

North East History

Jubilee
Edition

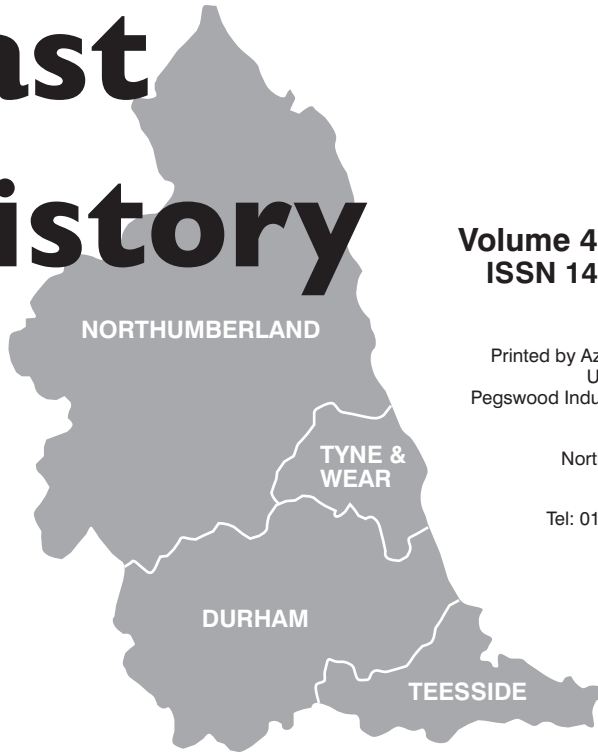
Volume 48 2017



Journal of the North East Labour History Society

north east history

North East History



Volume 48 2017
ISSN 14743248
© 2017

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

Copyright reserved on behalf of the authors and the North East
Labour History Society © 2017

www.nelh.net

Contents

Note from the Editors	5
How to submit articles	8
Notes on contributors	9

Articles:

Fifty Years of the North East Labour History Society	13
Picketing, Photography and Memory: Easington 1984-85	<i>Leanne Carr</i> 31
Another Kind of Heroism: Jack Trevena, Workers' Educational Association North East District Secretary 1914-1919 and Conscientious Objector	<i>Kath Connolly and Jude Murphy</i> 43
Conscientious Objectors 1916-1956 Oral History interviews with a Daughter and Widows in Newcastle	<i>Sue King</i> 59
The Bagnalls of Ouseburn: Watermen, Publican, and a Sporting Hero	<i>Mike Greatbatch</i> 65
Easington Colliery: My Pathway To Politics	<i>Harry Barnes</i> 81
Trade Unionism and Methodism. Some North East Labour Leaders Reconsidered	<i>Peter Sagar</i> 91
Rose Lumsden, a Sunderland Nurse in the Great War	<i>Judith McSwaine</i> 103
The Yemeni Seamen, South Shields	<i>Peter Livsey</i> 119
The North East Spanish Civil War Memorial Board	<i>Lewis Mates & Don Watson</i> 123
Commemorative Plaques and Monuments	129
Joe Willson 1841-1875	<i>Dave Harker</i> 129

north east history

Harry Clasper, 1812-1870	<i>David Clasper</i>	133
The Eighth Plinth Campaign in Middlesbrough	<i>Emma Chesworth</i>	136
Thomas Wilson, 1773-1858	<i>Mike Greatbatch and Ian Daley</i>	139
Gender and Social Transformation in the 1970s Community Development Projects: Lessons from the North East	<i>Susan B. Hyatt</i>	141
Living through the 1970s: Gender and the Community Development Projects revisited	<i>Judith Green</i>	157
That Was Then And This Is Now: Trade Unions And Plant Closures	<i>John Stirling</i>	167
Davey Hopper 1943-2016 A Personal Appreciation of the Durham Miners Leader	<i>John Creaby</i>	179
The Davey Pearson Photographic Collection	<i>Alan Diment and Allen Mulliss</i>	187
Book Reviews		195
2016 Secretary's report		208
NELH Officers, Committee Members, and Society contact details		209
Consitution		210
Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy		212
How to join the Society		213

**Unite the Union
Sunderland Area**



**Congratulates
NELHS
on its jubilee**

www.unitetheunion.org

Note from the Editors

We begin this volume of *North East History* by looking at the story of our own Society. Half a century of the NELHS is surveyed through the experiences of individuals, including two of the founders, who have been involved in the organisation over the years. These personal accounts illustrate the value of those active volunteers who have contributed so much over the years to ensuring that our activities and publications continue to reflect trends in our region's history whilst attracting an audience of interested persons both within the region and beyond.

Nothing reflects this more than our journal. *North East History* has evolved with the Society and today provides a platform for a wide range of topics and research interests, reflecting both changes in the development of working class history and the broad spectrum of our membership.

This is no more apparent than in the piece from last year's Sid Chaplin Prize winner, Leanne Carr, who combines the stunning photography of Keith Pattison with oral history evidence, or the photo-essay based on the Davey Pearson Collection currently being catalogued and digitised by volunteers of the Ouseburn Trust. The ability to reproduce images and present them as attractive artwork is a far cry from the early days of the duplicated and stapled *Bulletins* which helped to promote the Society in its formative years.

This year's journal features a number of illustrated essays, including those by Mike Greatbatch and the joint essay by Kath Connolly and Jude Murphy. Mike has lived with the story of the Bagnall family for many years, and is pleased to have finally completed a written version that he hopes reflects the value and skills of these river workers and those of the wider community of watermen once so universal on the working Tyne.

Jack Trevena's principled stance as a Conscientious Objector during the Great War reminds us that heroism is not confined to those that served in

the forces. There is much detail in his story that reflects also the importance of the WEA during those years, and the authors' on-going involvement in researching the post-war experience of the WEA in our region will hopefully result in more material coming to light.

The different experiences of Conscientious Objectors in both world wars is illustrated by Sue King, and the theme of the Great War centenary is further developed by Judith McSwaine in her study of the diary of nurse Rose Lumsden and by Peter Livsey in his study of the Yemeni Arab merchant seamen who served on ships sailing from South Shields. Tyne & Wear Archives hold a rich collection of material dating from the years 1914-18 and Judith demonstrates how the personal, and sometimes intimate, records of working people can bring to life such world-shattering events.

A more recent personal memoir is that contributed by Harry Barnes. In addition to conveying the events and experiences that helped to shape Harry's personal development in Labour politics, this essay also provides a valuable addition to our featured essays on the experience of Ruskin College students in last year's journal.

The study of recent history can sometimes produce particular challenges for the author, especially if, like Judith Green, you find yourself part of that historical story. Judith uses the term 'triangulated reminiscence' to describe the approach she has adopted in writing her account of the Community Development Projects that Susan Hyatt has been researching. The two essays provide valuable insights into the important role and contribution of working class women in such projects.

A feature of recent times has been the public recognition by commemorative plaque or public artwork of the contribution made by figures from our past to the history of working people and working class politics. Here we feature a number of short essays illustrating recent initiatives in support of such public commemoration, including a reminder of the sacrifice made by some of the volunteers from our region in the fight against fascism in Spain in the 1930s.

An appreciation of Davey Hopper, who amongst many other things,

was a great friend and supporter of the Society, John Stirling's piece on the response of trade unions and activists to plant closures in the 1970s, and an essay by Peter Sagar on the Methodist associations of some of our region's most famous trade union leaders, all reaffirm the enduring contribution of organised labour to our history and identity in the North East.

Finally, we conclude with the customary book reviews, including titles written by NELHS members.

Brian Bennison

Mike Greatbatch

Win Stokes

Sue Ward

How to Submit an Article to the Journal

The North East Labour History Society is committed to making our journal reflect the diverse range of historical experiences of working people in the North East region.

We aim to reflect all communities and groupings in the North East and would encourage contributions from those who live and work in them, those who research them and those who write about them. We want to hear from individuals, community organisations, local history societies, students and teachers and all who have something to say about our region.

If you have a research interest that could form the basis of a written article and would like to discuss this, please contact our Secretary or the Editors – contact details are on page 209.

If you have an existing article that you would like to submit for publication, we can send you a set of guidelines to ensure that the article and its endnotes are presented in a format that is appropriate to our journal's style.

