto, M., *The Rise of a Victorian Ironopolis: Middlesbrough and Regional Industrialization*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2011, p. 195.
- 9 McKibbin, Ross, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 84-90; Stobart, John, 'Building an urban identity. Cultural space and civic boosterism in a "new" industrial town: Burslem 1761-1911', *Social History*, 29, 4 (2004), pp. 485-98; Kidd, Alan and Nicholls, David (eds), *British Middle Class?: Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800-1940*, Stroud, Sutton, 1999.
- 10 Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 98-101.
- 11 Huggins, Mike, 'The Spread of Association Football in North East England 1876-90: The pattern of diffusion', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 6, 3 (1989), p. 301.
- 12 For a wider discussion on the origins of modern football – association and rugby – see Collins, *Rugby's Great Split*; Harvey, Adrian, *Football: The First Hundred Years: The Untold Story*, London, Routledge, 2005; Taylor, Matthew, *The Association Game: A History of British Football*, London, Pearson, 2008, chapter 1.
- 13 Carter, Neil, *The Football Manager: A History*, London, Routledge, 2006, chapter 1.
- 14 Huggins, 'Leisure and Sport', p. 136
- 15 Bartley, C., 'The evolution of a football culture in Cleveland' (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Teesside, 2007).
- 16 1891 census; *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 6 May 1887; *Northern Echo*, 29 May 1889.
- 17 *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 13 September 1881.
- 18 Huggins, 'Leisure and Sport', pp. 136-7.
- 19 *North Star*, 21 January 1884; *Weekly Gazette*, 5 May 1883.
- 20 Taylor, *Association Game*, p. 64.
- 21 See Rose, Jonathan, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale, Yale University Press, 2010, pp. 1-11.
- 22 *Northern Review*, 8th September 1888.
- 23 *Northern Review*, 20th October 1888.
- 24 *Northern Review*, 8th December 1888.
- 25 *Northern Review*, 2nd, 9th February 1889.
- 26 *Northern Echo*, 25th March 1889.
- 27 *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 31st January 1889.
- 28 *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 2nd February 1889.
- 29 *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 13th February 1889.

- 30 *Northern Echo*, 25 March 1889.
- 31 Savage, Mike and Andrew Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-*
1940, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 19.
- 32 *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette*, 18th May 1889; *Northern Echo*, 15th May 1889;
Northern Review, 18th May 1889.
- 33 *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette*, 18th May 1889.
- 34 *Northern Review*, 18 May 1889.
- 35 *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette*, 5th October 1889.
- 36 *Athletic News*, 7th, 14th October 1889.
- 37 Collins, Tony, *Sport in Capitalist Society: A Short History* (London, Routledge, 2013),
chapter 6.
- 38 Budd, Catherine, 'The Growth of an Urban Sporting Culture – Middlesbrough,
c.1870-1914', Unpublished PhD, De Montfort University, 2012, Table 2.2, p. 118.
- 39 Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 258.
- 40 1891 Census; *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 14 June 1892.
- 41 *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette*, 30 November 1889.
- 42 *Athletic News*, 10 November 1890.
- 43 *South Durham & Cleveland Mercury*, 30 November 1889.
- 44 *Athletic News*, 20 January 1889; *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette*, 4 January 1889.
- 45 *North-Eastern Weekly Gazette*, 14 December 1889.
- 46 *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* 23 April 1894.

INTERPRETING PHOTOGRAPHS

Peter Brabban

For the historian photographs are a valuable primary source but are more often than not only used as illustrations to the printed word. Yet photographs can offer insights into the background to the scenes being pictured and even into what authors call 'the human condition'. By deconstructing a photograph and placing it in its historic perspective one can get a lot more from a photograph than a listing of what is included in the image. I will try to do this by deconstructing two of my own photographs (avoiding copyright issues) to show the 'back story' and the history behind them.



Old man on the Redheugh Bridge, Newcastle, Sunday afternoon, August 1966

The caption above gives the viewer the basic information needed to place the picture, it provides the main subject, the place where it was taken and when it was taken. What it doesn't do is tell us what it is about, this can only be done by interpreting the photograph.

My perception, as the eighteen-year-old author of the picture, is that it is about the experience of being old in a decade obsessed with youth; in a world that is changing rapidly all around him. It focuses in on the loneliness of old age. In visual terms the clues are all there. The image of the old man is quite small in a big landscape, a landscape which is devoid of any other human figure. He is killing time staring at the broken cars in the Potters Lane breakers yards. The experience of 'killing time' for old men was quite common in Newcastle at the time (1966); I have another three photographs showing the same. Old men could be found wandering around the city, especially on Sundays when most indoor locations would be closed. He is situated in a landscape which is primarily of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries with large warehouses and Victorian engineering, yet on the horizon we see three tower blocks showing us the changing face of the city, which in time will gobble up the buildings pictured.

How does the photograph help us to understand the history of the period? The 1960's was a decade that was relentlessly focused on the young, yet every report on poverty in Britain at this time reiterated that the most 'at risk' group was the elderly. A Help the Aged report towards the end of the decade informed readers that "some 350,000 (elderly people) nationwide lived without a bathroom, a kitchen or an indoor toilet: 2 million had access to an outdoor toilet only; 1.5 million lived on their own; and 300,000 were in urgent need of flats with some sort of supervision".

The issue of 'killing time' was taken up by journalist Jack Shaw in his book 'On Our Conscience: the Plight of the Elderly' published in 1971. Shaw's colleague Danny Gallagher spent two weeks living with a 73-year-old pensioner, Mr C. in his two-up- two-down Victorian terrace house.

He described how Mr C.s 'life was a series of long uneventful days'; how he spent much of his time lost in thought, sitting in front of the gas fire or stretched out on his bed for hours on end just staring at the ceiling, stating that 'his eyes were focused there, but his thoughts were not'. He concluded that every day was the same, 'so uneventful that it seemed interminable. Nothing happened, and it happened all the time'.



Old and new residents of Islington, Spring 1971

What at first glance is no more than an innocuous street scene takes on a deeper significance in the context of the time and place: where the photograph was taken and in the subjects pictured. The street itself is a fine Georgian terrace bathed in spring sunshine. The cars parked in the street are expensive and appealing to young affluent drivers. But, it is the people in the picture that tell the story. The four women on the left have been interrupted during a chat on the doorstep, something which is integral to their culture. While the woman on the right is spending the day alone with her child. Other differences are more obvious; the

different fashions and hairstyles of the women define their lifestyles. Even the pram tells its own story; it is a folding pram designed to go into the back of a car and very different from the grand baby carriages of the past. The bunch of flowers attached to the pram tells us something about the domestic arrangements of the mother. In short the photograph shows us a young middle class mother passing a group of working class women.

But, why is this significant? Again we go back to time and place. Islington in 1971 was in the early throws of gentrification that would lead to more and more young middle class families buying property in the area and driving out the working class families who had lived there for generations. This was a reversal of the trend that had seen Islington populated by working people driven from Inner London by developments in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the mid-twentieth century, it was largely run-down and a byword for urban poverty. From the 1960s, the remaining Georgian terraces were rediscovered by middle-class families. Many of the houses were rehabilitated, and the area became newly fashionable. Among the new residents were a number of figures who became central in New Labour, including Tony Blair before his victory in the 1997 general election. According to *The Guardian*, “Islington is widely regarded as the spiritual home of Britain’s left-wing intelligentsia.” The Granita Pact between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair is said to have been made at a now defunct restaurant on Upper Street, not very far from where the photograph was taken. Seen in this light the photograph can be regarded as picturing the social revolution that saw the rise of the ‘urban middle class’.

THE CONCEPT OF THE MORAL ECONOMY IN MINING COMMUNITIES OF THE NORTH EAST IN THE 1830s AND 1840s

Aidan Harper

Introduction

The survival of the moral economy among North East pitmen in the 1830s and 40s, when employers and politicians were adopting the ideas of political economy, has been largely overlooked in the histories of mining communities. Using evidence from contemporary folk songs, this article seeks to demonstrate how the moral economy still performed a vital societal role in those communities well after its economic role had become redundant.

Thompson described the moral economy as that which defined 'what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing', and considers that by 1815 'all that was left of it was charity – and Speenhamland'¹. Randall and Charlesworth remarked that 'there was no bi-polar split between a world run on moral economic lines and one based upon the new political economy'². Colls, whose studies focus specifically on North East pit life and are perhaps the most comprehensive accounts of how society functioned within the coalfield³, claims that the 1790s to the 1850s were years of contestation for the control of 'social change' for the pitmen, suggesting that the remains of an older form of society remained.⁴ Social change resulted from the great expansion of coalmining during

this period which created new communities and extended existing ones. However, even Colls fails to pay due consideration to the influence of the moral economy on these communities.

This article will argue that although the ideas of political economy defined the economic structure of the coalfield, the remnants of a moral economy still played a hugely important role in the everyday lives of colliers. Because the skilled elements of the work force tended to be recruited from existing but declining mining areas, they retained and transmitted an *expectation* of certain societal obligations, including a duty on the part of coal-owners to provide an adequate quality of life for their workers. These expectations provided the lenses through which the experienced miner viewed the world, defining his self-image and his perceived place in society. Much of the evidence for these perceptions is taken from contemporary folk songs and ballads, which Lloyd considers to contain 'some of the deepest remnants of folklore' and 'may show the mettle of a community clearer than a shelf of history books'⁵.

Mining underwent wild fluctuations in wage levels as demand for labour alternated with overproduction. This was reflected in the yearly renegotiation of the contract of hire for skilled men known as the 'bond', a legal document of productive, as well as social relations.⁶ The bond stipulated how much a pitman could earn: the contracted rates of payment for coal extracted; rates of fines for absence or unsatisfactory work; and various allowances and extras inserted by negotiated custom.⁷ Increasingly, it also contained provision of basic housing. Historians have found difficulty in assessing the 'take home pay' of pitmen over this period, since it was linked both to productivity and status within the workforce. Mitchell says there were definite cuts in 1832, followed by a pattern of 'widely fluctuating wage rates', whilst Church's research suggested that monetary earnings of pitmen were consistently below subsistence levels from 1830 to around 1847.⁸

The social characteristics of the pitman's universe were intrinsically linked with the coal-pit, the economic hub of a mining community.

Indeed, for Beynon and Austrin 'the mine and the village were spatially coterminous'⁹. The mine was the centre of the community, and the bond defined the miner's position within the mine. The negotiation of the bond was, therefore, more than merely economic; it was inherently social, creating tensions every spring between employer representatives and workers until the binding was completed. The deteriorating conditions imposed by the bond until 1844 were seen by Hair as a 'steady assault on the pitmen's privileges and standard of living'¹⁰ and perceived injustices led to resistance. The creation of the United Colliers in 1825, Hepburn's Union in 1831-2 and the National Miners' Union in 1844 are examples of an emerging culture of solidarity in the face of what were deemed unjust and illegitimate stipulations enshrined within the terms of the bond.¹¹ The 1844 strike was directly attributable to the owners' ultimately successful attempt to introduce a monthly, rather than a yearly bond, thereby robbing the miners of the minimal security of employment of the traditional binding process as labour could now be hired and fired according to market fluctuations.¹² . The simultaneous blacklisting of known union members forced official unionism underground for a decade, but it was the experiences of the two strikes which evoked much of the folksong and balladry providing the evidence of miners' attitudes and aspirations during this period.¹³

For Marx, the mining industry was 'distinguished from others by the exceptional characteristic that the interests of the landlord and capitalist there join hands'¹⁴. The bond represented a 'pre-capitalist practice' related to domestic service, limiting the free market for labour by tying miners to coal-owners for the bond's duration and thereby limiting the coal-owners' ability to hire according to market fluctuations.¹⁵ However, the lowering of wages in order to compete in a market economy, and the move towards a monthly bond, indicate the pervasive effect of the ideas of political economy.¹⁶ This 'blast' of capitalism had dried up the 'old cohesive elements of society', creating a society based on the principles of a political economy in which social and economic decisions were divorced from

their traditional moral foundation and instead based upon the ostensibly objective “science” of economics.¹⁷ However, the material on which this article is based shows that the concept of the moral economy still survived amongst the pitmen and defined their social expectations

The Northern Pitman’s Moral Outlook

To determine whether the moral economy was still a major influence on North East mining communities we must consider what was important to them personally, how they viewed the world and on what basis they judged what was good or bad, fair or unfair, legitimate or illegitimate. We can then attempt to construct their “moral outlook”. And apply it to the society in which they lived.

On the most basic level, pitmen valued their own lives and the lives of those around them, their families and their workmates. For Challinor, coal-owners regarded human life as a ‘cheap commodity, easily expendable’¹⁸. There are several instances of animals or machinery having a higher priority than the life of a miner. The *Advocate*, for instance, reported a case in which a colliery’s manager told a rescue team to leave an injured man and to save the more valuable horse.¹⁹ Miners were regularly made to work on dangerous seams where roof-falls and explosions were likely²⁰, the low value accorded to human life by coal-owners reflecting the pervasive influence of political economy in most large scale industry. The population explosion between 1770 and 1830 meant a surplus army of labour with replacement workers easy to find for resourceful owners.²¹ In an economy increasingly dictated by market forces, the life of an individual pitman could be seen as an expendable commodity. It is here that the pitman’s attempts to re-appropriate the value of his life become significant.

The folksongs and industrial ballads of North East miners attempted to raise the value of their own lives. The fact that they wrote and performed songs about themselves was ‘representative of the richness and strengths’ of the miners as individuals; a recognition of the value of their own lives.²²

The *Pitman's Union* celebrates a miner:

And since that you have won the day, and since you've won my heart
I'll crown you in glory, and for ever take your part.²³

Here, the miner is addressed as an individual, immediately forcing the listener to acknowledge the singularity of the character. Conveyed in heroic terms, the miner is crowned in 'glory' and celebrated in perpetuity, a subversion of the notion of that it is the rich and powerful who should be crowned. This a stark contrast to the complete indifference to the lives of miners discussed previously. But despite this, the celebration of miners' lives was rare. Far more common was the mourning for miners who had been killed. *Explosion* describes the scene after a gas explosion:

the pit has blasted all are dead
now the wifes distracted runs
to seek their husbands and their sons
each mind is; then filld with despair
some wring their hands and tear their hair
the shricks most dreadful is to hear
while some more silent drops the tear²⁴

It is through tragedy that the pitman's life is made pre-eminent. Focussing on the family humanises a tragedy that can easily be desensitised through its common occurrence for, as Engels said, 'such explosions take place, in one mine or another, nearly every day'.²⁵ In the song a highly emotive bond is created between the listener and the deceased, thus rescuing individual tragedies from desensitisation. The songs about explosions do not give the impression of a community shocked into numbness, but reveal a steely determination to remember the importance of those lost and remind the reader, or listener, of the family context in which disasters are experienced.

An important aspect of the pitman's moral outlook was an adherence

to the male breadwinner ideal. The workplace represents the means to support a family and physical strength is important to earn enough to meet the family's needs. The breadwinner ideal, according to Fuchs, was a 'a means for a working-class man to bolster his power and pride, assert his masculinity, and show the community that he could support his family'²⁶. For Clark, working men began 'to incorporate domesticity as a key element in their new respectability'²⁷. This paternal domestic order was also inextricably tied up with sexual power within the home and could justify a culture of wife-beating.²⁸ The rhetoric of the male breadwinner ideal certainly permeates the poetry and songs of the North East coalfield, indicating its centrality to their lives.²⁹ *The Miner's Complaint* is perhaps the best example of this – here the ideal is undermined in the description of a miner who cannot afford to feed his family:

Alas! what will become of me,
What help for wife and family,
When work I cannot get!
Our bread is now become so small,
Our children crying, one and all,
Oh, give a little bit!³⁰

Work is seen here as the key to the miner in fulfilling his role as provider whose wages buy food. The interjection 'Alas!' immediately conveys a sense of grief and desperation, reflecting the deeply personal and highly emotive effect the failure to provide for his family has. Yet the family are only described as mere extensions of the miner, suggesting that the male breadwinner ideal was more an embodiment of social propriety and supporting Clark's conclusion that the breadwinner ideal was about social 'respectability'.³¹ It was a foundation of the miner's identity, defining him as a man and imbuing him feelings of self-worth and social responsibility. It must be pointed out that using the male breadwinner ideal as a form of analysis has an inherent weakness: it excludes women from the debate.

As Thompson points out, it ‘places the most basic human motivations in areas largely occupied by men’.³² However, the preponderance of the ideal of the male breadwinner throughout the miners’ songs and poetry means that we must use it as a defining feature of their identities, albeit with the caveat that it excludes women from the debate.

The moral outlook of many pitmen, particularly union members, was often defined by their Primitive Methodist religious connection.³³ Primitive Methodism flourished in newly established colliery settlements, largely by providing incoming workers from diverse origins with a structure and ethos that encompassed their existing moral values and making them sacrosanct through a highly religious rhetoric.³⁴ One of the most influential ideas associated with the Primitive Methodists was their link with the “jubilee”, which Chase stresses was important for the working-class in the nineteenth-century.³⁵ “Jubilee” was a biblical reference to Leviticus 25 which can be read ‘as a time of social renewal upon principles of justice, communal ownership, liberty and the rights of labour’³⁶. References to “jubilee” can be found in the poetry and songs of the miners, for example, the 1831 *Pitman’s Complaint* says:

We want to have a jubilee,
The slavish pitmen now set free.³⁷

“Jubilee” is associated with the attainment of freedom. The deep religious connotations of the word reflect an ideology strengthened through faith and given deep spiritual significance. The Primitive Methodists clung to the biblical origin of the word, imbuing it with an added religious significance.³⁸ The conscience of being set free from sin, part of the Methodist ‘conversion’ experience, is equated with freedom of pitman from the tyranny of his employer, a convergence of the spiritual and the actuality of everyday life. It represented a physical embodiment of a religious ideology that could be attainable in the real world.

The poems and songs of North East miners are replete with references to the outsiders - blacklegs (strike-breakers)³⁹ - who are brought in to maintain production during strikes. Their recruitment led to eviction for striking miners and their families from homes which should have been part of their contractual bond with employers. The fact that blacklegs were miners like themselves did not offer them the social protection extended to members of their own community. Blacklegs, says Challinor, were regarded as 'the cause of the current calamities' during strikes, and mining communities 'vowed to make them suffer'⁴⁰. This is described in *The First Drest Man*:

And there the Earsdon men did sit,
A drinking on that day.
But what their minds I cannot tell,
When they did see him coming,
The priest he had within his hat,
And hard he then was running⁴¹

In this humorous encounter, the blackleg's 'priest' is a phallic reference. The song is describing a blackleg miner who had an erection through fear and the depiction is one of sexual humiliation, with blacklegs shamed and degraded through the use of sexualised humour. By attacking his manhood the miners placed him outside one of their key moral standpoints: the male breadwinner ideal. In brief, the pitmen's moral outlook was defined by a self-image of the value of their own lives and those of their family and workmates, with the male breadwinner ideal providing a *raison d'être* for their working lives and conferring status within the community.

Deeply personal moral identities were reinforced by Primitive Methodism within communities which tended to sanctify personal attitudes imbued with a sense of righteousness. The concept of "jubilee" suggested a correlation between freedom from sin and freedom from social

and economic oppression. The bringing in of blackleg labour was seen as symptomatic of that oppression demonstrating the failure of the owners to accede to their legitimate requests.

Defence of the Moral Outlook and the Remnants of a Moral Economy

“The Owner of the Pit shall make it good.” (Exodus xxi, 34.)⁴²

Thompson argued that the moral economy defined what were ‘legitimate and what were illegitimate practices’⁴³ and was characterised by ‘a particular equilibrium between paternalist authority and the crowd’⁴⁴. Crucially, he also maintained that it was the ‘triumph of the new ideology of political economy’ which brought about its end.⁴⁵ Such was the triumph of political economy, claimed Stedman Jones, that arguments ‘upon absolute non-interference with market mechanisms, even in virtual famine conditions, [were] interpreted without quibble as an exposition of Smith’s views of the topic’⁴⁶. But for other historians the moral economy, along with a paternalist model based on innate and inherited rights, was still active well into the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Thompson wrote that crowds would claim a ‘legitimacy derived from the paternalist model’ through a concern for ‘local usages and traditional rights’⁴⁸ and an expectation of fulfilment of societal duties on the part of paternalistic figures. There is some linguistic evidence for this claim in the rhetoric employed in North East mining folksong and balladry about innate and inherited rights.

Masters and Servants

Just as the binding could be seen as a form of ‘hiring fair’ so the trope of the master/servant relationship is prominent in the songs and poems of the pitmen, a relationship forming the basis of a paternalistic social order. Beynon and Austrin state that ‘it is important to make clear the significance of paternalism as an ideology’ within the coalfields.⁴⁹ In *The*

Pitmen's Disgust, the beginning of the final stanza says 'Servants we intend to be', indicating that colliers saw themselves as part of a master/servant, paternalistic social order.⁵⁰ *A Copy of Verses* also makes clear the colliers' view of how society should be structured:

But the Servants and masters Soon with joy they Shall sing
The winter is Past: and appear the spring,⁵¹

The relationship between masters and men is conveyed as organic and natural, akin to seasonal transformations. It is portrayed harmoniously through the 'joy' it brings about, something reinforced through the rhyming couplet. More important, however, is the colliers' clear expectation that their masters fulfil their own societal obligations by providing a fair bond, allowing the pitman to fulfil his own role as breadwinner. *The Collier's Complaint* conveys this idea perfectly:

Let our labour be rewarded,
Let us live as men SHOULD live,
Let our sacred rights be guarded,
Grateful thanks ye shall receive.⁵²

The repetition of 'let' reflects the subservient position of the miners in relation to the owners, pleading that owners treat their miners fairly and reflecting a paternalistic structure with power lying with the coal owners. The capitalisation of 'should' demonstrates the absolute importance of the fulfilment of the owners' societal duties. There is a clear expectation here of what Simmell describes as 'the reciprocity of service and return service', which Hobhouse sees as 'the vital principle of society'⁵³. The expectation on the part of the miners of a continuing paternalistic social structure seems to indicate the survival of the concept of moral economy.

Tyrants and Slaves

The trope of slavery runs through the poetry and songs of the era indicating the perception that the coal owners are failing in their societal duties and corrupting the master/servant relationship. The *Advocate* voices this *failure* perfectly with ‘we want to be servants but not slaves’⁵⁴ while the corruption of the harmonious paternal order is clearly conveyed in *The Coal King*:

Away with the king of the bright black coal!
For his feast of joy is spread;
And the revel and song the gay hours prolong
While his slaves are starved and dead!⁵⁵

The coal-owner through greed and his failure to fulfil societal obligations in providing for his workers has turned a master/servant relationship into that of tyrant and slave. The hedonistic lifestyle of the tyrannical ‘Coal King’ is made possible through the suffering of ‘*his*’ miners - an exploitative relationship Gouldner refers to as a ‘reciprocity imbalance’, which created antagonistic feelings amongst miners.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the failure of the coal-owners to fulfil their obligations is hindering the miners’ ability to act as breadwinners. Here the “jubilee” becomes relevant: the freeing of slaves and the return to the order of things as God intended can be applied directly to the colliers’ situation and is made explicit in *The Pitman’s Complaint*:

Thou heard the Israelites of old,
And led them to a blessed fold;
Deliver us from slavery
And set the Sons of Britain free.⁵⁷

The ‘Israelites of old’ and their freedom from slavery are unambiguous references to the biblical jubilee, reflecting a mining culture steeped in the

biblical rhetoric of the Primitive Methodist preacher. The passing of the 1833 Emancipation Act ‘gave labour spokesmen an ideal opportunity to contrast what was done for black slaves with the neglect shown to white slaves’.⁵⁸ The colliers were very aware of the on-going debates around slavery, as demonstrated in *The Miners’ Plea to the Owners* in 1844. These calls for freedom from tyrannical coal-owners are calls for a return to the sanctified order of things – the paternalistic society in which societal obligations are fulfilled. The criticism of a failed paternal role appears to indicate the *expectancy* of the fulfilment of paternal obligations on the part of the coal-owners, thus suggesting that a moral economy at this date still maintained a major influence over the colliers.

A Golden Past

Evidence of the persistence of a concept of a moral economy is also apparent in the constant references to a golden past and a language in which Hearn states ‘meaningful images of the future are created and sustained in the interaction, of past and future...In this interaction, the past is playfully or imaginatively reconstructed, portrayed not as it actually was, but as it ought to have been. Thus the future is anticipated with reference to a past that never was’⁵⁹. Colls agrees, arguing that ‘the pitmen always presented a case of historical deterioration. Their demands could not be unreasonable because they were only the redressers’⁶⁰. During the 1831 strike Revd. Brandling reminded owners that ‘they have endured much hardship for some years’⁶¹, a clear reference to what an Anglican clergyman from a coal owning family perceived as a genuinely deteriorating position in the recent past. In the *Pitman’s Song* a less specific golden past is recreated:

In the days of old, ‘twas glad to behold
Each pitman happy and gay –
No work we refused, we were not “abused,”
And made our money “like hay.”⁶²

Here, a past in which pitmen were 'happy and gay, is juxtaposed with the present as a call to miners to improve their future position. As Hearn says, 'the traditions betrayed in the present must be retrieved in the future'⁶³. Crucially, the imagined past was one of a harmonious paternal order. The reference to the fact they were not 'abused' suggests that they were part of a natural master/servant relationship, an age where all members of society fulfilled their own societal obligations. This is contrasted with a present in which coal-owners have abused their position, taking a relationship based on mutuality and reciprocity and corrupting it to a debased tyrant/slave relationship based on greed and exploitation. The golden past the miners refer to is perceived as the uncorrupted paternalistic order of a moral economy.

The Language of "Rights"

Another theme running through miners' songs and poetry is the language of rights, a crucial element in the concept of a moral economy. Jones, in his analysis of the influence of the moral economy in the Swing Riots of 1830, declares that 'thanks to the continuing strength of the moral economy, labourers across southern and eastern England were able to mount a coherent movement in defence of their "customary rights"'⁶⁴. However, the language of rights has been largely ignored by historians when discussing the mindset of North East miners. Colls fleetingly touches upon the 'people's rights', without expanding on the term's significance in this context.⁶⁵ Claeys discusses the language of rights; from the viewpoint of an artisanal intelligentsia and not from the perspective of the assumed uneducated miner.⁶⁶ It is clear from strike activity that by 1844 political sophistication of miners' leaders had advanced considerably. Yet from much of the song and poetry produced it would seem that the language of rights associated with the rank and file of North East miners remained that of *assumed* rights passed down through tradition and not derived from any deep philosophical or legalistic understanding of the concept. This

language of assumed rights is pervasive in the rhetoric of the colliers well into the 1840s. An article in the *Northern Star* (a Chartist newspaper) urged 'Fellow workers, we earnestly address these few lines to you, hoping that you will boldly come forward and assert your rights and not allow yourself to be trampled on any longer by the greatest tyrants on earth'.⁶⁷ The writer realises that miners will be mobilised by an appeal to traditional rights rather than a political manifesto. The language of assumed rights is repeated throughout the colliers' poetry and songs.⁶⁸ The *Pitman's Complaint* bemoans the rights being taken from the miners:

As lions greedy of their prey,
They take our rights from us away;
To starvation we are driven,
Pale and wan we are ill thriven.⁶⁹

The 'rights' are undefined but imply the right to earn a return on his labour sufficient to sustain life, basic rights are assumed to be inherited.⁷⁰ The theft of them constitutes an offence to the moral economy because they provided the social protection crucial to the miner's ability to function as a human being. By referring to the greed of the owners, the poem suggests that it was their moral corruption which had caused them to upset the correct societal order by taking the rights of their workers away. *Union!* provides an example:

Send your might to break the chain,
And like men your rights maintain⁷¹

It is clear that the inherent rights of the pitman were an essential component in enabling him to fulfil his role as the breadwinner. As such, the language of inherited rights would have been a highly emotive. It encapsulated the pitmen's ideals and placed them within an ancient social order. Assumed rights passed down through tradition positioned the North East pitman

within a social system with rights and obligations on both sides. Songs and poems captured sentiments of betrayal at the hands of coal-owners whose greed removed any social and economic protection and deprived pitmen of their ability to fulfil their roles as breadwinners. The fact that the songs and poetry discuss their rights as part of an old social order suggests that a moral economy still defined the societal expectations of the North East pitmen well into the 1840s, although the prolonged confrontation of the 1844 strike and the reduction of the binding period went a considerable way towards eroding those expectations.

Raising the Status of the Miner in Society

Just as North East pitmen wanted to retrieve their inherent rights, they also wanted to reclaim their former status in the eyes of other members of the working class and society generally. Colls argues that raising the social profile of their profession was a crucial aspect of the pitmen's reason to go on strike: 'it was important for them to retain, or create, a sense of their own legitimacy as 'regular-bred, of unique skill and inherited knowledge'⁷². This derived from the primacy of the North East in the supply of coal to the Metropolis throughout the eighteenth century and gave the producers of this valuable commodity a powerful bargaining counter in disputes and in times of excess demand enabled them to negotiate good terms with their employers. The more recent lowering of status was not merely a reflection of the influence of a political economy, where the sheer numbers available appeared to make miners easily replaceable, but the massive expansion of mining in the first half of the nineteenth century. This made it impossible to maintain the tightly structured system of earlier years, although the miners and possibly some of the owners themselves failed to recognise it. Jaffe argues that 'for capital, the construction of favourable market relations meant a "free" labour market, oligopolistic control of product markets and limited wage bargaining'⁷³. In response, the miners attempted to raise the profile of their profession to strengthen their bargaining position. The

Miners' Advocate said that they wanted to make miners 'a class worthy of being courted in their turn'⁷⁴.

Pitmen attempted to raise their profile by highlighting how beneficial their work was to society and by pointing out the rigorous and highly skilled nature of their trade. This point was emphasised by the major explosion at Haswell colliery widely attributed to the employment of under experienced blackleg labour and the failure of essential maintenance during the 1844 strike:

Tis Ours to produce the Wealth of the Mines
Deep down the dark caverns where light never Shines
Be it ours tis all that we ask in Return
to partake of the bread that in dangers we earn⁷⁵

The miners are shown as having a keen sense of pride in their work and the 'wealth' that they create is set alongside the dangers they faced. Such dangers elevate the miner to heroic status and the risks grew as mining became more technologically adventurous. Linked to this was the increasing emphasis negotiating miners placed on the value of their own lives in the face of the devaluation of their economic and social worth by the followers of political economy. Colls argues that raising the profile of the mining profession was a trade union tactic in which they could 'bargain their unique craft to gain market advantage in times of high demand for labour', however; this is a somewhat one dimensional view.⁷⁶ Raising the status of their profession was also a way in which colliers stressed the importance and relevance of their profession in relation to a certain societal order. *The Collier's Worth* supports this point aptly:

His person and his trade should be
Regarded in a just degree,
And lauded by society,
By every neighbour round.⁷⁷

The wording reflects a motivation quite different from that of trade union bargaining. The word 'should' indicates an obligation on the part of a society that benefits from mining labour to recognise the importance of the collier's skills in the production process. It individualises the pitman in a role that commands the appropriate payment and recognition. Restoration of the miners' work to its "rightful place" as a skilled trade in the eyes of a wider society was also a means to try to force the coal-owners to recognise the validity of miners' grievances and restore the concept of a moral economy to which most of them continued to subscribe.

A key element of Thompson's notion of moral economy was its ability to define 'what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing'.⁷⁸ In the 1790s Burke saw legitimacy as based on tradition, favouring 'any settled scheme of government against any untried scheme'⁷⁹. Everything discussed thus far has been in the context of the confrontations of the 1830s and 1840s and attempts by colliers to legitimise the return to what were perceived as earlier and more mutually satisfactory relationships with their employers. This defence of custom is evident in *Auld Lang Syne*: a song whose Tyneside origins are rarely acknowledged.

Each Man stand true nor quit your post
Ye sons of Wear and Tyne
We,'l yet Enjoy the rights we,'ve lost
Sin days of auld lang syne⁸⁰

'Auld Lang Syne', translated literally as 'Old Long Since', immediately conveys the sense of tradition on which the miners rested their moral legitimacy, referring to a golden past in which miners established their *rightful* place in society. In *A New Song* written half a century later the moral legitimacy of the coal-owner is challenged in overtly religious terms:

If you be A coal owener, sir take my advice
Agree with your men & give them their ful price

For if you do not ah naw very well
You'll be in great danger of going to h—I⁸¹

By the threat of going to 'h—I', the coal-owners were receiving the ultimate moral judgement. However, the miners are referred to as '*your men*', which may still imply some notion of anticipated paternal response on the part of the owners. It could be argued that even at this stage it was *within* the concept of moral economy that the legitimacy of the coal-owners' authority was challenged.

Social and Economic Agency

Colls takes a different approach, with the 'union, relying on firing a *self-dramatisation*, brought together...a popularised version of labour-value theory'. He suggests that the miners saw social and economic agency as lying within their own hands, consequently running counter to the social order as defined by the moral economy.⁸² Indeed, the *Miners' Journal* declared that the function of the *Journal* was meant 'to point out to the Miners their real worth, and to compare their worth with that of their Masters, and to show them that instead of their being dependent on their employers, their employers are dependent on them', clearly propagating the idea that economic agency lay with the miners.⁸³ However, it is arguable that although this may have been the view of the union leaders it was not necessarily a representative viewpoint of all miners. Certainly, in the songs of the northern pitmen, social and economic agency still lay with the coal-owners:

Before the rulers of his Fate,
The Miner humbly stands;
He cheek is wan, his eye is sunk,
Toil-hardened are his hands.⁸⁴

Here the coal-owners are described as the 'rulers' of the pitmen's 'Fate', indicating the absolute power they were perceived to have. Despite being portrayed as humble and hardworking and, therefore, of a morally upstanding character, the collier is here described as physically frail and therefore socially and economically impotent. Colls, on the other hand, tends to discount this sort of evidence which seems to continue to sanction the coal-owners as having the ultimate social and economic agency within society.⁸⁵ Chase, from a rather different perspective, also sees miners as subservient to the coal-owners, stating that 'mine-owners exercised significant control, directly or through their managers or sub-contractors, of many aspects of the miners' lives... This may have made miners wary of overt political activity' and 'it certainly encouraged judicious occasional displays of deference'.⁸⁶ However, Chase fails to attribute this 'deference' to the surviving moral economy.

The examples given thus far have certainly suggested that a moral economy remained in existence into the 1830s and 1840s in the North East. Even in situations where coal-owners had failed to fulfil their perceived societal duties, miners appealed to them in terms defined by the moral economy. However, these appeals fell on deaf ears as the coal-owners having long been convinced of the supposed superior principles of a political economy. The pitmen were in a chronically weak economic position with coal-owners no longer adhering to the social practices their employees still lived by. The *Miner's Magazine* perfectly described the absolute power coal-owners, divorced from their traditional moral basis, could wield: 'the process which is starving a portion of his slaves has no effect at all upon him, save enabling him to get rid of a stock that was fast mouldering away. He calculates rightly, for he has nothing to 'come to' for. He grins again!'⁸⁷ Thus, miners had not learned the 'rules of the game' in regards to capitalism.⁸⁸ They still interpreted the world around them in terms of a *moral*, not a *political* economy.

Labour Value

Miners may have begun to see themselves as socially and economically powerless, but major attempts were made to redefine their fundamental position in the economic system through the idea of labour as the source of all wealth.⁸⁹ Colls interprets this not merely as an attempt to 'reiterate an economic 'truth'', but [as an attempt] to cultivate a cultural climate for social assertion'⁹⁰. For example, the Sunderland Chartist George Binns, preaching to miners about coal-owners in 1843, claimed that 'their grandeur emanates from your industry'⁹¹. Using labour value theory as a source of empowerment became increasingly evident in the 1840s in pitmen's songs and poems:

But altho' our labour brings wealth in profusion,
To our masters that they may in luxury live;
Their sordid minds cling to the phantom delusion
That we are beholden to them what they give.⁹²

Explicitly referring to labour value theory, the poem says it was the pitmen's 'labour' which enabled the coal-owners to live a life of 'luxury'. More importantly, however, the coal-owners are ruthlessly belittled, with the unambiguous assertion that they are 'deluded' about the true source of wealth. This was a form of 'social assertion': the pitmen stating their true identities as producers of the wealth upon which the coal-owners were reliant.⁹³ The colliers' role is now seen as a fundamental part of a working economy.

At first sight the use of the labour value theory would appear to run counter to the continued existence of a moral economy. Colls states that the labour value concept was 'part of political economy', reinterpreted by journalist-economists Thomas Hodgskin and William Thompson in the 1820s and placed within a radical dimension.⁹⁴ Consequently, by referring to their labour as a source of wealth in society using the language

of political economy, miners had ostensibly accepted the reality of a capitalist economy and learned 'the rules of the game' by manipulating their position within it.⁹⁵ But the presence of the concept of labour value does not necessarily imply the total abandonment of a belief in the moral economy. It can be interpreted as increasing the worth of the miner's work *within* a moral economy. This can be seen in *The Miners' Friend*:

But we know our just rights, and we now will maintain them,
Return the great blow they have aim'd at our heads;
With those evils we'll grapple while evils are in them,
Or for principle perish as martyrs have bled.⁹⁶

The suggestion here is that miners, intent on taking back their traditional 'rights', will use force to compel coal-owners to pay a fair wage. Furthermore, it is for 'principle' that the pitmen will confront the 'evils' of the coal owners, a highly moralistic use of language imbuing colliers with a sense of legitimacy in the coercing of coal-owners to fulfil their societal duties. The labour value theory instils miners with a sense of importance and power *within* a moral economy. Furthermore, legitimacy was still derived from tradition; forcing owners to fulfil their societal obligations would correct the social order in accordance with a moral economy. The presence of labour value theory in the miners' rhetoric does not, therefore, negate the belief in a paternalistic social system.

Trade Unionism and the Move towards Political Economy

Many songs and ballads were created in support of trade unions striking to increase wages and improve the working conditions. Trade unions, however, viewed the world through the lens of political economy and opposed the paternalistic system of a moral economy. According to Price, unions actively sought the 'dissolution of the paternal ties' of a moral economy and followed instead the 'new logic of the new system which

implied the bonds between employers and workmen could be reduced to those of pure and simple economics'⁹⁷. Hobsbawm agrees, declaring that the mid-nineteenth century was the era in which skilled workers threw off their non-market attitudes to the economy and instead learned 'the rules of the game'⁹⁸. Jaffe expands on this, stating that unions 'struggled for power in the market, not its abolition'. Consequently, labour was seen as a 'commodity to be sold' within a political economy rather than as a societal role within a moral economy.⁹⁹ This fundamental acceptance of a political economy was commented on by James Mather in 1854: 'the strikes as they have been conducted of late are not like the strikes of former times, but more like capital in deliberation', suggesting that strikes were used as a function of labour in order to improve their economic standing within a political economy.¹⁰⁰ The songs and ballads of North East pitmen were certainly suffused with language in support of the union.¹⁰¹ This can be seen in *The Pitman's Union*:

When unions through the nations made,
Which then for work we shall be paid;
And tyrants too they will be laid
All by the poor men's union.
To put oppression to an end,
And make the tyrants with us bend:
Like Britons all join heart and hand
Within the bonds of union.¹⁰²

This is a complete inversion of the moral economy's paternalistic model, describing a time when the 'tyrants' of the coal-owners will be completely usurped by 'the poor men's union'. There is no pleading to coal-owners, but rather there is an authoritative tone running throughout, as evidenced in the use of the imperatives 'put' and 'make' which place social and economic agency in the hands of the unions. 'Tyrant' is constantly repeated, but not one reference to 'servants' or 'slaves'.¹⁰³ This suggests quite a significant

conceptual shift in how miners interpreted the world. No longer is there a paternalistic social model in which the economic well-being of the pitmen is ultimately dependent on the coal-owners' fulfilment of the societal duties. Instead, their identity as a unified group of labour means that they can demand the wages and working conditions appropriate to their position in the labour market.

Unions constantly tried to promote their cause in the mining communities. Colls states that North East strikes became 'a war in print'¹⁰⁴. Vicinus sees the union's propaganda as an attempt by the union leadership to '[rebuild] the miners' self-confidence' in the union after a series of defeats.¹⁰⁵ The sheer amount of propaganda which saturated the North East coalfield may be taken as demonstrating that miners needed convincing to support the union. In fact, neither appeals to moral economy and paternalistic traditions nor to confrontational union tactics did much to dent the entrenched power of the coal-owners in the two decades, although pro-union poems and ballads did their best to discredit the image of the paternalistic society that underpinned the concept of a moral economy:

Sons of slavery come with me,
Join the bond of unity!
Let us now join heart and hand,
Bring oppression to a stand!
Long have we been servile slaves;
Long been duped by heartless knaves;
But we so on cander free
If we join blest unity!¹⁰⁶

The suggestion here is that freedom will come through 'unity' and overthrowing the 'heartless' coal-owner and by implication eradicating any possibility of a return to a system of moral economy. In their stress on freeing the pitmen from servility the unions are effectively acknowledging

the continued influence of the concept of a moral economy. Vicinus has described the union ballads as 'transitional' works, 'pointing the way to the more individualised pit songs of the later nineteenth century'; and away from the anonymous, 'communal' folk songs which characterised earlier works.¹⁰⁷ However, it was not just the stylistic nature of the songs that was in transition; North East pitmen were also going through a far more important transition, moving away from an interpretation of the world through the lens of a moral economy towards that of a political economy. This is evident in *Song of the Oppressor*:

Look! look! the face of the King grows pale,
His mighty heart begins to quail,
For a voice like the roar of the stormy sea
Bursts on his ears – 'tis liberty!
For sufferings long and sufferings sore
Men's hearts oppressed, they could bear no more.
They are free! and that word o'er the land shall ring
A dirge on the might of the great Coal King.
Oh liberty! 'tis sweet to be
Freed from the Coal King's tyranny!¹⁰⁸

This is the transformative moment in a poem where miners move from a sense of helplessness and despair to an enlightened self-assurance.¹⁰⁹ The 'Coal King' represents the irredeemably corrupted moral economy and his demise signifies the union's victory over the old, tyrannical system. The repetition of the exclaimed 'look!' portrays a moment of enlightenment in which the physical degradation of the paternalistic order is made clear; the realisation of a broken social order that enables the pitmen to begin the process of a conceptual re-imagining of how their social and economic worlds are ordered. Merely by virtue of the fact that they are made aware of the corruption of the traditional paternal social order enables the pitmen to reach a state of 'liberty'. The poem is optimistic and forward looking,

moving away from an outdated social order towards a society in which pitmen can use their combined strength to obtain a fair wage and better working conditions. This viewpoint is that of actors within a *political* economy, but there is also a clear acknowledgment that a moral economy still defined the societal expectations of many miners. This resulted in a rhetoric addressing the paternalistic system of 'tyranny' and tore it down, forcing the colliers to re-imagine their society in terms of a political economy in which they could not just ask for, but *force* the coal-owners to accede to their demands.

Conclusion

This article has shown that Thompson's initial thesis of a moral economy which died out after the Napoleonic Wars needs further re-evaluation.¹¹⁰ It is clear that North East miners retained an expectation of the fulfilment of reciprocal societal duties, which they considered had formed the foundation of a paternalistic moral economy. These societal expectations were evident in the pitmen's poems and ballads which were saturated with the tropes of the paternalistic master/servant relationship and the corrupted tyrant/slave relationship. This desire for a paternalistic social order was framed in the language of a golden past which allowed the miners to conceptualise an idyllic, traditional, and paternalistic past in order to criticise the coal-owners and to move towards a future influenced by those conceptions. The reciprocal societal expectations were also shrouded in the language of assumed and inherited rights, with which the miners tried to assert their rightful position within society and demand a just wage and a safer working environment. This in turn was validated through a Burkean notion of legitimacy which imbued the miners with a sense of moral authority derived from tradition. Furthermore, they tried to emphasise their rightful social position by elevating the status of mining as a profession and accentuating the essential role of the pitmen as part of the moral economy. The self-recognition of the pitman's role was further

underlined through the labour value theory, interpreted as recognition of the pitman's vital role within a moral economy, and attempts to force the coal-owners to recognise that fact. Ultimately, however, the poems and ballads of the pitmen reflect acceptance of the notion that social and economic agency lay with the coal-owners, regardless of whether or not they were fulfilling their paternal role.

The 1830s and 1840s was a transitional period. The trade unions appropriated social and economic agency via their conception of the world around them through the lens of political economy, which enabled them to manipulate their position as unified labour in order to force the coal-owners to accede to their demands, thus inverting the traditional social order. Nevertheless, much union propaganda was aimed at pitmen who still viewed the world through the lens of a moral economy. As such, most of the poems and ballads produced in the later period addressed the issue of a moral economy as an irredeemably corrupt social order. They attempted to enlighten the pitmen to the world of a political economy in which the unions could use their collective strength to establish the colliers' rightful place in society.

References

- ¹ E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50, 1 (1971), (p. 258).
- ² Adrian Randall, and Andrew Charlesworth, 'The moral economy: Riot, Markets and Social Conflict,' in *moral economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority*, ed. by Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-32 (p. 18).
- ³ Robert Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield: Work, Culture, and Protest, 1790-1850*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); and Robert Colls, *The Collier's Rant: Song and Culture in the Industrial Village*, (London: Croom Helm, 1977).
- ⁴ Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 3.
- ⁵ A.L. Lloyd, *Come All Ye Bold Miners: Ballads and Songs of the Coalfields*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1978), p. 13.
- ⁶ Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 45.

- 7 ibid.
- 8 B.R. Mitchell, *Economic Development of the British Coal Industry 1800-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 360; and Roy Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry. Vol. 3, 1830-1913: Victorian Pre-eminence*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), pp. 568, 573.
- 9 Huw Beynon and Terry Austrin, *Masters and Servants: Class and Patronage in the Making of a Labour Organisation: the Durham Miners and the English Political Tradition*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994), p. 58.
- 10 Hair, P.E.H., 'The Binding of the Pitmen of the North-East, 1800-1809', *Durham University Journal*, 27, 3 (1965), 1-13, (p. 12).
- 11 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 302.
- 12 Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 97.
- 13 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 303.
- 14 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, Vol. I*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), p. 501.
- 15 Beynon and Austrin, p. 29.
- 16 Mitchell, *Economic Development of the British Coal Industry*, pp. 568, 573.
- 17 Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 57.
- 18 Raymond Challinor, *The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968), p. 50.
- 19 *Miner's Advocate*, 3 March 1844.
- 20 Challinor, *The Miners' Association*, p. 50.
- 21 Charles Feinstein, 'Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain during and after the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 58, 3 (1998) 625-658 (p. 628); and Marx, p. 798.
- 22 Martha Vicinus, *Broadsides of the Industrial North*, (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1975), p. 15.
- 23 *The Pitman's Union* (1832), cited in: *Songs and Verse of the North-East Pitmen c.1780-1844*, ed. by Dave Harker (Surtees Society CCIV), (Gateshead: Athenæum Press Limited, 1999), pp. 137-138.
- 24 *Explosion* (1844), cited in: Harker, pp. 221-225.
- 25 Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working Class of England*, (London: Panther Books, 1969), p. 203.
- 26 Rachel G. Fuchs, *Gender and poverty in nineteenth-century Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 112.
- 27 Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1995), p. 199.
- 28 Anna Clark, 'Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820', *Representations*, 31 (1990) 47-68, (p. 57).
- 29 Examples include: *A New Song Composed for the Miners' Philanthropic Society* (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 177; *The Pitman's Union*, cited in: Harker, p. 185; *The Miner's Complaint* (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 195; *The Explosion* (1844), cited in: Harker,

p. 221; *The Miner's Doom* (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 286.

The Miner's Complaint (1843), cited in: Harker, pp. 195-197.

Clark, p.

Dorothy Thompson, *Outsiders: Class, Gender, and Nation*, (London: Verso, 1993), p. 35.

Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield* p 146.

ibid., p. 98.

Malcolm Chase, 'From Millennium to Anniversary: The Concept of Jubilee in Late-eighteenth and Nineteenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 129, (1990), pp. 132-147, (p. 133).

ibid.

The Pitman's Complaint (1831), cited in: Harker, p. 127.

Chase, p. 145.

Examples include: *A Dialogue Between Harry Heartless and Peter Pluck*, cited in: Harker, p. 117; *The Coal Owners' Vend and the Miners' Union* (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 231; *The Blacklegs* (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 261; *Song of the Oppressed* (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 271.

Challinor, p. 132.

First Drest Man of Seghill (1832), cited in: Harker, p. 120.

The Bible: Authorized King James Version, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 92.

E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, (London: Merlin Press, 1991), p188.

ibid., p.249

ibid., p. 250.

Gareth Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty? A Historical Debate*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 88-89.

Randall and Charesworth, p. 18.

E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 261, 267.

Beynon and Austrin, p. 26.

The Pitmen's Disgust at the Monthly Bond (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 227.

A Copy of Verses Referring to the Present State of Things (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 285.

The Colliers' Complaint (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 303.

Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, (Glencoe: Free Press, 1950), p. 387; and L.T. Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution: A Study in Comparative Ethics*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1951), p. 12.

Miners' Advocate, 24 August 1844.

The Coal King! (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 211.

Alvin W. Gouldner, 'The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement', *American Sociological Review*, 25, 2 (1960), 161-178 (p. 167).

The Pitman's Complaint (1831), cited in: Harker, p. 123.

Fladeland, Betty, 'Abolitionists and Chartism', in *Slavery and British Society, 1776-*

1846, ed. by James Walvin, London, Macmillan, 1982, pp. 69-99 (p. 76).

Francis Hearn, *Domination, Legitimation, and Resistance: The Incorporation of the Nineteenth-Century English Working Class*, (Westport: Greenwood Press Inc., 1978), p. 13.

Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 89.

Revd R. Brandling, cited in: Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 89.

The Brave Old Oak (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 251.

Hearn, p. 15.

Peter Jones, p. 274.

Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 111.

Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought*, (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989), p. 214.

Northern Star, 31 December 1842.

Examples include: *Grievances of the Pitmen* (1831), cited in: Harker, p. 123; *A Copy of Verses* (1832), cited in: Harker, p. 142; *The Pitmen's Union* (1832), cited in: Harker, p. 143; *State of the Times*, cited in: Harker, p. 159; *Union!* (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 194; *An Address to the Miners of Britain* (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 198; *The Collier's* 44), cited in: Harker, p. 303.

The Pitman's Complaint (1831), cited in: Harker, p. 123.

Gregory Claeys, *Machinery, Money and the Millennium: From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-1860*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 191.

Union! (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 194.

Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 102.

James Jaffe, *The Struggle for Market Power: Industrial Relations in the British Coal Industry, 1800-1840*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 203.

Miners' Advocate, 19 October 1844.

A New Song Composed for the Miners' Philanthropic Society (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 177.

Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p. 102.

The Collier's Worth (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 313.

E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, (London: Merlin Press, 1991), p. 188.

Edmund Burke, quoted in: Carl Joachim Friedrich, *Man and his Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics*, (London: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1963), p.235; and E.J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p. 30.

Auld Lang Syne (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 276.

A New Song (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 294.

Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 124.

Miners' Journal, 4 October 1843.

The Famishing Miner (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 124.

Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 124.

Malcolm Chase, *Early Trade Unionism: Fraternity, skill and the politics of labour*,

(Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000), p. 205.

Miners Magazine, March 1844

James Jaffe, *Striking a Bargain: Work and Industrial Relations in England, 1815-1865*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 250.

Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 117.

ibid., p. 126.

George Binns, cited in: Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 126.

The Miner's Friend (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 232.

Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 117.

ibid., p. 117.

Jaffe, *Striking a Bargain*, p. 250.

A New Song (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 274.

Richard Price, *Masters, Unions and Men: Work Control in Building and the Rise of Labour, 1830-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 129.

E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work-load in Nineteenth-century Industry', in *Essays in Labour History*, ed. by Asa Briggs and Saville, (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 113-139, (p. 114).

ibid.

James Mather, cited in Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 75.

Examples include: *The Pitman's Union* (1832), cited in: Harker, p. 137; *The Pitmen's Union* (1832), cited in: Harker, p. 143; *A New Song Composed And Written For The Miners' Philanthropic Society Of England Scotland And Wales*, cited in: Harker, p. 174; *A New Song Composed for the Miners' Philanthropic Society* (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 177; *The Miners' Philaowners nthropic Society*, By James Wardhaugh, cited in: Harker, p. 179; *The Pitman's Union*, cited in: Harker, p. 185; *Union!*, cited in: Harker, p. 194; *An Address to the Miners of Britain* (1843), cited in: Harker, p. 198. *The Pitman's Union*, cited in: Harker, p. 186.

The Pitman's Union, cited in: Harker, pp. 185-186.

Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p. 110.

Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature*, (London: Croom Helm, 1974), p. 73.

Union!, cited in: Harker, p. 194.

Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse*, p. 68.

Song of the Oppressor (1844), cited in: Harker, p. 291.

ibid.

E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', p. 258.

ORAL HISTORY: JIM TATTERS, USWORTH COLLIERY

Interview by John Suggett

Introduction

Jim Tatters was born in Usworth, County Durham, in 1921. He was raised in that village which adjoined several other villages including New Washington, High Usworth, Springwell, Washington Village, Glebe and Biddick. Jim, at fourteen years of age, left school to work at the local pit, Usworth Colliery, and coal-mining was to be his life-long career.

Having moved, in 1953, from Usworth to Calverton in Nottinghamshire to work in a developing pit, Jim frequently visited family and friends in his 'home' area. He watched, often with dismay, at how the Washington New Town Development Corporation destroyed many of the buildings in the Usworth area. Had he still lived there, he said that he would have opposed some of the destruction even to the point of civil disobedience. How could I not believe him, given that Jim was among the original Hostel Estate 'squatters'?

Because of Jim's vivid memories of growing up in Usworth, where I was also born and raised, and his willingness to share those memories, I decided to record them thinking that they might contribute to social history. What follows is based mainly on transcriptions of recordings made in March and April of 2012 when Jim was in his 91st year.



In transcribing the recordings, I have tried to capture the essence of Jim's voice and dialect. Communicating the nuances of his voice has, I feel, eluded me. I considered writing his words in 'standard English' but rejected the idea almost immediately because the 'colour' of the dialect would be completely lost and, since I like to hear local dialects, I felt the need to try to get this across even if I was not very successful.

John Suggett

Editorial Note: Jim Tatters died in December 2013. This is an extract from a full interview transcript that we intend to publish on the NE Labour History website.

Working at Usworth Colliery

Cast your mind back, then, you told me about 'putting' at the pit. But that wasn't your first job was it?

Oh nor, datal work! The colliery was arl haulage, John. We goroff [*got out of the 'cage'*] three-quarters down the shaft. What the' carld the East Pit.

But didn't you say you started on 'the screens'?

Only two or three weeks, 'til the' saw what yuh were. The gaffer would say tiv 'is surface man, "Any lads? Aa want two spare lads." "Aye, aa've got two or three likely lads." Then the' invited yuh t' come.....wuh weren't forced! "Fancy gannin down the pit, son?" "Aye!" "Right then." An' that's how yuh started. Yuh were down. The' was nee trainin yuh knaa!

The screens were sorting out....picking out stones from the coal, is that right?

Aye, that's what the screens were.

north east history

And then you started down?

Aye. Wuh went down the East Pit. Our district used t' run.....under an area near Hillthorn Terrace. Arl seams ran deeper as the' went eastwards. So it was gravity.

As they were going towards the coast, they were deepening?

Aye. And the' were arl steel haulage. Thirty tubs used t' be the recognised number for a set of tubs gannin 'in-bye'. But what would happen would be this.....the coal seams ran down. There was three-quarter, five-quarter, main coal, Maudlin, Low Main, Hutton, Beaumont, and then the bottom one.....aa've forgotten what the' carld it.....but it was the main bottom of the shaft.....Busty!

So, there were seven seams were there? Were they all working?

Nor! The' had been. 1845 the' opened. The' were runnin on gravity [the tubs]. The empties would come down an' the' would run down on gravity. The' would gan intiv a sidin where there were thirty fullins waitin.

What seam did you start on?

It was Maudlin. Not ivery area carld it Maudlin. It was named after a Gateshead name.....Bensham! Same wi' our Beaumont. Next door at Wash'nton, it was another name.....Harvey!

The same seam of coal went under another name at a different pit? What was your first job once you'd gone down the pit?

When these empties went down there intiv a big landin, the' would be a haulage engine t' split them into three tens. And the' had t' be got in t' where the men were workin. The putters would be comin out wi' fullins ,

north east history

an' when aa had ten fullins, aa would tek the set in, tek the ropes off, and away it went oot t' get t' that big landin.

Jim was drawing diagrams throughout this time to help me to understand what was going on underground.

So, you were connecting full tubs to the rope to haul the coal out and unhitching empty tubs....

It was very dangerous....Aa remember one lad. His district went in the direction of Waterloo. He used t' let the tubs gan down there on gravity. For some reason he'd gone t' the bottom an' 'e got caught in between the wheels and was crushed. He was only a teenager! The' was ever so many teenage kids.

How high was the workplace that you started in?

Wey, where me an' thee father worked, in the Hutton seam, it was two foot fower. [*two feet four inches*]

That was later! But this first job.....?

Oh. The'd mek height where there was a landin.

So you could stand up to do this?

When the thirty fullins came in, the' came down an' ran inta here. [*Jim continues to draw!*]

And the' would arlriddy be thirty fullins there. Yuh would tek thee rope off, purit on the fullins an' the tail rope on, an' out they would go. From this little haulage engine which was splittin' these inta tens....the landin lad.... Putters were fetchin full tubs out tub by tub. [*The tubs would be made up*

into a set of thirty]

Is that what you were called....landing lad?

Landin lad. Aye. Yuh were dealin wi' haulage ropes arl the time.

You had to have your wits about you all the time!

Aye!

How long did you do that?

Well, aad be about nineteen when aa started puttin. That's half-way between the work aa was doin....Yuh weren't dropped into the deep end straight away. Puttin was half-way house. So yuh were gannin in wi' empty an' comin out wira fullin, yuh see. The' could be two or three o' yuh puttin in the same little landin wi' the ten tubs. Yuh'd be sittin on the limmers behind the pony.....'es tail wase didn' hev a flowin tail, it was....oh, it used t' be like sandpaper on yuh showlder, cos 'es tail was cut short.

[Jim describes a situation where two putters would be working in the same landing area and how they had to co-operate to keep their work flowing because they were on' piece work' (payment by results)...."two and sevenpence a score....twenty-one tubs..." He describes the putters coming face-to-face in a narrow section... .."That's what was carld 'a yokin'. Somebody had t' give in." [He laughs].

I asked if one of the putters had to go back and Jim said: "If it was wide enough, yuh rowld [rolled] the empty tub off t' let the fullin gan out."

So you'd only take one tub out at a time?

Oh aye, just one tub.

At the start of yuh shift, yuh took empties in.....one for each single man [*a man working on his own*] and two for the double men [*two men working together*]. The' arl got one each, yuh see.

That would keep you going all day then?

Aye. Each tub yuh filled had a token on. The hewer had a token an' arl. When the' arl came t' the surface, the' had t' gan ower a weighbridge, an' the'd be a lad stannin outside the weighbridge, and the youngun would pick it up [*the token*].....it was still secured.....and the token number would be recorded. When the coal went down and was tipped onto the screens, the' was another lad pickin them up [*the tokens*] an' puttin them in bunches.

So, did you, as a putter, have a token as well?

Aye, ivery putter had a token. Sometimes yuh used t' share. Wuh used t' say: "Are wuh hangin up or what?" The' gorra cavil ivery quarter. Every thirteen weeks aal yuh names went in t' see what districts yuh were gannin intee. Cos some was gooduns an' some was badduns. So thoo an' me might land in this one....."Are wuh hangin up, John, tigither?" "Aye!" That meant just get stuck in an' the number o' tubs yuh ' put ' were arl tigither, see?

Hot and Wet

But where there was watter it meant yuh pick was wet, iverything was wet what yuh were handlin, yuh knaa. And you were wet! And that marvellous invention during the war years.... About 1940 there came a marvellous invention for women...plastic....never seen before. A plastic hat...yuh purit on....wirit bein low, the watter dropped stright in your ear [*because heads had to be turned to the side to work*]or yuh eyes.....The plastic hat.....like a hood...tied underneath yuh chin.....wuh arl had them!

I didn't know that!

Aye. Wuh nivver wore tin hats, yuh knaa! At Usworth. When aa left Usworth in '53 t' come here, yuh had t' hev a tin hat on afore yuh went down the pit.

But you didn't at Usworth?

No. Not at that time. Aa divven knaa whether the' eventually.....Some were usin them as the Coal Board developed from nationalisation. The' were gradually formin, in different pits, a responsible man in charge of younguns an' things like that...

So, did the colliery start supplying these plastic hats?

Nor.....the women fetched them. That's what Usworth men wore. An' when yuh were workin , yuh knaa, wuh only had our boots an' stockins on. Sometimes wuh were naked. What we did hev was a one-legged 'steppy-in'. Like Tarzan! Yuh knaa yuh had a pair o' pants burit was just one leg yuh purin. Hev yuh ivver seen them?

No! Do you mean like a skirt?

Why, instead of a pair o' shorts....these yuh put yuh legs in an' it fastened at the side. Aye! It was red hot! It used t' stick on yuh, the coal, yuh knaa. It used t' stick on yuh sweat. Yes!

Living in colliery houses

Shirley Roddham (maiden name, Nevins) was telling me about a visit she made to Beamish Museum where, whilst visiting some miners' cottages, she overheard some people saying, "Isn't it quaint? Isn't it nice? Wouldn't it have been nice to live in a place like this?" Shirley said to me, "John, I got angry,

and I couldn't hold my tongue because I had lived in a place like that!" So, she'd said, "It looks nice, but do you realise you had to go outside and across a yard to get to the toilet which, in winter, might be frozen up? And get the coal in from outside. And you came into the living room on a morning, put the light on, and the floor would be covered with 'black-clocks' (cockroaches)." Did you have any experience of that?

Oh, yes! The whole street....crammed wi them! Aa used t' sit in front o' the fire....Yuh knaa the family used t' sit in a half-circle in front o' the fire. Pullin yuh chairs up after meals an' that. Mam might be ironin....The table was always in the middle o' the room.....big, square table! An' she'd either hev a board and a rollin pin, or mekkin the bread, or she'd be ironin. An' she used t' use a iron what yuh put on the fire in them days, yuh know. Not electric irons. Wuh didn' hev electric in Single Row. Wuh just had oil lamps. And these cockroaches were there.....horrible! Yuh knaa, the Co-op would give yuh a big almanac that yuh put up in, like a recess, in the room. An' aa was sittin there this partic'lar day an aa says, "Mother, the' summat makin that paper crinkle. It was pinned on the wall, yuh see. She says, "Whey, if yuh pull it down, if there's anything, it'll run away when it drops onta the floor." Aa says, "Aa knaa that!" Aa says, "Can aa hev a len [*lend*] o' yuh rowlin pin?"

How old would you be at this time?

Aa was about ten or eleven! So, imagine that's our fire. [*Jim demonstrates with a rolled-up map how he rolled the rolling-pin down the wall over the paper almanac*] God! Yuh should o' seen them! Hundreds o' them! Livin' behind this paper. Nice an' warm, yuh knaa. Burif yuh didn' he' them, yuh got them from next door!

The' were horrible things yuh had t' purup with! A lot o' them houses originally were built of stone from the quarry. Now, stone-built houses....the' was arlwas cracks an' crevices where roughly built, hewn blocks of real stone are used....the' can get arl ower. [*the cockroaches*] The' were arlwas there!

Early Health Care

...in later years, before aa came down t' Nottingham, for several years aa was the representative for the Victoria Hospital. This was pre-1948 when the National Health Service started. This is an example of how we survived medically. Yuh had a stoppage at the pit, so Usworth men, there was about 1200 or 1400 men had thripence or sixpence stoppage each week [*i.e. 3d or 6d kept from their pay*] that went to a central fund that covered yuh in the doctor's and the infirmary. So, if yuh iver had t' have t' get your tonsils out or anything like that in those days, you were covered by this contribution that the colliery was doin.

And wuh had our own pit amb'lance for accidents at the pit, of course. The' used t' garage it at Usworth Hall. Aa remember goin down wi' Matt Gregory.... he was a surface worker but he was always at hand in case there was an urgent need for the amb'lance to take somebody to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Hostel Estate (known locally as The Squatters)

Now, Hostel Estate was a huge field area behind Woodland Terrace and Station Terrace. It was built to cater for a bombed-out town. It wasn't army....although the army 'knocked around' [*there were some soldiers about at times*]. They were houses that could tek people during the war. It wasn't like a soldiers' barracks....that was up at Blackfell.....Blackfell Camp.

So, Hostel Estate, which I remember mainly as 'the Squatters', was built for the evacuation of homeless people?

Well, homeless people caused by being bombed out of their homes. It was strategic for arl the Tyneside towns which were in danger of being bombed. The' did gera hammerin, some o' them.

As far as you recall, were people housed in the Hostel Estate?

What happened was this, John. Peace came in 1945. We were, naturally, established....workin at Usworth pit.....and we were livin in rooms. That was our trouble! Wuh were arl just livin in rooms or with yuh parents. Cos, when the war started in '39, building houses stopped. Arl that was at a standstill. When peace came in '45, nothing re-commenced immediately....for us impatient young uns or wuh fam'lies.

The grapevine started t' work! And one night wuh invaded and took the lot! Then the civil servants that was guardin the gates were overwhelmed. There was no violence. Wuh just crowded them out and took over. The one [house] aa got was a special....one of three that were on the edge, just behind 'The Gardeners' [*public house*]. I was a dep'ty at the time but wuh still come home black. Our pit baths were almost complete when war broke out.

Were the majority of the people who took over Hostel Estate miners?

The' were. Mostly Usworth lads. Wuh moved wuh little community there.

Was there some sort of dialogue among people?

The' was hundreds of us yuh know. The' was some the' husbands was still in the army and the lasses were livin at home wi' the' mothers. The' would have children or were goin' t' have children. And our house became a little bit of a maternity home. Aa once went in a room t' visit me cousin in one o' the Squatters huts, just near the garage. She was in a little room, half the size of this. [*so the room was about nine feet long*] It was virtually just a cupboard. An' aa ses t' me cousin, "Is she ganna hev her baby here?" An' he ses, "Aye! We'll get help yuh knaa."

Aa came home an' aa telt Josie, an' Josie says, "Tell 'er t' come up here." An' wuh rigged up a room for a'an' Nurse Glew.....she brought arl the children in in them days.....came and that child was born in our house. We looked after them! The hard thing is when wuh had t' turn them out.....

back to 'er little cupboard further down the street. Wuh felt very guilty.

Were there ever any repercussions to your takeover of Hostel Estate?

The' was threats an' that, but we were just solid. Aa divven knaa what would happen wi' modern day youth, but we were as solid as a brick wall.....without violence....an' wuh were adamant. "But where yuh ganna put wuh?" "If yuh chuck wuh oot, where yuh ganna put wuh? Where wuh goin'?" Yuh knaa, aal things like that! An' the' gave in an' wuh started t' pay rent. An' the' was a terrific 'lectric bill to be paid for. Aa mean, the' coulda turned that off, but the' didn't. So that was alright. So, who did you pay the rent to?

The council. An' aa don't know if the council was just agent to the Ministry of Defence or whoever.

When did you move in there?

Aa moved in 1947. That's when it was taken over. Lads was comin home from war and comin back t' the pit and findin jobs and livin in rooms wi' the in-laws and arl them troubles.

And how long did you stay there?

I gora colliery house offered me which was the biggest mistake of my life. Me turn came round for a house, number thirteen Single Row which was one of two rows – Single Row and Quarry Row—almost buried wi 'pit heaps. An' aa left. Wuh were stupid. Wuh shouldn'a left but wuh did and that was in 1951. So aa lived there about four years. Best time of our lives!

The' was nivver any money in them days an', when the' squatted, the' were arl on tick wi' bits o' furniture that the' had t' get to furnish. The bed an' a dinin table, a kitchen cupboard.....things like that. The Hostel Estate was vast yuh knaa.

The Pictures and the Bookie

Jim recalls the Regal Cinema being converted to 'talkies'.

Yuh were towld t' shut up tarkin which was difficult cos everybody read the captions underneath. Me grandma used t' tek me so aa could read tiv'a cos she could'n read, see. [This was when watching silent films]... But when wuh used t' gan t' the cinema.....there we were....wuh would be readin like iverybody else. Readin for somebody else.....we'd be readin arl the captions. So, the sound of voices, accordin t' the picture what yuh looked at on the big screen, voices rose and back again, and there was remarks about the villain, or yuh got : "E's be'ind the door!" "Watch out!" And somebody would shout: "Shut up! Sit down!"

Me grandma would be addressing the audience. [*Jim is chuckling as he recalls these scenes*] "Aal not sit down! Aa knaa their kind – aa've met their kind before!" Aal this was gannin on! We would read because she couldn't.