The Society holds limited numbers of back issues of the North East History journal, and details of how to obtain copies can be found on the Society's website: <http://nelh.net/>

A searchable index of articles and reports can also be found at our website: <http://nelh.net/>



Notes on Contributors

Harry Barnes was born in Easington in 1936. After working as a railway clerk, he became an adult student at Ruskin College and the University of Hull. He spent over two decades teaching in the Extra Mural Department of Sheffield University and from 1987 to 2005 he was the Member of Parliament for North East Derbyshire. He is still active in Labour politics and runs a monthly discussion group.

Leanne Carr is from East Durham and graduated from Newcastle University in 2016. She is the winner of the 2016 Sid Chaplin Prize. Her essay is an abridged version of part of her first class honours degree dissertation, which she would like to dedicate to her late father, Terence Carr.

Kath Connolly is a retired secondary school teacher and Chair of the Durham Branch of the Workers' Educational Association. She recently completed an oral history of former employees of the Co-operative Wholesale Society in the North East and she is currently part of *Education 4 Action Durham* which is encouraging wider community participation in the Miners' Hall in Durham.

John Creaby is currently Chair of the NELHS and Regional Chair of the Co-operative Party. He retired as a trade union official after twenty-eight years service and has been a Regional Vice Chair of the Labour Party, Chair of the Racial Equality Council, as well as sitting on the Regional TUC Executive and the Northumbria Probation Board. He has been a life long activist with CND, Peace Action, Anti-Apartheid and anti-racism movements. John holds an MPhil. from the University of Durham.

Mike Greatbatch is a Fellow of the Association for Heritage Interpretation and has over thirty years experience of working with communities to document and celebrate local heritage. He worked for thirteen years in the Lower Ouseburn and the history of this area continues to be his main research interest.

Judith Green was born and brought up on Tyneside and returned from university in 1974 to take up her first job as a Research Fellow with Durham University, working on the Benwell Community Development Project. During this five-year period, she contributed to several of the published local and inter-project CDP reports, as well as joint publications with other organisations. Since then, she has continued to work in an action-research capacity, with a continuing but not exclusive focus on the West End of Newcastle. Now retired, she works in a voluntary capacity in the West End, mainly focusing on engaging the local community in exploring and celebrating their local history.

Susan Hyatt is a former community organiser and currently Professor of Anthropology at the Indianapolis branch of Indiana University.

Sue King was born in Hartlepool. Her career as an English teacher included five years in East Africa and twenty years in Further Education in South Shields working with Access students. Following retirement she volunteers at Jesmond Library.

Peter Livsey was a Senior Education Inspector for Durham LEA. Since retirement he has worked on a number of local history projects. He has written several articles, including four published in *North East History*, all resulting from projects launched by the NELHS.

Lewis Mates teaches politics at Durham University. His first monograph (*The Spanish Civil War and the British Left*) focused on the politics of the grassroots solidarity campaigns, taking the North East as a case study. His latest book (*The Great Labour Unrest: Rank-and-file Movements and Political Change in the Durham Coalfield*) was published by Manchester University Press in 2016.

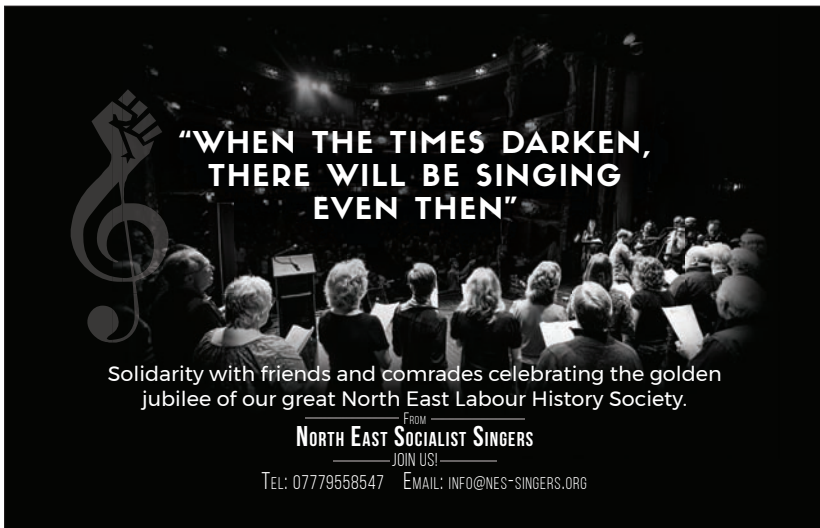
Judith McSwaine was born and brought up on Tyneside. She worked in adult and community education in local government where she was active in her trade union. She is currently Treasurer of the NELHS.

Jude Murphy is a Project Organiser for the Workers Educational Association, currently developing the WEA North East History & Heritage Branch and co-ordinating the Heritage Lottery Fund supported project *Turbulent Times 1918-1928*. Her PhD research topic of folk music revival and North Eastern identity continues to be an on-going interest.

Peter Sagar is a teacher and trade union and human rights activist. He is secretary of *A Living Tradition* (www.alivingtradition.org), a community interest company which aims to help people in the North East to learn more about the heritage of human rights and community cohesion and be inspired by it. Coming from a Methodist and United Reformed Church background, Peter has developed an interest in Nonconformism and trade unions in the North East.

John Stirling worked at Northumbria University before retiring and has a longstanding involvement in trade union education. He was a member of the management committee of the Trade Union Studies Information Unit (TUSIU) and is currently Membership Secretary of the NELHS.

Don Watson is a former Secretary of the NELHS. Besides the book on the Spanish Civil War mentioned in his essay in this issue Don is also the author of *No Justice Without A Struggle: The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in the North East of England 1920-1940* (Merlin Press, 2014). He has contributed to several books and journals on labour history. His latest publication, on squatting, is reviewed in this volume.



**"WHEN THE TIMES DARKEN,
THERE WILL BE SINGING
EVEN THEN"**

Solidarity with friends and comrades celebrating the golden
jubilee of our great North East Labour History Society.

FROM
NORTH EAST SOCIALIST SINGERS
JOIN US!

TEL: 07779558547 EMAIL: info@nes-singers.org

Fifty Years of the North East Labour History Society

This year the *North East Labour History Society* (NELHS) is fifty years old. The North East was the first English region to form its own labour history group distinct from the *Society for the Study of Labour History* (SSLH) which was founded in 1960 as a kind of umbrella organisation covering the United Kingdom. *The Scottish Labour History Society* was formed in 1966, the *Welsh Labour History Society* in 1970 and the *Irish Labour History Society* in 1973. There is no English labour history society as such but a number of regional groups were set up independent of the SSLH. Over the years some of these regionally-based societies collapsed but the NELHS still exists in rude health. Below we look back over the Society's life with some of those who became involved.

Archie Potts recalls the birth and early years of the Society

The year 1966 found Joe Clarke and myself on the General Studies staff at Rutherford College of Technology in Newcastle. Joe lectured on the history of science and technology and I taught economics. We were both members of the SSLH. Joe had recently completed a MA thesis on labour relations in the Tyneside shipbuilding and engineering industries in the late nineteenth century, and I was writing entries for the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*. We both found it difficult to attend SSLH meetings and discussed the possibility of forming a North East group. We contacted likely members in local universities, colleges, schools, history societies and trade unions. Out of these soundings emerged a steering committee of four that met at Rutherford College on 15 September 1966.

Professor Edward Allen of Durham University chaired the meeting. Ted, as he was known, had come to Newcastle in 1929 to take up a

lectureship in economics at King's College. In 1946 he became a Reader at Durham University and in 1963 was appointed to the newly created Chair of Economics. His special subject was regional policy but he also had a strong interest in the history of the labour movement. He was a man of quiet authority and was used to chairing meetings.

Joe Clarke, who had drawn up an agenda and done most of the preparatory paperwork acted as secretary. Terry McDermott was the third person in attendance and I was the fourth. The steering committee drafted a constitution and made preparations for an inaugural meeting. Leaflets were circulated and we received a welcome shot of publicity on local television.