Aa used t' write a' thripenny [*three penny*] bets oot for the 'bookie' comin down the street. Bookies in them days, yuh knaa, the' had t' watch the police. It was illegal to collect bets down the street. But the' came regardless. When the' got caught and had t' gan t' Gateshead t' be fined – he didn' hev money t' pay the fine but 'the big boys' up above 'im, worre was collectin for, they would pay them. It was farcical really but ivery body used t' hev a bet. The police knew the' were there. Yuh could read the p'liceman as the' warked aroond in them days --- "Oh, aal lerrim 'ev 'is go. Aal pick im up when aa want." Aye! Aa diven knaa how she studied horses [*meaning studying their racing form*] but : "Write that one down, Jim." And aa used t' write it – threepence or threepence each way. And the bookies used t' tek them arl the time.

BREAKING THE BOND: COAL MINING TRADE UNIONISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY SUNDERLAND

Stuart Howard

I am grateful to the Victoria County History for permission to publish this excerpt from my essay 'Trade Unionism in Sunderland' (2005) which is available on-line.

The history of trade unionism in Sunderland, and in particular that of the coal miners' unions, during the nineteenth century provides an important illustration of the potency and range of combination in North-East England in general, which in 1893 stood at a little over 11% of the population¹. (These figures relate to Northumberland and Durham in all trades).

Mining Unions in Durham and Northumberland

The nature of trade unionism in the Durham and Northumberland coalfield is best summed up by the miners' first historian, Richard Fynes, who saw the collective action of the pitmen as a vehicle for 'the assertion of their social and political independence'.² In this context, the North-East pitmen's contract of employment, the 'bond', is crucial. The first recorded strikes took place on Tyne and Wear during the 18th century and were sparked in relation to the bond. The earliest stoppage, in 1731, is clouded in mystery, but the dispute between August and October 1765 is better recorded. This strike (or more accurately, mass refusal to sign the bond),

is said to have involved 4,000 men. The action was taken in order to resist an attempt by the masters to implement a system of 'leaving certificates' to destroy the market in 'binding money' paid to miners on signing the bond. The miners returned to work under duress, but succeeded in extracting from the masters an agreement to give freely a discharge in writing and to establish October as the binding month (an arrangement which would last fifty years), to prevent confusion and disputes relating to the duration of the bond.³

The first colliers' strike of the nineteenth century in the area took place in 1810, triggered by an attempt by the masters to move the binding month from October to January. The colliers reacted by organising themselves into a 'brotherhood', formal combinations being illegal in consequence of the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800. The dispute lasted for seven weeks, until it was agreed that 'binding time' should be neither October nor January, but April.⁴

In 1825 there appeared the region's first formal pitmen's union, the United Association of Colliers on the Rivers Tyne and Wear. No doubt the association represented little more than the emergence of an existing organisation made possible by the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824. The union seems to have collapsed after a dispute in 1826. Four years later a new union arose out of the ashes of the old. The Pitmen's Union of Tyne and Wear, or 'Hepburn's union', was led by a cadre of Primitive Methodist activists and preachers. This group brought to North-East mining trade unionism an intensity of focus and organisation hitherto unknown in the industry, and lent the union the added cachet of moral superiority and social respectability. Their influence was to last until the end of the Great War. In April 1831 the members of this association refused the terms of the bond, and in May won concessions from the major coal owner Lord Londonderry. This was the pitmen's first comprehensive victory. Infuriated by their defeat, the owners 'resolved to break the union utterly', and refused to bind men associated with it. This triggered the strike of April to August 1832, in which the miners were defeated and the union destroyed.⁵

Trade unionism resumed in 1842 in the shape of the Miners' Association, a national union that was to become dominated by Durham and Northumberland. As members of this association, the Durham and Northumberland miners refused the bond of March/April 1844 in protest at reductions. The dispute which followed was cruel and violent, lasting until August when the men returned to work defeated.⁶ No county-based union existed in Durham and Northumberland until 1863 when a joint association was formed, the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Mutual Confident Association. In 1864 Northumberland seceded from this association and the historic union of the two counties was severed. Durham had no comprehensive county union until 1869 when, not least as a result of the Wearmouth colliery dispute, a permanent county union was established, the Durham Miners' Association (DMA).⁷

The bond

Between around 1703 and 1872 the bond was the principal contract of employment on the great northern coalfield. The bond tied the pitman to a master, generally for a year, which was usually expressed as 11 months and 15 days in order to prevent newcomers from acquiring a settlement in the parish by a year's continuous service, and hence become entitled to local poor law relief. However, monthly bonds emerged after the 1844 dispute and were widely used for a decade.⁸ The bond did not guarantee full or continuous employment, or any employment at all. Nor in some early examples was there any agreement on prices or wages, although housing was provided as an aspect of the bond, particularly in the nineteenth century.⁹ Under the terms of a bond a pitman could be fined for poor work or lack of punctuality, absenteeism and other matters.¹⁰ A breach of the bond by the employee was a criminal offence under the Master and Servant Acts, which could and often did attract a prison sentence.¹¹ A breach by the employer was a civil offence. The bond was usually read out to the miners at a mass meeting and then signed by them, by a cross if they were 'marksmen'

(illiterate), as many were.¹² Miners rarely received a copy of their bond. Inducements to encourage colliers to sign included a cash prize for the first man to sign, 'binding money' for all who signed, and free beer.¹³ The value, scale and availability of these inducements was regulated by market conditions.

Monkwearmouth Colliery

Monkwearmouth or Wearmouth Colliery was sunk in the period which followed the Hetton Coal Company's success in breaking through up to 250 feet of permian magnesium limestone which overlay the East Durham coalfield.¹⁴ Work began in 1826, but development was slow because of significant drainage problems, a feature of the east Durham pits. The first coals were drawn at 1,578 feet from the Maudlin seam in 1834, and in June 1835 the first cargo of Wearmouth coals was shipped from Sunderland. Thereafter output rose to 50,000 tons a year. In 1846, the rich five-foot thick Hutton seam was struck at 1,772 feet. Employment rose hugely:-

1836	100 men and boys
1843	340
1855	1,100

In 1851 Wearmouth was the world's deepest mine and one of the most technically advanced, employing cage and rail-transport technology and longwall working in the Hutton seam.

The leading partner and, with others of his family, major investor in Wearmouth colliery, was Richard Pemberton of Barnes, after whom the mine was sometimes known as Pemberton Main. The technical problems created by the geology of East Durham meant that between £80,000 and £100,000 was spent on sinking and development costs before any quantity of coals was first shipped in 1834. The discovery of the Hutton seam made the mine an attractive commercial proposition, but it had potentially high

capital costs and these factors, together with the volatile state of the coal trade and the deaths of a number of the partners, may explain the decision of the Pembertons in 1847 to sell 18 of the total 32 shares, for which they were paid £54,000. Two of the new owners were London-based coal capitalists, William Stobart and Charles Richard Fenwick. Their emergence indicates the way in which London capital was entering North-East industry. Day-to-day running of the re-named Wearmouth Coal Company was left to the third new shareholder William Bell of Ford, who with Stobart had interests in collieries at Lumley, Harrington and Fatfield.¹⁵

The great strike of 1844

At the time of the great strike of 1844, Monkwearmouth colliery was still under development, for it would be two years before the Hutton seam could be worked. At the time, Monkwearmouth was not a large pit in terms of its workforce, in 1843 employing 340. Willington colliery, in contrast, had 618 employees 15 years earlier.¹⁶ It is difficult to estimate the level of trade union activity at Monkwearmouth at this time. The new East Durham pits tended to be more radical and unionised than longer-established mines, with Hetton the epicentre of trade unionism during the first half of the century.¹⁷ A second shaft was sunk at Monkwearmouth between 1841 and 1845, and new transport machinery installed, so that the pit at the time of the strike would have had sinkers and engineers working alongside hewers and putters. The degree to which these men found common cause is open to debate.

There is little doubt that the Miners' Association was active at Monkwearmouth. In December 1843, four Wearmouth miners were on trial, charged with assault and making threats against fellow collier Joseph Russell, who had left the union on the grounds that he objected to threats of violence against the colliery viewer. Large numbers of Wearmouth pitmen were present at the trial. Despite a succession of non-union witnesses supporting the defence, Russell's assailants were convicted, fined and bound

over.¹⁸ The Wearmouth pitmen were also active during the great strike of 1844. In May 1844 a meeting which took place in a field drew 'upward of 300' men from Monkwearmouth, Jarrow, Hepburn and Shields collieries. The pitmen were clearly organised, electing a chairman and passing three resolutions, one of them from Nicholas Morgan of Monkwearmouth colliery: 'That it is the opinion of this meeting that the conditions of the miners' bond of this district are nothing but what are reasonable and just and this meeting pledges itself, individually and collectively, not to commence work until the conditions are complied with.'¹⁹

How many of the Monkwearmouth miners were union men it is impossible to say, as is how many of them struck during April to August 1844. The 300 who attended the meeting in May amounted to perhaps 20% of the combined workforces of the pits represented. How many of these collieries were not in production or partly working is not reported in the local press. Significantly, evictions from tied housing were reported at nearby Rainton, Hetton and Pitlington, but not at Wearmouth.²⁰ By early September the pitmen were back at work.²¹

Trade union activity and disputes, 1847-69

Many of the disputes preceding the formation of the DMA in 1869 concerned changes to the piecework prices and systems of working set out in the bond. Despite the collapse of the Miners' Association in the region in 1844, the spirit of trade unionism did not expire. In March 1847, Wearmouth miners in dispute over prices held several meetings and resolved to unite with the National Association of United Trades. By April the men had returned to work.²² In 1850, three to four hundred Wearmouth miners struck work in an attempt to resist payment by the score rather than by the yard, which would have meant a reduction in wages. Mr Burnes, the colliery viewer, appealed to the magistrates and mayor. Bailiffs, accompanied by the borough police, removed 20 families from their houses. The belongings of the miners and their families were taken to a nearby quarry, where the men stayed overnight.²³

Four years later, in 1854, the pitmen of Wearmouth colliery struck and in doing so breached their bond. The dispute turned on changes in the work process, from 'bord and pillar' to 'longwall', and an associated demand from the men for an increase in prices. Summonses were taken out against four of the men, and they appeared before the magistrates. The miners argued their case 'intelligently', and during the proceedings the masters and men came to an agreement 'without the aid of the bench'.²⁴

The Wearmouth strike of 1869

The 1869 strike at Wearmouth colliery is of prime significance in the history of industrial relations on the great northern coalfield. John Wilson, an early member, later general secretary, and first historian of the DMA, saw it as 'the real, although not formal, starting point of our union'. The conduct of the dispute, in which miners abandoned a traditional and archaic form of conciliation and resolution, according to Wilson lent a new impetus to trade unionism in the county, resulting in the formation of the DMA.²⁵ However, most significant was the end of the miners' bond which had conditioned 'master and servant' relations in the industry since the early eighteenth century.²⁶

The 1869 Wearmouth dispute shows how the bond, allied to the vagaries of geology, the division of labour, the labour process and, crucially, the resulting complexity of the wage system in Durham and Northumberland's deep seam coal mines, created a catalyst for industrial conflict and trade unionism activism. In North-East England, hewers and putters were paid by results on a 'prices' system in the context of an overall employment contract, the bond. This created a source of grievance since work was not guaranteed, whatever prices had been set out in the bond. Moreover, prices agreed at 'binding time' were literally binding for the period of the bond. At Wearmouth, hewers complained that they were able to work only seven or eight shifts a fortnight, earning on average only three shillings a shift, and this was not enough to sustain them.²⁷ Yet they were bound by law to this arrangement.

The productivity and earning power of miners varied greatly according to the geology of different mines, different seams within mines, and different places within seams. Thus the notion of average earning power in mining may in fact disguise large discrepancies which were the object of grievances. This was the case at Wearmouth:

....it is stated on behalf of the owners that men can earn 5s. a day in some parts of the colliery, but we were assured that these instances are very rare, and where 4s 6d or 5s a day can be got is reckoned one of the lucky 'Kebles' of the place. In the fortnight before the strike, the highest sum earned was in the best place in the Maudlin seam, where two men averaged 4s. 9d. a shift. But we have been assured by scores of hewers that they are utterly unable to earn more than on an average 2s. 9d. or 3s. a shift... As an instance, one man for 32 shifts working his utmost, was unable to earn more than £3 1s. 4d., or not 2s. a shift; two other men had 16s. each for seven shifts; two men in Maudlin, working five shifts, earned only 16s. 4d. between them. These are given as a sample of the complaints, and they might be multiplied. As compared with the prices elsewhere, there does not appear much difference, but the men say the working of coal is so much more difficult in the colliery that they cannot earn so much money as in other places. As compared with Ryhope for instance, the men assert that the coal in the latter place is so much more easily workable, that at the same prices a hewer can earn a shilling a shift more.²⁸

The division of labour within mining was more complex than is often assumed, with implications for the conduct of industrial disputes and for the formation and cohesion of trade unions. Below bank (that is to say, subterraneously), beside hewers, who stood at the top of the labour hierarchy, there were a number of other ranks: off-putters or putters, who transported the coal from face to shaft; various 'off-hand men' who carried

out maintenance and developed roadways; and lads and boys in a variety of secondary roles, often as trappers and in transport. These groups worked more hours, and frequently more shifts, than the hewers, and received lower scales of pay. When in April 1869 the Wearmouth hewers complained that they could not make £1 a fortnight, the management countered that 'the average is much higher'. The miners then pointed out that 'the average earnings of all the men below bank will exceed £1 a fortnight, but this will include others than hewers, who have 10 or 11 shifts a fortnight', compared with the seven or eight which hewers were working.²⁹

The dispute began on 18 May 1869, when at the end of their shift 400 hewers held a mass meeting on the green at Roker. The bond signed in March had reduced prices at the request of the owners, who claimed a downturn in trade. The Durham Chronicle reported that 'the average reduction of the hewers' wages is 33 per cent., or one third, so that a man formerly earning 30s. a fortnight can now average only 20s.' The hewers had agreed to try the new price system, but after three pays, or six weeks, concluded that it was not enough to sustain them. During the mass meeting, the hewers appointed a deputation of six to meet with the colliery manager, Mr Stobart, and the viewer, Mr Heckles. The deputation informed the managers that 'it was impossible to work at the terms, and unless the old rates were reverted to, they [the hewers] would not be able to go in again'. Mr Stobart is reported as saying that the owners were 'not receiving sixpence profit out of their capital, and would be unable to give the advance asked'. Viewer Heckles added that 'according to his judgement the terms were just and reasonable, and he could not advise the owners in the present state of the coal trade to give any increase'. The deputation of hewers returned to their fellows to put to them this response, the men repeated that they could not maintain their families, passing a resolution that they would not resume work until the old prices had been restored. A further deputation of five put this to Heckles, 'but with no better result than at the first interview'. The hewers then forwarded a memorial to the masters containing their grievances: 'Having experimentally proved for

the last six weeks that we cannot maintain ourselves and our families on the present terms of agreement, we have unanimously resolved to have last year's price before we resume work'. The conduct of the dispute at this point is indicative of a climate of change running through industrial relations during the era. Newspapers reported that the meeting between the employer and the employed was conducted on the most friendly terms.³⁰ This reflected the growing consensus of capital and labour around liberal values which would lead to notions of 'a shared interest', and a conciliatory position taken by the DMA leadership in the 1870s and 1880s.³¹

The emergence of a leadership and strategy also reveals a newly sophisticated organisation. The hewers held morning meetings at Roker, and a strike committee sat daily at the Wheatsheaf Inn to direct events. On 29 May, Heckles requested a meeting with the under-viewers and put to them two propositions to communicate to the men. The first was that 'consideration' money (compensation up to the minimum level) would be paid to men who could not earn between 2s. 6d. and 3s. per shift; and later, in a letter addressed to the under-viewers, an offer to release from the bond up to 50 hewers if they would report to his office and show that they could not earn more than 4s. a shift.³²

Both offers, communicated to the men via their delegates at a meeting at Roker on 31 May, were rejected. The hewers stated that when they had complained previously they 'invariably failed to obtain redress'. In other words they did not trust the management to pay consideration money. The offer of release was characterised as 'an attempt on the part of the viewers to impress the public with the idea that the men were earning more than 4s., and that it was also an effort made to break their ranks'. They resolved not to take up this offer but to 'stand by one another as a united body'. However, a number of men, who according to the *Durham Chronicle* failed to attend the meeting, did request release. The first of these, William Shipley, was granted his, but all other applications failed.³³

During this tumultuous day, the strike escalated. The 'off-hand men' were instructed to commence hewing the next day in place of the strikers.

A meeting of the off-hand men on the green at Roker decided to send a deputation to speak to the hewers' committee. A defensive pact was agreed at this meeting: 'if the off-hand men refuse to take the hewers' places now, at the termination of the strike none of the hewers would seek or accept the jobs of the off-hand men'. The agreement was ratified at the committee room of the Wheatsheaf. The dispute had become general and almost 1,400 men were now on strike.³⁴

The following day, hewers and all other grades met at Roker, each class of men resolving to support and stand by the other. During this meeting word arrived that Heckles and Stobart were waiting for a deputation at the colliery offices. There Stobart pointed out that the men had acted illegally, but Heckles offered an advance of 3d. a score as 'consideration' money. Late in the long June evening, 1,000 miners met on Roker sands to discuss the offer. On the grounds that it would improve their wages by only 1s. a fortnight, they rejected it.³⁵

During this negotiation, there was controversy over beer offered to the hewers' delegation by Heckles and Stobart. In John Wilson's version of events, an account which reflects an important development in trade union consciousness among the Durham miners:

It is not part of my purpose to enter into all the phases of the strike, but one thing I will set forth, as it shows the method adopted to break the ranks of the workmen. The manager of the colliery was a man well known in the north of England coal trade, Mr R. Heckles. He, believing there was great power in the beer jug, when the strike had continued for a fortnight sent six notes for 50 men each to get a quart of ale per man. These were placed before a meeting of 250 men. On the offer of the beer being announced the men replied that the notes were to be sent back, as the day had gone by when the men were to be bought with beer, but that beef and bread would be better, and a resolution was carried not to resume work except at last year's prices.³⁶

However a very different account was given by Heckles to the Newcastle Daily Chronicle. Heckles claimed to have called the meeting to dispute earnings figures provided by the men and published in the Chronicle, and that the delegation admitted the figures to be 'absurdly erroneous' – Richardson denied this at trial – and then made his offer of an increase of 3d. per score. He went on:

This appeared to be a perfectly satisfactory solution of all difficulty to the men composing the deputation, so satisfactory that the chairman John Richards, asked me to allow them 'quarts a piece', to which Mr Stobart somewhat reluctantly assented. The orders for the beer were ultimately given to the chairman of the deputation, all of whom, excepting the chairman himself, returned in the evening, declining on the part of the men the 3d. per score, and returned the orders for the beer for which the deputation had asked.³⁷

These events were not reported in either the Durham Chronicle or Sunderland Times, but, if Heckles' account is true, they are significant in casting a different light on Wilson's interpretation of the erosion of traditional practices in industrial relations by Durham miners' leadership.

Later in June, five Wearmouth hewers were brought before magistrates to face charges of breaching their bond. The Durham Chronicle reported 'the neighbourhood of the police court at Sunderland... densely crowded with people long before the time for opening the court'. On the bench were the mayor, Alderman Thompson, Aldermen Lindsay, Alcock and Elwin, and J. T. Elcock Esq. In the dock were Thomas Fenwick, James Forrest, Thomas Marshall, and Robert Lackenby. John Kitson was prosecuting on behalf of the owners, with Stobart and Heckles in attendance as well as the company chairman Richardson. The 'pitmen's attorney-general', W. P. Roberts, was defending.³⁸

The case against Fenwick was put first. Kitson, in a significant observation,

pointed out that the Masters and Servants Act had been amended to allow cancellation of the bond. He then attempted to show that the bond was legal and had been breached by the defendant. Heckles and the under-viewer, Benjamin Wilson, were called as witnesses to establish this. Wilson said the terms of the bond had been explained to the men, and after that the bond had been read out and left in the office for signature, but he could not swear that the defendants were present when it was read. He said the defendant signed the bond after it was read out. The kernel of Heckles' testimony was that he had addressed the men on the depressed state of trade before the bond was read. He could swear that he had no intimation of their displeasure, and that none of the pitmen asked for a copy of the bond. Both Wilson and Heckles repeated allegations which Heckles had made in his letter to the Newcastle Daily Chronicle, to the effect that Richardson had admitted published figures related to the men's earnings were erroneous, and that Richardson had asked for 'quarts a piece'. During Wilson's evidence on the first of these allegations, Richardson shouted out, 'That's false, sir.'³⁹

Roberts attempted to establish that there was no case to answer, asking 'Was there any proof that the men signed the bond? If the bench considered there was, he must ask for a case to the court of the Queen's Bench.' Kitson argued that it was proved that the defendant had signed the bond, to which the mayor said 'We think that is quite sufficient.' Roberts was outraged by this, 'the most extraordinary assertion he had heard in a court of justice', and went on to make a long acerbic speech concerning the oppression of the miners during the nineteenth century. Roberts then called Fenwick 'who spoke to signing the bond, which was not read over nor explained to him'. Roberts said he had 40 or 50 witnesses, but would not call more. The bench retired to consider the case, and after 20 minutes returned to find for the owners and to direct the defendant to carry out his contract. Roberts asked for the case to go to appeal at the court of Queen's Bench. Mr Kitson objected, but proposed an adjournment to attempt a reconciliation. The clerk announced that the judgement of the court would be suspended for 14 days, and a decision on Roberts' plea for appeal was also adjourned. The pitmen cheered Roberts.⁴⁰

The following day the owners issued a final notice to the strikers which stated that the strike was illegal, that no advance would be made on wages and that there would be no further discussions, on any matter, until the men returned to work. The same day as this missive was posted, the miners met on Roker beach, John Richardson presiding. The chairman argued that the best possible case had been made for them in court by Roberts and that he should be retained. This was agreed. Richardson then observed that they had now entered upon a new phase in the struggle, and it was absolutely necessary for them to maintain a firm attitude... He expected every man would attend to himself and cultivate the principles of courage and sense of duty... He then concluded by enjoining upon the masses peace and union throughout the strike.⁴¹

On 2 July the case of Thomas Fenwick returned to court. As in the first hearing, crowds had gathered in and about the building. Kitson opened, pointing out that the magistrates had found Fenwick to have breached his bond and that he had failed to return to work during the adjournment. Roberts, for the defence, argued that the case should go to the Queen's Bench, but his application, an issue from the first hearing, was refused by the bench. Roberts said he would make a second application, as the men faced prison and he had succeeded with similar cases in the past. He asked for a month's adjournment. Kitson's counter-argument was that the case against Fenwick was not a matter of the interpretation of law, but of fact.⁴²

At this point Kitson suggested what he saw as a compromise. Let the men return to work immediately, let Roberts go to the Queen's Bench, and if it was found there was no contract the owners would pay wages, an amount to be decided by two viewers. When Roberts objected to two viewers, Kitson offered 'any arbitration you like'. Roberts suggested one man from each side, which was agreed. Kitson asked if the men would return to work 'at once'. Roberts said they would not do so under the terms of the bond, and added: 'You exercise the pressure of the bench, we exercise the pressure of the strike'. He suggested that the bench was not without bias: 'One of your magistrates said, "There's plenty of evidence of signing

it", and it seemed to gurgle in his throat to get it up', which triggered a sharp exchange between the bench and Roberts. At this point, Kitson made the offer that was to invest the dispute with its historical significance: 'We will cancel the bond at once; let the masters seek new men and the men seek new masters. We will let them go at once if they will leave our houses at the end of seven days'. Roberts immediately accepted. When the news reached those outside, the proceedings were interrupted by loud cheering. Roberts asked for a half hour's adjournment, in order to consult with the men. He returned and stated their agreement. From the bench, Ald. Hartley said that if both parties agreed, 'the magistrates can have no objection whatsoever'.⁴³

It seems clear from Kitson's anxiety to negotiate a return to work, or any means to end the strike, from what appears to have been a position of strength, that his employers were under significant pressure to bring Wearmouth Colliery back into production. The Wearmouth unionists had created that pressure, and had called the masters' bluff, since despite their statements to the contrary the owners had negotiated in the face of what Roberts had astutely seen as the 'pressure of the strike'. The bond was breached, and Wearmouth had achieved the freedom that Durham miners had historically sought.

The degree of ceremony in vacating their colliery houses attests to the significance of this victory by the Wearmouth miners. Wilson described how 'the men formed a procession, over 300 in number, each man carrying his lamp and a copy of the colliery rules. Marching to the colliery they handed in their lamps, and returned the rules to the over-man'. In doing so they signified that they were not a rabble, but a disciplined and organised body of men.

The effect of the trial was speedily seen in the solidifying of the whole of the workmen at Wearmouth, as the deputies and others (while passively remaining from work, had never taken active part in the strike) now threw themselves into the struggle, and made common cause with the hewers, and the further effect was the impetus given to the cause of unionism throughout the county until it consummated in the Durham miners' union.⁴⁴

It might be added that the strike threw up a new and influential leadership and contributed to the abolition of the bond. The meetings which preceded the formation of the DMA in November 1869, often held in union 'hot spots' such as Thornley and Trimdon, were addressed by the now victimised Wearmouth union leadership, men such as John Richardson and William Crake, who became respectively the first secretary and president of the Durham Miners' Association.⁴⁵ Others found it necessary to leave the region. Ned Cowey, for example, a man said to have had 'a massive and commanding presence', was blacklisted, but went on to become president of the Yorkshire Miners' Association in 1873. The bond was abolished in 1872 by Act of Parliament, and some believe that the Wearmouth strike 'led the way' for its abolition.⁴⁶ Certainly the Wearmouth dispute must have contributed to it. In the general climate of liberalism in this period – Kitson advised the owners of Wearmouth colliery to hire on fortnightly contracts, and the yearly bond was no longer universal – nevertheless many masters still used the bond. The Wearmouth dispute, and the subsequent formation of the DMA with its resolution to agitate against the yearly bond, must have made them conscious of the increasing difficulties of employing it. Moreover, the strike highlighted in the court of public opinion the inequities of this 'feudal' contract in a world increasingly politically liberal and enfranchised.⁴⁷

Wearmouth Colliery was an important centre of trade union activity from at least the early 1840s. The tradition of combination at Wearmouth endured despite the collapse of the early county and national associations. It seems clear that a local union operated at the pit throughout the 1850s and 60s, and that effective union machinery evolved and was fine-tuned during these years. By 1869 Wearmouth had some of the foremost Durham trade union activists working at the mine and they were to provide leadership not only in the seminal dispute of that year, but for the fledgling county association. In these senses at least, mining trade unionism in Sunderland represents a significant source of the forces of

collective action which were to transform mining trade unionism on the Durham Coalfield during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

References

- ¹ S.& B Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism, 1666-1920* (1894:1920, Printed by the Authors, London), p.427.
- ² Fynes, R., *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham: a history of their social and political progress*, Blyth, Summerbell, 1873, preface.
- ³ Levine, D., and K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991; Webb, S., *The Story of the Durham Miners*, London, Labour publishing Co, 1921, pp. 4-7.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 15.
- ⁵ Colls, R., *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield: Work, Culture and Protest, 1790-1850*, Manchester, MUP, 1987, chapter 17 especially p. 252.
- ⁶ Ibid., chapter 18; Challinor R., and B. Ripley, *The Miners' Association – a Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists*, Whitley Bay, Bewick Press, 1968, especially chapter 8.
- ⁷ Webb, pp. 53-9.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 88; Colls, pp. 45, 70-1, 109.
- ⁹ Webb, p. 8; Hammond, J. L. and B., *The Skilled Labourer*, London, Longman, 1979 [1919], p. 10; Beynon, H. and T. Austrin, *Masters and Servants: Class And Patronage in the Making Of A Labour Organisation: The Durham Miners and the English Political Tradition*, London, Rivers Oram, 1994, p. 32.
- ¹⁰ Colls, p. 45.
- ¹¹ Webb, p. 9; see below.
- ¹² Ibid., p.10; Colls, pp. 72-3; Beynon and Austrin, p. 29.
- ¹³ Colls, chapter 5; Webb, p.10; Hair, P. E., 'The binding of the pitmen in the north east, 1800-9', *Durham University Journal* (1965-6), n.s. xxvii; Scot, H. 'The miners bound in Northumberland and Durham', unpublished M.A. thesis, Durham University (1947) (copy in Newcastle Central Library).
- ¹⁴ Patterson, G., *Monkwearmouth Colliery in 185*, Durham, Dept. Extra- Mural Studies, 1977, especially pp. 9-24; Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Mines, London, 1842, North Durham and Northumbs. XVI; Leifchild, J. R., *Our Coal and Our Coal Pits* (1853), pp. 142-72; Chambers, W., 'Visit to Sunderland', *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, Edinburgh, 1850 (copy in Sunderland Central Library); Fordyce, W., *History of Coal- and Iron-Mining and Manufacture in the North of England*, Newcastle, Fordyce, 1860.
- ¹⁵ Patterson, pp. 9-13.
- ¹⁶ Patterson, p.17; Flinn, M. W., *The History of the British Coal Industry. ii. 1700-1830: the Industrial Revolution*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 362.

north east history

- 17 Colls, pp. 247-8, 303.
- 18 Northumbs. Record Office (NRO), 3410/Bell/18, pp. 123, 125.
- 19 *Sunderland and Durham County Herald*, 3 May 1844.
- 20 Ibid., 28 June 1844.
- 21 Ibid, 6 Sept. 1844.
- 22 NRO, 3410/Bell/18, pp. 121, 128.
- 23 NRO, 3410/Bell/18, p. 122.
- 24 *Sunderland Herald*, 6 Jan 1854.
- 25 Wilson, J., *History of the Durham Miners' Association*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907, pp. 3, 5.
- 26 Beynon and Austrin, p. 46.
- 27 *Sunderland Times*, 29 May 1869; *Durham Chronicle*, 4 June 1869.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.; *Sunderland Times*, 29 May 1869.
- 31 Beynon and Austrin, chapter 3.
- 32 *Durham Chronicle*, 4 June 1869.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Wilson, p. 4; Webb, p. 59-60; Beynon and Austrin, p. 45. Webb misinterprets the sequence of events.
- 37 Durham Record Office (DRO) NCB I/RS 372; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 4 June 1869.
- 38 *Durham Chronicle*, 25 June 1869.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 *Sunderland Times*, 6 July 1869.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Wilson, p. 5.
- 45 Webb, pp. 60-1.
- 46 Beynon and Austrin, p. 46.
- 47 *Sunderland Times*, 6 July 1869; Wilson, p. 12.

THE MINERS' STRIKE OF 1984-5

Introduced by John Stirling

The miner's strike of 1984-5 was unquestionably a major event in the history of the labour and trade union movement but its course and outcome remains contested terrain. The strike divided miners, communities and families while at the same time uniting others in inspirational acts of support and solidarity which changed lives forever. It is those lives and actions that we remember in the contributions that follow. As with all first-hand accounts and oral histories different people will record the same times and events in ways that are important to themselves and often in contrast to each other. We all know how the police attendance figures for a march or demonstration rarely match our own perceptions but we can just as easily raise or lower the same figures depending how optimistic or pessimistic we might be feeling on the day!

What we are able to capture in the pieces that follow are views from the North East. All of them convey the tremendous solidarity that men and women, both in the mining communities and across the region, demonstrated with those bearing the hardships of the strike. Three things stand out in these recollections. Firstly, there is Dave Hopper's reflection on how the Thatcher government planned for the dispute by lining up the State and the Coal Board to carry her strategy through. Secondly, we can see how women were actively engaged both in the practicalities of the strike and in debating the politics of the dispute and, by extension, of the country. Finally, there are harsh words for the Labour Party leadership but equally strong support for the Party's local rank and file activists who gave their time and energy unstintingly.

We begin with an important contribution from Dave Hopper of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in Durham, who was one of

the local leaders of the strike. His words speak for themselves and, like others we record here, he is particularly condemnatory of Neil Kinnock, then Labour Party leader, whose reception at the subsequent Durham Big Meeting was certainly hostile, although other memories recall him speaking on through the boos.

Personal reflection: the Great Miners' Strike, 1984-85, and its consequences for the North East

David Hopper

The recent release of Cabinet Office papers under the 30-year rule really brings home the extent of the struggle awaiting the coalminers of the North East when they embarked upon that epic strike in March 1984. This was action taken to protect their jobs and their community.

We realised at the time, certainly after the appointment of Ian MacGregor (later Sir Ian) as Chairman of the National Coal Board (NCB) in 1983

Ian MacGregor was born in Scotland, but went to America during the Second World War on a managerial secondment and stayed there after the war. Even though (or because of) his known confrontational style in the USA, Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan brought him back to Britain as a non-executive Director of British Leyland in 1977. MacGregor claimed responsibility for the dismissal of the union convenor, Derek Robinson. In 1979 Thatcher appointed him chairman of the nationalised British Steel: closures and then privatisation followed. In 1983, he became chairman of the NCB. He was knighted in 1986. Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013) Conservative Prime Minister 1979-1990.

by Thatcher's Tory Government¹, that we were facing worrying times in the North East coalfields. MacGregor came with a record of closures and anti-trade union attitudes from when he was Chair of British Steel in early 1980s. Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) speaking at

the Durham Miners Gala in July 1983 had warned of the secret Pit Closure Programme, the “secret pit hit list”¹. This included a number of pits in our coalfields. At the time, he was ridiculed as a troublemaker and scaremonger by the NCB North East Area Board and, unfortunately, by some of the NUM Area full-time officials. After all, we had been told in 1978 that the National Incentive Bonus Scheme, introduced by the Labour Government, would not lead to the excessive production of coal that we would be unable to sell.

The effect of the National Incentive Bonus Scheme

It is essential to bear in mind the history of this scheme when discussing the later controversy over strike ballots in 1984. In 1978 Joe Gormley², then President of the NUM, was an advocate of the bonus scheme, as were the North East representatives on the National Executive Committee (NEC). However, two national ballots rejected the idea of an incentive scheme. Gormley then gave a ruling that the national ballots did not debar individual Areas of the NUM from introducing the scheme as an Area Scheme. NUM Areas, with right-wing leadership, such as Nottingham, South Derbyshire and Leicestershire, seized upon this ruling and established a scheme. Some miners saw this as a violation of union rules, and the Kent Area of the NUM legally challenged this. However, in a bizarre legal Judgment, Lord Justice Watkins, Lord Justice of Appeal, ruled that the result of national ballots were not binding on Areas of the NUM *who make decisions on an Area basis*. Of course Watkins’ decision placing the emphasis on Areas was ignored in 1984, when the Government, TUC, Labour Party leadership and the media were screaming out for a National Ballot.