The inaugural meeting of the NELHS was held on 2 December 1966 at Rutherford College with fifteen people in attendance. The draft constitution was approved and officers and committee elected. The first officers were: Ted Allen, Chairman; Archie Potts, Vice-chairman; Joe Clarke, Secretary; and Terry McDermott, Treasurer. The Committee consisted of the writer Sid Chaplin; two young academics, Duncan Bythell of Durham University and David Rowe of Newcastle University; and E. Barnet, a trade unionist. Several trade union officials were sympathetic towards the Society but were pressed for time and could not take on any more commitments. Although elected to the Committee, Mr Barnet never became an active member. Apart from Sid Chaplin, we were an academic bunch.



Joe Clarke



Archie Potts



Terry McDermott

<u>FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1967</u>			
<u>Income</u>	<u>£ s d</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>£ s d</u>
Subscriptions		Durham Day School	
Individuals (19)	4 15 0	Speaker's Expenses Travel	1 9 0
Trade Unions (2)	10 0	Van Mildert College	1 17 6
Donation	2 6	Bulletin	
Durham School	4 17 6	Paper & Typing	4 0 0
		Dispatch	10 0
		Minute Book	10 0
Balance Excess		Postage etc. Secretary	1 0 0
expenditure		Treasurer	5 5
over income	3 6 11	Nov. Meeting Travel	4 0 0
	<u>£13 11 11</u>		<u>£13 11 11</u>

T.P. MacDermott
Hon. Treasurer.

1967 Financial Statement

The prevailing discipline amongst us was economic history: we either taught it or studied it. Interestingly, the SSLH was also dominated by economic historians, notably Eric Hobsbawm, Sidney Pollard and John Saville, in its early years. This was hardly surprising since labour history as a university subject grew out of the teaching of economic history. In the case of the NELHS, as with the SSLH, the area of interest expanded in the 1970s to embrace sociology, gender, industrial relations, ethnicity, popular culture and oral history.

Shortly after the inaugural meeting Joe Clarke and myself were asked to report to Dr George Bosworth, the Director of Newcastle Polytechnic. 'Now we are in for it', I said to Joe, but the opposite proved to be the case. Dr Bosworth said he had noted our involvement in the new society and welcomed it as the Polytechnic needed to get involved in the local community and had no objection to us using its facilities. Dr Keith Harris, the Chief Librarian, became a member of the Society and we could always rely on his co-operation. In this way we built up a network of support for the NELHS within the Polytechnic, which became the lead institution.

This was in some ways a curious development because the committee were determined to make this new society a regional rather than a purely Newcastle organisation. However, attempts to hold meetings in Sunderland, Middlesbrough and other venues were not a success in terms of attendance. Whether we liked it or not, we were thrown back on Newcastle. Indeed several members who did not reside in Newcastle did not mind travelling to Newcastle for meetings because they could take the opportunity to visit the city's bookshops and libraries.

The first meeting of the NELHS programme was at Rutherford College on 3 February 1967 when the speaker was John Saville, then Reader in Economic History at Hull University, on the present and future prospects of labour history. Over the next three years members spoke at meetings, usually on aspects of their research, and visiting speakers included W. R. Chaloner, John Foster, W. R. Garside, W. H. Maehl, Robert Moore and Sidney Pollard.

In the first year of the Society it was decided that there should be an annual publication to be known as the *Bulletin*. This was to have four main aims: to furnish a record of the Society's activities and meetings by summarising lectures, transcribing interviews etc; to publish bibliographies and provide guidance to archives and records; to provide notes and comments of matters of local interest; and to review books on local history. It was a 'tools of the trade' publication and the first six issues followed these guidelines. However, the editors found that they were receiving substantial articles of good quality and it was decided to open up the Bulletin to such works. This proved to be a popular move with the Society's membership and with writers who found an additional outlet for their work.

The first five *Bulletins* were run off by hand on a spirit duplicator in a staff room at Newcastle Polytechnic. They looked rather like the samizdat journals produced by dissidents in the Soviet Union. Then the editors discovered a Polytechnic technician who had a printing press in a shed in his back garden and offered cheap rates. The Bulletin was, on the whole,

well received by members and actually made a profit, so that it became possible to have it professionally printed. The first editors were Joe Clarke and David Rowe, followed by Duncan Bythell and myself. Subsequently an editorial board assumed responsibility until Bill Lancaster took over as editor in 1991 in its new format as *North East History*. Terry McDermott served as business manager for the first ten years and did a first-rate job in boosting sales.

In 1968 Joe Clarke was diagnosed with a rare blood disease and spent lengthy periods in hospital. I covered for him as Joint Secretary. I worked alongside Joe until Val Gillespie took over as Secretary in 1972. Sid Chaplin was elected to the Vice-Chairman vacancy in 1968. Ted Allen resigned as Chairman in 1973 and was succeeded by Norman McCord.

Ray Challinor, already a prominent member of the SSLH, was appointed as a principal lecturer in history at Newcastle Polytechnic in 1971 and joined NELHS. Two years later Maureen Callcott was also appointed to the staff at Newcastle Polytechnic and also joined. Both Ray and Maureen were cadre members of the NELHS for the next twenty years.

John Stirling spoke with Terry McDermott about his involvement with the Society

In the early days of the Society, as Archie Potts has recalled, it had an academic heritage. However the academics also drew on a wide range of contacts and experiences, as well as often being 'activists' themselves. Terry McDermott, the Society's first Treasurer and later Chair, was lecturing at the then Newcastle Polytechnic but had brought with him a wide-ranging trade union background. Terry had arrived in Newcastle in 1960 following early years working in the road transport industry in Northern Ireland as it recovered in the aftermath of the Second World War. He had worked as a clerk for the Road Transport Board in Belfast and his active involvement with the trade union movement started with him joining the Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA).

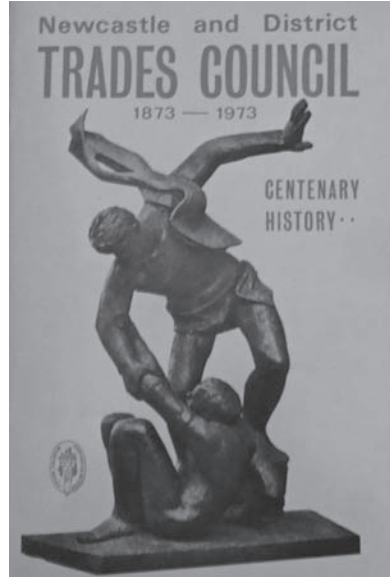
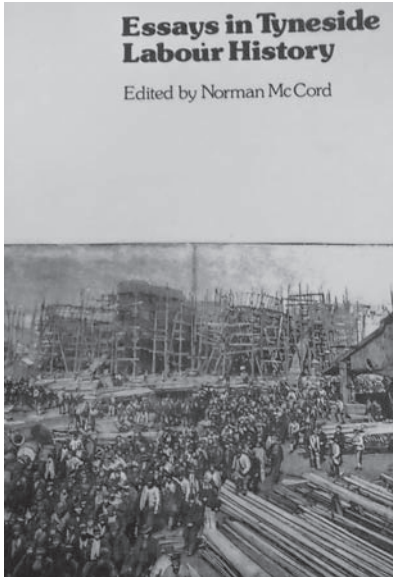
Terry came to Newcastle to take on the role of a Workers Education Association (WEA) tutor organiser in trade union studies. This was an early appointment in what was to become a burgeoning area and he quickly made links with all the local unions. Working for the WEA was rewarding but not always easy, especially as Terry had no car and had to rely on public transport in the early days. Travelling from Newcastle to Consett on the bus on a freezing cold North East evening to run a class for five people was a challenge at times but the reward of having enthusiastic adults in the class made it worthwhile. It also brought practical experience and important local knowledge to the Society's work. Terry was a WEA tutor for thirteen years.

His next job was at Newcastle Polytechnic where he became actively engaged with the production and distribution of the Society's *Bulletin*. He recalls how he was required to distribute copies to Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Trinity College Dublin and the British Library. Somehow or other an American library found out about NELHS and became our first overseas subscriber. By then, printing was undertaken at an indulgent (or perhaps un-noticing) Polytechnic where Archie, Ray Challinor and Terry all worked. Terry recalls between 50-100 copies of the *Bulletin* being distributed, always to a wider audience than just the Society's members.

Alongside this, Terry was leading the development of an expanding trade union studies and industrial relations programme with new staff including Jenny Beale, Doug Miller and myself. Newcastle was one of the rare Polytechnics to run shop stewards programmes for the TUC, which says quite something about the trade union respect for Terry. However, all the staff ended up teaching managers and undergraduates in what became the Business School as well as trade unionists during the day, in the evenings at weekends and at summer schools.

Terry continued his active engagement with the Society and local unions and he produced (with Joe Clarke) a history of the Newcastle Trade Council which he then forgot to put his name on. After early retirement he worked with Norman McCord on a proposed MA that

took him back to his roots and labour history. He did extensive research on the Tyneside Irish community before leaving for a sojourn in the Irish Republic. He could not resist the call to come back to Tyneside and returned to Fenham with his wife Eileen where he still lives.



Early examples of publications by Society members.

Maureen Callcott remembers encountering a male-dominated Society

In the early 1970s I found myself in what was very much a man's world after some years teaching History at Kenton Lodge, a Women's Teacher Training College which had only latterly admitted male students. I moved to a post in the all-male history division of Newcastle Polytechnic and remained the only woman there for the next nine years. It wasn't a concerning factor professionally but when I also became involved in the NELHS I was introduced to the Society by its then Chair, Norman McCord, who was supervising my research and invited me to speak at

a Society meeting in Durham. The emphasis in the Society was, quite understandably, given the nature of our region, almost totally on industrial history and man's part in it. There has, of course, always been another and arguably equally fundamental aspect; namely the lives of working women, the majority of women in fact, which only more recently is receiving serious study.

At that time I was completing an MLitt study of parliamentary elections in the North East and chanced upon some key women, both high-quality candidates such as Ellen Wilkinson, Margaret Bondfield and Dr Marion Phillips, and the many other women political activists and workers whose lives I followed in politics and elsewhere. I contributed several pieces to the *Bulletin* and several biographies to the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* and increasingly researched women's roles. However, the committees, articles, speakers and conversations in the Society were mostly all male for the first thirty years and failed to respond or reach out to and include the new work that was happening in women's history in the region and elsewhere, for example in the newly formed Social History and Oral History Societies.

Keeping the Society alive at all during the latter years of the 1970s and early 1980s became difficult. My memory is of key members of the early Committee becoming seriously ill, heavily involved in local politics or otherwise engaged, and a small core of us, with our own challenges, struggling to obtain contributions to the *Bulletin*, get it printed and stapled (!) and distributed. I worked at these tasks with Tony Barrow and Keith Armstrong. Happily the Society revived with new energies leading it into expansion and greater professionalism, especially in the production of its now outstanding journal and research enterprises.

Stuart Howard's long association with the Society began with a meeting in Blaydon

In autumn 1980 I was sitting in Blaydon Library with a mixed group, including some not un-eccentric people. Dr David Rowe was explaining

that there was little more to be said about Chartism when my companion, with an enigmatic smile, shook his head almost imperceptibly. This was Keith Wilson, soon to become Secretary of the Society. We had driven up from Darlington, probably the only 'southerners' in the room I guess. A burly man with a tonsured head, ruddy red cheeks, sparkling, intelligent eyes, and legs extended out like two pit props reclined opposite; he looked as if he might explode. I did not know him then, but this was Ray Challinor. At the front of the room Archie Potts sat in the chair, the kindest and wisest academic I was ever to meet in a long university career. I do not recall if Maureen Callcott was there, but her work, some of the most innovative produced by the group, was to profoundly influence and guide me in the years to come. How was I to know on that November night, that one day, I would owe all these people, keystones of the NELHS, a deep debt of gratitude?

We did not know it then, but the high water mark of labour history had passed. E. P. Thompson still dominated the field, and perhaps modern history in general, but the new decade had introduced new dynamics. Within the Society, many of the old guard were drawing back, revealing a core of Challinor, Potts and Callcott. Significantly for Labour History, the worm of post modernism was gnawing away at some of the subject's primary conceptual structures, not least the notions of class and class struggle, and replacing them with organising ideas around culture and identity. But it was not only post modernism that proved to be a force of change, for the 1980s were a transitional decade. The creeping ideology of liberalism reduced the influence of consensus and committee men, and promoted the dynamism of movers and shakers. All of this was reflected in labour history as a discipline in general and the Society in particular

The largely economic historians slowly gave way to cultural historians and in Bill Lancaster the Society acquired a mover and shaker of the first order. Bill was driven and visionary. His ideas and energy, aided by Joan Allen's punctilious administration, changed a Society that by the mid 1980s had perhaps become a little moribund. A significant moment

was the re-design of the *Bulletin* in 1990, moving it from photocopy to glossy, then later its renaming as *North East History*, an event which caused an existential moment among some of the membership, including myself. Bill Lancaster was probably right for *North East History* reflected prevailing historiographical shifts and thus appealed to a wider and more contemporary audience, without losing its Labour focus. It also enjoyed a wide distribution, not least in university libraries, and had talented contributors. Bill built upon the participation of students, hosted History Workshop events, founded the journal *Northern Review* and co-authored the book *Geordies* among other things. No one person could be expected to keep this up and by the early years of the new millennium he began to run out of steam. The new man to emerge was different, but no less dynamic, and like Bill, John Charlton had a clear vision.

John re-energised the Society and attracted to it some new and energetic core members. The emphasis that the Society had placed on student membership and academic research shifted to a more political and popular approach. The Society journal too was re-cast in 2005, with higher production standards.

Paul Mayne witnessed the Society embracing a wider focus for its activities

I became a member of the NELHS sometime in the nineties but it feels as if I have been a member a lot longer. My earliest recollections are of meetings with a range of interesting speakers and subjects in the premises of the Literary & Philosophical Society. I particularly recall the inauguration of the monthly 'First Tuesday' meetings, initially at the *Old George* pub, where we have returned recently after a number of years at the Irish Centre. These regular get-togethers offer the chance for members to familiarise themselves with a whole variety of topics. For me, one of the best was the meeting led by Peter Brabban at which he showed his photographs of the Consett Steel Works Campaign, and was joined by veterans of the campaign who contributed to a lively discussion and

dissection of events. Another was when we commemorated the centenary of the 1916 Conscription Act with personal accounts of the treatment of individual conscientious objectors, which I found very moving.

I have had the great honour to serve as Chairperson of the Society. It was a privilege to welcome and introduce so many distinguished speakers and to address comrades and friends on behalf of the Society, but I must acknowledge the unstinting work of two Secretaries of NELHS, the late Val Duncan and her successor Don Watson, and other members of the Committee during my period of office. A significant development during my involvement with the NELHS, which has been favourably commented upon by the membership and general readers, has been the improved appearance over the years of the Society's journal. It is a credit to successive editorial teams. Another highlight of my time in the Society, as I am sure it was for many people, was the Popular Politics Project, a genuine collective effort which widened the Society's appeal.

However, one thing about the NELHS that has perturbed me slightly is the Newcastle-centric nature of the events we hold. All our meetings, with the exception of the July pre-Gala meeting in Durham, take place in Newcastle. Perhaps, as the Society continues to grow we can consider the idea of a branch system in order to cover the outlying parts of the region, which would then hold the occasional meeting on the lines of the First Tuesday. It is something to think about.

John Charlton takes us into the new century

The Society moved into the millennium with some unresolved problems. There was a fall in membership and little sign of new members to fill the gap. Two factors were at play. The first was that the generation of people who had founded and sustained it through the 1970s, the 1980s and into the 1990s had been retired for some years - in some cases for twenty years - and largely past doing the leg-work to bring in newcomers. Less than a handful led by Bill Lancaster and Joan Hugman (later Allen) were keeping things going whilst doing increasingly taxing jobs. Round the

turn of the new century there were just two issues of the Society's journal in four years.