The introduction of this incentive scheme, based on output, enabled the Thatcher Government to build up a massive coal stock at pitheads, power stations and stocking sites. Production soared to record levels, but the downside was pit closures. In the North East, pits and communities suffered; there were closure notices at Houghton, Bearpark, Marley Hill in Durham and Woodhorn in Northumberland. Manpower at several more

was dramatically reduced. As a result of the Scheme, coal stockpiles and job losses increased whilst unemployment was around 3.5 million. The North East was one of the hardest hit regions.

Thatcher Government prepares for confrontation

In 1981, Nigel Lawson, the Tory Energy Minister, had cut the subsidy to the coal industry which, at £3.20 per ton, was the lowest in Europe. The NUM reacted and walkouts occurred across the British coalfields. In Durham, miners at Sacriston, Boldon, Houghton and Bearpark went on strike. The Government, however, was not yet prepared for a strike. Thatcher, now involved directly, prepared a U-turn. She offered to withdraw the proposals and agreed to set up a Colliery Review Procedure. Unfortunately, to the dismay of some of us in the North East, Gormley and the NEC accepted what we now know was a scam. The men returned to work, allowing the Tory Government three years to get their preparations right. By 1982, Gormley had left his post and had been replaced by Arthur Scargill.

For most activists in the pits, a clear signal of the coming conflict was the appointment of MacGregor in 1983. Rather ironically, his first port of call was to visit Wearmouth Colliery in Durham, where I was union secretary. We objected most strongly to a 70-year-old “geriatric” going underground on health and safety reasons. We also refused to meet him because we were now clear his appointment was ‘to butcher’ the coal industry. Regrettably, when he moved on from Wearmouth to Ellington Colliery in Northumberland, the union secretary agreed to meet him, for whatever reason. The local news concentrated on that part of his hurriedly rearranged visit.

The overtime ban in November 1983, called in an effort to reduce the coal stocks, was in hindsight too little and too late! By March 1984 the plan was exposed. MacGregor announced the closure of five pits on economic grounds in different areas of the British coalfield. This included Herrington in Durham, raising suspicions of more closures to come. Also on the list was Cortonwood Colliery, Yorkshire. Their vote to strike was

endorsed by the Yorkshire NUM Area Council on Sunday 5th March. This triggered the strike across the whole Yorkshire coalfield. The Scottish and Kent Areas soon followed this action. Meanwhile, activists in the Durham coalfield met to prepare their strategy in advance of the Durham NUM Area Council meeting, arranged for the 9th March.

Before the meeting on the day, the Area Executive Committee met, and agreed a motion to recommend strike action from Monday 12th March in support of all the NUM Areas now on strike. After an extremely vociferous debate on the motion, the pit delegates voted 7-7. It was now the responsibility of the Durham Area President, Harry Mitchell, to use his casting vote in support of the Area Executive motion.

Over that weekend, all the pits in the Durham Coalfield had to call Special Meetings to endorse the strike call. Easington, Westoe, Eppleton, Wearmouth, Herrington, Horden, Sacriston, Hawthorn, Blackhall and Bearpark all did so. Murton was prevented from working by a picket by their Colliery Mechanics' Branch, and so the Colliery joined the strike. However, the three Seaham pits, Dawdon, Vane Tempest and Seaham, voted against the call. As this was now a decision on an Area basis, both Vane Tempest and Dawdon were picketed and by the evening of Tuesday 13th March, the whole of the Durham coalfield was on strike. Picketing in Northumberland resulted in the complete North East coalfield on strike, followed by North Derbyshire and Lancashire.

The strike in the North East remained solid throughout the summer months, so picketing concentrated on open-cast coal sites, docks and, in general, the movement of coal. The North East miners, in a show of solidarity, picketed far and wide: Immingham in Lincolnshire, Glasson Docks in Lancashire, Bilston Glen in Scotland, Orgreave in Yorkshire, and pits throughout the Lancashire and Nottingham coalfields. Because most of the coalfields on strike were standing firm, the Government drafted police from sixteen forces into Nottingham to keep that coalfield working. Here, mass arrests and physical beatings of pickets were the order of the day.

As we approached the autumn, the miners in Durham faced a new

propaganda initiative in an attempt to encourage them to break the strike. Miners and their families, their loyalty to their community action to save jobs stretched to its limits, were encouraged to break the strike by a joint initiative of the NCB, the police, and a Government backed organisation led by an anti-union Etonian, David Hart³, a millionaire advisor to Thatcher and MacGregor. His organisation, it is alleged, had the support of MI5. We also had suspicions that at least one leading North East industrialist was heavily involved in this State plot.

The union was finding it difficult to finance the strike. Under the Trade Union Act 1984 (passed just after the strike had started), the government used the Courts to sequester the funds of the NUM⁴. The Act also meant the miners' families with no income were not entitled to free school meals or other help and were dependent on donations and support from individuals and organisations. To maintain the dispute some cash had to be borrowed illegally from sympathetic sources. As pressure grew, some miners drifted back to work.

Major conflicts took place at Easington and Wearmouth Collieries, as police escorted 'scabs' back to work. Mass arrests by police snatch squads were the order of the day. The violence meted out by the police, many from South Wales and the London Metropolitan Police shocked the people of the Northern Region. As winter approached, the return to work gathered pace and there were brutal scenes at Ellington Colliery in Northumberland.

The decision of the leaders of the pit deputies' union, National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS), not to follow through the 82.5% vote to join the strike was a further body blow to the miners. It is my opinion that if they had implemented that vote, the Thatcher Government would have been forced to negotiate. To their eternal shame, and I blame elements of their leadership, they were bought off - or maybe, looking back, they were betrayed!

Christmas was made bearable especially in the North East by the gift of food and toys from the French trade union federation, the CGT, the Russian miners and the many sympathetic trade unionists and trade unions.

At the beginning of 1985, some ten months into the strike, we had a

mountain to climb. The State machine was in full operation, and the media attacks increased. The TUC, after promising so much help, had almost deserted us along with Kinnock⁵ and the Labour Party leadership. Indeed, at a later date, Kinnock was heckled and booed when he next addressed the Durham Miners' Gala. Subsequently, the Northern Regional TUC would organise the 'Beamish Family Gala Day' in an attempt to circumvent the Miners' Gala, an act of betrayal with which I have never come to terms and I never will! Thankfully this 'Family Gala Day', which was boycotted by the miners, died a quick death, whilst the Durham Miners' Gala continues to grow. Nevertheless, many Labour Party members and local parties alongside some trade unions, trade union members and local trades union councils gave great support for which the mining communities are ever grateful.

However, the end of the strike was now in sight. The drift back to work became even greater as the extreme plight of miners and their families worsened. Thatcher was determined to win whatever the cost. At the NUM Special Delegate Conference at the headquarters of the TUC, Congress House, London on 3rd March 1985, the vote was 98 to 91 for a return to work. Durham and Northumberland supported the vote to return. My only regret was that we returned leaving nearly 100 sacked and victimised North East miners outside the gates. Most of them, I believe, were victims of State repression. What happened during this strike will never be forgotten or forgiven.

After our return to work, we soon realised how right we were. The agreement NACODS had accepted to call off their strike, the so-called Colliery Review Procedure, was a scam. When Bates Colliery in Northumberland won a review decision the NCB simply refused to accept it.

Privatisation followed, but this did not stop colliery closures. By 1993 every Durham Colliery had closed, while Ellington, Northumberland, was kept open for a few more years with a greatly reduced workforce.

The release, in January 2014, of the cabinet papers of the Thatcher government, show a campaign of lies and deceit, and the full power of the state machine were being used against the miners and their communities.

The “secret hit-list” of pits that miners argued existed, both before and during the strike, is now there for all to see. The documents even reveal the secret preparations to use troops to move coal stocks.

The consequence of this historic event is around us all. We now have the highest unemployment in mainland Britain in our region. Youth unemployment is a disgrace. Social problems are rife in the former coalfield communities. We desperately need real jobs to secure the future for our youth, not ‘zero hours’ contracts with trade union rights obliterated. We are also left with thousands of former mineworkers claiming industrial injuries benefits that are now under attack. At a time when Britain is still importing 55 million tons of coal, from parts of the world where child and slave labour are being used, thousands of ex-miners are unemployed and their children have no future.

Thatcher infamously called the miners during the strike of 1984-85 ‘The Enemy Within’. History has proven that she was the Enemy Within.

No wonder we celebrated her death and partied on the day of her funeral.

Personal memories of the impact of the miners’ strike

Following on from Dave’s view from the union we have the reflections and memories in interviews from 5 other North East people engaged in supporting the miners: *Mary Stratford, Bala Nair, Thea Khamis, Pat and Vin McIntyre.*

Mary Stratford was born in Peterlee, Co Durham and was interviewed on 14th April 2012. Mary’s father was a miner and she first became active in the trade union movement through the Civil and Public Services Association.

Interviewer: What happened during the Miner’s Strike?

Mary: Well, obviously that was...huge... politicising really! Paul (her husband) went on strike...he was a mechanic at the pit... It was obvious

really...we'd known that the strike was coming. There was never any doubt that it was going to happen at some point and we'd become very politicised... We'd gone to Easington Welfare to listen to (Mick) McGahy and then (Arthur) Scargill.

And it was interesting because I think I was one of... 3 or 4 women in the entire Miners' Welfare listening to those



speeches! ... So I knew it was going to happen, so it was 'what do I do when it does start?' The first few weeks were really Paul picketing! I wasn't particularly involved ... after about 4 weeks when it became apparent that things were going to start to happen and people needed to organise, I sort of got involved.

There was a meeting through at Easington ... but the difficulty was I was 10 or 11 miles away and knew I wouldn't be able to afford to get there... lots of different people were sort of sitting in their communities thinking 'what's going to happen here?' Paul was involved with the Union at this time; he was on the Executive of the Union. And my brother was the Union Secretary of the Mechanics and my other brother's the Treasurer of the Miner's Lodge- so I've got an active Union family and, ironically enough, we were sitting round and my brother over the road said to me: 'We need to have a miner's support group in Lumley, so shall we set up a meeting?' He got the names of all of the miners that lived in Great Lumley and Little Lumley and Burn Moor I think it was, and we went round and put leaflets out though the villages and then our Michael chaired the meeting.

I: Did you get a good turn-out?

M: A very good turn-out, but a lot of suspicion: ‘Who were we and why did we think we had the right to do this?’ ... and our Michael took the lead ironically, but he didn’t want to become involved in the longer turn... and it was handed to me by association: you know- whose wife you were, or whose partner you were, or whose sister you were! I took the Secretary’s job on, my sister-in-law took the treasurer’s job on... it was a miner who chaired!

I: It was a mixture of women and men?

M: Oh yes! We were very adamant - because we were so few, there were 80-odd, 90-odd families - we couldn’t afford to say it was only going to be the women! I think that’s one of the MYTHS of the Strike- that it was ALL women in the Support Groups- it wasn’t! There were a lot of men involved! But women DID take a lead, but there were lots of men, who for one reason or another weren’t involved in picketing or they were retired miners, or there were other men who wanted to help out. But it was always a fight to make sure that women were at the forefront!

... Durham Miners’ Support Groups were set-up. It was Billy Herrington, who was the Secretary of the Durham Mechanics’ Union, (*who*) recognised there was a need for all the little Support Groups to come together and he sort of ‘pushed it’. And he ‘gave’ his female secretary – basically ‘donated’ her to us. But she was very much a political activist as well: Ann Suddick. She organised it and ... all the Support Groups came centrally together in the Miners’ Hall in Durham ... and, I have to say that’s where my past in a trade union was helpful to me, because I could pick up immediately the nuances of who was vying for power and what the agenda was! [In the end we] just had this sort of ‘loose’ (*group*) with Ann as the sort of figure-head, but a loose set of people. ANYBODY could get involved, and ANYBODY could help out and ANYBODY could be involved actively in it ... I probably feel that was one of the SIGNIFICANT achievements ...

to stop the Union ... MEN from dominating the whole thing!

It caused us problems in some ways, but it also meant it was 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 figurehead, 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!

It was really good and I think, obviously by then, I was becoming much more getting into organising: we were raising funds, but you had to go out and speak and things and I got opportunities. I visited London, to meet with people opposing the London Docklands Development Corporation. I stayed in a place called West Silvertown for a week and I have to say I find it ironic that ...the perception of people in London ... we were struggling ... their perception of 'miners' was ... you know 'they lived in little 2 by 2 colliery houses and had fires and you know, trips to the pit in their pit boots and things'. It was like 60 years out-of-date ... I went to this place called West Silvertown and thought 'well...I'd never want to live (her) ... it's so deprived: I'd NEVER seen deprivation like it! There was deprivation in the mining communities at that time, but they were COMMUNITIES and they support one another. They still had that sense of what a community is and you're all in it together- joint sort of support network and families.

I: So everyone had a role?

M: Everyone played some (*role*)...they didn't have to be actively involved but they had to do something! They didn't just have to 'take'! ... They had to come

to the meeting to get the parcel or the money, they had to stay to the meeting and they had to do something, contribute something. And I think that leads to a blossoming of people's perceptions- there were women there who hadn't done much at all, and (*they*) would go out onto the street, some of them didn't want to do that, but they would go and do something else. And some of them would go and speak (*at*) places. So it developed them politically as well...

Some of them didn't support the strike, but would come along and we never said they had to, we just said 'we're there because we want to support each other and make sure that families and the single miners in particular, at least have something to get by on.' ... By then it had developed county wide, so we were able to link in with the Welfare Support Organisations, the Local Authority... there were lots of voluntary, sort of CABs [Citizens' Advice Bureaux] and things with different names! We used to link into them, and I would go along sometimes and act as an advocate or some of the women would do that...

I: So how long did it go on for?

M: We were a solid group towards the end, there were only about 15 families left at the end because, the travelling miners, in particular, were much more vulnerable to going back. But we were very close knit by the end... it was almost feeling like batten down the hatches! And how much longer can people go on - because they couldn't have gone on any longer and that was the only time I've disagreed with my brother and my husband through the Strike ... My argument was: when the conference was on at the end - the vote - that the vote had to be to go back. Because the only other option was to decimate the whole thing... because my family would have split... because nobody could go on any longer.

Bala Nair came to England from India and was interviewed on 19th January 2012. His father had been a UK diplomat but he and his brother had developed strong socialist convictions. He joined the Communist Party when he got his first job in India and later became a member of the Co-operative Party in Britain.

Bala: The miner's strike to me was glorious disappointment. 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, but there was a very basic morality in it. [The] morality is common and I found that fantastic.

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 the fact that when I was 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. And that feeling, it was a brilliant feeling ... But to counter that was the knowledge, with the absolute knowledge from the day we started that we would lose. However we looked at it, when we realised that there were the miners in Nottingham [working], places like that, we realised that the battle was essentially lost. But much more than that was the quarrels that we had with the constituency Labour Party. A lot of us, including me, had the most, not bitter, but definitely very, very heated arguments because our constituency had to follow Neil Kinnock's dictates. The miners were being led by lambs and donkeys, etc. [saying] that the miners should have gone back to work. And all of us who still belonged to the working class, realised that was the wrong decision to make. So it was gloriously beautiful because the... community spirit, and the coming together of human beings, because of a morality which is inherently correct.

But hugely disappointing because from the day we started, we knew we were going to lose. And we realised that the consequences of that loss... 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. Then we come to the period where the biggest disappointment of all, was when the Labour Party got back in again and there was so much hope, especially with the size of the majority that we had. The hope that the Labour Party would do

for the working class what Margaret Thatcher did for the privileged class, with the same kind of majority she had to the majority that the working class had now achieved. So the disappointments that came over the fifteen years of watching our own leaders diminish our own self. And how new liberalism has such a... such a, how shall I put it, feeling that it is correct, a justification that somehow managed to creep into morality.

***Thea Khamis's** father was from Palestine and her mother from England and she was interviewed on 4th April 2012. She grew up in America, Lebanon, Egypt and Italy, and remembers a family full of political debate. Her first job was in Algeria 'which was a very political place to be'.*

Thea: Of course, we were involved in the miner's strike, and support groups, we sort of set up the local support group with Len James as county councillor then and started collecting at the supermarkets, and doing what people were doing all over the country. Organising the parcels, delivering them, organising... events; fundraising at the clubs. We had one... in Stanley... I remember that, with Mick Elliot... I went along to put that... to... the committee and try and get them to agree. I find that interesting at the time because they weren't used to women going in I don't think very often. It was very much a men's club still in those days!

Interviewer: Were you successful?

T: Oh yes. Generally they were very supportive of me. You had no shortage of people wanting to collect money. They did it for the miners; it was just massive support. I remember standing there, ice cold, with a Father Christmas outfit on... everyone just seemed to be working to support the miners... I hope it goes down in history as something people do actually remember... as a good fight... then we also had... (Dennis) Skinner came up for some sort of fundraiser. We had music, organised bands. Lots of activity the whole time... .

***Vin and Pat McIntyre** were jointly interviewed on 4th July 2012 and are from Middlesbrough and Stockton respectively. Both went to (different) Catholic grammar schools but Pat recalls coming from a 'very political family' whereas Vin's family was 'Conservative if anything'.*

Vin: Despite the fact that a lot of people didn't like us in Durham Labour Party, we managed to persuade Durham City Labour Party to take on the role of the principal support agent during the miner's strike. ... We supplied eight hundred parcels a week. We thought there was, maybe, forty or fifty miners living in Durham constituency, since all the mines had disappeared. But it turned out there was close to a thousand miners living in Durham City, working on the coast... in the coastal pits. And because of the difficulty, they couldn't travel to their pits to get relief during the strike, it was agreed by all the groups around the County meeting together, that support would be provided on the basis of where miners lived, rather than where they worked... So when we discovered there were so many, we started supplying parcels by shopping with a couple of trolleys in the supermarket.

The Labour Party kind of ownership of the campaign was a problem for (some people) so they formed themselves into a group, the Durham Miners' Family Aid, which was a separate group. But we went and liaised with them, and in the end, they handed all the money they had collected over.

Pat: Barring two other places that they were supporting.

V: To the Labour Party constituency. £120,000 over the year, one way or another.

P: We had a clothing facility as well, and shoes and boots, new ones, or rejects.

V: There was probably a dozen people active on a daily basis during that campaign. Maybe another 50 or 60 who supported quite a lot, collecting

or distributing parcels, or whatever. But that was a year out of our lives in a way.

V: We bludgeoned the miners' union into giving us a big room there (Redhills) for our packing operations.

P: We'll have this one. It stunk of onions for years afterwards!

V: We started off buying sacks of potatoes and dividing them up into seven pound plastic bags, carrier bags and we thought: this is ridiculous. A huge labour effort, so eventually we bought little sacks of potatoes: 28lbs, and gave each family one every fortnight. But when the 'pantechnic' arrived with these thousand sacks of potatoes, lorry and its trailer, at Redhills to unload them, they stacked them outside for us to carry them in, it was like wartime sandbags. It was like a bunker! Somebody should have taken a photo of that.

P: ...We learnt a lot didn't we? ...

V: You had to have a social every week to raise money, you know. So Pat had to write a song every week.

P: I didn't write the music every week.

V: Had to have new material all the time!

P: No it wasn't exactly, but it was getting on that way. I hadn't time to think about the music at all, basically I write lyrics. And I write, I don't call it verse or poetry, but it scans and it rhymes, and that's it. But it was, it was good, good fun. Those were the fun bits.

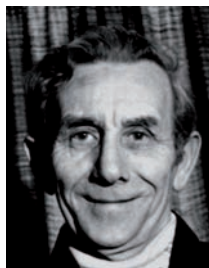
These are only a few of the many stories recording the experiences of individuals and communities during a momentous period in the history of our region.

References

- ¹ Arthur Scargill (1938-) NUM President 1981-2002.
- ² Joe Gormley (1917-1963) NUM President 1971-1981.
- ³ David Hart (1944-2011) Far-right adviser to Thatcher, playboy banking heir, funded the breakaway Union of Democratic Miners in Nottingham.
- ⁴ The act withdrew the immunities from official industrial action which had not been the subject of a valid ballot. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_Union_Act_1984 for more details (accessed 15 April 2014).
- ⁵ Neil Kinnock.(1942 -) Leader of the Labour Party 1983-1992.

FRED RAMSEY – MORE THAN A STEREOTYPE

Peter Brabban



When the publishers Strong Words¹ published a collection of poems by my uncle, Fred Ramsey in 1980, it surprised me, most of my family and many of Fred's friends. We all knew that Fred, or Ted as he was known in the family, was an intelligent, lively, outspoken, courageous and compassionate man - but not that he was a poet.

The collection, *The Way I See It*, draws on Fred's life experience and the views that it shaped. This is poetry and not biography or historical analysis and it paints with broadbrush strokes his life and especially his views. The choice of poems fits well with a view of Fred as a radicalised 'working class hero', a left wing socialist and class warrior - a stereotype drawn straight from the world of 1970s TV series *When The Boat Comes In*. Yet Fred and his politics were much more complex than the picture drawn from the collection of poems. His son Alan feels that many of his poems, especially those expressing his patriotism, were omitted because they clashed with this view. Fred was indeed working-class, had experienced the grinding poverty of the mining communities of County Durham in the 1930s, and was in fact, and in deed, a hero, both as a sailor and as leader of a mines rescue team after the war. He was much more than a stereotype.

Fred Ramsey was born in Tantobie, County Durham in December 1918, just over a month after the ending of the First World War. He was the youngest of five children. In 1911 his parents Frederick Ramsey and Alice Osborne were living in two rooms with two of their children (their

eldest was my mother), and a lodger. Frederick was a journeyman butcher, described by Jack Temple, the butcher in nearby White le Head as “the most skilled slaughterman he ever saw”. Family legend tells of Frederick as being plagued with depression (Winston Churchill’s black dog) and a drinking problem.

Young Fred soon proved to be a bright and intelligent lad. He graduated from Tanfield Lea Elementary School in 1930 with a scholarship to the Alderman Wood Grammar School in Stanley. Unfortunately Fred’s Grammar School career began at a time when the inter war economic depression was taking a firm grip on County Durham. Over 30% of men were unemployed, and of these over 80% had been unemployed for over a year. Before he reached his fifteenth birthday the economic depression reached out and shaped Fred’s life forever. At this time his father was one of the great mass of unemployed, and his brother Alan was beginning to lose the battle against kidney failure that would eventually kill him in 1938. Fred had to leave school to go down Tanfield pit to earn a living. His poem *The Hungry Thirties* displays his feelings about the injustice of the curtailment of his education and the life he was forced into. Fred was one of the boys being employed by the mine owners to replace the more expensive adult males. His wage would have been a fraction of that earned by adult miners. His sense of injustice and the disparity in the opportunities offered to the children of different classes is a repeated mantra in a number of his poems, as is his sense that working-class people are treated with disdain by those with wealth and power.

Fred stayed at Tanfield Colliery for nearly two years, but in January 1935 circumstances changed when the Means Test legislation kicked in. This meant that the whole of a household’s income was assessed in fixing the amount of dole to be paid out. The earnings of a son or daughter would be subtracted from the total dole being paid to recipients such as Fred’s father. The reasons behind the decision that Fred must leave school early would have disappeared overnight, and the sacrifice he had made for his family would have been made meaningless. Like many single young men at this time his

THE HUNGRY THIRTIES

*At fourteen I went down the pit,
wearing hand-me-downs that did not fit.*

*I crawled inbye by candle's gleam,
through reeking tunnel, stinking seam.*

*My pony stands, sweat rising off it,
worked to death to show a profit.*

*No matter how ill treated he
is valued here much more than me.*

*The owner ponders, face a frown.
"Good gracious me, my profits down!
Profits down! God bless my soul!
Here's your cards, you're on the dole.*

*While unemployed you'll get some sun
and find starvation can be fun.
I don't care if you're cowed and beaten.
I've got a son to keep at Eton.*

*If I can keep you in your place,
It will help him win the social race."
I swallowed hate, my path was fixed
to be a life long socialist.*

choices were stark. He could stay and live in the poverty forced on the family by the Means Test or ease the family situation by leaving to support himself, a form of forced migration - a tough choice for a 16-year-old. In making his choice Fred would have to take into account the overcrowding at home, which he shared with his parents and three adult siblings. Fred chose to leave and at the age of 16 he set off to try his luck in London.

London in 1935 must have seemed like a different world to Fred, arriving from the enclosed working-class community of Tantobie. In his book *English Journey*, published in 1934, J B Priestley claims that there were three Englands at that time: 'Old England: the cathedral and market towns, manor houses and inns'²; Nineteenth Century England: 'the industrial England of coal, iron, steel, cotton, wool, railways: of thousands of rows of little houses all alike... a cynically devastated countryside, sooty dismal little towns, and still sootier grim fortress like cities'³; and

the new post-war (1914-18) England: belonging far more to the age itself than to this particular island. America, I supposed, was its real birthplace. This is the England of arterial and by-pass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance halls and cafes, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses⁴.

It was into this 'new England' that Fred arrived in 1935. With the worst of the depression disappearing from London and the South East, where the new consumer based industries were beginning to take off, prompting a housing boom stretching the suburbs further and further from the city. (Echoes of 2013?) The wealth of London and the growing affluence of its people must have come as a profound shock to Fred. He had left one of the designated Distressed Areas, and had personally faced the prospect of deepening poverty. The wider social mix would have come as a bit of a revelation to someone who by his own admission was "as green as grass".

He found work in a pub in Ealing, in West London and for the first time found himself in the company of white-collar middle-class people, whom he would call the “gin and it set”. Their political views were very much at odds with the prevailing attitudes in Tantobie. His conversations with this new set of people in the evenings, as well as his lunchtime conversations with the workers engaged in building the houses of the growing suburb, helped to shape his political views. The General Election of that year must have given an extra edge to those discussions. He soon discovered that his opinion of an individual was not necessarily determined by that person’s class or political views. He actually liked some of the middle-class Tories he met and found some of the working-class builders to be ‘arses’, quite a mature attitude for a naïve 16-year-old. It can be argued that his views of a ‘one nation’ approach to politics came from these early encounters.

His time in London also helped him to develop a view on the growing threat of fascism. Nineteen thirty-five can be seen as the high point in the growth of Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists before their defeat at the ‘Battle of Cable Street’ on 4th October 1936. However, it was not from these home-grown fascists (who he would later describe as “being ridiculous”) that Fred saw the threat but rather from the growth and activities of foreign fascism. This view led him into the camp of those opposing appeasement and a new appraisal of Winston Churchill, who he later described as a terrible Chancellor and even worse Home Secretary but a great war leader and a great man - not the views of a man bound by ideology.

In 1936 he returned home to County Durham where for a few months he worked down the pit while he developed other plans. He put those plans into action in 1937 when he enlisted in the Royal Navy as a practical way of opposing fascism. His first act as a sailor was to volunteer for the Spanish patrol, and he was posted to HMS Hyperion in the Mediterranean to enforce the arms blockade and ferry Republican refugees from Catalonia to Marseille. At the outbreak of war in 1939 Hyperion was transferred to the Atlantic before being involved in the Norway Campaign and afterwards transferring back to the Mediterranean. The fact that Fred was not only

prepared, but also in place, to fight a war against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, shows his willingness to fight. Yet his poem 1939 - 45, written well after the war ended, shows a more jaundiced view of Britain's involvement.

Fred proved to be an excellent sailor and a skilled operator of the ASDIC equipment (the underwater sound detection system for anti-submarine operations). His ship, HMS Hyperion, was in the thick of the battle for control of the Mediterranean taking part in the Battle of Calabria and the Battle of Cape Spada in July 1940 before hitting a mine while escorting one of the convoys to Malta in December 1940. This was the end for Hyperion which had to be sunk after Fred and the rest of the crew were transferred to HMS Imperial. He



He stayed with Imperial and was part of the crew in May 1941 when it joined the fleet bound for Crete to evacuate the British troops stranded there. On 29th May, while sailing towards Crete, the fleet was attacked by the Italian Air Force and Imperial suffered a near miss when a bomb exploded near her stern. Despite this, Imperial carried on to Crete and evacuated 300 troops. It was on the return voyage to Alexandria that the damage to Imperial became evident when her rudder jammed and the out-of-control destroyer cut across the bow of HMS Orion, barely avoiding a catastrophic collision. Repairs being impossible, and not wanting to delay the fleet in a precarious situation, the Admiral ordered Imperial to be scuttled after crew and passengers were disembarked. Once again Fred found himself leaving a ship that was to be sunk. Fred later described the brutal and bloody battle of Crete as his worst experience of the Second World War. It was an experience made worse when he contracted blood poisoning from an insect bite and underwent an operation in Alexandria to drain the poison from his arm.

Shortly after his experiences at Crete in 1941, Fred was mentioned in the King's Birthday Honours Dispatches, after he and another ASDIC operator

1939-45

*Your country's in danger, it needs one and all.
From the slums and the dole queue we answered the call.
We went to the warships and barracks and trained
to uphold the freedom we'd never attained.*

*We'd been free to exist on a meagre means test.
Free to pick up the crumbs while the rich took the rest.
To attend our slum schools in rags and barefeet,
while the real education was for the elite.*

*They told us our ships and our tanks were the best,
but they soon proved inferior when put to the test.
The profiteers prospered, they cheated and lied,
and got a bit richer with each man that died.*

*We still chose our leaders by one golden rule.
To get to the top you attend public school.
A man could be craven, his mind could be blank,
but an upper class accent would guarantee rank.*

*By guess and by God, we at last won the war,
and re-started the system the same as before.
You're all heroes now lads, your demobs arranged.
Get back to the treadmill, nothing has changed.*

(there was supposed to be three on duty but the third had been wounded) had tracked a U-boat for almost thirty hours. They had worked in short shifts to maintain concentration until the U-boat was pinned down, attacked and destroyed. The flavour of that chase and the mixed feelings after the 'blood lust' of the chase can be seen in his poem *Brothers In Arms*.

Nineteen forty-one turned out to be a good year for Fred, the high point being when he married his sweetheart Elizabeth (Betty) Young in late summer. Betty was the younger sister of the girl who his late brother Alan had been seeing. She was a cheerful woman, who always seems to have been smiling and was working as a nurse at the time of their marriage.



BROTHERS IN ARMS

*“Ping, ping, ping,” the Asdics said,
“an enemy U-Boat’s dead ahead.”
“Steady, boys, steady,” the Captain cried,
“tonight we’ll avenge some mates who’ve died.”*

*With her great bow waves backward curling,
and Battle Flags snapped taut, unfurling,
her turbines howling loud and shrill,
‘Hyperion’ tore in for the kill.*

*Depth charges arcing, bursting, spouting.
Blood lust, swearing, cursing, shouting.
“Kill the pigs, the swine, the Huns!
Sweep her decks with the Bowfors guns.”*

*The U-Boat’s sunk, and from the sea,
survivors shout “Help! Oh please help me.”
Deatly quiet, then a voice in the hush
Says “give them a hand, they’re lads like us”.*

Fred continued to serve in the front line of the war at sea for another three years. He witnessed the containment and destruction of the Vichy French fleet and the allied landings at Sicily and Salerno, where, unknown to Fred at the time, his sister’s husband and my father, Tommy Brabban, was part of the landing force. There is no doubt that Fred was a good sailor, a brave man, who had served his country well, yet he never forgot the injustices and prejudices he had experienced in the thirties. His poem *The Admiral* sums up his exasperation that the conduct of the war was still in the hands of a ruling elite who were given power solely on the basis of social standing and the old school tie.

THE ADMIRAL

*The Admiral proudly saluted that day
The bosuns' pipes trilled as the ships left the bay.
They steamed out to the open sea,
then laid their course by his decree.
They steered straight into a U Boat pack
and were slaughtered in the first attack.
Half the ships in the convoy went down,
obeying the plans of that high ranked clown.
The remainder scattered and grimly fought
their separate ways to a friendly port.
Then the King gave a medal, bought with blood,
to the Admiral whose plans were no damned good.*

In late 1944 Fred was diagnosed with significant hearing loss in one ear (in later life he would become near-deaf in that ear), the result of being too close to too many explosions. He was transferred from the frontline to training duties at Campbeltown on the Mull of Kintyre where he trained new ASDIC operators and instructed submariners in evasion techniques. His wife Betty joined him in Scotland, where my cousin Alan is keen to point out he was conceived. In the summer of 1945 Fred returned to 'civvy street' and to County Durham.

The 1945 Election was the first one in which he could vote, although it is not clear whether this was as a serviceman or a civilian. There is very little doubt, however, that he did vote and which party he voted for. There would have been very little sentiment in the way that Fred cast his ballot. While he admired Churchill as a war leader, he also admired Clem Attlee just as much and Ernest Bevin perhaps even more. He admired Attlee for his intelligence and quiet determination and forgave him his public school background. As for Bevin, Fred admired the way that he had overcome a very unpromising background to become one of the most powerful men in the country, a real

‘working class hero’. As an intelligent and thinking man, Fred must have been following the progress of the Beveridge Report containing as it did so many answers to the problems faced by working people in the 1930s. The scars from that time must have felt raw to someone like Fred, whose future had been blighted by poverty and unemployment. He may also have witnessed the way that the Conservatives had dragged their feet when the implementation of the report had been debated by the Commons in 1943.

The bright future expected by many with the election of a Labour government committed to implementing the Beveridge Plan was not immediately apparent to Fred and Betty when they returned to County Durham. Fred could only find work as a ‘datal hand’ (a labourer paid by the day) at Byermoor Colliery. The bright spot of the year was the birth of their first son, Alan, in October 1945. Fred was never going to remain in this lowly position in the workplace, and he began to take a full course of evening classes to complete his education. Within four years he had become the Overman at Byermoor, and father to a second son, Ian. Later he went on to become Fore Overman at Hobson Colliery.

By the start of the 1950s he had added another string to his bow by training in mines rescue, becoming the leader of the auxiliary mines rescue team at the Hobson. It was in this role that Fred and his team were called to Easington Colliery on 29th May 1951. Easington was one of the most modern and productive pits in the Durham coalfield, but when the teeth of a coal-cutting machine hit some pyrites in the early hours, the ensuing sparks caused a firedamp explosion which brought down 120 yards of roof and entombed eighty-one men. There was little chance of bringing out any of the men alive, yet mines rescue teams went underground time and again to see what they could find. This was not without risk to the rescuers, as the death of two rescue team members testified. These two deaths brought the final total of dead to 83. The desperation of the rescuers to find any glimmer of hope or life is well captured by Fred’s poem *The Easington Disaster*, which also conveys the grim stoicism of miners who would leave this scene of devastation and grief to return underground in their own collieries on the next working day.