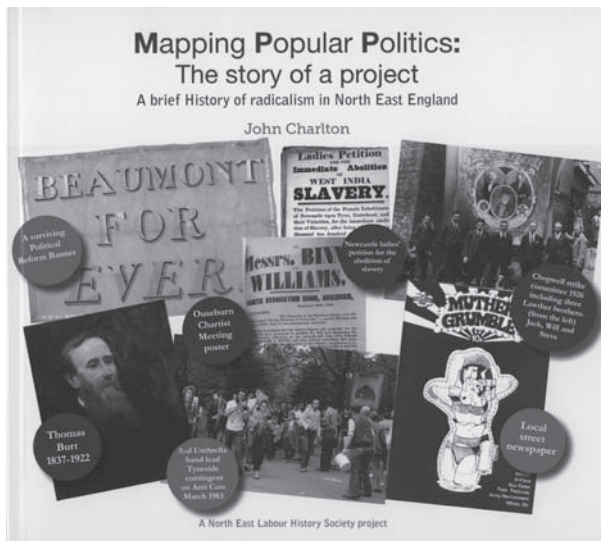
There was a much bigger problem. The ascent of neo-liberalism had impacted on the universities. Students had to face an end first to maintenance grants and then to free tuition, and were being forced to take an instrumental view of their time at college. Business Studies began to dominate the non-science areas of study, affecting humanities and social sciences across the board. The examination of trade union and workplace history and the labour process, so vibrant in the 1960s and 1970s, all but disappeared from the curriculum.

There was a serious possibility of the journal and the society simply disappearing. However, by happy coincidence, a number of academics, trade union officers, teachers and other public sector workers reached retirement at more or less the same time. That some had organisational experience in trade unions and a variety of left-wing parties and groups was an added bonus. Amazingly they all worked happily together.

A new committee aided by some survivors from the old began to reconstruct the Society from 2003-4. It was not easy but soon it became clear that there was an audience for lively meetings. Regular meetings brought a stream of new faces as did social activities; music and poetry evenings, Christmas Socials, coach trips to New Lanark (Robert Owen's factory village), John Ruskin's home on Lake Coniston, and the Mining Museum at Woodhorn, historical trips down the River Tyne, and a range of town walks.

In the first stages the new members and supporters were largely consumers of the offerings of a relatively small core of producers. In 2006 the commemoration of the ending of the slave trade in the British Empire was registered in the North East by a Heritage Lottery funded project in which some twenty volunteers were involved. Some of them were Society members and some of them became members through working on the project. The idea of a project inspired and run by the Society grew out of the Slavery Project. The outcome was the Popular Politics Project. It ran

for eighteen months and almost 150 volunteers participated in developing research and writing skills. Participants hoped to mount a third funded project but when only limited amounts of money were available members simply got on with a range of ideas, including an Oral History project with former employees of the Co-operative Wholesale Society factories. One of the important by-products of the projects has been the reminder, through catalogue searches, of the valuable collections relating to lives of working people to be found in the region's archives and libraries.



Mapping Popular Politics

The jewel in the Society's crown has been the journal, *North East History*. It has remained a vibrant and very well-produced publication under different editors and editorial teams. This was a chosen direction, with each issue gaining a freshness from the input of both new and experienced editors. There have been some attempts to produce themed issues, namely the Slavery issue in 2008 and on the Co-operative movement in 2012. Largely though it has thrived through variety, articles being submitted

from the collective or individual research projects of members. Each of the last five issues has had five or more articles written by active members of the Society and in several cases by first time authors.

The Society has so far succeeded in overcoming the problem that threatened its existence in the last decade of the twentieth century; the decline and virtual disappearance of the great industries and trade unions which created the region's wealth over three centuries.

Janet Medcalf was one of many drawn into the Society by the Popular Politics Project

I fell in love with the subject of history when I was eleven years old. I had just started grammar school and was picked out at random by Mr Watkins, the history teacher, to read passages from his text books to the class. I was his reader for the next five years and was hooked on the subject. As a result I went on to study for a history degree at Newcastle University, which led to a career in the Civil Service.

In 2009, just after my husband died, I was at a talk given by Kath Connelly. John Charlton was there as her Powerpoint operator, and at the end of the talk he told me about the work of the NELHS and mentioned that they were looking for volunteers. The lure was too great. John suggested that I join the team that was cataloguing the work of Thomas Wilson at the Northumberland County archive at Woodhorn. I duly went along to the archive there and met Peter Nicklin and the others who were busying away with multiple boxes of material from the Thomas Wilson archive.

The Woodhorn team were lovely but soon after I started going there Peter was offered a full-time job and I found the journey to Ashington more difficult so I transferred to the team who were also working on the Thomas Wilson archive at the Central Library. This was part of the 'Mapping Popular Politics' project, in which much energy was being generated.

Once I had joined the Society I realised very quickly that I had none of the skills of an experienced local historian. A love of history and a degree in it does not make a competent local historian, but I found that

the Society contained many excellent historians, who were generous in sharing their knowledge and expertise. After becoming involved with the Society I have attended many meetings where projects were discussed and taken to fruition, one of the most interesting being the Co-operative Society's funded CWS Oral Histories project. I have also undertaken a few personal writing projects for the Society, one on the development of midwifery in Newcastle upon Tyne and one on Murray House in the West End of the city, after a commission came in from Newcastle United Football Club. I have also helped at workshops and some talks.

Joining up with the Society and the people who participate in it has meant a lot to me. I am most definitely a student again with a new set of history teachers. I am grateful to them all.



Janet Medcalf and fellow volunteers at Newcastle City Library

Sean Creighton recalls his involvement in the Popular Politics Project

I became interested in labour history while at Sheffield University through the Society for the Study of Labour History, and in 2001 I prepared material on the black presence in the North East for use in Sunderland, and then in 2002 I worked with Sue Robson supporting an economic development partnership of the five Tyne and Wear Community Empowerment Networks, using some of that history.

I then applied for the post of Archive Mapping and Research Officer for the Remembering Slavery project based at the Newcastle Literary & Philosophical Society in 2007. I quickly got to know John Charlton who became a stalwart in the Project. He published a book *Hidden Chains*, and undertook dozens of talks around the North East, while I gave at least one talk for NELHS. I, along with several volunteers, contributed essays to the 2009 edition of *North East History*, mine being on 'Black People in the North East'.

At the end of the project we set up the North East Slavery and Abolition Group (NESAG, currently on hold), as a way of continuing work on this history. John and I discussed the radical component of the abolition movement and links with the campaigns for political reform. We agreed that a new project was needed to explore that radicalism. This grew into the North East Popular Politics Project for which NELHS got Heritage Lottery funding. I was appointed Archive Mapping and Research Officer. Many members of the Slavery project and NELHS became volunteers, and undertook an amazing amount of work.

A key element in the Project was for volunteers to contribute towards a database. My role was to edit this material before it was published on a website, which became operational following the end of the Project's funding period. Since then, as a volunteer editor, I have uploaded hundreds of topic files onto the site. I have also been working with Peter Nicklin to alter the NELHS website, to make it easier for internet searchers to know what is in the North East Popular Politics database.

The information collected in both projects has been shared with the Legacies of British Slave-ownership project at University College London, part of the co-operation which has existed since, in the Legacy project's early days, UCL ran a workshop with NELHS and NESAG on the preliminary North East findings.

My involvement with both projects and the connection with NELHS has been very important in developing me as a historian and broadening my interests. It has stimulated me into looking in depth at the slavery business elsewhere especially Croydon, Merton, Lambeth and

Wandsworth, and sharing information from there with the Legacies team.

You can access records in the Society's North East Popular Politics database via this link: <http://ppp.nelh.net>.

Don Watson reminds us of another anniversary for the Society

As we celebrate fifty years of the NELHS, it is worth noting that 2017 also marks thirty years since the Society began awarding the annual Sid Chaplin Memorial Essay Prize.



Sid Chaplin

Sid Chaplin (1916-1986) was a pitman from Shildon in County Durham who later became a well-known novelist, journalist, essayist and broadcaster. He was awarded the OBE for services to the arts in this region. Sid was also a founder member of the NELHS, and besides being a regular attendee of meetings he served on the Committee as Vice-Chairman. He was one of the very few Committee members not from an academic background and so his perspective on the activities of the Society was particularly appreciated.

After Sid's death the Committee agreed to commemorate his contribution in a way that would also encourage the research and publication of material on the labour history of the North East. It was decided to establish an annual essay prize competition open to anyone not involved in history in a professional capacity. Original essays were invited on any aspect of the labour history of the region, to be based on the use of primary sources and judged by a panel drawn from the Committee.

The prize was to be a miner's lamp which the winner would retain for one year and have his or her name inscribed on the back together with the year of their entry. More recently this has been accompanied by £50 in book tokens, and as a rule the winning entry is published as an essay in *North East History*. The prize was presented in the early years by Mrs Renee Chaplin, and now whenever possible it is presented by Sid's son

Michael Chaplin, himself a well-known local writer and broadcaster. This maintains the valued links between the Society and the Chaplin family.

The Society and its journal have always taken a wide definition of labour history and indeed this has been reflected in the practice of the subject since the 1960s. Therefore the themes of the entries have reflected the evolution of labour history itself since it emerged as a distinct branch of the study of history. For example over the last ten years the winners have included, besides several accounts of the mining industry including the great strike of 1984-85, essays on the origins of district nursing in the region, and controversies over vaccinations. The Irish communities on Tyneside have been studied, as have wartime industrial relations, working-class attitudes to the Empire, and the building of the Tyne Bridge.

Over the years by far the most entries for the prize have come from students who have been encouraged to submit high-quality undergraduate dissertations. The success of the Popular Politics Project, and several recent initiatives by the North East WEA, in drawing people into local labour history research both suggest that the net for entries could be cast wider still. The essay prize will continue to encourage historical enquiry and writing.

Conclusion

When the handful of enthusiasts decided half a century ago to set up the *North East Group for the Study of Labour History*, which soon became the NELHS, the parameters of their studies reflected the subject's limited horizons and the heavy industrial emphasis of the region's economy. The testimonies of the individuals above illustrate, in a personal way, the manner in which the Society's focus has evolved over the years and the nature of its membership has expanded. There have been hiccups on the way but the NELHS reaches its golden jubilee in fine fettle and stays true to its original aim of bringing together everyone interested in the history of working people. Fittingly, the Society's ability to survive and flourish is an example of a great North East working class tradition found in the membership's commitment to voluntarism, mutuality and cooperation.

Picketing, Photography and Memory: Easington 1984-85

Leanne Carr

*'These photographs encapsulate a year of struggle.
Not just by my lads. But by their families'.¹*

This essay is based on a larger project that examined the correlation between photographs taken by photographer Keith Pattison during the 1984-85 strike and oral testimony. Interviews were conducted in a traditional question and answer format, after which images in the book *No Redemption* were shown to the participants in order to prompt further recollections of the strike.² Almost all interviewees either worked at Easington Colliery or had close familial connections with the mine. Pattison's photographs cover many aspects of the dispute and its impact on the residents of Easington with images of the village travelling abroad and images of Easington Colliery having appeared on film and in the theatre, the most prominent example being *Billy Elliot*.³ This portrayal on stage and screen further contributed to the assimilation of this strike into collective memory and the culture of ex-mining communities. Although Pattison's work takes in many features of family and community life, this piece primarily focuses on picketing at Easington Colliery and considers Pattison's photographs alongside memory. Public awareness of this strike was much more immediate than in earlier coal disputes due to instant and

extensive coverage in the news and media, and also because of the interest taken in it by the creative arts.⁴

Photographer Keith Pattison, then working for the Artists' Agency in Sunderland, spent eight months during the strike living with a family in the shadow of Easington Colliery. His work, however, was not published as a collection until 2010.⁵ Although this was a quarter of a century after the strike, the events of the time in Easington were still being discussed locally, as they are to this day, and have become a point of pride for those involved. For example, when interviewed over thirty years after the end of the dispute, Dawn Carr remembered the key events of the strike and how, after she and her miner husband had moved homes from Easington to Wheatley Hill in 1993, she would take him back to Easington Club each Sunday until his death. There he would meet with former workmates and periodically relive the strike.⁶

Alan Ruddell worked as a blacksmith on the mining shaft at Easington Colliery. He subsequently transferred to Monkwearmouth Colliery, where he remained until its closure and solemnly claims to be the last working miner in the Durham Coalfield. When interviewed, he spoke of his sadness at the closure of the pits and the effect this has had on ex-mining villages. This contrasts with the jubilant atmosphere in Easington upon hearing the news of Margaret Thatcher's death.⁷ For residents of the village the year long dispute helped develop a local identity that provides a contrast between official and vernacular memory.⁸

The strike still evokes a deeply human response and Pattison's photographs offer further understanding of a reality that is difficult to capture in words alone.⁹ Cartier-Bresson once said that the only bad photograph is the one you're not close enough to, and Pattison embedded himself and stood alongside miners, seeing himself as the miners' photographer trying to document their voice.¹⁰ Intending to be immersed in their experiences, he provides the viewer with emotionally charged, engaging images. It remains a matter of debate as to whether photography should aim to relay a visual truth or be an artistic interpretation aspiring

to get to the subconscious, but the notion that the camera never lies can be tested to some extent by combining an analysis of Pattison's photography with oral history interviews and media representations of the dispute.¹¹ Using oral testimony poses its own problems of course, as the passing of time affects the quality of recollection, but memories of events that created vivid impressions are often remembered at ease.

In some images, Pattison creates an impression of the picket line as a steady entity, usually made up of six pickets, a dramatically lower number than in other parts of the coalfield, until its nature changed in August 1984.¹² For the general public the abiding picture of picketing served up by the media was one of violent clashes between striking miners and police, and similarly simplistic representations of the dispute became the conventional wisdom. So, whilst Pattison's full collection of over one hundred photographs document the complex, multi-dimensional experience for pitmen and their families, it is often the same few images, those that coincide with the public's expectation of what the strike involved, that resonate and become the mainstream narrative.¹³

A number of Pattison's pictures suggest that the picket line experience involved a lot of waiting and watching with nothing happening for long periods of time. One photograph, for instance, depicts striking miners passing the time reading and completing crosswords. The politicisation of miners as the dispute became a fight for whole communities, is suggested by Pattison as he captures miners and their families reading newspapers and watching news broadcasts. A sense of solidarity and local identity is also presented by Pattison's inclusion of the Easington National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) Lodge banner in a number of photographs, reflecting the importance of mining life in the community which is still present today.



Pit Gate. Easington Colliery. Early morning picket. August 1984.

A flashpoint in Easington was the attempts of one miner, Paul Wilkinson, to return to work. Pattison photographed the mass protests by locals as Wilkinson was given a necessary police escort to the colliery in August 1984. He portrays a tumultuous period during which the village attracted attention from the local and national media, and complemented other examples of strike-breaking in other areas of the country. As a result, Easington gained a degree of notoriety through exaggerated headlines in national newspapers such as ‘Rampage as Rebel Enters Pit’ and ‘500 in Riot at Colliery’.¹⁴ Pattison arranges a series of photographs of what appears to be the same episode over two pages, in an attempt to include as much information as possible about the incident. The composition shows a great number of people in the small village and clear divisions between police and striking miners. Until this point Easington Colliery had remained solid.¹⁵ Wilkinson’s return to work caused a permanent rift between himself and striking miners, symbolised by the use some thirty years later of language such as ‘scab’ and ‘that bloody Wilkinson’, language which is still echoed today.¹⁶



Easington Colliery. Corner of Arthur and Tower Street. Escorting miner home.

In 2016, Alan Ruddell recalled in detail the miners' kitchen in Easington Colliery Club, the work of the Save Easington Area Mines group, supported by donations from home and abroad, but he particularly remembered his time on the picket line, especially the period surrounding Wilkinson's return to work. What strikers found irksome was that the strike-breaker had been in receipt of food parcels, a method used to ensure 'Thatcher did not starve the miners back to work'.¹⁷ Alan Ruddell remarked wryly of the returning Wilkinson that 'his bait was probably made up from a care parcel'.¹⁸

Wilkinson's return to work was naturally seen as a betrayal of his striking comrades, a feeling intensified by a life of working interdependently underground that had created a strong bond of camaraderie and community. At the time, Easington Colliery was viewed as a long-life pit which had offered job security to miners facing redundancy elsewhere and Wilkinson had only worked at Easington for a short period prior to the strike. Some rationalised his strike-breaking behaviour as a consequence of him being a 'traveller or woolly back' lacking any significant local

identity.¹⁹ As the strike progressed and times became more desperate, another Easington striker returned to work due to the necessity of providing basics such as shoes for his disabled child, but immediately reverted to strike action after the union bought the shoes.²⁰ The issue of going back to the pit before the dispute ended was not clear-cut and judgemental distinctions were made between individuals who returned to work, often based on the timing of their return. Alan Ruddell, for instance, thinks that Wilkinson was a scab and deserved everything he got for returning in August 1984, but sympathised with the desperation felt by those who made the decision to return to work shortly before the end of the strike, as part of the so-called 'drift back to work'.²¹