THE EASINGTON DISASTER

*At the pithead, in the dawn,
rescue teams look old and drawn.
Sickened by the last vain search,
where two men died to save a corpse.*

*Weeping women, mangled men,
can we face it all again?
Yet, we must, for, if we strive,
perhaps we'll find just one alive.*

*Down this grim, blast-shattered mine,
bodies sprawl where our lamps shine.
Once strong men, once eager boys,
lie broken like discarded toys.*

*Our hopes have gone, our tears we've shed,
there's nothing down here but the dead.
Eighty three's the final toll;
the endless, bloody, price of coal.*

Fred stayed with mining for another eighteen years. He left in 1969 because of ill health - he was diabetic. He took the Civil Service exam and started working as a Clerical Officer at Longbenton. But he hated the work "with a near religious passion", as he put it, and left at the first opportunity to become keeper at the County Hall and County Court in Newcastle.

It was perhaps during the 1970s that Fred began expressing himself through poetry. This was a watershed decade, and the events of that time would have had an impact and set the tone of Fred's poetry. The long post-war economic boom (an artificial boom based on consumer spending and Tory tax cuts) was grinding to a halt, leading to a breakdown in the

MY COUNTRY, RIGHT OR WRONG

*I wish they'd tell me what they mean
when they exhort us on our TV screen,
to help restore old Britain's glory.
My memory tells a different story.*

*The Britain I knew had mighty fleets
and starving men on the corner of streets.
She had a glorious empire out in the East
where a native was treated worse than a beast.*

*It was a Britain where you begged for a job,
where skivvies slaved for just five bob
for a non-stop, weary, seven day week
and nobody cared for the old and the meek.
A country bound by strict class chains
where women died in their labour pains
or bore rickety kids with bones all bent
for want of money, wisely spent.*

*Where kids started work at just fourteen.
Holidays were still an impossible dream.
While for folks with just a little money
the country flowed with milk and honey.*

*Now, they talk of spending more
On guns, defences and the law,
while cutting down on social things,
the pendulum stops, then slowly swings.*

*If going back is what we mean
when they lecture on the TV screen,
then I'd advise the bloody lot
to try and better what we've got.*

political consensus of full employment and support for the welfare state. In the context of rising unemployment and cuts in welfare spending, Fred's poetry can be seen in the same light as Ken Loach's recent film *The Spirit of '45* - a reminder of the conditions experienced by many in the pre-war period⁵. His poem *My country right or wrong* expresses this idea in a very direct way. The threat to Britain's welfare state and the growing political polarisation of the 1970s must have been very painful for Fred because it undermined the two main pillars of his politics. Fred was very much a product of his time, and no different from many people of his age and experience, with a belief in caring for those in trouble, social fairness, and the much-quoted phrase of the time, 'equality of opportunity'. Even though Fred never joined the Labour Party, the policies and programme of the 1945 Labour government fitted perfectly with his views especially as they were the product of a consensus within the Labour Party. Fred was no Marxist, and believed very much in seeking common ground. If a label must be attached to Fred, it would be that of a social democrat.

For those of us on the Left, the most uncomfortable aspect of Fred's politics is his patriotism - something he shared with the majority of working people of his age. In coming to terms with this aspect of Fred's socialism, I returned to another socialist patriot whose views I believe coincided with those of Fred. George Orwell takes up this tricky topic in his essay *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*. Describing England in 1941 Orwell declares, 'England is the most class ridden country under the sun. It is a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and silly', but he goes on to qualify this by putting forward the view that:

England... resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons... It is a family in which the young are generally thwarted and most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. Still, it is a family... with the wrong members in control.⁶

Reflecting Fred's views, Orwell states, 'we have got to fight against privilege, against the notion that a half-witted public schoolboy is better for command than an intelligent mechanic'⁷. Taking up the issue of the Left and patriotism, Orwell claims that:

In left-wing circles it is always felt that there is something slightly disgraceful in being an Englishman and that it is a duty to snigger at every English institution ... It is a strange fact, but it is unquestionably true that almost any English intellectual would feel more ashamed at standing to attention during 'God save the King' than of stealing from a poor box.⁸

He goes on to claim that faced with a growing groundswell for fundamental change, 'Progress and reaction are ceasing to have anything to do with party labels'⁹ and that 'because patriotism is finally stronger than class hatred, the chances are that the will of the majority will prevail...The swing of opinion is visibly happening'¹⁰. I am sure that Fred would have agreed with Orwell when he declared that 'Patriotism has nothing to do with Conservatism. It is actually the opposite of conservatism, since it is a devotion to something that is always changing'¹¹.

For Fred, patriotism led to the adoption of a 'one nation' approach to socialism, an approach that was reflected in the decades following the Second World War but which was breaking down in the late 1970s and was brought to an end with the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Fred hated the divisiveness of the Thatcher government, and his son Alan remembers clearly Fred's response to Thatcher's 'enemy within' remarks during the Miners' strike:

I thought he was going to explode. I can remember his anger and what he said, 'I detest that woman and it makes me ashamed of myself to admit it - I never hated anyone'.

Fred Ramsey died on 29th April 1989 just a few miles from where he was born and, perhaps, the best epitaph that can be given to him is his own poem

TEMPUS FUGIT

*Now that I am growing old,
My joints all creak, my blood grows cold.
My hair falls out, my teeth go bad,
But in my heart – I'm still a lad.*

*Now that I am growing old,
I must act staidly, so I'm told,
But I'd like to be naughty, I'd like to be bad,
Cos deep in my heart – I'm still a lad.*

References

- ¹ Strong Words for Wallsend Arts Centre, 1980, ISBN 0905274113.
- ² London, Heinemann/Gollanz, 1934, p 397, (republished 2009 by Great Northern Books, ISBN 978 1 905080 47 2).
- ³ Ibid p 398.
- ⁴ Ibid p 401.
- ⁵ Documentary film released in 2013, with Ken Loach as both writer and director. See www.spiritof45.org for more details.
- ⁶ Originally published by Secker and Warburg in 1941 as the first in a series of short books, the Searchlight books, edited by T. R. Fyvel and George Orwell. Reprinted in Orwell, Sonia and Ian Angus (eds.) *Collected Essays, Journalism and letters of George Orwell Vol 2: My Country Right or Left, 1940-1943*, London, Penguin Books, 1970, pp. 74-134 (pages 87 and 88).
- ⁷ Ibid p108
- ⁸ Ibid p 95.
- ⁹ Ibid p 116
- ¹⁰ Ibid p 118.
- ¹¹ Ibid p 127.

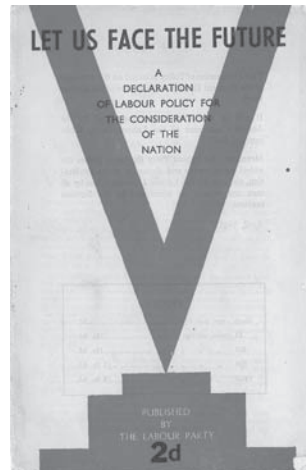
A LABOUR BOYHOOD

Archie Potts

I grew up in a rock-solid Labour household in the 1930s and 1940s. None of my extended family was ever a member of the Labour Party, although they supported it with a passion usually reserved for the local football team. I was the first member of the family to join the Labour Party. I joined the Labour League of Youth in 1949 and remained an active member of the Labour Party for several decades. Was the family I describe a typical family of the time? I doubt it. I believe it had its own peculiarities.

Personal background

I was born on 27 January 1932 in Sunderland. My father, a shipyard riveter, was unemployed at the time. My mother worked in a glass warehouse in the town before her marriage. Both of my parents came from large families, which meant I had many uncles and aunts and an increasing number of cousins. Most of my uncles were time-served workers in the shipbuilding and engineering trades – as both my grandfathers had been before them, although they had died before I could have any memories of them. They were all proud members of their particular trade union,



either the Boilermakers' Society or the Amalgamated Engineering Union – but were never active in union affairs. It might appear strange that although they were fervent supporters of the Labour Party and loyal members of their trade unions they were not active in these organisations. Nevertheless this is the way it was.

The Potts family were 'Barbary Coasters', that is they came from Monkwearmouth on the other side of the River Wear, where I was born and brought up. My father's relatives were not gregarious and I saw little of them as I grew up. On the other hand, my mother's family, the Simpsons, was a closely-knit unit. Its members usually gathered on Saturday evenings at Grandmother Simpson's house, located in one of the mean streets at the top of the High Street in Sunderland. We attended these Saturday evening shindigs, as my mother remained close to her mother and siblings after her marriage. A large table in the living room would be cleared and the adults would play a card game called Newmarket. At the conclusion of an evening spent playing cards my grandmother would serve up a local dish called pan haggerty - sliced potatoes laced with either tomatoes or onions cooked in a large frying pan. The serving of supper would be a time for political discussion dominated by the men. Although none of my uncles was a domestic tyrant, they did subscribe to the view that politics was a male preserve. The womenfolk, in the interests of family harmony, usually held their tongues. I, too, sat and listened to my elders holding forth on the issues of the day.

Political discussions in the 1930s

In general members of the family were uncritical of the Labour Movement and its leaders. A. J. Cook, a miners' leader of the 1920s, was revered in our family for his resilience in the face of defeat. 'He never gave in', was a phrase often used to describe him. Ernest Bevin was admired for his role as the 'Dockers' KC' and as the man who created the Transport and General Workers' Union. Herbert Morrison was given credit for Labour's

takeover of the London County Council – a rare Labour victory in the 1930s. Sir Stafford Cripps was respected for having given up a lucrative law practice in order to enter Labour politics. Ellen Wilkinson was admired as a bonny fighter for the unemployed, and Beatrice Webb was awarded brownie points for refusing to use the Lady Passfield title when her husband Sidney was made a Labour peer. I cannot recall Clement Attlee ever being mentioned in any family discussion held in the 1930s.

Ramsay MacDonald and J. H. Thomas were regularly denounced as traitors, and I remember my father describing Stanley Baldwin as a 'scoundrel'. Lloyd George was not remembered as 'the man who won the war' but as the politician who, at the 1918 general election, had promised to build 'a land fit for heroes to live in' and did not keep his promise. His failure to implement the Sankey Report, favouring the nationalisation of the coal industry, was never forgotten.

Curiously, Edward VIII was popular mainly because, on a visit to South Wales, he had been shocked by the effects of mass unemployment and had said, 'Something must be done'. It was firmly believed in our family that this was why Baldwin decided to topple him. The King's proposed marriage to Mrs Simpson was not the real reason why he had been forced to abdicate. When he was succeeded by his brother, who became George VI, my father remarked, 'He'll give them no trouble'. In general, the women in the family took more interest in the royal family than did the men. However, I would say that the main feeling was one of indifference. Some working class areas in the town were bedecked with flags and bunting as part of the coronation day celebrations of 12 May 1937. I can confirm that there was no 'coronation fever' in our household on the day George VI was crowned.

On foreign affairs there was strong opposition to Neville Chamberlain's Appeasement Policy. My father – a bookish man – had read an English translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and he said, 'This man means what he says'. Winston Churchill's warnings were received with approval, although Churchill's role during the General Strike had not been forgotten and was held against him. The only Conservative politician I can ever remember

receiving any praise was Duff Cooper and this was because he had resigned from the Cabinet over the Munich agreement.

Although the family was to be proved right on Appeasement, it badly misjudged the Soviet Union. Although they were not Communists, in their eyes the Soviet Union could do no wrong. They sincerely believed the USSR to be a workers' paradise presided over by a benign Stalin. The Soviet's planned economy providing full employment was a big plus in its favour. Any criticism of the Soviet Union was dismissed as 'capitalist propaganda'. This rosy view of the USSR persisted well into the 1950s.

Although there was virtual unanimity on political matters, I remember a heated argument on the abolition of capital punishment. The other liberal issues that became important in the 1960s, such as the reform of the laws on abortion, homosexuality and censorship, were completely outside their field of interest in the 1930s.

In respect of religion the religious divide between the families was not very great, the Potts family were Low Church Anglicans and the Simpsons were Methodists. Roman Catholicism, however, was regarded as suspect and if any member of the family had 'married out' – which never happened – I feel sure this would have been regarded as some sort of betrayal of family values. The Roman Catholic Church's support for Franco in the Spanish Civil War was regarded with disapproval and the Vatican was believed to be sympathetic to the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy. Eire's neutrality during the Second World War did not go down very well either. All my uncles and aunts had attended Sunday schools as children and, in some cases, church youth clubs as teenagers, but religion played little part in their adult lives. They were not churchgoers. Christenings, marriages and burials were treated seriously and the relevant church was expected to provide a ceremony appropriate to the occasion. These family events were perhaps their only contact with organised religion. George Orwell probably got it right in his book *The English People* when he observed that the English working class on religious matters had settled for a 'vague theism'.¹

The war years 1939-1945

The outbreak of war in September 1939 reduced the opportunities for Saturday evening family gatherings at the Simpsons. My youngest uncle was called up into the army, another uncle, who had served at sea, was recalled to the merchant navy, an unmarried aunt was drafted into factory work, overtime was being worked in the shipbuilding and engineering industries, and the summer of 1940 saw the beginning of German air raids on the town. The war gradually encroached on everyday life. Family get-togethers became less frequent and when they did take place the main topic was the progress of the war.

There was little faith in Neville Chamberlain's leadership and everyone was relieved when Churchill took over in May 1940. Like many others we huddled around our wireless-sets to listen to Churchill's stirring wartime speeches. The fall of France came as a great shock. What had happened to the Maginot Line? Why had it failed to stop the Germans? The Battle of Britain was won in the air by a very narrow margin and Britain avoided defeat. Victory appeared remote but there was no question of surrendering to Hitler. Britain would have to fight on alone. The Eighth Army battled it out with Rommel in the deserts of North Africa and the Royal Navy fought the Battle of the Atlantic.

Then on 22 June 1941 what appeared to be a miracle occurred: Hitler's armies attacked the Soviet Union. The Germans advanced deep into Russian territory. Soviet losses were enormous. But the Russians finally halted the German armies outside Leningrad and Moscow and then launched a winter offensive of their own. A wave of relief swept across Britain and there was widespread gratitude towards the Russians for their magnificent fight back. Later, the defence of Stalingrad was followed closely in news bulletins and the defeat of Hitler's Sixth Army proved to be a turning point in the war.

The positive family views already held on the USSR were reinforced by the fighting qualities of the Red Army and the endurance of the Soviet people. The Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 was regarded as a clever move to buy

more time for the Soviet Union that had paid off. Stalin's purges of the 1930s were viewed as the necessary removal of a potential fifth column in Soviet ranks.

My father explained to me why the Russians were fighting so well, 'You see, the farms and factories belong to the people in Russia. It is their country, they own it, and they are fighting to defend it'.

On 7 December 1941, Japan attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, bringing the USA into the war. Members of the family welcomed the USA as an ally but feelings towards the Americans were mixed. President Roosevelt was genuinely popular and his New Deal much admired. His support for Britain through his Land-Lease programme was also appreciated. However, it was recognised that the USA had its own agenda and would pursue its own interests.

If there was a special relationship with the USA, it was cultural. Family members were regular filmgoers and enjoyed watching American films. The men liked the Westerns and crime thrillers and the women the Bette Davis and Joan Crawford weepies. Everyone liked Hollywood musicals. However, American war films, often starring John Wayne, were regarded as too brash and British war films were preferred. Later in the war, the Gainsborough costume melodramas, featuring Phyllis Calvert, Margaret Lockwood and James Mason, provided some much needed escapist entertainment.

American popular music was preferred to the classical and light orchestral pieces largely favoured by the BBC. Bing Crosby was then at the height of his popularity as were singing groups such as the Andrews Sisters and the Ink Spots.

Apart from my father, who was an autodidact, family members were not great readers. American pulp magazines, then sold on market stalls, were their preferred reading. As a boy I remember reading articles about J. Edgar Hoover and his G Men shooting it out with gangsters such as John Dillinger. Hoover was then famous as America's crime buster and not the sinister figure he later became.

Victory 1945

The war ground on to a victorious conclusion on 7 May 1945 when the Germans signed surrender terms at Eisenhower's headquarters at Reims. Naturally there was relief within the family that the fighting had stopped. But there was pessimism about what would follow. As one uncle put it, 'Once they no longer need us to build the ships we'll be back on the scrap-heap'. There was a strong belief that mass unemployment would return and they would be on the dole again.



Richard Ewart and Fred Willey, wearing rosettes, pose with Labour supporters on the steps of the Sunderland Town Hall after their election to the House of Commons on 26 July 1945

A general election was arranged to take place on 5 July 1945. There was little hope in our family that it would result in a Labour victory. It was believed that a grateful electorate would return Winston Churchill, the successful war leader, to power. It did not work out that way. Labour won a stunning victory and Clement Attlee became Prime Minister.

In Sunderland, then a double-member constituency, the successful Labour candidates were F. T. Willey, a barrister from Durham City, and Richard Ewart, a trade union official from South Shields.

An uncle took me to two of the big election meetings held by the Labour Party in the town. I heard Hugh Dalton speak at a packed meeting at the Co-operative Hall in Green Street and Emmanuel Shinwell addressing a large and enthusiastic open-air meeting at Roker Park football ground, then the home of Sunderland FC. Both men were accomplished public speakers and in top form on these occasions. I also recall attending an election meeting at the Miners' Hall in Monkwearmouth addressed by Sam Watson, the Durham Miners' leader, who put the case for the nationalisation of the coal industry. The supporting speaker was former miner Josh Ritson, the retiring Labour MP for Durham City.

I vividly remember the post-election family gathering when the Labour victory was savoured to the full and hopes ran high. There was a pause in the celebratory banter when an uncle observed,

‘There’s only one thing missing from this victory.’

‘Oh aye, and what’s that?’, came a chorus in reply.

‘Churchill did not lose his seat.’

Well, you couldn’t have everything in this life.

References

- ¹ Orwell, George, *The English People*, London, Collins, 1947

THEIR GEORDIES AND OURS

Dave Harker

This is a continuation of the article in last year's volume.

8 Geordie gets the vote

In 1880, the *Newcastle Weekly Courant* published *Bob Cranky's Size Sunday* and carried a Conservative candidate's story about canvassing a 'pitman'. 'Well, now Geordie, and who are you going to vote for?' "Well," said he, "I've been asked by both the candidates, and they were both so civil and sic canny men I could-na help promising them both – (laughter) – but I'm going to vote as I think right." (Applause.)' Northeast people 'very commonly' used *Cockle Geordie* as a name for 'peripatetic vendors of shell fish'.¹ According to an Aberdeen paper, a 'Geordie engine' brought pitmen up the shaft in Seaham. In 1881, a London paper noted that Lizzie Howe starred in a Newcastle pantomime as 'the local celebrity, Bob Cranky'.² The *Oxford English Dictionary's* mining glossary defined 'Geordie' as 'George Stephenson's lamp'.³ According to the *Courant*, Londoners called George Stephenson 'Geordie', and pitmen in Newcastle addressed each other as 'Geordie'. In Newcastle, when George Hill challenged Thomas Burt in debate, there were supportive shouts of 'Gan on, Geordie'.⁴ A London paper called a Navy steamer capable of eleven knots as 'good for nothing except perhaps for an Irish pig-boat or a Geordie collier'. An Exeter paper told a tale about a 'Geordie' 'pitman' who wanted 'hoggers' – stockings without feet – but refused to pay the full price after a Durham draper cut the feet

off a normal pair. A Preston paper told of a Newcastle 'Geordie' who felt overcharged because his dentist extracted a tooth too quickly, but a London paper reported that Selkirk people addressed George Trevelyan as 'Geordie' and saw that as a sign of his popularity. In 1883, the *Courant* reported that, 'Geordie', a drunken pitman, zigzagged across Percy Street in Newcastle after a Town Moor demonstration. In 1884, a Tyneside captain recalled that West Country seamen called every collier sailor 'Geordie'. They 'delighted to hear him talk the broad north lingo' and would 'try to imitate his manner of speaking', but pronounced 'Geordie' as 'Judy', 'in fun'.⁵ An Anglo-American novelist referred to collier ships as 'she-Geordies'.⁶ *The Northern Echo* noted that after an MP spoke in Middlesbrough, someone 'familiarily shouted, "Gan away, Geordie"' and that became 'the signal for another round of applause'.⁷ Late that year, a Reform Act enfranchised all male house owners, employee tenants and lodgers, and added six million to the voting registers.

In 1885, two Durham Miners' Association officials,⁸ and a Northumberland hewer, became MPs,⁹ and the *Courant* acknowledged that 'Geordie' pitmen preferred the simplicity and honesty of men like Burt. It also published a poem that called a 'pitman' 'Geordie', noted that 'Geordie's wife' was unenfranchised and recalled the late 'Geordie' Ridley.¹⁰ Harvard University's Francis James Child suggested a link between *A lamentable new Ditty* and the 'traditional ballad', *Geordie*.¹¹ In 1886, a magazine lamented 'the decay of the rowing enthusiasm which used to characterise "Geordie's"'. A Cardiff paper advertised Harry Monkhouse playing 'Geordie a Tynesider'; while a Liverpool paper called a local footballer 'Geordie'. In 1887, the *Courant* noted that York station guards directed passengers to Newcastle trains with 'This way to Geordie-land'. Male workers who used 'Non transferable' tickets to get into the Newcastle Exhibition and seaside holidaymakers were all 'Geordie'. In 1888, *The Northern Echo* reprinted an *Auckland Chronicle* story about pitmen, but hoped 'our dusky friends' would not 'feel offended at the hackneyed appellation' of 'Geordie'.¹² A *Glossary* of coal trade

terminology defined 'Geordy' as the 'safety lamp invented by George Stephenson',¹³ but a Kipling character cried 'Oh for a decent, rational Geordie'.¹⁴

Ralph Hedley was born in Yorkshire but later trained and worked as an artist in Newcastle. In 1888, he painted 'Going Home', which showed a young pitman called 'Geordy', who carried a 'Geordy' lamp, and an old pitman called 'Ralph', who was smoking. A tobacco advertisement described Ralph as 'Geordy's Chum'. In 1889, the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* gave away lithograph copies of Hedley's painting with its Christmas edition.¹⁵ To Joseph Cowen and others who depended on pitmen's votes, 'Geordy' was a positive icon.

9 The name by which Tynesiders are known outside the district

In 1890, the *Newcastle Weekly Courant* reported about 'Geordy', a pitman, in Durham jail; but a Leeds paper called all English miners 'Geordie' and quoted one from Yorkshire. In the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, Heslop defined 'Geordy' as 'George Stephenson's safety lamp' and 'the name by which Tynesiders are known outside the district'.

When a man from Tyneside came to work in a new place, outside his district, it was said 'a Geordy' had come among them. In South Tynedale, even, this name was applied to the Lower Tyneside men. By Tyneside is understood the eastern portion of the river.¹⁶

A Birmingham paper liked *Geordie. The Adventures of a North Country Waif and Stray*, and two London reviewers noted that after 'much hardship through falling among thieves' the 'poor little fisherman's lad' found 'honesty is the best policy'.¹⁷ In Newcastle, Thomas Allan dedicated Joe Wilson's *Tyneside Songs* to Joseph Cowen.¹⁸ Ralph Hedley painted 'Geordie ha'ad the Bairn' in a pitman's cottage, using him as a model, and Cowen's *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* gave away chromolithograph copies with its Christmas edition. Workers liked it.¹⁹

In 1891, a Manchester paper reprinted a London report that northeast 'miners' earned £8 a fortnight, bought 'luxuries quite beyond their perception of the proper use for them', including pianos, and fed greyhounds on beefsteaks. 'Geordie' wore a 'Sunday suit' to go to Newcastle races, and was 'rather prone to a pugilistic encounter'. He showed 'pluck' by 'well-nigh exterminating' Fenians, but his wife dominated him. A Bristol paper acknowledged that 'Geordie' could 'endure all manner of hardships when he thinks he is standing up for his rights' by striking. The *Newcastle Weekly Courant* reported that 'Geordie', a 'pitman', had refused to bathe at South Shields or let his dog do so.²⁰ Cowen's *Monthly Chronicle* published John Waller's poem, *The Pitman*, whose supposed narrator reminisces about having 'bool'd ower Geordy Waakors' mark', but stresses that 'Geordy gov yor harth that cosy blink'.²¹ In London, the English Dialect Society published Richard Heslop's *Northumberland Words*, which claimed that County Durham people from Wylam to Jarrow, excluding South Shields, used the 'old Northumberland dialect', while a 'Tyne ship' was a 'Geordy'.²² Thomas Allan dedicated *Allan's Illustrated Edition of Tyneside Songs and Readings* to Heslop, 'As Acknowledgment of his Labours', and included many old songs about 'pitmen' called 'Geordie'.²³ A Durham antiquarian published an alleged 'dialogue' between 'Bill, Geordy, and a Doctor'. He defined 'Geordy', bizarrely, as a 'dimin[utive] of George' from the Greek word for a 'landholder'; but since it 'has long been a favourite name among the miners, who were loyal to the Royal Georges', 'Geordy actually meant and means pitman, or even a Tynesider in general'. He offered no evidence.²⁴

In 1892, when northeast pitmen restricted their output rather than strike, a Bristol paper noted that 'Geordie and his canny hinny and bairns are hardy, resolute creatures, and once they make up their minds they will go through much hardship and tribulation before they give in'. A Stockton correspondent complained to *The Northern Echo* that 'an overwhelming majority of the miners are willing and anxious to

return to work at once,' but were 'held in a state of terror by a rowdy minority'. 'If Geordie won't work himself it seems most unjust to permit him to prevent his neighbour from working'. The *Echo* reported that a Tees Valley cyclist who had raised money for charity was dressed as an 'excellent imitation of a "pit-Geordie" with his grimy face, pick and lamp'. A Leeds paper noted that 'Geordie', 'the generic name of the North-country pitman', was 'fond of his garden'. In a Manchester paper's 'Election Anecdote', 'Geordie', a Gateshead 'pitman', did not know how he voted in the secret ballot because he had closed his eyes. In 1893, the *Echo* explained that a 'Geordie' did not necessarily live in the 'pit district', but the *Courant* called all pitmen 'Geordie'. In 1894, it noted that 'Geordie' would 'recreate on the Moor' or 'seek a sniff of ozone' at Tynemouth or Whitley at Easter. When Durham pitmen drank and danced to a German band near Newcastle Station, 'Geordie' declined to contribute to the collection, and all the pitmen at Durham Gala were 'Geordie'. When Hartlepool boys shouted 'Gan on, Geordie' and 'What cheor Geordie' at a pitman, and threw stones, he shot one of them, but the magistrates granted bail. The 1895 *Courant* serial, 'George Robson, the Durham Miner', called him 'Geordie' throughout.²⁵ The Northumberland Miners' Association defiantly commissioned a sculpture of 'Geordie', based on Hedley's painting, to top their Newcastle headquarters; but most papers used the term patronisingly, at best.

In 1896, the *Echo* reported that people at the Tees Union Shipping Company's annual dinner applauded 'Geordie's Piano' and songs in 'the real "canny Newcastle"' idiom. The *Courant* noted that Harry Monkhouse played 'Geordie' in the comedy, *An Irish Girl*, while a London paper called Sunderland a 'Geordie town'.²⁶ In London, the English Dialect society published a list of words from Hetton-le-Hole that defined 'Geordie' as the 'generic' name for 'miner'.²⁷ In 1897, a London paper mentioned a 'North-country "Geordie"' collier vessel and a Belfast paper liked *Geordie, the Black Prince: a north country story*. In 1898, a Cardiff paper reported that migrant 'Tynesiders' had enjoyed

a 'Geordie Quartette'. In 1899, a London paper told of a 'Geordie skipper' whose 'Geordie' collier went round in circles in the Thames. *The Northern Echo* reported that a cyclist dressed as 'Geordie and his bairn' won a fancy dress prize in Barnard Castle. A London reviewer claimed that *Tales of Northumbria* was 'in the Yorkshire style' with 'double-barrelled adjectives' that were 'not in Geordie's vocabulary', since the 'Newcassell-way', 'generally speaking, sheers away the fat' from vowels. The review distinguished between the language used on farms and a 'Geordie' pitman's speech, which was 'very far from improving the dialect'. The *Courant* regarded the 'Geordie' lamp as fit for a museum; but, as the Boer War got underway, 'How "Wor Geordie" Joined the Colours' noted that 'fightin' fever is still in his blood'.²⁸ 'Geordie' was useful as cannon fodder.

10 Howay Geordie!

In 1900, *The Times* published an *English Dialect Dictionary*, which defined 'Geordie' as 'A guinea,' 'Obs[olete] George Stephenson's safety lamp', 'in *comb[ination]*, Geordie-lamp', 'Phr[ase], *by the Geordie*, by George, by St. George', 'A man from Tyneside; a miner', 'a north-country collier vessel' and an English miner in Australia.²⁹ The *Courant* published the pitman Fred Kitt's 'Geordy's Dog Quest', about 'Geordie from Durham and Geordie from Northumberland', who 'wrangled' about a 'skemmy pigeon'.³⁰ In 1901, a Oxford dictionary on 'Historical principle' located the 'dialect' term 'Geordie' in Scotland and northern England, and defined it as a diminutive of George, a 'coal-pitman', a 'collier-boat' and Stephenson's lamp, while a '(Yellow) Geordie' was a guinea.³¹ In 1902, the *Newcastle Weekly Journal* and *Courant* merged.³² In 1905, *A Dictionary of Slang and Colloquial English*, published in London, defined 'Geordie' as a 'North Country' word for 'pitman', '(generally) a Northumbrian', 'A North-country collier' and a variant of George, while 'George (or Geordie)' was a 'half-crown' with the 'obsolete' meanings of a

‘noble’ (the 16th century coin) or a guinea.³³

In 1907 and 1908, the Newcastle-born, London-based music hall singer, ‘C.E. Catcheside-Warrington’ - Charles Ernest Catcheside - recorded *Geordie Haud the Bairn* on a wax cylinder. In 1908, the Tyneside comedian, ‘J.C. Scatter’ - James Cosgrove - recorded *Keep your Feet still Geordie Hinny*, and ‘Catcheside-Warrington’ recorded *Jack and Geordie at the Smoking Concert*, *Jack and Geordie’s Motor Car Ride*, *Geordie at the Auction*, followed by *Geordie’s Saturday Night* in 1909.³⁴

In 1911 *Tyneside Songs* Volume I, ‘The Tunes Collected, and the Pianoforte Part arranged’ by ‘Catcheside-Warrington’, did not credit Joe Wilson for *Geordie Haad The Bairn* or *Keep yor Feet still Geordie Hinny*.³⁵ In 1912 ‘Catcheside-Warrington’ recorded *Geordie at the Coronation*, *Geordie at the Barbers*, *Industrious Geordie*, *Jack and Geordie in the aeroplane*, a sketch about an unemployed ‘Geordie’, *Geordie’s holiday*, *Geordie’s motor bike*, *Geordie’s toothache*, *Geordie’s day out*, *Geordie the tram conductor* and *Geordie at the dentist*. In 1913, the lyrics of *Bogey Cheeky Band*, began with ‘Howay Geordie’.³⁶ Reportedly, *Blaydon Races*, and ‘particularly the chorus’, was ‘a local “Tipperary” song’ for ‘Geordies’ fighting in the ‘Great War’.³⁷ In 1919, a trespassing pitman challenged a Durham squire who told him that his ancestors had fought for their land: “Oh, begox!” cried Geordie, ‘I’ll fight tha’ for thine’.³⁸

In 1920, *The Times* noted that ‘Geordie’ ‘the pitman, whatever his views as to nationalisation’, was ‘a bonnie fighter and proud of his county regiment’.³⁹ Reportedly, Newcastle papers first used ‘Geordie’ in reports about Newcastle United in 1924,⁴⁰ and *The Times* referred to ‘Geordie collier brigs’ in 1928.⁴¹ In 1930, an Alnwick civil servant’s novel was about a brutalised pitman called ‘Geordie Shieldykes’.⁴² In 1932, Todd Slaughter recorded *Geordie out of work*.⁴³ In 1936, Tyneside papers did not call the Jarrow Marchers ‘Geordies’,⁴⁴ but BBC radio aired ‘Geordie mixes the valentines’.⁴⁵ In 1939, *Blaydon Races*, and ‘particularly the chorus’, was a ‘rallying cry for Geordies’ in the armed forces, as World War II got underway.⁴⁶

In 1943, 'Geordie' was a colloquial name for a Scotsman in New Zealand.⁴⁷ Years later, one letter-writer to *The Times* recalled that a 'Geordie' soldier's 'rendering' of it in India 'always brought down the house', and another noted that 'the *Geordie* would sing the praises not only of the Scotswood Road but of the Cheviots'.⁴⁸ In 1947, a Gateshead journalist called *Blaydon Races* the 'national anthem of Tyneside'.