Paul Carr, a power loader at Easington who went on to study at Sunderland University, was another who could still remember in vivid detail Wilkinson's return and his own personal animosity towards and treatment of 'the scab'.²² John Davin, a fitter at Easington Colliery, could recognise and speak with warmth about people shown in Pattison's book, but spoke in derogatory terms about scabs and the fact that Easington as a community is still suffering due to the strike and subsequent pit closure.²³ Academics have written of Durham coal mining communities establishing certain norms of behaviour; not conforming to these norms results in consequences and hostility which tends to be extreme and lasting. For example, a local newspaper reported that 'miners who scabbed still get blanked in the street'.²⁴

Pattison's photographs record the large influx of police into Easington, something that the village had not anticipated and their treatment of residents came as a shock. Despite having grown accustomed to media reports of similar scenes elsewhere, one miner said that 'I never thought I'd see something like this', a view that was generally widespread in the village.²⁵ The militaristic nature of the police was confirmed by the establishment of a 'Command Centre' within the pit offices, to co-ordinate police activity in Easington. Miners responded by using citizens' band radios in order to coordinate mass pickets and combat the police

control.²⁶ Two of Pattison's photographs show a police officer carrying out an arrest with an arm around a man's neck, implying an element of police brutality. On the other hand, there are photographs creating an impression of the miners being violent and rampageous, contributing no doubt to the stereotype depicted by the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, of them being 'the enemy within'.²⁷ But those photographs that portray miners as violent are but a small snapshot of one facet of life during the strike.



Easington Colliery. Corner of Abbot Street and Office Street. August 1984.

A commonly expressed limitation with regard to photographs is that the image is often tainted by its caption.²⁸ Pattison captions only a few of his photographs and the absence of captions for most of the collection allows images to speak for themselves without any attached meaning or pre-conceived assumptions of an editor. One of the few captioned photographs, although the citation is merely the date, is of a large police contingent walking alongside Wilkinson on his successful attempt to return to work, having failed for the previous four days. The image marks

a change in Easington people's views of policing, which was accompanied by a change in attitude among striking miners towards the legal system. 'It was not', as John Davin recalled in a studied piece of understatement, 'your local bobby'.²⁹ One woman recognised her nephew, who was a member of the armed forces, wearing a police uniform, confirming widespread sentiments that the Government was using a paramilitary force to maintain order during the strike.³⁰



Easington Colliery. Outside Pit Gate in Office Street. August 1984.

One of the most widely circulated images from the whole of the dispute was Pattison's photograph of the arrest of a man known as Jossie, who is framed in the centre of the shot with his wife alongside two police officers. Whilst the others in the photograph are looking at Jossie and the police, Jossie himself looks directly at Pattison's lens, as if pleading with the viewer to come to his aid. The accusatory gaze of the subject would seem to indicate that Pattison, the photographer, is his only hope of being understood and the only outlet for his story. Another popular image, is a photograph which illustrates the horror felt by Jossie's wife at his

arrest without directly showing her husband in police custody. Pattison's framing of the distraught woman surrounded by tall men indicates the powerlessness felt by her, as well as metaphorically suggesting the miners' strike is swamping every aspect of Easington Colliery.



Easington Colliery. Tower Street. Josie Smith, retired and disabled miner arrested outside his home, with his wife.

As the police maintained their presence after Wilkinson's return to work, distrust increased and they were seen as invading mining communities to arrest miners for picket line offences on often dubious and contested police evidence. The arrival of two thousand police officers in August 1984 turned residents 'totally against the police'.³¹ It also undermined faith in the legal system, which became regarded as 'all a joke'.³² The police are a common feature in many of Pattison's photographs pointing, perhaps, to the utilisation of state control against the working class.



Easington Colliery. Back Alma Street. Shop worker from Liptons Supermarket goes home for lunch.

Pattison recalled that most days the strikers just sat waiting and the most exciting part of the day was ten minutes shouting at a scab bus, after which they would sit and wait for something else to occur.³³ During the many hours of relative inactivity on the Easington picket lines the men had ample opportunity to discuss the progress and conduct of the dispute. An on-going controversy of the dispute was the Union leadership's decision not to hold a national ballot, something which Paul Carr remembers as an abiding topic whilst picketing.³⁴ Another striker suggested that campaigning for a ballot could be interpreted as being against the strike.³⁵ In hindsight, John Davin suggested that the decision not to hold a ballot was incorrect, as the lack of a ballot helped cement the government's view of the strike being undemocratic and unjust, yet still firmly supported the leadership and strike action.³⁶

In *No Redemption*, Pattison depicts the varying nature of the picketing experience, contrasting particularly tense incidents with the more

dominant reality of the relatively mundane. Picket line experience is difficult to understand in traditional text forms as it can seem removed, implausible and abstract but Pattison's work provides an additional human insight offering an emotional engagement with the strike.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Keith Pattison for permission to reproduce his photographs and for the captions he supplied for this publication.

Notes

- ¹ Alan Cummings quoted in K. Pattison and D. Peace, *No Redemption: The 1984-85 Miners' Strike in the Durham Coalfield*, (Newcastle: Flambard Press, 2010) p. 15.
- ² Pattison and Peace, as above. Interviews were conducted by the author between October 2015 and April 2016.
- ³ *Billy Elliot*, Directed by Stephen Daldry (England: Universal Pictures, United Kingdom, 2000).
- ⁴ This interest survives long after the event, a recent example being K. Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984-85 UK Miners' Strike* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012) which presents an understanding of the dispute through the deconstruction of poetry created during the strike.
- ⁵ Pattison & Peace.
- ⁶ Dawn Carr: interview conducted 4 February 2016.
- ⁷ Alan Ruddell: interview conducted 6 April 2016.
- ⁸ The press regularly visited Easington to monitor the ongoing consequences of the strike for the community. See, for example, Richard Benson, 'Life after coal: how one Easington Colliery family survived the closure of their mine', *Guardian* 20 December 2015, and Robert Chesshyre, 'Return to Easington', *Independent* 15 July 2010.
- ⁹ See Huw Beynon, 'Introduction', in Beynon, (ed.), *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners' Strike*, (London: Verso, 1985) p. 1.
- ¹⁰ Keith Pattison: interview conducted 5 April 2016.
- ¹¹ See Derek Sayer, 'The Photograph: The Still Image', in S. Barber, and C. M. Peniston-Bird, (eds.), *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, (London: Routledge, 2010).
- ¹² Philadelphia Colliery, for instance, often had numerous pickets: on Thursday 24 May 1984 at 10 am there were approximately ninety pickets with police present, unlike Easington Colliery which had six; Durham County Records Office, NCB 30/BOX 215/1 'Strikes and disputes including the NUM Strike of 1974, April 1974, and May 1984'.
- ¹³ The images taken up for publication invariably included those of the soup kitchen, the

north east history

Handy family with police in the background, the police officer with an arm around a man's neck during an arrest, policemen in front of a home with a woman and child in the window, Jossie's arrest, and the vote to return to work.

14 'Rampage as rebel enters pit', *The Times* 25 August 1984, and '500 in riot at colliery', *Daily Mail* 25 August 1984.

15 By the end of the strike only 54 men had returned to work out of 2,500, with 32 of them returning just for the fortnight before the official return to work. In other pits, men had started to drift back to work; D. Norris, '3,807 back and Arthur Scargill still calls it a flop!', *Daily Mail* 26 February 1985.

16 Alan Ruddell interview.

17 Dawn Carr interview.

18 Alan Ruddell interview.

19 Huw Beynon, 'The Miners' Strike in Easington', *New Left Review*, I:148, November 1984, p. 112.

20 Paul Carr interview conducted 31 October 2015, and Dawn Carr interview.

21 Alan Ruddell interview.

22 Paul Carr interview.

23 John Davin: interview conducted 6 April 2016.

24 'Miners who scabbed still get blanked in the street', *Shields Gazette* 3 March 2014.

Similarly, see Tom Keraney, 'The dispute that tore communities apart', *Northern Echo* 4 March 2009.

25 *Still the Enemy Within*, Directed by Owen Gower (England: Lace DVD, 2014).