Wherever Geordies gather at home it is sung in a spirit of loyalty.
Wherever they meet in far distant lands it serves to recall the
coally Tyne, the ships that come and go, our famous bridges, the
hardy, hospitable, industrious people who have proved their worth
in the past, and upon whom the nation depends so much today.⁴⁹

BBC radio's *Wotcheor Geordie* used Jack Robson's *Wherever ye gan you're sure to find a Geordie* as its signature tune,⁵⁰ and Richard Kelly produced the programme for almost a decade.⁵¹ In 1949, a Bishop Auckland baking powder manufacturer published *Lingford's High Level Tyneside Song Book*, to celebrate the Tyne bridge's centenary. Sir Arthur Munro Sutherland, Bart., K.B.E., called himself a 'true Tynesider' and the songs included *Cum, Geordy*, *Haud the Bairn* and *Keep Yor Feet Still* [*Geordy Hinny*] and 'Geordie' Ridley's *Blaydon Races*.⁵² *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, published in London, defined 'Geordie' as 'A pitman; any Northumbrian; North country coll[ier]; from c[irc]a. 1760. Prob ex the Christian name there so pronounced.' 'A North country collier (boat); nautical: from c[irc]a. 1880', 'The *George Stephenson* safety lamp: miners' (-1881)' and 'A Scottish variant' of George. It provided no dating evidence.⁵³ In 1950, an electricity industry advertisement featured a racist 'Geordie' Tyne pilot.⁵⁴ In 1955, 'C.H. Rolph', a former policeman, edited *Women of the Streets* and included a 'rough Geordie woman'.⁵⁵ In 1957, the President of the Northumberland and Durham Association in London argued that being a 'Geordie' went 'beyond mere geography' and was 'a quality of heart'.⁵⁶ Around 1959, T. & G. Allan's

Selection of Songs and Ballads of Northern England included *Cum, Geordy, Haud the Bairn*, with a short glossary, *Keep Yor Feet Still* [Geordy Hinny] and 'Geordie' Ridley's *Blaydon Races*.⁵⁷

In 1962, an 'Exiled Geordie's Dinner Dance' formed part of the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of *Blaydon Races*. The Lord Mayor of Newcastle called it the 'Geordie Anthem',⁵⁸ and Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour Party leader, thought it 'served to remind Geordies that they are Geordies at a time when they are in danger of being ironed out of existence by mass communications'.⁵⁹ In 1964, the BBC TV comedy series, *The Likely Lads*, revolved around upwardly mobile 'respectable' and stubbornly 'unrespectable' 'Geordie' characters. In 1965, a *Times* critic noted that Rediffusion's TV's *Paradise Street* 'highlighted the glamour and the grime of life' of 'a Geordie shipwright'.⁶⁰ In 1966, Frank Shaw published *Lern yerself Scouse* and *Volume 2: the ABZ of Scouse* in Liverpool.⁶¹ In 1967, a woman asked in *The Times* why 'a Geordie from the Northumberland Fusiliers' should 'be uprooted to form part of a predominantly south-east English formation, The Queen's?' The £21,000 Newcastle Civic Centre bells played *Keep your Feet still, Geordie Hinny*. In 1968, Tyne Tees TV screened 'Geordy Girl'.⁶² The *Times Educational Supplement* suggested that an 'apolitical' Newcastle University undergraduate had to be 'a Geordie first and a student afterwards' to 'be accepted as part of the community'.⁶³ A Hull-based playwright's *Close the Coalhouse Door*, based on Sid Chaplin's stories, included a serio-comic character called 'Geordie'. It rehearsed pitmen's past struggles, but welcomed the decline of a dangerous industry.⁶⁴ John Woodvine, a Tyneside-born Shakespearean actor, was able to use his 'Geordie accent' for the first time and *The Times* found that 'Most of the Geordie accents were impeccable'. A *Times* reporter noted that the 'Yorkshire dialect' began 'bearing a close resemblance to Geordie' when he reached the 'south banks of the Tees'. When the Durham Light Infantry disbanded after 200 years, a band played *Geordie*.⁶⁵ Was all that 'Geordies' had to look forward to, the past?

11 Larn Yersel Geordie

Frank Graham was born in Sunderland in 1913. He went to Bede Grammar School and on to King's College, London, to read Classics, but attended London School of Economics lectures, took part in anti-fascist activities and joined the Communist Party (CP). He could not afford to continue at university, so he returned to Sunderland and helped to organise the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) marches to London in 1934 and 1936, and the Special Branch file described him as 'one worth watching'. In the Spanish Civil War, he recruited three NUWM comrades and there were in Spain by Christmas 1936. He became a reconnaissance officer and suffered serious wounds in 1938, which kept him out of World War II. He got manual jobs on Teesside and worked for the CP. In 1945, he trained as a teacher, and worked at Wharrier Street School in Newcastle and as an Adult Education tutor. In 1958, his pamphlet, *Holy island*, sold almost 3,000 copies in eighteen months, and he retired from teaching in 1960.⁶⁶ In 1965, Graham's *Tyneside Songs* included what he called *Come, Geordie – ha'd the Bairn* and *Keep yor feet still [Geordie Hinny]*.⁶⁷

Edward Scott Dobson was born in Blyth in 1919, the only son of a local government officer and a teacher, but the family soon moved to Newcastle, where Edward attended secondary school and excelled in art. He later joined the Territorial Army and during World War II he served in India and France.⁶⁸ He later claimed that he was an interpreter between troops and officers in a 'Geordie regiment':⁶⁹ 'if you came from 'anywhere between the north bank of the Tees and Berwick' then 'you were Geordie';⁷⁰ but he became a junior officer.⁷¹ After the war, he trained as a schoolteacher and worked at St Aloysius Roman Catholic secondary school in Newcastle.⁷² He promoted working-class painters in an article in the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle*,⁷³ was an Adult Education tutor,⁷⁴ and went drinking with Communists.

In 1969, Graham published Dobson's *Larn Yersel Geordie*, with 'the intention of making you' – the non-native – 'a fluent speaker'. Dobson

recalled being 'greatly upset by a dreadful act of revisionism when a master was appointed to teach us 'speech'.

He insisted that such words as the ancient and beautifully mellifluous 'clarts' should no longer be used. Instead we should say 'mud', or rather 'mahd'. I am happy to report that within six months he broke and was subsequently drummed out of the National Union of Teachers and blackballed at the Lit. and Phil.

According to Dobson, the 'Geordie' 'tribe' originally extended 'well into Scotland', but while the 'Geordie heartlands' were now in Newcastle, the 'Geordie enclave' extended to the Town Moor, Four Lane Ends, Byker Bridge, Gateshead and Bensham. Pubs and clubs were the centre of 'Geordie' social activity and Newcastle Brown Ale was 'the wine of the country'. There was 'always a football match going on somewhere in the tribal reservation' and a novice might make a 'safari', but 'he' should not beyond Low Fell. Beyond was a 'territory' 'under siege by neighbouring tribes from Windy Nook who cherish a hatred for renegades who talk humpybacked' – unidiomatically – and whose 'National Anthem' was 'The working clarss can kiss my foot, / I've got the foreman's job at larst'. 'Geordies' did not go to public school or Sandhurst, work for the BBC, associate with Tories, tax inspectors, gentry or anyone associated with Lord Londonderry, but supported trade unions and voted Labour. Some traitors lived in semi-detached houses in a 'fortified enclave' like Darras Hall, while most occupants of large terraced houses were 'regrettably foreigners' from 'south of the Trent'. The 'many sub-tribes in Geordie-land' had 'a native wigwam', though 'smaller wigwam Geordies' were 'mostly emigrating to multi-storey wigwams'. There, 'due to insufficient sound-proofing they have had to stop beating their wives', as had "cooncil hoose" Geordies', because their long walk to work tired them out. 'Wor lass' was 'the little woman' and 'thumpin her lug' was 'an exercise in domestic discipline', but Byker women flattened unfaithful

husbands with frying pans. The ‘most powerful and primitive inheritors of the traditions of the Geordie nation’ were “‘Pitmatic” Geordies or “Yackers””, who often lived in ‘very long rows of low wigwams’, with ‘subsidiary wigwams called “netties”’ – toilets. The women began work before the ‘cursing colliers who count the days to redundancy’ got up and these ‘primitive Geordies’ rarely spoke ‘more than one word at a time’. ‘Geordie’ speech ‘owes much to Scandinavian tongues’ and was ‘*not* a regional accent’, but ‘a language’. Reportedly, 3,000 copies of *Larn Yersel Geordie* 3,000 sold in two days.⁷⁵

‘Most regional of all English regions’

The Times claimed that the northeast was the ‘most regional of all English regions’ and that ‘Geordies’ ‘viewed with suspicion anyone coming up from the south to run their affairs’ ever since they assassinated the Bishop of Durham in 1080. In spite of economic crises, ‘a Geordie’ was never ‘abject’. ‘Geordies’ were ‘the most hospitable people in the world to all except those who try to patronize them’, but had ‘a tendency to think the rest of the country is against them’.⁷⁶ A *Northumberland and Durham Word Book*, published in Newcastle, acknowledged that ‘Geordie’ was ‘derived from George’ and was the name of ‘a north country collier vessel’. It had formerly ‘connoted a guinea’, and still denoted a ‘native of Tyneside’, ‘Northumbrians and Dunelmians’.⁷⁷

A history of Blaydon races made a striking claim.

All over the world, exiled Geordies sing the ballad of ‘The Blaydon Races’. In pubs and clubs and barrack rooms, at parties and football matches, wherever Geordies get together, this is the song that means home to them, the ‘national anthem’ of Tyneside. Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, all know it, though they may never have been within a thousand miles of

Blaydon, nor even realise that such a place really exists.⁷⁸

Dorothy Pilbin was born into a Quaker family in South Shields in 1902. She attended St. Johns' Higher Grade School,⁷⁹ and married Leonard Samuelson-Sandvid in 1923, but they lived in Hexham from 1945. In the 1950s, 'Dorfy' wrote a 'dialect' column for the *Shields Gazette*.⁸⁰ In 1970, she complained that 'Whenever I write in Geordie dialect I am unhappily conscious of being unable to reproduce' its 'most attractive feature – our Geordie lilt'. Unlike Welsh nationalists, 'us Geordies' did not expect road tax licences to be in their 'langwidge', and 'w' dain't need t' fash-on aboot beein' reconised as Geordies'. 'Nee mittor wheor w' might live – onnywheor in the wawld, a Geordie is still a Geordie. Us disn't need nee special tartans, nor emblems, nor nowt'. 'We're a friendly lot, we Geordies. The only people we "cannit abide" are those "jumped-up nowts that thinks owt becomes them!"'. 'To "foreigners" some of our sayings can be baffling' but 'Our dialect is a *dialect*' and '*not* bad English'.⁸¹

In a year, *Larn Yersel Geordie* had sold 81,000 copies.⁸² Graham's 'Larn Yersel Geordie series' included Dobson's *History o' the Geordies*. The Oslo Peace and Purity League deported the 'Fathers of the tribe' in the 4th Ice Age' and they crossed the North Sea by brake and cuddy. Later, the Romans built the Wall 'te keep the Picts and Glasgow Rangers fans oot', and then Saxons, Danes and Vikings ran 'day trips' to Roker, South Shields and Holy Island. They went back 'skint, and with a heavy hangover', but 'Geordies' returned 'to their reservations loaded with kroner'. Sixteenth century 'Geordieland' was 'rather cut off' from 'the rest of the country', and 'military or martial Geordies', 'agricultural or peasant Geordies', 'excavating Geordies or pit-men' and 'maritime Geordies or sea-men' lived in a class society, where 'luxuries, such as work, were provided by the district overlords', who were 'unselfishly content with mere dividends'. Capitalism brought changes.

Some of the de-tribalised or urban Geordies lived in towns or

cities but their life had become infected with south-country decadence, such as water-closets and ready-sliced bread, and their tribal identity became lost. Their language remained basically tribal, however, although terms such as parlour, lounge or front-room took the place of the pure GEORDIE expressions such as BESTEND, and instead of BAYUT they ate 'lunch'.

Advanced Geordie Palaver described 'intrepid explorers' into 'Darkest Geordieland'. The people of this 'wild, untamed country' had 'an ancient culture all their own', including 'natural kindness and courtesy' and a propensity to good-humoured violence. The 'Geordieland Army' protected the territory from the Tweed to the 'Teesside badlands' and included a regiment of 'Elswick Sikhs'. A 'variant' of 'standard' English was taught in 'reservation mission schools', but it was 'unpatriotic and insulting' to 'use any other tongue but Geordie in intimate tribal ceremonies', especially 'in the deep Geordie jungle', where 'a number of intensely nationalistic and patriotic organisations' kept 'the flame of Pan-Geordieism eternally burning'. *Hadrian and the Geordie Wall* claimed that 'anti-Geordie elements' had wrongfully credited Romans, instead of 'King Woralf of Northumbria', who was 'Half Pict and half Geordie', for building what '*should* have been called the Geordie Wall'.

Dobson and the Gosforth-based comedian Dick Irwin's *The Geordie Joke Book* noted that Irwin was 'one o' the standards o' Geordieland. If yer laff at his jokes yer either mad or a Geordie. Sum o' them is so Geordie that ounly Geordies knaa when te laff.' Irwin described Gosforth as 'the sort o' place where the' tek thor fish and chips hyem te the scullery in a fiddle case and eat them with a yachtin' cap on' and a Chinese restaurant was called 'somethin' like Hoo Flung Dung'. He told a 'joke' about 'a little Pakistani chep whe's had a drop ower much' and about a local telling a turbaned Sikh bus conductor 'ah hope yor heed soon gets better'. Irwin and Dobson's *Geordie at the Club*, a 'guide to foreigners,' especially those from 'south of Middlesbrough', noted the 'inborn

tendency, present in every good Geordie, to place the foot on a brass rail and hand round a glass'. Their *Geordie Laffs* included a 'Special Warning'.

You can only understand these jokes if you comply with the following categories.

- a) You were born within the sound of Armstrong's buzzer.
- b) It is possible from the place of your birth to spit into any of the following rivers. Tweed, Aln, Coquet, Blyth, Tyne, Wear or Tees.
- c) You hold A levels in applied Geordie.
- d) You hold a Geordie degree – (three times on the Dole that is).

They repeated several 'jokes' from previous 'Geordie' booklets. 'Geordies' were generous, bibulous and racist.

In 1971, Dobson and Irwin aimed their *Geordie on the Beer* at the 'actual or potential visitor to 'Geordieland' who was unwilling to be branded as a transvestite or 'a time-and-motion study executive from Ponders End', though even a local 'Hebrew friend' made cultural mistakes. 'Geordie' was a man with 'a special part of his heart set to one side for beer', even if it meant drinking in a Conservative Club. Newcastle Tyne Brewery was the 'Holy Grail of all good Geordies', who respected 'owld traditions that hev made Geordieland what it is'. The 'degenerate members of the lesser Geordy tribes', who 'take their wives out for a gin and orange' in the pub 'buffer' or 'lounge', were inferior to beer drinkers in the bar, while a 'Geordie' who got a gold-fish 'fer the wife' had 'made a canny swop'. Dobson's *Stotty Cake Row* did not use 'Geordie' after the title page. *SuperGeordie – Scott Dobson's Xmas Book* - asked 'What Is A Geordie? His criteria included a birthplace 'within the sound of the shipyards' buzzer', being 'Bronchial', 'open,

free of guile, easily exploited', 'fast in action and speech', and 'sharp and impish' in humour'. 'Geordie' was 'the undepressed inhabitant of a depressed area' who 'made his country rich, but not *his* part of the country'. Dobson illustrated Andrew Elliott's *The Geordie Bible*, which used 'Geordie' as a familiar form of George. Elliott sympathised with Jewish building workers on the 'lump' who were up against a 'Union man'. 'Nehemiah and eez pals hed a lot to put up with in the weeks that followed – pickets, hooligans and vandals,' but they 'finished the job'. In *The Geordie Cookbook*, Esther McCracken complained that 'we are all lumped together as Geordies by anyone from outside the district', and while Peggy Howey's 'Geordie' territory included Northumberland and Durham, she did not use the term again.

Alex Glasgow's *Joe Lives* – 'A Tribute' to Joe Wilson - was premiered in Newcastle, starring John Woodvine, and Mawson, Wareham & Mawson issued an edited version as a record.⁸³ *The Times* reported on the 'Geordie Ridley' pub in Blaydon and noted that '1,500 Southerners' at a Lindisfarne concert in London 'clapped their hands in unison to the Geordie National Anthem, *Blaydon Races*'. Eric Burdon was a 'Geordie' living in California, but 'retained his Tyneside accent'. A review of a London performance of *Close the Coalhouse Door* noted that the audience were 'relishing the Geordie sing-song cadences, always with their touch of aggression'.⁸⁴ *The Listener*, published in London, claimed there was 'a people's culture in Geordieland'.⁸⁵ The writer Sid Chaplin was 'grateful for a Geordie upbringing, a Geordie twang and the Geordie sense of humour which has given me about sixteen million laughs against all the odds in this sad and sticky world'.⁸⁶ In 1972, Graham published Chaplin's essays. 'It was taken for granted that any Geordie given half a chance would get out' and head south, and he had left the pit twice, but returned.⁸⁷ Graham's *Geordie Song Book* included *Keep yor feet still* [*Geordy Hinny*] and the *Cum, Geordie haud the bairn*, and advertised *Larn Yersel Geordie*. Dobson's *Aald Geordie's Almanack* warned against cultural assimilation.

We may look forward to a re-shaping of the Geordie nation and its image. Naturally the re-shapers will try to present to the world the new Geordie, the executive-type Geordie. He will, of course, still work in the shipyard or the coal mine or the factory for the same money but he will be expected to comport himself in such a manner that he could be mistaken for, let us say a respectable draper's assistant in Ponders End.

Thames TV screened 'The Geordie Bible'.⁸⁸

In 1973, BBC TV broadcast the first episode of *Whatever Happened to the Likely lads?* The National Youth Theatre staged Peter Terson's *Geordie's March* in London. Sunderland apprentices emerged from a football crowd and marched to London to demand a trade union, then merged back into a crowd.⁸⁹ Dobson's *A light hearted guide to Geordieland* located it 'between the north bank of the Tees and Berwick' and defined a typical 'Geordie' as the *Daily Mirror* cartoon character, 'Andy Capp', a work shy chauvinist from Hartlepool. Residents of Stanley and Wearsiders might disagree with the 'Tourist Authorities' who called the region 'Northumbria', but the Anglo-Saxon King Edwin had given his name to Edinburgh, so 'Jock was once a Geordie!' Graham re-titled Dave Harker's *George Ridley, Gateshead Poet and Vocalist* as *Geordie Ridley 'Gateshead Poet and Vocalist' Sings The Blaydon Races*, without consultation, as a 'Geordie Book'.

In 1974, the Yorkshire-born footballer George Harvey felt like 'more of a Geordie than most of the passionate locals', while Tyne Tees TV screened 'Cheerio Geordie'.⁹⁰ Andrew Elliott's *A Geordie Life of Jesus* did not use 'Geordie' after the title page, but listed ten books in the 'Geordie Range'. Dobson's *The Geordie Dictionary* included a 'Geordie passport', but was 'based almost entirely on Heslop and Geeson', and he and Graham parted

company.⁹¹ The Geordieland Press published Dobson and Bradford-born Len Shackleton's *Geordie at the Match*. Lord Westwood of Gosforth, the United Chairman, believed that 'the Geordies are the greatest natural humorists' and 'nothing can beat the Geordie humour which was designed especially for hard times. In good times it's even better.' The booklet advertised Newcastle Brown Ale, Ringtons tea, Greggs the Gosforth bakers, Shackleton's books, Dobson and Irwin's booklets and three recordings – 'Larn Yersel Geordie', 'Son of Geordie' and 'Goerdierama' – scripted by Dobson and Roger Burgess, spoken by George House and Mike Neville of the BBC and published by Mawson, Wareham & Mawson. This booklet soon sold 10,000 copies. Graham published Ronald Embleton's *Geordie Pride*, which aimed 'to portray the colourful life of Northumbria before so much of our local heritage was swept away in the twentieth century'. Chaplin wrote that 'after the Civil War, when Newcastle got more of its share of a hammering, the town decided to play it canny in future, with the result that they became among the most loyal supporters of the Hanovers. Hence their title of "Geordies"'. Yet he provided no evidence that this had 'a grain of truth'. Newcastle Breweries bought Embleton's paintings for *The Geordie Pride* pub.

In 1975 'The Jocks and the Geordies' serial in the *Dandy* told of a feud between Scots and English schoolchildren in a fictional town that straddled the border. Thames TV screened 'In Search of Geordie', but a 'Geordie Night' was near the bottom of the Newcastle Festival programme.⁹² Dick Irwin's *100 Geordie Jokes* included those 'popular in the music hall and clubs of the middle of the 20th century'. 'Geordie' was the Tyneside working-class 'Everyman', and God had differentiated him from 'Jocks', Eskimos and Africans.

So he made a man of iron, with muscles of forged steel

For hewing coal and building ships, a job that He's done weel,
And just to finish off His job, at least so I've been told,

He completed His first Geordie, by giving him a heart of gold.

Graham censored one 'joke'. In 1976, there was a feature film of *The Likely Lads*. Irwin's *The Geordie Laff Inn* repeated several 'jokes' and included others about a 'big Zulu', 'a big Pakistani', four 'Irishmen', British Leyland workers who 'sign the visitor's book', rather than clock on, a stupid 'Geordie' man and a female council house tenant. Graham boasted that he had 'issued 300 local books in two million copies'. Viking Brews of South Shields produced a 'Geordie kit' for home beer making. *The Times* described Blyth and Seaton Valley as 'a bleakish, windswept corner of the nation, where life has always been hard', but it was 'the home of the true Geordie accent'. In 1977, it called Newcastle Brown Ale 'the foundation of Geordie life'.⁹³ *Geordie Words and Phrases* defined 'Geordie' as 'George', as in 'Noo then, Geordie'.⁹⁴ Graham published *Geordie at School*, written and illustrated by Frank Richmond, the retired headmaster of Axwell Park Approved School, who did not use 'Geordie' after the title page. Neither did Elliott's *The New Geordie Bible*, while Graham's *The Geordie Netty* was full of lavatorial 'humour'.

Robert Colls was born in South Shields in 1949, the son of a ship repair yard driller and a hospital cleaner. He attended the Grammar-Technical School for Boys, entered Sussex University in 1967 and got a job at Loughton College of Further Education in Essex in 1970.⁹⁵ By 1977, he felt that 'history can be varnished by a sense of the past which blends region and class into a mythical "Geordieism"'.

Out of the past struggle has emerged an heroic sensibility made in our own image: to be proud of it is to be proud of ourselves. This pride can approach bitterness, and in the North East it consistently votes Labour, but it fails to carry its impetus beyond mere *reactions* ... because the self-image which created it is locked in the past, it is about what we have been and what

we have done, rather than what we are and what we will do. To enjoy it is natural, but merely to enjoy it is self-indulgent. This self-indulgence cheats us and history, but it also implies a condescension which cheats others. Liverpool or South Wales might push us close, but what about those poor Suburban Serfs (conveniently placed south of Hatfield) who have no 'language', who had no childhood, who – for goodness' sake – have no history! Not that the condescension is always wilful: first flat vowel dropped and the Serfs know a Geordie ('or are you Welsh?') for what he is – a 'character' with an enormous capacity for beer who might start to sing at any minute.

Colls claimed that 'many is the Geordie who, if not exactly a "collier lad"', 'felt common identity, perhaps pride, on coming from such a swashbuckling culture', and 'invoked' 'Bob Cranky',⁹⁶ but failed to grasp the class origins and satirical purpose of the 'Cranky' songs.

In 1978, *Geordie and Jock*, a history of the Tyneside Scottish regiment, did not use 'Geordie' after the title page.⁹⁷ Graham's *Geordie Songs, Jokes and Recitations* was largely a re-hash of previous material and used 'Geordie' as a collective name for pitmen, clubbers, drunks and the work shy. *The Times* reported that a budgerigar could 'sign off Radio London's *Up Your Street* programme in a Geordie accent', and in 1979 it reported that the comedian Bobby Thompson had received a golden disc, though 'rather less than 10 percent of the British population can understand his carefully cultivated Geordie'.⁹⁸ The punk 'comic' *Viz* made its first appearance. Graham's *New Geordie Dictionary* noted that 'Geordie' was 'a friendly term' for anyone who lived in Northumberland and Durham, but there was 'no definitive Geordie dialect', because it differed between country and town. Current explanations of the origins of 'Geordie' were 'fanciful', since 'not a single piece of genuine evidence has ever been produced'. The 'middle class of Newcastle' had used 'Geordie' as 'a term of abuse' for pitmen, and it had 'ceased to be an insulting word' by the

late 1870s, but he offered no evidence.

In 1980, the police thought the ‘Ripper’ had ‘Geordie accent’, but he came from Yorkshire. In 1981, Graham published *The New Geordie Song Book*, which contained nothing new, and the Ashington-born footballer, Jack Charlton, attended a ‘typical Geordie banquet’ at Seaton Delaval hall. In 1982, BBC TV screened *The Geordie Lamp* and the Royal Shakespeare Company staged Peter Flannery’s *Our Friends in the North*, in which ‘Geordie’ goes to London and met bent police with links to corrupt northeast public figures. In 1983, ITV screened the first episode of *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, which focussed on three ‘Geordie’ builders who had to go to West Germany to find work, and Channel 4 TV screened Mike Elliott’s *The secret rituals of the Geordie Tribe*.⁹⁹ Irwin and Graham’s *The Geordie Book of Beer* noted that ‘Geordieland’ was top of the league for alcohol consumption and repeated many ‘jokes’. One new ‘joke’ claimed that dockworkers took four-hour tea breaks and another was a racist tale about an ‘Irishman’ in the Geordie Pride pub. Ten ‘Geordie Books’ and five ‘Geordie Song Books’ remained in print; but the last of Graham’s ‘Geordie dialect books’, Elliott’s *The Geordie Genesis*, did not use ‘Geordie’ after the title page. In 1984, 180,000 pitmen went on strike. In 1985, after they were defeated, Beamish Museum held a ‘Geordie Heritage Day’.¹⁰⁰ In 1986, Scott Dobson died in Malta.¹⁰¹ In 1987, a Newcastle conference ‘explored issues of identity’, which had begun to ‘displace class’ as the ‘main concern’ of academic historians.¹⁰² Graham sold his business, whose 387 titles had sold three million copies, and retired.¹⁰³

12 A Scotsman with his brains bashed oot

In 1990, Joe Ging argued that a characteristic of ‘Geordie’ humour was that ‘We laugh that we may not weep’; though some thought a ‘Geordie’ was ‘a Scotsman with his brains bashed oot’.¹⁰⁴ In 1992, Colls and Lancaster’s *Geordies*, written ‘by Geordies, about Geordies’, aimed

to 'capture the new zeitgeist of a region emerging from its industrial past but not sure where it was heading'. Regions were 'imagined communities' and 'belonging' was 'an act of affiliation and not of birth'. Most 'Geordies' lived in Northumberland and Durham, but some were in southern Teesside and Cumbria. 'Geordie culture' was 'generous' and 'continues to draw' on other cultures, but 'British national identity resides in the south of England'. 'Geordies' should 'turn their faces to 'a political 'federation of *the regions*' and 'Geordie' entrepreneurs should 'break free from trade routes their forbears knew' in order to produce 'sustainable economic growth'.¹⁰⁵ The *Offishal Geordie Dictionary*, published in Berwick and printed in Darlington, relied on Brockett, Heslop and Geeson. 'Geordie' was an 'Inhabitant of North East, synonymous with superiority', but really, 'Nebody knaas', and yet the reader would 'pass (oot) for a native'.¹⁰⁶ In 1993, Bill Griffiths sought to distinguish Tyneside 'Geordie' words from those of Northumberland, Durham, Cumbria and Yorkshire, and suggested that 'Geordies' were 'supporters of King George', without a scrap of evidence.¹⁰⁷ In 1995, Gateshead Council put a blue plaque on the William IV pub, for 'George ("Geordie") Ridley',¹⁰⁸ even though his home was on the other side of Grahamsley Street.¹⁰⁹

In 2001, *Geordie English* defined 'Geordie' as an 'inhabitant of Tyneside' and the 'dialect' spoken there, which was 'probably the best-constructed' in English. Its 'distinctive' pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar were mainly 'because of geographical isolation' and 'immigration has made little impact'. 'Geordie' was 'not a lazy language' and the 'basic features' were 'the cadence', the 'quirky tone and the questioning lilt at the end of each sentence'. (A Maltese press later printed the tenth edition for a London publisher.)¹¹⁰ Griffiths' *North East Dialect* used definitions of 'Geordies' that predated 1900.¹¹¹ In 2004, an Edinburgh publisher issued *Who Wants to be a Geordie?*¹¹² In 2005, Griffiths' *A Dictionary of North East Dialect* used definitions up to 1926 and Dobson's booklets, but Griffiths' Byker-born mother-in-law thought

the ‘real Geordies’ were pitmen.¹¹³

In 2006, Frank Graham died aged 93.¹¹⁴ Katie Wales claimed that ‘younger inhabitants’ of Berwick and Middlesbrough were ‘identifying Newcastle as their local centre’ and ‘adopting certain apparent “Geordie” features’. There was ‘a popular perception that “Geordie” and “Northeast” were synonymous, yet “true” Geordies’ used ‘Mackems’ for ‘Wearsiders’ and ‘Smoggy’ for ‘Teessiders’.¹¹⁵ In 2007, Kartsen Keuchler argued that the ‘dialect of Northumberland and Tyneside’ remained more or less untouched’, though ‘some irregularities of Tyneside verb forms’ were ‘dying out’ and others were ‘about to disappear’ or were ‘archaic’. Class, age and gender gave rise to differences of speech, but she ignored the issue of race, while lamenting it was ‘getting harder to find true dialect speakers who have been living in the respective area for a long time’. ‘Geordies seem to suffer from their standing as “unsophisticated folks” and had begun to ‘neglect and put down their dialect’.¹¹⁶

Gary Hogg claimed that that ‘Geordie’ was ‘a more than affectionate term used throughout the country’ for the ‘canny folk of Tyneside, Northumberland and Durham’. People with ‘Mackem tendencies’ had ‘infiltrated’ south Tyneside, but ‘Geordies’ could not ‘support a football team from S*nd*rl*nd’.¹¹⁷ A London publisher issued an actor’s guide to speaking ‘Geordie’.¹¹⁸

Sid Waddell, the ‘proud Geordie’ son of an Ashington miner, went to Cambridge University. In 2008, he argued that ‘our main talent as a tribe is verbal: Geordies, I reckon, word-for-word could out-patter anybody’. ‘At moments of high emotion and/or excitement I lapse into Geordie, despite having lived in Yorkshire for 38 years’. The ‘first Geordie was the Venerable Bede’ and the ‘Geordie Nation’ was comparable with that of the ‘American Indians’. The ‘heartland’ of ‘Geordieland’ was Newcastle. ‘Pitmatic Geordies’, a ‘branch of the tribe who once worked the coal mines’, had ‘contributed most to the Geordie lingo’, but ‘the Geordie matriarch is still the lynchpin of our society’. To the north are ‘Jocks’, to the north and west are ‘Gadgie Geordies, or gypsies,’ westwards are

‘Coonty Geordies’, or farmers, and to the east are the ‘Sand Dancer Geordies’ of South Shields.¹¹⁹ A Tyneside born former Yorkshire miner republished *Geordies – Wa Mental* in Hastings, and dedicated it to ‘every mad bastard “Geordie”/Northumbrian who ever lifted a claymore, pistol, moli, broon-ale bottle or brick in the cause of the lang-doonstrodden toilers of the world’.¹²⁰

In 2009, Newcastle Libraries’ ‘Origins of the Name Geordie’ acknowledged that there were ‘a variety of explanations’, and that ‘no-one knows which, if any, is correct’, but suggested, without evidence, that it was ‘born in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745’. ‘Local Folklore’ defined ‘Geordie’ as ‘someone born on the north side of the Tyne, within a 1 mile radius of Tyneside’, but ‘many people from outside the area refer to anyone from the North East as a “Geordie”’. Newcastle City Council marketed *Larn Yersel Geordie*, ‘Geordie mugs’ and a ‘Geordie passport’ quiz.¹²¹ A ‘dialect’ specialist found it ‘hard not to smile’ at Newcastle station, surrounded ‘by the lilting “song” of Geordie speech’, with its ‘delicious jerkiness’, especially in Byker; but his editor hedged her bets.¹²²

In 2010, a poll found that a ‘Geordie’ accent was the ‘most attractive in England’,¹²³ but US TV producers sacked Cheryl Cole because they ‘feared the American audience would not understand her’ in 2011.¹²⁴ In 2012, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined ‘Geordie’ as a ‘diminutive of George’ in Scotland, a ‘north[ern English] dial[ect]’, a ‘coal-pitman’, a ‘collier-boat’, ‘Stephenson’s safety lamp’ and a ‘native or inhabitant of Tyneside’, but in Australia and New Zealand it was a ‘Scotsman’.¹²⁵ In 2013, Wikipedia defined ‘Geordie’ as ‘a familiar diminutive form of the name George’, ‘a regional nickname for a person from the Tyneside region’ and the ‘dialect spoken by its inhabitants’. The ‘catchment area’ for ‘Geordie’ can be ‘the whole of North East England’ or only urban Tyneside. ‘In most aspects, Geordie speech is a direct continuation and development of the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxon settlers’ into the ‘distinct “Northumbrian” Old English dialect’, though no medieval evidence was provided.¹²⁶

By 1600, ‘Geordie’ was a familiar name for George on both sides of

the border, and Jacobites used it to deride the Hanoverian King Georges from around 1700. Around 1800, Tyneside townsmen adopted it to express negative attitudes to temporarily affluent pitmen in song and prose, using 'phonetic' versions of vernacular speech to guide non-native speakers. Tory newspaper editors kept its pejorative connotations alive for middle-class readerships from the 1870s and they and other writers from outside working-class communities continued to homogenise northeast workers as 'Geordies'. In the 1970s, Scott Dobson and Frank Graham perpetuated this middle-class *way of seeing northeast workers* as 'Geordies', but northeast workers rarely use the term to describe themselves.

References

- ¹ *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 19 Mar, 2 Jul, 26 Nov 1880.
- ² *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 9 Sep 1880; *The Era* 15 Jan 1881.
- ³ Anon, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881).
- ⁴ *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 27 May, 17 Jun, 8 Jul, 25 Nov 1881.
- ⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 Apr 1882; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 12 Apr 1882; *Preston Guardian*, 15 Jul 1882; *Graphic*, 28 Oct 1882; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 28 Sep 1883; *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Sep 1884.
- ⁶ <http://www.oed.com/>
- ⁷ *Northern Echo*, 28 Jul 1884.
- ⁸ Wilson, *Miners*, 195-6.
- ⁹ Welbourne, *Miners*, 198-9.
- ¹⁰ *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 16 Jan, 15 May, 25 Sep, 18 Dec 1885.
- ¹¹ Child, *Ballads*, 141-2.
- ¹² *Bristol Mercury*, 21 Jul 1886; *Western Mail*, 3 Sep 1886; *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 Dec 1886; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 8 Apr, 27 May, 19 Aug 1887; *Northern Echo*, 25 Aug 1888.
- ¹³ George Greenwell, *A Glossary of Terms used in the Coal Trade* (London: Bemrose, 1888), 44.
- ¹⁴ <http://www.oed.com/>
- ¹⁵ John Millard, *Ralph Hedley* (Newcastle: Tyne & Wear Museums, 1990) 7-13, 46-7, centre, 100-1. The painting is in the Laing Gallery, Newcastle. Beamish Museum has a copy.
- ¹⁶ *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 19 Apr 1890; *Leeds Mercury*, 24 Jun 1890; *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 1 Mar 1890.
- ¹⁷ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 Dec 1890; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 14 Dec 1890; *Graphic*, 24 Jan 1891.

- 18 Wilson, *Tyneside Songs*, xv.
- 19 Millard, *Hedley*, 47-8, centre, 101. The painting is in a private collection. Beamish Museum has a copy. The chromolithograph proofs are in Newcastle City Library.
- 20 *Manchester Times*, 20 Mar 1891; *Bristol Mercury*, 21 Mar 1891; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 4 Apr 1891.
- 21 *The Monthly Chronicle* (Newcastle: Walter Scott, 1891), 208-9.
- 22 Richard Heslop, *Northumberland Words* (London: English Dialect Society), I, vii-viii; II, 321.
- 23 Allan, *Illustrated Edition*, [iii].
- 24 Dennis Embleton, *Local Dialect Dialogues* (Privately printed, 1891), 11-13, Durham City Library.
- 25 *Bristol Mercury*, 12 Mar 1892; *Northern Echo*, 23 Apr, 30 Jul 1892; *Leeds Mercury*, 19 Sep 1892; *Manchester Times*, 23 Sep 1892; *Northern Echo*, 25 May 1893; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 26 Aug 1893, 24 Mar, 21, 28 Jul 1894; *Northern Echo*, 12 Dec 1894; *Newcastle Weekly Courant* 11 May 1895.
- 26 *Northern Echo*, 2 Jan 1896; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 31 Oct 1896; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 4 Oct 1896.
- 27 Francis Palgrave, *A List of words and Phrases in Every-Day Use by Natives of Hetton-le-Hole* (London: English Dialect Society), 20
- 28 *Daily Mail*, 13 Oct 1897; *Belfast News-Letter*, 7 Dec 1897; *Western Mail*, 19 Dec 1898; *Daily News*, 9 Jan 1899; *Northern Echo*, 23 May 1899; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 Jul 1899; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 22 Jul, 23 Dec 1899.
- 29 Joseph Wright, *English Dialect Dictionary* (London: Times Book Club, 1898-1904), Volume 2, 597.
- 30 *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 3 Mar 1900.
- 31 James Augustus Murray, *A New English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), Volume 4, 127-8.
- 32 Milne, *Newspapers*, 200.
- 33 John Farmer & William Henley, *A Dictionary of Slang and Colloquial English* (London: Routledge, ND), 187.
- 34 Ray Stephenson, *A Slice of Geordie Heritage* (Newcastle: Stephenson, ND), 8, 14-16, 22, 30, 35-8, 40-2.
- 35 C.E. Catcheside-Warrington, *Tyneside Songs*, (Newcastle: Windows, 1911), Volume 1, 5-6, 16-17.
- 36 Ray Stephenson, 'Ragtime Geordie', *Northumbriana*, Number 26 (1982), 38-9.
- 37 William Tynemouth, *Blaydon Races* (Newcastle: Newcastle City Libraries, 1962), 52.
- 38 Robert Colls, *The Collier's Rant* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 164.
- 39 *Times*, 23 Apr 1920.
- 40 Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster, *Geordies* (Newcastle: Northumbria University Press, 2005), xiii.
- 41 *Times*, 2 Oct 1928.
- 42 John Charles Grant, *The Back-to-Backs* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930).

- 43 Stephenson, *Heritage*, 40.
- 44 Colls & Lancaster, *Geordies*, xii-xiii.
- 45 *Times*, 14 Feb 1936.
- 46 Tynemouth, *Blaydon Races*, 52.
- 47 <http://www.oed.com/>
- 48 *Times*, 3 Jul 1956, 24 Oct 1960.
- 49 *Gateshead Times*, 5 Dec 1947.
- 50 Colls & Lancaster, *Geordies*, xii-xiii.
- 51 Joe Ging, *A Geordie Scrapbook* (Constable, 1990), 23.
- 52 Anon, *Lingford's High Level Tyneside Song Book* (Bishop Auckland: Lingford), 2, 10, 16-17, 21.
- 53 Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (London: Routledge, 1949), 322.
- 54 *Times*, 19 Sep 1950.
- 55 <http://www.oed.com/>
- 56 Colls & Lancaster, *Geordies*, xiii.
- 57 Anon, *Selection of Songs and Ballads of Northern England* (Newcastle: Allan, ND), 10-12, 26-7.
- 58 Tynemouth, *Blaydon Races*, 5, 23.
- 59 *Times*, 11 Jun 1962.
- 60 *Times* 18 Sep 1965.
- 61 Frank Shaw, *Lern yerself Scouse: how to talk proper in Liverpool* and *Volume II: the ABZ of Scouse* (Liverpool: Scouse Press, 1966).
- 62 *Times*, 20 Apr, 6 Jun 1967, 5 Jan 1968.
- 63 *Times Educational Supplement* 18 Apr 1968.
- 64 Alan Plater, *Close the Coalhouse Door* (London: Methuen, 1969).
- 65 *Times*, 26 Jun, 23 Oct, 13 Dec 1968, 10 Dec 1977.
- 66 http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=2&Itemid=92
- 67 Frank Graham, *Tyneside Songs* (Newcastle: Hill, 1965), 33-5, 42-3, 48.
- 68 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scott_Dobson
- 69 Scott Dobson, *Advanced Geordie Palaver* (Newcastle: Graham, 1970).
- 70 Scott Dobson, *A Lighthearted Guide to Geordieland* (Newcastle: Graham, 1973), 3.
- 71 Scott Dobson, *Advanced Geordie Palaver* (Newcastle: Graham, 1970).
- 72 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scott_Dobson
- 73 Natasha Vall, 'Bohemians and "Pitmen painters" in North East England', *Visual Culture in Britain*, Volume 5, Number 1, (2004), 16.
- 74 Scott Dobson & Dick Irwin, *Geordie on the Beer* (Newcastle: Graham, 1971), Introduction.
- 75 http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=2&Itemid=92
- 76 *Times*, 10 Feb, 4 Jun 1969.
- 77 Cecil Geeson, *A Northumberland and Durham Word Book* (Newcastle: Hill, 1969),

92.

Joan Gale, *The Blaydon Races* (Newcastle: Oriel Press, 1970), 3.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Samuelsan-Sandvid

<http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/w/a/l/Joan-Walls-Cumbria/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0013.html>

Dorfy, *A Basinful o' Geordie* (Newcastle: Hill, 1970), 3, 28, 30, 78, 79.

http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=2&Itemid=92

Alex Glasgow, *Joe Lives*, (Newcastle: MWM 1003S, 1971).

Times, 1, 26 Jan, 18 Feb, 22 Jun 1971.

Listener, 12 Aug 1971.

Ging, *Scrapbook*, v.

Sid Chaplin, *A Tree with Rosy Apples* (Newcastle: Graham, 1972), 50.

Times, 12 Sep 1972,

Times, 7 Sep 1973.

Times, 3 May, 12 Aug 1974.

Frank Graham, *The New Geordie Dictionary* (Newcastle: Graham, 1979), 3.

Times, 6 Aug, 6 Sep 1975.

Times, 29 Mar, 28 Apr 1976, Jan 1977.

George Todd, *Geordie Words and Phrases* (Newcastle: Graham, 1977), 20.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Colls

Colls, *Rant*, 12, 15.

J.L.R. Samson, *Geordie and Jock* (NP: Samson Publishing, 1978).

Times, 21 Mar 1978.

Times, 29 Oct 1981, 9 Jul 1983.

Times, 13 Jul 1985.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scott_Dobson

Colls & Lancaster, *Geordies*, vii.

Watson, 'Appreciations', 190.

Ging, *Scrapbook*, 4, 23-4.

Colls & Lancaster, *Geordies*, viii-ix, xi-xvi.

Stephen Leslie, *The Offishal Geordie Dictionary* (Berwick: Bridge Studios, 1992) 2-3, 22.

Bill Griffiths, *Durham & Around: a Dialect Reader* (Seaham: Amra Imprint, ND).

http://www.bpears.org.uk/Misc/Gateshead_Plaques/#RidleyG

Harker, *Gannin'*, 20-1, 130-1

Percy Douglas, *Geordie-English Glossary* (London: Abson Books, 2001), 4-5, 16, 31, 33, 36.

Bill Griffiths, *North East Dialect* (Newcastle: Northumbria University Press, 2001), 76.

Simon Newell, *Who Wants to be a Geordie?* (Edinburgh: Black & White Publishing, 2004).

Bill Griffiths, *A Dictionary of North East Dialect* (Newcastle: Northumbria

- University Press, 2004), 63-4.
- 114 Watson, 'Appreciations', 186.
- 115 Wales, *Northern English*, 205-6
- 116 Keuchler, *Geordie*, 4, 6-7, 9, 13, 17, 21.
- 117 Gary Hogg, *The Fairly Truthful Guide to Geordie* (Blyth: Toontoons, 2007), 15.
- 118 Penny Dyer & Gwyneth Strong, *Access Accents Geordie (Newcastle)*, (London: Methuen, 2007).
- 119 Sid Waddell, *Taak of the Toon* (Glasgow: HarperCollins), 3-4, 7-10, 36, 59, 73, 90, 187, 189.
- 120 Dave Douglass, *Geordies – Wa Mental* (Hastings: Christie Books, 2008), x-xi.
- 121 Newcastle Libraries, *Geordie*.
- 122 Susie Dent, *How to Talk Like a Local* (London: Arrow Books, 2010), 66-7, 87.
- 123 <http://www.pocket-lint.com/news/107191-geordie-accent-best-says-tomtom>
- 124 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geordie>
- 125 <http://www.oed.com/>
- 126 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geordie>

NORTH EAST LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY



reviews, news and ‘history in brief’:
contributions from projects and members

REVIEWS

Colin Barker, Laurence Cox, John Krinsky and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, eds, *Marxism and Social Movements* (Brill, Leiden & New York, 2013) 482pp. ISBN 9789004211759, £109.70 hbk.

Many readers of this journal have given a large part of their lives to trying to change the world. Usually their chosen instrument is a political party; Labour, Green, Far Left. At some point, indeed at many points they will have supported and participated in a range of single issue campaigns like CND, Anti-Apartheid, Anti-Fascism, against unemployment, environmental pollution, the Poll Tax, the Wars in Vietnam, the Falklands, Iraq, Afghanistan, for Women's Rights, Gay Rights and so on. So many issues with patchy success. People of different persuasions will have worked together sometimes amicably but often gritting their teeth and occasionally fighting each other to the detriment of the campaigns. Although occasionally political organisations faced the charge of opportunism their involvement in such campaigns was an uncontested part of political life. Indeed it was widely recognised that their members were frequently amongst the most energetic organisers. In the opening years of the twenty-first century there has been a new development where the charge of opportunism has been raised to a general objection, and at its most extreme in the *Indignados* movement in Spain members have been excluded from demonstrations sometimes violently. One consequence of this development has been a fresh examination of the relationship between political organisations and philosophies and movement activism.

One such project is *Marxism and Social Movements*, a massive book edited by Colin Barker and others. It is divided into two main sections. In the first theoretical questions are put under the microscope, with Marxism

a key tool for many participants in movements but also for those wishing to analyse their successes and failures. Several different perspectives are given space. In the opening chapter Colin Barker argues the contentious point that class struggle underlies most social movements even when it is by no means obvious. A further interesting essay in this section by Hetland and Goodwin seeks to explain why the capitalist system seems to escape from recent studies of movements.

In the book's second section fourteen essays explore the strategy and tactics of movements over time as far back as resistance to colonial rule in mid-nineteenth century India. It is a big book with a whopping price ticket but a cheap paper back will follow next year. Although it does not directly relate to events in north east England it has many useful insights which could be valuable to researchers of movements in the region's past

John Charlton

David Clark, ***The Labour Movement in Westmorland*** (Lensden Publishing 2012) 216pp. ISBN: 978-0-9551992-9-5, £14.99, pbk.

Histories of the labour movement have a strong tendency to focus on the industrial proletariat or its well known leaders so it is good to see a book about a less chronicled part of Britain. David Clark's Westmorland history provides a valuable account of the challenges facing a labour movement that has gone unrepresented in Parliament in the face of an often openly hostile conservatism with both a large and small 'c'. How those challenges were responded to and often overcome by labour's dedicated activists is illustrated through each of the chapters in Clark's detailed account. His moving personal comment in his conclusion sums this up when he says: 'I cannot get over the bravery of the farm labourers at Askham who, literally under the shadow of Lowther Castle, formed a branch of the Agricultural Labourer's Union'.

Clark faced his own challenges in writing the book given, as he says, that there was 'not a single document' from the labour movement itself covering the first eighty years of his chronicle and he has to rely instead on local newspapers which were no friends of the fledgling movement. Nevertheless, he finds much to engage the reader's interest in those early years. In this respect, it is interesting to see how he begins with the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement and the importance of Ruskin at nearby Brantwood in the Lake District who, of course, had an influence on many socialists at this time. Other early influences came from dissenting churchmen and school teachers and the story of the attempt at 'utopian' community building in Starthwaite.

Much of the book focuses on the individuals and personalities who kept the movement alive and once the early period is passed the focus shifts to the Labour Party and the long and ultimately (even inevitably?) unsuccessful campaigns to elect a local MP. Amongst these personalities who are too many to list in a review, Clark explores the particular role of women in the movement. For example, he notes how middle and upper class liberals were engaged in the campaign for the vote but that 'the earliest organised suffrage activity in the county was strongly working class'. Evelyn Short becomes a parliamentary candidate for Labour in 1935 and wins almost one third of the votes, which was more than respectable for the constituency.

The later chapters of the book become rather more concerned with the role of the Labour Party as it becomes the focus of attention for activism (and, presumably, records become more easily available). Clark puts the campaigning in a national context and charts the ups and downs of electoral results against the fortunes of Labour nationally. In doing so we lose some of the flavour of the earlier years and the more disparate labour movement with the different battles that needed to be fought. We are sometimes left with accounts of quiz nights and coffee mornings and the Labour vote at elections – for one of which, Archie Potts, a founder member of the North East Labour History Society, was a candidate.

Overall, the extension of labour movement history to a neglected part of the country is to be more than welcomed. Clark provides an invaluable account and an important source for future historians. No doubt the book will be inspiring to others to dig below the surface and find more of those stories of local activists that brought the labour movement and this book to life.

John Stirling

Don Watson, *No Justice without a Struggle: The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the North East of England 1920-1940*, (Merlin, 2014) 280pp. ISBN: 978-0-85036-618-1, £15.95 pbk.

Don Watson's excellent account and analysis of the unemployment workers' movement in the North East during the two decades of the interwar depression remains unhappily all too relevant to our own time, and provides a very pertinent example of how unemployed workers were and are treated by the authorities, both during that era and in our own – and the manner in which official meanness and persecution could be fought and overcome through collective mobilisation. His volume includes over ten pages of sources upon which it is based, ranging from oral history to national archives, and is supplemented with relevant photographs and a very comprehensive index.

Following a very brief and shaky boom in the two years following the First World War, the world economy plunged into deep depression, where it remained for the next twenty years. The slump went through several phases. A US-led halting recovery in the mid-twenties ended with the New York stock market crash of 1929 and the deepest depth of collapse persisted till 1932, after which another fragile recovery was on the point of being followed by further seizure at the end of that decade – until the outbreak of the Second World War completely altered the situation.

The hardest-hit sectors of the economy were the traditional heavy industries inherited from the nineteenth century – coal mining, shipbuilding, heavy engineering – and also textiles – upon which the UK was particularly reliant, and the result was mass unemployment on a scale not seen for nearly a century. Newcastle, it is noted, was in 1928 spending as much on unemployment relief in a week as it had spent in a year in 1914. In the North East, as in other mining areas during the miners' lockout from May to November 1926, conditions were particularly grim.

A restricted system of unemployment benefit had been introduced in 1911, and when the depression hit in 1920 that was very grudgingly extended and popularly named 'the dole'. When that ran out for an individual worker nothing remained except the successor to the nineteenth-century Poor Law, the local Board of Guardians, which being elected were subject to some democratic influence, but were succeeded in the 1930s by the more implacable and authoritarian Public Assistance Committees, later termed Unemployment Assistance Boards. As Don writes, the aim of these systems was:

... reducing expenditure on unemployment at the expense of those who were out of work, and reducing and then removing the element of local democratic participation. ... [and] screened eligibility for benefit through a rigorous and intrusive household Means Test. (p.17).

Resistance – where, how and whom

One of the most impressive features of this volume is the extent of its coverage across the North East, covering the large urban concentrations such as Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough, medium and smaller towns such as North and South Shields, Jarrow and Chester-le-Street, and mining villages like Chopwell, one of the 'Little Moscovs' (though in this case the Bolsheviks were mainly Labour Party rather than Communist Party activists).

Resistance to the injustices of the unemployment relief system could take many forms. These could involve lobbying, sometimes in very large numbers and with varying success, of the official bodies administering relief. Large demonstrations, graphically described, were frequent, especially in the major cities, occasionally becoming violent, usually in consequence of police aggressiveness. The police forces were not renowned for their sympathy for unemployed activism. The Hunger Marches, represented the most focused form of demonstration and were consequently boycotted by the media. The Jarrow Crusade, being more 'respectable', by contrast was well covered and became symbolic as a result. Legal challenges and appeals against the decisions of relief agencies were the everyday work of activists, the 'shop stewards of the streets', who made it their business to study the regulations.

The participants in this struggle were also many and varied, 'a plurality of unemployed organisations'. They could include trade union branches, trades councils, sometimes Labour Party and Communist Party branches, individual Labour and communist councillors – and of course the charismatic MP Ellen Wilkinson, author of the classic account of 'the town that was murdered', namely Jarrow, although as Don indicates her role on that event became somewhat controversial. She was not the only woman who was prominent in the struggle, and considerable space is devoted to women all over the area who were both activists and propagandists. 'For example in Sunderland in 1921 and South Shields and Jarrow in 1922, women were noticeable among the demonstrators, as they were also in Felling early in 1926.' (p.55).

In the Hunger Marches, as well as the other forms of activism, there was deep involvement of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, which, led by the formidable Wal Hannington was undoubtedly the most militant and forceful of the unemployed movement's organisations, though it never included more than a fraction of the unemployed workforce, but pursued 'every aspect of what was affecting poverty-stricken families'. (p.246). The NUWM was strongly under the influence of the Communist Party, which

had initiated it and of which Hannnigton was a leading member, though frequently at odds with his leadership colleagues.

These individuals and organisations worked, sometimes in collaboration and at other in rivalry, to oppose the increasingly onerous and restrictive measures and demands of the relief agencies and the economic system which generated mass unemployment.

Fascists repelled

Fascism in Britain, which had been a marginal phenomenon during the 1920s took on a more menacing aspect when in 1932 the ex-Labour, ex-Tory MP Oswald Mosley formed the British Union of Fascists, with ideas from Hitler, funding from Mussolini, and until 1936 backed up with a blackshirted paramilitary squad. He reckoned that the unemployed workforce would provide a favourable field for spreading his ideological toxin and mounted considerable efforts to hold rallies and meetings throughout the industrial areas, including the North East. Don quotes a local observer who noted that, 'There was always one event that brought the Communists and most of their critics together. This was the arrival of Sir Oswald Mosley's blackshirts'. (p.185).

In the event the fascist attempts to hold meetings were, in spite of police protection, broken up and dispersed. Thanks to this united action fascist insolence was effectively repressed and allowed to make no impact. We also learn of several militants, dedicated activists, who followed up their anti-fascist activity in the North East by volunteering for the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil, and some of whom died in the fighting.

Conclusion

Don Watson has done exemplary justice to what can be accurately described as a heroic episode in British labour movement history. At the same time he has not limited himself to a narrative of description and acclaim but

has explored and analysed the character of the struggle, its setbacks and contradictions, the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the organisations and individuals involved. Though focused on the North East this volume is well worth reading far more widely, especially at a time when the social advances achieved after 1945 have come under relentless attack, mass unemployment is once more a reality and comparable struggles are again on the agenda.

Willie Thompson

Alex Pritchard, Ruth Kinna, Saku Pinta and David Berry (eds): ***Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red*** (Palgrave MacMillan 2012) 311pp ISBN: 978-0-230-28037-3, £60 hbk

This collection of essays explores different encounters between ‘libertarian socialism’ – generally taken to mean anarchism, syndicalism and revolutionary trade unionism – and the Marxist tradition. The general theme is to demonstrate that there has been far more to these encounters, both political and theoretical, than is suggested by the usual assumption that the history between them is simply one of antagonism. The range of case studies provided includes the Situationists in France in the 1960s, ‘councilist’ libertarian socialism in Australia in the 1970s and perspectives on anarcho-syndicalist participation during the Spanish Civil War. Other contributors explore the role of the libertarian socialist tradition in the development of key figures like Gramsci and CLR James; there is an interesting critique of the dismissal of anarchism that was made by William Morris, and an account of the anti-racist roots of modern American anarchism. The essay most likely to interest North East History readers is the chapter by Lewis Mates: ‘The Syndicalist Challenge in the Durham Coalfield before 1914’. This local example of syndicalism is examined through the political activities of Will Lawther and George Harvey from 1910 until the outbreak of war.

Both these North East militants were miners who came to revolutionary trade unionism through independent working-class education; the Plebs League and the Central Labour College were key. Harvey's pamphlets sold widely throughout the coalfield and his politics were well-known to the miners at Wardley who chose him as their checkweighman. Lawther organised the 'Communist Club' and anarchist discussion circles in his native Chopwell. Both made the case for the organised rank and file of the unions as the vehicle for revolutionary change; Harvey regarded standing in parliamentary and council elections as opportunities for propaganda rather than winning office.

In the Durham coalfield nevertheless revolutionary trade unionism never achieved the impact that it did in South Wales. Also, as Lewis points out, the fact that around 500 Chopwell miners volunteered for the armed forces during the First World War does not suggest that the revolutionary politics of syndicalism had much impact there. Assessing the effectiveness of propaganda is difficult but at least on paper there were opportunities in County Durham. Some key factors are identified to explain why the political influence of these two industrial unionists was limited, so that in fact it was the ILP's 'Durham Forward' campaign that was more effective in channelling the miners' grievances. Lawther refused on principle to stand for any elected office in the DMA, for example, thus reducing his range of contacts and influence, and both were prone to a sectarianism that would have confused their target audience of politically conscious miners.

In the case of these two militants their anarchism or syndicalism did not survive the encounter with what would become known as Marxism-Leninism after 1917. Both of them clearly adopted Lenin's instruction for British revolutionaries to affiliate to the Labour Party. In 1919 Harvey was standing as a Labour candidate for Durham County Council and in 1922 Lawther was the Labour parliamentary candidate for South Shields. There is some evidence too that both had dual membership of the Communist Party (CP) at this time, and in any event both spent the remainder of their political activity with Labour and both were supportive of CP positions

before the Second World War. The question therefore is begged: what happened to this strand of political thought and activism between the outbreak of the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution? More exactly, we know the outcome but what was the process with militants like Lawther and Harvey and why did it come about? It is far easier to pose these questions than to answer them of course. It is to be hoped that Lewis will continue to research into the later period and thus develop this interesting contribution to the radical history of the Durham coalfield.

Don Watson

Anthony Flowers, *An Innocent Eye: Jimmy Forsyth, Tyneside Photographer* (Tyne Bridge Publishing in association Amber Film and Photography and Tyneside Archives and Museums, 2013) 128pp., ISBN: 978-1-85795-214-8, £10 pbk.

It is relatively rare for the working class to represent themselves. When they do we really should sit up and take notice, because the history of the working class has very largely been written by the middle class. We should ask some questions too. What was done? Why was it done? And for whom was it done?

I never knew Jimmy Forsyth, but I saw him out and about once or twice, and met him once in Newcastle at some dreadful literary launch attended by the regional literati. Jimmy looked slightly dishevelled, isolated and out of place among the ‘in crowd’. I wanted to speak to him but did not do so, I did not want to appear yet another patronising admirer. Now, I wish I had asked the questions I cite above, for the answers I give to some of them now largely rest upon opinion.

Jimmy Forsyth systematically photographed Newcastle and its people between 1954-67. His images are of groups of local people (all working class), buildings and infrastructure frequently in states of demolition or

construction, things in passing and becoming. Jimmy was recording, giving witness; that is why I think he was a historian rather than an artist, even if the medium was aesthetic rather than textual.

I think Forsyth saw himself as recorder, and that these photographs were taken because he had a sense of passing and of the past. There is no artistic pretence (nothing staged) in his work, no constructed narrative or ideological message (Jimmy had an 'innocent eye' as Anthony Flowers points out). However, as his autobiography shows, Forsyth deeply resented the re-development of Newcastle, particularly Scotswood, and, unlike the City Planners, he understood the destructive force that high rise living would have on community.

Jimmy's photos or as he liked to call them 'snaps' were taken from circa 1954. He stated in 1986 that he was spurred by the demolition of Newcastle's old infirmary and Scotswood in general. He said that he had nothing else to do and that his object was to show future generations 'what we looked like and how we lived'. (In his autobiography [MS. 1989], he claims he was already taking photographs, but that the demolition of Scotswood increasingly became his subject). By this time Jimmy had become a regional celebrity and it is hard to tell if this idea had grown with his fame.

This book is an excellent introduction to Forsyth and his work, the group of photographs gathered here give a good impression of the nature and range of his images. For historians, one is lent a strong impression of its scope as a primary source. The introduction of this book is a work of biography and succeeds in explaining the man I met many years ago. There are good bibliographical details. There is also reproduced here a copy of Jimmy's autobiography in manuscript form, with a transcription. All in all this is a very good introduction to Forsyth and his work. Jimmy Forsyth was an important regional figure, not least as a working class historian, if you want just one book on him, buy this one.

Stuart Howard

Alan Morgan, Ken Smith, Tom Yellowley, *Lost Industries of the Tyne* (Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2013) 144 pp. ISBN: 978-1-85795-216-2, £10 pbk.

As the blurb on the back of this Tyne Bridge Publishing paperback proclaims ‘for many centuries the banks of the River Tyne steamed, smoked clanged, banged and bustled with industry of all kinds’. Now in the second decade of the twenty-first century nobody under the age of fifty can have the remotest idea of what it was like. This is an attempt by two popular Tyneside historians and a well-known local photographic expert and collector to conjure up in images and text, the huge range of that lost industry.

Like most Tyne Bridge publications the book is on sale at Newcastle Central Library and like its predecessors designed not for the specialist but for the interested general reader who will find it full of information. The specialist is likely to be irritated by a certain vagueness about some of the dates: ‘around 1680’ is probably justified for the introduction of glassmaking in South Shields but its attribution to Isaac Cookson (at that date a child in Penrith) is not, although the Cooksons did have the works fifty years later. The book is unreferenced but has a useful list of sources consulted and suggestions for further reading about the various industries and an equally useful concluding index of businesses and people mentioned in the text.

The range of the illustrations is most impressive particularly granted the time scale, with photos dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, prints from the local archives and entertaining vignettes of adverts for many of the firms whose products are covered. The charting of the rise and fall of individual companies, as patterns of demand changed and contracts were completed, is a reminder of the insecurity of manufacturing industry even in its heyday. As a further point of interest, the authors have done their best to bring the story up to the present day and to pin down, where possible, the location of the lost industries and identify what has been built in their place – like bingo halls, hotels and not a replacement but a change of use – the Baltic Gallery.

A brief personal quibble –your reviewer was disappointed to find a reference to the Maling pottery women workers as ‘white mice’ but none to ‘Haggie’s Angels (the tough lasses from the Willington ropeworks), a fond memory in North Tyneside.

Win Stokes

Nick Mansfield, ***Buildings of the Labour Movement*** (English Heritage Publishing 2013) 164pp. ISBN: 978-1-84802-129-7, £30.00 pbk

A very welcome addition to the literature providing guides to the surviving structures significant to the history of Britain. Unlike past publications which brought to the fore the role of the aristocracy and the wealthiest of Britain by choosing their homes and mansions to conserve and interpret, this publication’s focus is on the labour movement and the structures and sites significant to the movement.

The book ranges across the buildings of the early 19th century political radicals, Owenites and Chartists, through Arts and Crafts influenced socialist structures of the late Victorian and Edwardian period to the grand union ‘castles’ of the mid twentieth century. There are also chapters on the ubiquitous co-operative architecture, socialist holiday camps, and those memorials associated with the hidden story of radical ex-servicemen and their remembrance of war dead, rural labour buildings and the clubhouses of the idealistic socialist cycling clubs.

The preface to the book provides a short guide to the growth in interest in the concrete past of the labour movement, starting in the early 1990s with ‘The Landscape of Labour History’ conference at Congress House and the ‘Red Bricks’ conference at Ruskin College in 1996. English Heritage were active participants in all these early movements and took on the role of producing this guide.

The guide does a good job of placing these structures in the context of

the movements that created them, even if it does give a conservationists emphasis on the architecture of the buildings rather than their role. The photographs and graphics are excellent, often providing a human perspective to the buildings featured. Labour historians from the North East may find the book disappointing because it features only four sites in the region (Redhills in Durham, South Moor Miners Institute at Stanley, Newcastle Co-operative Society and the Durham Miners Gala). It was this paucity of sites that sparked the present project to map the 'Landscape of North East labour history'.

English Heritage should be congratulated for producing this publication which must, to them, seem to be for a small audience, an audience which will be made even smaller by the price of £30 which will limit its sales. Nevertheless the book gives a glimpse of the wealth of evidence on the ground of the activities of the labour movement in all its different forms: it's up to us to put the flesh on the bones provided by English Heritage.

Peter Brabban

Jane Bowen (ed) **Further Aspects of Belford**, (Belford Bowen Publishing, 2011), 256pp. ISBN: 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 eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries is a very strong 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 nineteenth-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

Ken Smith and Tom Yellowley, **The Great Walls of Newcastle** (Tyne Bridge Publishing 2012) 96pp. ISBN 978-1-857952-09-4, £6.99 pbk.

On Saturday 3rd July 1802 the Newcastle Advertiser informed its readers that, 'on Wednesday, the workmen began to pull down Pilgrim-street Gate, in this town, above which has long been held the meetings of the Joiner's Company. When cleared away, a grand opening will be formed between Pilgrim-street and Northumberland Street.'

This reflects the growing conflict between the old town walls that once kept unwanted visitors out, and a rapidly growing and expanding town that by the early nineteenth century felt constrained by these same imposing walls and gates. As the authors of this splendid book acknowledge, 'by this time they were regarded as a hindrance to business and traffic. However, several sections survived and are an important part of Newcastle's heritage'.

This pocket-sized book provides a readable and informative guide to that heritage, including a detailed walking tour of the walls, towers and gates as they survive today. The chapter called 'A Tour of the Walls' provides the bulk of the book, and the authors' text is complimented by a wonderful collection of archive images that help the reader, and the walker, to navigate through over 700 years of Newcastle history. For example, the three views illustrating the changing appearance of Heber Tower at the bottom of Stowell Street, or the photograph of nearby Morden Tower showing the reservoir associated with Locke, Blackett and Co.'s lead works. Walking past this stretch of medieval wall we can easily forget that not so long ago much of this important part of our historic environment was hidden from sight, and it is to the credit of Newcastle City Council that so much work has been done to preserve and reveal this aspect of our built heritage.

It is also good to see useful extracts from historic maps that identify specific features at selected locations, including of course landscape features that no longer exist. In addition, the outer book-covers open-up to provide two maps of the full extent of the town walls, one historic and one contemporary, the latter identifying surviving walls and towers and the sites

of those sections and gates now long demolished.

In addition to the town walls, the authors also provide a survey of the Roman Wall and the Castle Keep and Black Gate. These two chapters are shorter in length but help to make this survey of Newcastle's 'Great Walls' more comprehensive. Additional chapters describe the building of the town walls in the 13th and 14th centuries, and that major challenge to their strength in 1644 when these same walls withstood the attack by a Scottish Covenanter army.

My only criticism of this excellent book is that there is no bibliography. We are provided with a tantalizing image of a page from one of Newcastle's 17th century account books but are not told which archive it comes from. The authors have obviously invested a great deal of time researching this story and a list of the sources they consulted would have been useful.

One final thought; the medieval towers that have survived often did so because they became the meeting place of Newcastle guilds. Heber Tower was the meeting place of the Curriers, Armourers and Feltnakers, for example, and Sallyport Tower was the meeting place of the Shipwright Carpenters. Is there a labour history story here, one that documents how the town's craft workers and tradesmen acquired these medieval relics and established the network of guild administration and membership that sustained the freemen of the town thereafter?

Mike Greatbatch

William Hunt-Vincent: ***Shed No Tears for the Defeated*** (Austin Macauley, 2014) 321pp. ISBN: 9781849634700. £8.99 pbk

Billy Vincent will be known to some NELHS members as a retired Sunderland shipyard worker, a trades unionist and political activist who has contributed to this journal and to Sunderland local history over the years. This, his first novel, presents a pessimistic tale of losing a struggle against factory management,

self-serving trade unionists, and personal pressure.

The story is set in a northern town (clearly based on Sunderland) in the late 1960s. Barney Darling is a labourer at a television manufacturing plant; he is a committed if aggressive and inarticulate militant whose wife and children are the centre of his life. At work the conditions and the tame nature of the main factory trade union prompt him to become a shop steward.

The author puts across the discomfort and tedium of mass-production factory work at that time with strength and clarity. His hero deals with a '*mind-shrinking routine*' of '*lift, turn, three steps, release, turn, three steps, lift,*' on the line, with heat, noise and minimal break time. Issues and grievances that may seem minor when described assume major proportions. The factory moves from macho management to one with a slow but clever strategy to keep the union convenor '*in the kennel*', either bought off or marginalised so that maximum output at minimum cost can be maintained. Barney's attempts to challenge this and to usurp the position of the union machine take place against a background of worry about his wife's health and their own future.

The vision throughout, it has to be said, is a bleak one. Such levity as there is tends to be factory banter: '*George was so round-shouldered that Chilla Tate used to say that he'd make a good Guardsman if only his head were the other way round*'. Or sarcastic observations, such as this on the dim and egotistical union convenor: 'Abortive! That was a good word. Once Isaac found out what it meant he would use it in the meetings'. Otherwise the dark atmosphere of the book is unremitting and indeed at the end of the story Barney is reduced to a hopeless defeat at both the individual and the political levels. The current state of manufacturing industry in the region, the weakness of the left and the curtailment of trade union influence in the workplace probably shaped the author's perspective.

Until fairly recently factory life was a common experience for much of the population and yet novels set in factories have been persistently rare events in British fiction. Ones featuring trades unionists have been rarer still, and now that so much manufacturing has been 'outsourced' abroad this gap is unlikely to be filled. Therefore any venture into such territory is welcome and

north east history

acknowledgement is due to Billy Vincent for making this effort.

Don Watson

Miners Shot Down : A film by Rehad Desai.

“a documentary feature film that uncovers the truth behind the Marikana Massacre”

When it was suggested to the Committee of the NELHS that a presentation of the award winning documentary film “Miners Shot Down” about the massacre of miners in South Africa could be arranged for a first showing outside London, it was agreed to host the event. Although it was not directly relevant to the Society’s purpose, it was felt that there were very good reasons to do so.

Firstly, the subject has a resonance with the community in which we live. Secondly, the film was to be introduced by Jim Nichol, the lawyer working pro bono representing dead workers’ families at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the massacre and wounding of workers on strike at the Lonmin platinum mine. Brought up in the coal mining town of North Walbottle, Jim’s connection to the struggle of these miners and their families was a personal one. His own father, a miner, had died at the age of 40 from a dust-related heart disease. Finally, Jim was active in the labour movement in the early 60s as a teenager on Tyneside, at the same time as John Charlton and me. Now a lawyer, his legal practice in London specialises in miscarriages of justice, represented miners in 1984-5 strike and represented clients at the Bloody Sunday Inquiry. So, this overt miscarriage of justice, the massacre of miners in South Africa, was the reason he had volunteered to represent poor workers and their families.

A special preview of the film was held on Monday, 10 March 2014 at The Mining Institute in Newcastle with an audience of about 50 members and friends. In his opening comments, Jim recalled a demonstration in 1960 when he was only 15 years old, which I, too, remembered. A single file of 20 or so people, each carrying a placard, marched silently through Newcastle protesting at the Sharpeville massacre by the police of the white South African Apartheid regime. Now, in 2014, he was representing black people also murdered by South African police. This time the police force of

the democratic black majority government. Jim gave a full, but brief, account as he said the film would highlight every detail.

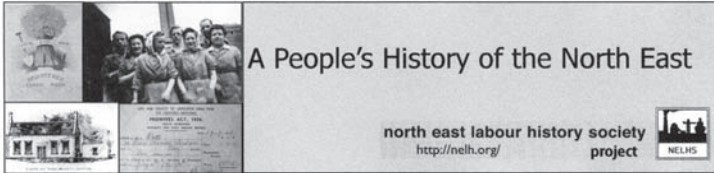
It was indeed a powerful, upsetting and detailed film. Charting the 7 days in August, 2012 leading up to the bloodshed, it showed disturbing footage of lines of police, with armoured vehicles in the background. Then, the firing of live ammunition into the ranks of miners who were moving, slowly, in a huddle. The police claim that they acted in self-defence was laid bare as false! At the Judicial Commission of Inquiry we could see this in the testimony given and also in the statements from miners who were active in the strike and at Marikana. It showed a group of poorly paid workers not deterred by danger acting in defiance of the combined forces of the mining company Lonmin, the South African Police, the Government and the (South African) NUM.

The audience was clearly moved by the film which provoked questions and discussion.

A collection, raising £250, was taken for the campaign and DVD copies of the film were sold.

John Creaby

PROJECTS



This project is well under way with a number of active working groups developing themes that combine archive research, field study, and oral history. The principal working groups and their themes are as follows:

Women's lives and Health Provision

This group combines two related themes and is carrying out archive research primarily at Newcastle City Library, the Lit & Phil, and Tyne & Wear Archives. The aim is to share the results of this research at the Society's First Tuesday events and then to prepare draft papers for possible publication in the Society's journal.

Topics currently being researched include

- the history of midwifery,
- Newcastle asylums and the treatment of mental health,
- health provision for the working poor in Byker Township, and
- a study of the contrasting quality of life for families living in Stepney and families living in Sandyford, two Newcastle districts within short walking distance but, in the period c1890-1918, worlds apart.



Discussions in the group led to thinking about how midwifery services were delivered through the Lying-in hospitals and the "Charity of married women lying-in in their own Homes", for example. The list of other hospitals and organisations providing health services

was growing very long but what was emerging was that access did depend on being in work, being supported by your religious community and, for pregnant women, being married. Naturally, we started wondering what about how people not covered by work-based medical services or who were not strongly embedded in a religious group got medical attention and what was available in that period for pregnant unmarried women? A fragile patchwork of Self-help organisations, Poor Law Guardians and work-houses were a safety net of sorts. Essays on Public Health edited by McCord describe Newcastle between 1850-80 as being in a perilous condition.

The First World War and Family Life

This group meets at Northumberland Archives (Woodhorn) and is investigating the impact of the war on the families of working people:

- the experience of ‘aliens’ as recorded in the local alien records;
- how mining families coped financially when fathers, husbands, sons and brothers went to war despite Mining being an essential industry. The Ashington Coal Company Minutes for 1914 - 1918 are contributing to an understanding of some of the problems that women and families faced and the Cooperative Society Minutes 1914 - 1918 are providing the group with details of how prices for goods and food were affected during the war as well as detailing how support for families and staff members was given.
- 4xboxes of material relating to Military Tribunals will be looked at in the future.

The group is currently looking at and recording material in two collections, the Aliens Files and the Military Tribunals. The former is an almost complete record of men and women obliged to register as aliens-non-holders of British passports. After seeing over 50 files we have developed an overview of the obsessive British bureaucracy at work.

Wholly innocent individuals could generate over 20 documents signed by perhaps 15 officials. The most spectacular offence was failing to report a movement from, say, Hexham on a day trip to the seaside at Whitley Bay. More serious are the files containing letters to Chief constables from concerned citizens (informers). So far none produced actual spies!

Visual Arts and Working People

This group has been looking at images of working people and associated activities, and developing a database of paintings, photographs, illustrators, monuments and associated collections. Particular themes include Tyneside rowers, painters who depicted keelmen and river scenes, and images associated with the First World War and the region.



*North Eastern coalfield:
colliery pit-head and coking
ovens* by William Wheldon
Oil Painting 1845
Owned by Science museum
but not on display. Held in
the Museum's Large Object
Store in Wroughton,
Wiltshire

Nothing has yet been found on William Wheldon or on the background to this painting of a colliery near Seaham.

The painting shows surface activity by the pit-head gear and buildings; wagons and pit ponies in the yard. To left, [Hackworth] locomotive and coking ovens. Similar scenes are depicted in 'A series of views of the collieries of Northumberland and Durham' by T H Hair, 1844 and in the same genre of illustration of industrial activity rather than a statement on working conditions.

The Landscape of North East Labour History

Working with local history societies and other groups within the region, this group is beginning to document sites and structures associated with labour history. These include sites where strikes or demonstrations, or public meetings took place, working men's clubs and meeting rooms, and the premises of the Labour Party and radical political parties.



The Central Post Office where windows were broken by suffragettes in 1911.



Esh Winning 20 October 1926

The small team of researchers are tackling a wide diversity of topics trying to find sites connected with 'early socialist parties', 'the suffragist movement', 'the General Strike & miners lockout', 'an in-depth study of a miners welfare hall', 'immigration into the North East', 'cultural sites'. Their work has uncovered a fascinating network of left parties and organisations in Newcastle prior to the First World War, the traditional sites of open air meetings throughout the region, the buildings attacked by suffragettes in 1911, the roles played by miners welfare halls during the depression years of the inter-war period and a growing list of distinguished speakers visiting the region.

Research into identifying significant sites of labour history in the region continues to throw up fascinating stories. Take this one from Esh Winning. On 20 October 1926 deep into the miners lockout after the General Strike, Thirty Seven strike breakers were escorted out of the colliery by a detachment of police.

The community turned out to express their disapproval and did so by creating an improvised jazz band which followed the scabs up the street playing loudly while the crowds booed and jeered at the scabs, one of whom lost his temper and snatched and tore up a red flag being waved by one of the crowd, disturbances followed. Leading the Colliery Manager to call in police reinforcements resulting in 23 of the strike leaders being arrested and jailed for one month.

An Oral History of CWS Workers

This is a large group that has made significant progress in identifying former employees of the CWS and the recording of their oral histories. To date they have recorded the memories of over thirty men and women who worked for the CWS, thereby providing a lasting archive of this iconic regional employer.



Pelaw-on-Tyne - Drugs and Dry Saltery
Cabinet Works
Clothing Factories, Tailoring
Printing, Quilt Factory



THE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

We have some great stories from Blandford Street, Birtley Tinplates and the many CWS factories at Pelaw on Tyne .

One of the early aims of the Coop had been to sell produce of good quality, rather than pass off adulterated or watered down goods. Allan, as the chief scientist at the Drysaltery in Pelaw, was employed to do just that. He had to monitor the self raising flour for carbon dioxide and to get the colour right in the custard powder. He says 'It wasn't easy that... once the flour came in and

it wasn't of a high standard. To really sort it out and tidy up took a few weeks and we had to come in in the evenings and work through the night until the problem was solved.'

Special Collections

As work has continued in more of the University of Newcastle's Special Collections, some strong themes have emerged. One is public health concerns. Another is the street as a place of work and confrontation. One example of the latter is the altercation, on Sandhill in the early 19th Century, between Euphie, Queen of the Fishwives, and a cavalry colonel who questions her prices. Her language, as recorded in a popular poem, is robust and explicit.



Another pamphlet and poem, from 1823, describes the case of Watson versus Carr, tried at the Guildhall.

Watson had been put in the Newcastle House of Correction overnight for protesting at the arrest of his friend, Walton, by the Night Watch. Carr was Captain of the Watch. The prosecution wanted £200 damages for Watson.

James Scarlett, for the prosecution, claimed that four respectable young men had been roughly hauled to the watch house because of a little light hearted singing. Carr had indulged a personal grudge - "the inferior officers of Justice" needed to be taught a lesson.

Henry Brougham, defending, said they were trying to crush a poor man who was only trying to do his duty. The watchmen called as witnesses said Watson and his friends had been noisy and abusive. Walton admitted that he and Watson had been in fights before.

The Judge summed up that the law setting up a Watch for Newcastle gave them only limited powers to deal with obvious threats to the peace. They should not have arrested residents in regular employment. Damages should reflect the stain on reputation as well as the unpleasant experience of a night in a cell.

The jury awarded 40/- with costs. Carr immediately declared himself a debtor and went to gaol. The Watch Commissioners, who had backed him, kept his job open. In 1836 the reformed Municipal Council set up a professional Police Force.

Acknowledgement: Peter Brabben for photographs and images which appeared in the project newsletters.

Anyone interested in joining the project can contact Mike Greatbatch on michael.greatbatch@sky.com

J M W TURNER'S
PAINTING *KEELMEN
HEAVING IN COALS
BY MOONLIGHT*
NOTES ON ITS
SIGNIFICANCE FOR
NORTH EAST LABOUR HISTORY



Terry Welsh

Visitors to the Royal Academy exhibition in 1835 could see a large oil painting of an unusual subject, namely people of the North East labouring on the River Tyne. Then entitled “*Moonlight*”, Joseph Mallord William Turner’s artwork showed keelmen working furiously to load coal from the local mines onto ships that have to be away on the morning tide.

The painting re-named “*Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight*” was part of a recent exhibition, entitled “*Turner and the Sea*”, at the Greenwich Maritime Museum between 23rd November 2013 – 14th April 2014. The painting, arguably the most recognized piece of visual art of relevance to North East labour history, is now back in its permanent home in Washington DC. It was taken across the Atlantic in 1910 when bought by a wealthy American and went to the American National Gallery as a bequest in 1942 where it has been on display ever since.

My appreciation of the significance of this painting was nurtured in my time as a volunteer researcher with the Society’s Mapping Popular Politics project which came to an end last year. I developed an interest

in how working class people in the North East were depicted in the time between the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and the appearance of the first photographs.

Among the archives that I had the opportunity to open were the catalogues and the reviews of art exhibitions held in Newcastle in the 1820s and 1830s. The exhibitions featured lots of picturesque landscapes, hunting scenes, animals and ships; all in keeping with the accepted ideas of taste in the early nineteenth century. In that period, any working class people who appear in works of art are there because they are colourful characters. There are depictions of drovers, shepherds and fishermen. The upper and middle classes who bought paintings were, generally, not interested in social comment or any record of ugly, industrialised landscapes.

The appearance of the Turner painting in London in 1835 must have been startling. It showed working people, not at play, but labouring under demanding and dirty conditions. Nor are they part of a precise illustration of an industrial site. Instead they feature in a painting celebrating the aesthetic beauty of moonlight.

The critic of the London Literary Gazette of May 1835 expressed the views of many who questioned whether Tyneside workers were a fit and proper subject for visual art:

“And such a night. ... A flood of glorious moonlight wasted upon dingy coal whippers, instead of conducting lovers to their appointed bower”

His comments reflect what the upper classes wanted to see in their paintings.

Even more remarkable is the fact that the painting was executed as a commission. Turner's patron was Henry McConnell from Manchester. In 1835 his cotton mill was the largest English importer of cotton from the American slave states. In 1834 he spent £350 at the Royal Academy exhibition on a painting by Turner showing a carnival at Venice. He was obviously delighted with it because he asked Turner to paint him a

companion picture. He wanted a painting contrasting the decadent and languid Mediterranean city of Venice with a scene of industrialisation in England which showed it becoming rich and powerful through activity, work and industry. For £300, he got the painting we now know as "*Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight*".

In response to McConnell's request Turner adapted a work that he had produced on Tyneside thirteen years earlier; a watercolour entitled "*Shields on the Tyne*". The watercolour had been commissioned to be engraved and published in a book called the "Rivers of England" intended as a record of activity and scenery in ports and harbours around the country. Since the composition of the old watercolour matched that of the Venice painting, Turner chose to develop it in oils. The original watercolour showed keelmen loading ships from their boats with coal staithes in the background.

The preparation for the big oil painting had been done in 1822. Turner visited the North East many times after a first visit in 1797 when he sketched staithes in North Shields. His usual practice was to spend time with the people who worked on the river, so he will have known sailors and keelmen who had developed a way of life based on the principle of a common good. The Keelmen's Charity provided poor relief, a hospital, funeral expenses, and widow's pensions, removing the burden of welfare for this close knit group from the parishes. There was a keen belief in "welfare of all" among keelmen which their public statements emphasized.

Turner will have been around just before, or during, the Long Stop in 1822. This was the longest of many keelmen's strikes, lasting ten weeks. The main reason for the keelmen's unrest was anxiety over the coal owners continued introduction of staithes, coal spouts and steamboats which threatened their livelihoods: where spouts were introduced along the river, coal could be loaded directly into ships without the need for it to be taken down the Tyne in keelboats. The staithes were prominent in Turner's watercolour.

During one dispute over the staithes and spouts in 1819, some elements of the local press were not sympathetic as this report in the Newcastle Courant of 2nd October 1819 shows:

the keelmen are calling for the substitution of expensive manual labour for a cheap machinery already erected and in operation; a demand wholly incompatible with all the acknowledged principles of freedom in trade

It was in 1822 that the coal owners used a steam engine on a boat to pull barges of coal down the river to break the strike. If Turner did not see this, he will have heard about it. The 1822 Long Stop was unsuccessful. The keelmen could not turn back the tide of technological progress.

The coal owners' ideas prevailed. By 1836 John Buddle told the Select committee on the Coal Trade that employment for the keelmen was almost gone, as keels were to a great extent being superseded by spouts and by railroads. This was one year after Turner had presented McConnell with his image of high industrial activity on Tyneside.

There are some contradictions to explore in Turner's painting of *Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight*. He was a supporter of the abolition of the slave trade. He was also known to have shown sympathy for reform and for working people, such as agricultural labourers, who were losing their livelihoods through social change. Yet, when a gentleman grown rich on the labours of American slaves and Manchester cotton workers asks him to produce a painting celebrating industry in England he agrees and takes as his inspiration an earlier work produced amongst workers who were fighting to preserve their society and values from people with no thought for the welfare of those displaced by new machinery. By the time he gives McConnell and the London public the painting it depicts a working life that has already collapsed. The hardworking keelmen are, in a sense, at work once again, this time to please McConnell. Once again, they are not to be beneficiaries of the wealth they are creating. The painting is instant nostalgia – a theme not

so greatly removed from backward Venice in the companion piece.

There are many other works where Turner does the unexpected; when he appears to be sending a subtle message about change and social dislocation. "*Ploughing up Turnips near Slough*" (Tate Britain) is one such example. It nominally belongs to a patriotic genre around in the Napoleonic Wars showing how people rallied to support the war effort. While the King's Standard flies above Windsor Castle in the background, Turner's country folk are harvesting. But, their lives look anything but idyllic. One of them has brought a baby to work. Another is bent double. The plough is broken. Turner empathised with agricultural workers who lost their livelihoods through reform and enclosures. This painting demonstrates some of that empathy.

There is little documented information about Turner's politics and social views. He took commissions from whoever offered them, including anti-abolitionists who made money from sugar plantations. But there are enough Turner paintings to provide evidence of a liberal and radical disposition, for example "*The Slave Ship*" painted for display at an anti-slavery conference in 1843.

There are also Turner paintings which demonstrate an interest in an age that is passing and being subsumed by a new one. A good example is "*The Fighting Temeraire*", voted Britain's most popular painting in 2005. It shows an obsolete ship of the line being pulled to the breakers yard by a smoky steamboat as the sun sets.

So, perhaps, it is not fanciful to assume that Turner was making a personal point when he gave McConnell his representation of an industrious England and bathed the grimy work of heaving coals in bright moonlight. The workers in the picture were not about to benefit from England's power and wealth. Their society of mutual aid and welfare was finished. They were in decline as much as the Venetians of the companion piece.

On the other hand, perhaps, he was simply using an old piece of work to demonstrate how he could paint moonlight and to claim otherwise is to see more than Turner intended. But if we admire Turner's skill and

have an empathy with the keelmen, we can still adopt the painting as an allegory for the working class of Tyneside in the years since 1835. Industries have come, gone, and been replaced by new ones. New technology has disrupted collective ways of living and communities have had to meet challenges. Those whose labour has brought wealth to the country have been disdainfully regarded as “dingy coal pickers” in some London circles.

The painting really belongs here in the North East. It will remain in the care of The National Gallery of Art, in Washington DC.

Further Looking and Reading

The best way to look at the painting, if you can't get to Washington DC, is to Google *Wikimedia commons Turner Keelmen* and go for the link at the top.



<http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.1225.html>

The Google search *Turner Shields Tate* will get you to a link to the original watercolour and *Turner Shields Tate engraving* will put the link to the Charles Turner engraving at the top. The detail in the earlier work suggests that there are women working on the keelboats. Did this happen?



<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-shields-on-the-river-tyne-d18155>



Also Google *Turner Tate Turnips* and *Turner NGA Dogana* to see other paintings mentioned in these notes.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-ploughing-up-turnips-near-slough-windsor-n00486>

The Tate Britain Library is a huge resource for information about Turner.

Useful books are by James Hamilton, Barry Venning and Gillian Forester.

Newcastle Central Library Local Tracts DY41, DY43, DY 138 have the original catalogues and reviews.

The most comprehensive publication about the Keelmen, and source of quotes and information in these notes is Joseph Fewster's *Keelmen of Tyneside* published by Boydell in 2011 and in the reference section of the City Library.

Max Adams *The Firebringers aka the Prometheans*, Quercus 2009 sets the historical context.

Art for Newcastle Paul Usherwood Tyne and Wear Museums 1984 is a comprehensive history of the exhibitions of the 1820s and 1830s.



Engraving Shields on the River Tyne JMW Turner

LEAZES PARK: A PEOPLE'S PARK

Maureen Dickson

My interest in Leazes Park came about when I discovered that my husband's great grandfather, John Wilson, had been one of the park's superintendents, and that the park was the first purpose-built Municipal Park in Newcastle upon Tyne. Having spent some time enjoying the pleasant environment just a short stroll away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre, I was keen to find out more about the origins of the park. The Popular Politics Project gave me the opportunity to follow up this interest by carrying out a mini-project as part of the Project's activities.

The creation of public parks ('People's Parks') was one of the great social inventions of the nineteenth century. Like all nineteenth-century cities, Newcastle was unsanitary. It was afflicted by cholera epidemics in 1832 and 1848-49, with the worst in 1853. The provision of public parks was one of the much-needed reforms to improve sanitary and physical conditions by providing a healthy place for people to unwind, relax and exercise. For example, Sunderland's People's Park, was a result of a public health enquiry into the 1840s cholera epidemic and a response to the demand for more open spaces in the town. Creation of this park had begun in the mid-1850s. It opened seven years later in 1857.

From information already published, I knew that the process of creating the park had been a long drawn out affair, taking sixteen years. In 1857 Newcastle Council had been presented with a petition, signed by some 3,000 working men, and that the park had eventually been officially opened on 23 December 1873 by Alderman Sir Charles Hamond. This was the issue that I decided to follow up.

In 1857, a deputation of three working men presented the petition seeking ready access to some open ground for the purposes of health and recreation to Newcastle Council. They wanted access to the privileges that were enjoyed by the working classes in other large towns. As the deputation pointed out, the public were deprived of access to areas that had previously been open to the public - the Croft, the Forth and the Forth Field. It was intended that the park would provide enjoyment for families and recreation for those who did not have their own gardens. In support of the petition, the deputation also claimed that the park would keep working men away from public houses and out of bad company.

The favoured site for a park was on a portion of the Elswick Estate, as the Moor and Leazes were considered too distant for people to benefit from a park in that area. The Council proceedings of 23 September 1857 give the first indication that the creation of a public park might not be straightforward. Yes, there was support for a public park, but there were some financial concerns. The Council's revenues were not too healthy and land at Elswick was about £500 per acre (with 10-15 acres being required). The deputation was asked whether the petitioners would be favourable to a local tax for the purpose of forming a public park. In any case, the suggested location on the west side of the city was considered less advantageous and would not be enjoyed to the same extent as one in the city centre. This observation was made by a member who had visited other public parks in England where the conclusion was that parks in the centre of a town had great advantages. The discussion ended with the matter being referred to the Town Improvement Committee.

The next reference I found to the creation of a public park was in the Council proceedings of 2 February 1859, when a Public Park Committee was specially appointed for the purpose of finding a suitable site and the best means of acquiring it.

In July 1859, that Committee considered Pandon Dene as a possible site. However, concerns were expressed about the proposed building arrangements for the vacant ground near the Dene. So the Town

Surveyor was asked to produce the plans that had been prepared some 30 years earlier for improving the Leazes.

It was now becoming clear that the favoured site for a public park was the Leazes area and that there had been long-standing plans for its improvement. In 1770 the Freeman had put forward suggestions for the improvement of the Moor and in 1811 there had been a report by the Burgesses on plans for the improvement of the Town Moor and Castle Leazes. The report revealed, however, that there was dissension between the Corporation and the Burgesses not only about the plans and reasons for the improvement but also about the use of funds that would accrue from the improvements to the Town Moor. The report also stated that Castle Leazes was one of the most valuable parts of the Moor, for the purpose of cow pasture.

Oppostion to Leazes as the site for the new park was coming from the Freeman and members of the council, and financial considerations were impeding progress. The following notice also appeared in the Newcastle Courant on 30 January, 1863;

A petition is now lying at the Trinity House against the Town Moor and Leazes Park scheme for the signature of all free mariners.

The challenge to create a people's park was taken up by Aldermen Harle and Hamond. With their support, Leazes became the favoured site for the new park and formed part of a vast scheme, requiring the permission of Parliament, for the improvement of the whole of the Town Moor.

Coming up with a design of the park was not straightforward either. A number of designs, by different designers, were put forward. In 1863 Thomas Oliver was employed to draw up plans. Later, John Hancock was commissioned to produce a scheme. This scheme was less formal but it made no provision for sport or games. The next plan to be prepared was a design by John Laing. This plan was accepted and then amended by Mr Fulton, the town surveyor.

On 18th November 1870 The Newcastle Courant reported that plans had been prepared for two parks – one on the Town Moor and one on the Leazes and that the scheme had assumed a form that promised success.

The plan below shows the proposed public parks



Courtesy of Newcastle City Library Local Studies

There is much more that could be followed up in respect of the creation of Leazes Park itself – the process of designing, laying out and developing the park, as well as further research into the opposition to the provision of a public park.

This could also lead on to other general areas of research such as the role of the park-keeper and the rules and regulations on the use and management of parks.

This is a brief article on the research I have done so far. It made me realise that the process of creating a public park was a much wider issue than I had at first thought. I realised that there was much more I needed to know about how the city was politically governed at that time and I wanted to find out more about the Town Moor – its, uses and improvements.

W. E. ADAMS

John Charlton writes, I started my *Brief History of Radicalism in North East England for the Popular Politics Project* by writing ‘it covers a very long timescale from the seventeenth century to the present. It therefore makes inevitable ...very short summaries and the probability of missing what some will think very important.’ One serious omission was pointed out by Owen Ashton. It was the neglect of W. E. Adams. After Joseph Cowen and Thomas Burt he was the most important figure in north east radicalism in the 19th Century’s second half. Cowen and Burt were political activists. Adams had played that role in his youth in Chartism. In his Newcastle days he was a journalist-propagandist for the cause in which he believed. He was a staunch republican, a supporter of European nationalist movements, a co-operator, a secularist and talented writer. These were all attractive to Joseph Cowen who in 1864 invited him to edit his newly acquired *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. In the forty years which followed he turned the paper into a very accessible campaigning weapon bringing many vital issues to the attention of the north east public. The *Chronicle* was an unequivocal supporter of anti-slavery in the American Civil War and it exposed the atrocities of the British colonial regime in Jamaica in the 1860s. The paper also supported the rising tide of European nationalism and more riskily the Irish campaign for Home Rule. The paper also carried full and unbiased accounts of strike activities especially amongst the mineworkers and led the calls for franchise extension. Adams promoted the creation of public parks and free libraries for working people. He was a pioneer of journalism for children. The *Weekly Chronicle* may have been the very first mainstream newspaper to carry a page for children and young people. However all this said W E Adams’ politics were rooted firmly in mid-century radicalism. Although some issues are still relevant today he stood firmly

against the rise of socialism and the emergence of independent working class politics.

For full accounts of his contribution readers should consult his extensive autobiography, *Memoirs of a Social Atom* and the excellent biography, Owen Ashton, *W. E. Adams: Chartist, Radical and Journalist. 1832–1906*, 1991.

Nb. If any reader of the '*Brief History...*' spots other gaps in the narrative further notes could be included in future issues of this journal.

A BANNER UNEARTHED

Don Watson



The Felling NUWM Banner in the 1930s

During the 1930s Felling had an active branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and its banner can be seen in photographs of demonstrations in the town at that time. There was a story that the banner still existed and was held in the office of the Newcastle and Gateshead Centre against Unemployment in Newcastle's Cloth Market. The Co-ordinator there, Kevin Flynn, confirmed that this was the case; the banner had been presented to the Centre when it was opened in the early 1980s.

NELHS members Bill Lawrence and Don Watson went to see if they could find it and, having climbed to the rooftop garret of the Centre, discovered it rolled up among a pile of boxes, equipment and placards.

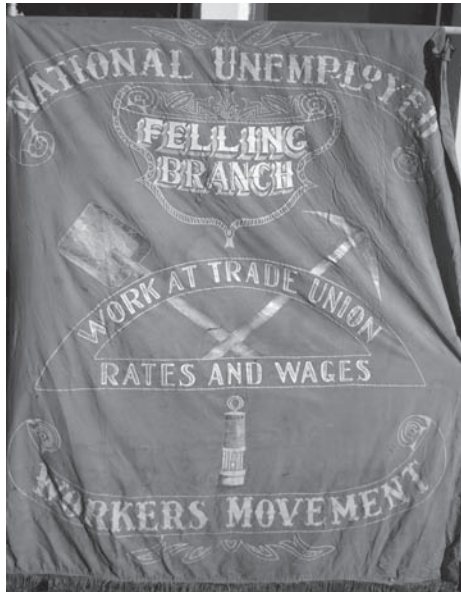
Although it had originally been displayed on the wall, the many different campaigns run by the Centre over the years had created more pressures for space and, therefore, the banner had been put away. A sunny day meant that the banner could be properly unfurled outside and photographed.

The banner is clearly modelled on the lodge banners of the Durham Miners' Association and it shows the mining character of Felling with the lamp, pick and shovel.

"Work at Trade Union Rates and Wages" was a key slogan of

the NUWM. The reverse of the banner bears the famous slogan "Workers of the World Unite" and the Communist roots of the NUWM are evident from the only two bright spots shown on the world map: the Soviet Union and China. The banner dates from the early 1930s but the map was probably added later in the decade following the Japanese invasion of 1937.

The banner is in reasonable condition for its age but in need of some restoration work. It is a real piece of Tyneside working-class history that deserves to be preserved and displayed. All being well the Centre and other interested parties will arrange for this to happen before long.



The Felling NUWM Banner in 2014

Don Watson

SECRETARY'S REPORT

After my first term of office I am pleased to report on a successful year, but I must give 'credit where credit is due'. Acting as Secretary proved both enjoyable and painless, primarily because I leant on the wisdom of John Charlton and Don Watson and was able to draw on the support and enthusiasm of the Committee and Editorial Board.

The Society has continued to organise a schedule of stimulating talks and seminars. The annual meeting and quarterly general meetings dealt with such topics as the politics of T D Smith, the inter-war unemployed movement and the Plebs League. It is particularly gratifying that two of these meetings coincided with the publication of books by Society members. The First Tuesday sessions covered many subjects, periods and geographical locations; a varied programme that testifies to the range of members' interests and their productive research. Some of the First Tuesday meetings dealt with topics being pursued under the Peoples' History of North East England. As Secretary I am indebted to all those who came forward to speak to meetings and those who took part in discussions. The Society only functions as it should because the membership is willing to participate.

I have been pleased to see the ongoing, increasing profile of the Society carried on through the last year. Not only has the Society been represented at public events, not least the Durham Education Week in Gala week, but a good deal of thought and dialogue with our web consultants has resulted in the design of a new, enhanced and user-friendly website. Another pleasing aspect has been the growing number of students who have approached the Society or individual members seeking advice and help with their research. Perhaps during the coming year we can consider how we may strengthen our links with undergraduates and post-graduates.

The Society, in the best North East tradition, is founded on mutuality and the collective efforts of its members. The Committee is not restricted

to a fixed number and welcomes anyone who wishes to join. It is also eager to hear of ideas or suggestions members may have with regard to the Society's activities. The Society relies on volunteers. Do not be backward in coming forward.

Brian Bennison

Officers:

President:	Archie Potts
Vice President:	Maureen Callcott
Chair:	John Creaby
Vice Chair:	Kath Connolly
Treasurer:	Mike Cleghorn
Secretary:	Brian Bennison
Journal Editor:	Judith McSwaine

Committee Members:

Peter Brabban (Newcastle)	Sarah Rennie (Newcastle)
John Charlton (Newcastle)	Ben Sellers (Durham)
Mike Greatbatch (Newcastle)	John Stirling (Morpeth)
Lynda Mackenzie (Newcastle)	Wyn Stokes (Tynemouth)
Paul Mayne (Newcastle)	Willie Thompson (Sunderland)
Liz O'Donnell (Morpeth)	Don Watson (North Shields)
Sue Pearson (Newcastle)	

How to contact the Society

Brian Bennison
27 Ivy Road
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 1DB

CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTH EAST LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY

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 at 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.

Dissolution

- a. If the members resolve to dissolve the Society the members of the Committee will remain in office as such and will be responsible for winding up the affairs of the Society.

- b. The Committee shall collect in all the assets of the Society and pay or provide for payment of all the liabilities of the Society.
- c. The Committee shall apply any remaining assets or money of the Society:
 - i. directly for the objects of the Society;
 - ii. by transfer to any other society having the same or similar to the objects of the Society;
- d. In no circumstances shall the net assets of the Society be paid to or distributed among the members of the Society.

Officers and committee:

The business of the Society shall be conducted by a Committee composed of 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.

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	2013	Aidan Harper

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.

north east labour history society

I would like to join the society

Membership Types: please tick

- ☐ institutions £25
☐ individual (including overseas) £15
☐ students/unwaged £5

Annual subscription includes a copy of Journal.

Name

Address

.....

.....

Email:.....

Please make cheques payable to:

North East Labour History

or use **Standing Order Mandate** on next page.

Please send cheque or standing order mandate with this form 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)

To The ManagerBank
Address.....
..... Sort Code.....

Please pay the following beneficiary in accordance with the following details:

BENEFICIARY	North East Labour History
BENEFICIARY'S BANK	Unity Trust Bank Plc
BRANCH TITLE	Birmingham
SORT CODE	08-60-01
ACCOUNT NO.	58254950
AMOUNT IN FIGURES	£15.00
AMOUNT IN WORDS	Fifteen pounds only
DATE OF FIRST PAYMENT AND FREQUENCY	1 st October 2014 and thereafter every year on 1 st October until you receive further notice from me in writing.
ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED	
ACCOUNT NO.	

Please debit my account accordingly. Please also cancel any previous standing order or direct debit in favour of the above beneficiary.

Signature:

Date:

Note: The Bank will not undertake to

- 1) make any reference to Value Added Tax or other indeterminate element
- 2) advise payer's address to beneficiary
- 3) advise beneficiary of inability to pay
- 4) request beneficiary's banker to advise beneficiary of receipt



Gateshead Local Government Branch

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

Dave Smith
Branch Secretary

Dave Walkden
Branch Chair

Gateshead Local Government Branch
Suite 5
New Century House
Gateshead
NE8 1HR

Tel: 0191 4776638
Fax: 0191 4776613
Email: info@gatesheadunison.co.uk



Durham Miners Gala.

*"From our past we inherit
The future we build"*

Let's go to the 131st Durham Miners Gala in 2015 'The Big Meeting'

The recent release of Thatcher Cabinet Office papers under the 30-year rule, really brought home and reminded us of the major struggle that awaited the coalminers of the North East when they embarked upon that epic strike in March 1984.

Last year we commemorated the start of the Great Strike. In 2015 we will recall and show respect for the end and return to the pits with heads held high.

Thatcher is no more, but the Gala and the working folk and their communities of the North East are still here to celebrate their long historic tradition of unity.

Come to the Durham Miners' Gala "The Big Meeting" in June 2015

The Durham Miners Gala , the Big Meeting, is a unique celebration of labour, trade union and community values, history and traditions.

To secure its continuance in the future join

The Friends of the Durham Miners Gala.

Donation is a minimum of £24 per annum or £2 monthly.

See our website www.durhamminers.org

or contact at Durham Miners Association, The Miners Hall, Red Hill, Durham DH1 4BB

north east history volume 45

- **Brandling Place Home For Penitent Women**
- **A footnote in the history of a north east film archive**
- **The Community Development Project in North Shields 1971-1977**
- **Middlesbrough Football - Early History**
- **Reflections on 1984-5 miners strike**
- **Personal and oral histories of life in Sunderland, County Durham and Usworth**
- **Book reviews, project reports and NELHS news**



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/>