26 Keith Pattison interview.

27 See, for example, the 19 July 2014 speech to the 1922 Committee, available at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105563>.

28 See, for example, Sayer (2010).

29 John Davin interview.

30 Pattison and Peace, p. 10; Ian MacGregor, *The Enemies Within: the Story of the Miners' Strike 1984-5* (London: Collins, 1986).

31 Alan Cummings quoted in Pattison and Peace, p. 10.

32 Bill Barrymore, 'Just one of your ordinary people like', in T. Parker, *Red Hill: A Mining Community*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), pp. 43-45.

33 Keith Pattison interview.

34 Paul Carr interview.

35 As above, and Norman Strike, quoted in the film *Still the Enemy Within*.

36 John Davin interview.

Another Kind of Heroism: Jack Trevena, Workers' Educational Association North East District Secretary 1914 - 1919 and Conscientious Objector

Kath Connolly and Jude Murphy



Jack Trevena as an elderly man. Photograph courtesy of WEA NE.

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) recently completed a Heritage Lottery Fund supported project aimed at uncovering the stories of members, tutors and staff during the First World War.¹ The results of this project were published in a commemorative edition of *The Highway*, a regular newsletter that had been distributed to WEA members until the 1950s, and which proved to be a rich source of material for the project volunteers who researched the campaigns, debates and challenges of the war.²

The story of Jack Trevena, North East District Secretary of the WEA during WWI, illustrates a particular controversy and tension arising from the war.

From Hewer to District Secretary

John George (Jack) Trevena was born January 1889 into a Primitive Methodist family in Kyo, a small village to the west of Stanley. His family were Cornish copper miners and part of that great migration into the Northern Coalfield, moving first to Cramlington and then to Stanley. On leaving school Jack joined his father and uncle at South Moor Colliery, and the 1911 census records his occupation as 'coal miner, hewer'.³ Jack was brought up in a home where self-worth and self-improvement were important. With only an elementary education but eager to learn, he joined a class in the very active Stanley WEA community and became a student in Philip Brown's economic history tutorial class. Here Jack met a fellow student, infant teacher Hilda Johnson, his future wife. She was the energetic and enthusiastic secretary of the West Stanley WEA Branch.

Nigel Todd describes the University Tutorial Class format as the WEA's 'gold standard'. The North East Regional Secretary John Lee embedded these tutorial classes into the WEA programme. Constructed in partnership with Durham University, they were structured as weekly two-hour sessions delivered over three years. Regular summer schools (the first in the North East being held at Hatfield College, Durham, in June 1911) gave working-class students, mainly miners and their wives, the opportunity for extended study. The fellowship offered by the social activities programme helped to nurture the young movement with students who shared a common passion for learning and the WEA. The February 1914 edition of *The Highway* described the tutorial classes as a means by which the WEA could become self-sufficient in its own tutors.⁴ Jack Trevena was one such student who aspired to be a WEA tutor.

With the help of a grant from Stanley Urban District Council Jack obtained a scholarship to Fircroft College, Selly Oak (Birmingham) and

began his studies in September 1913. Fircroft had been founded in 1909 in the former home of the Cadbury Quaker family. It was created to provide educational opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged and excluded members of society. Its mission was social justice. So Trevena was well placed to take up a paid position with the WEA when John Lee, the Regional Secretary, resigned to go back into the Unitarian ministry in Sheffield. The District Executive unanimously recommended Jack to be temporarily appointed as North East District Secretary on 35/- (£1.75) per week, increasing to £2 if funds allowed. He and Hilda Johnson were married in Newcastle the following year.⁵

The WEA and the War

As war broke out, discussions among Summer School students led to the publication of *The War and Democracy* which argued that the future of democracy was at stake, ‘.. and is all that is worth living for’. While some in the WEA felt the book endorsed the war, others saw it as a vehicle for discussion. Jack Trevena used it in his North East study circles to facilitate discussion of these divergent views. In this way it helped the WEA accommodate opposing views and protect the movement.⁶

The WEA encouraged debates that would lead to a greater understanding of the political and economic world they lived in but in doing so they created a need, described by Nigel Todd, to manage disagreements between those who held diverging views on the war. Letters to *The Highway* in late 1914 illustrate these radically disparate views within the WEA, as the quotations below demonstrate.

In October the Bishop of Oxford wrote that ‘never in my life have I been so proud to be an Englishman’. He was confident ‘the army and navy, fighting for the cause of liberty, honour and justice sees the cruel insolence of German pride, daring to invoke our religion into its service and drag down our God into the position of German idol bound to fight for his chosen people, horrifying and disgusting’.⁷

However, Percy Redfern's letter in the December issue, informed readers that they should not believe that all that is German is base and all that is British is splendid: 'If knowledge can do no better than this where is our hope of the WEA? It will teach us that the kingdom of God does not come by plunging bayonets into mens' bodies and scattering their limbs with machine guns.... The Kingdom of – of fraternity and co-operation is indeed the only kingdom for our common humanity'.⁸

Albert Mansbridge, the WEA General Secretary, had controversially allowed letters from pacifists to be published in *The Highway*, fully aware of the threat these polarising views posed to the WEA. He argued that members should stay together to fight against that eternal enemy, 'ignorance and its helpmate prejudice'.⁹

The great majority of the country was persuaded by the propaganda to fight for King and Country, carried along by a patriotic, jingoistic fervour and a belief that God and right was on their side. But those religious and humanist pacifists who were opposed to the war believed implicitly 'thou shalt not kill'. Others took a left political perspective, among them Keir Hardie of the Independent Labour Party who believed in the universal brotherhood of man. To this group, the war was more to do with the vested interests that made war both possible and profitable. It was an imperialist war of the ruling elites and British workers had much more in common with their German fellow workers. As Jack Lawson noted, 'if the war did nothing else ... the old social superstition of a superior people who are entitled to a superior life has gone for ever.'¹⁰ But those on the left were not necessarily pacifists and some reserved the right to fight for a cause they believed in.

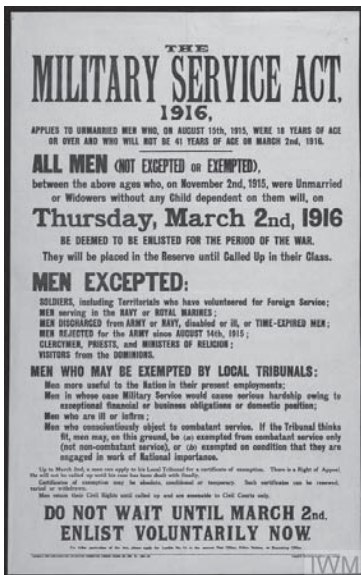
Conscription and Conscientious Objection

It could be argued that those who resisted conscription in the First World War were extremely influential on subsequent human rights debates. Margaret Brooks has written that:

There were approximately 16,000 British men on record as conscientious objectors (COs) to armed service during the First World War. This figure does not include men who may have had anti-war sentiments but were either unfit, in reserved occupations, or had joined the forces anyway. The number of COs may appear small compared with the six million men who served, but the impact of these men on public opinion and on future governments was to be profound.¹¹

In March 1916 the Government introduced conscription and, in May of the same year, extended it to include married men. Several district secretaries were in danger of conscription so the WEA Central (National) Executive agreed that they should support appeal tribunals on the grounds that WEA officials were 'engaged in work of national importance'. Three district secretaries made successful appeals to be excused, which begs the question why not all were treated similarly. Meanwhile, this also highlighted blurred lines between exemption and conscientious objection.

Although the Peace Pledge Union has recorded a long history (from at least sixteenth century Holland) of opting out of compulsory military service, the term 'conscientious objection' appears to have been coined to cover those exempted under the 1898 Vaccination Act.¹² It was certainly being applied to



*Poster detailing conscription
arrangements,
©IWM (Art.IWM PST 5161)*

those refusing military conscription by 1916, since the British government was aware that this option needed to be available, particularly to those called up from an already conflicted Ireland.¹³

There were three categories of Conscientious Objector:

1. Absolutist - committed pacifists on religious or political grounds
e.g. Quakers, Socialists
2. Alternativists - would not serve in the army but were prepared to be engaged in war work such as munitions manufacture
3. Non-combatants who might serve at the front but as stretcher bearers, medics etc.

Trevena believed that he was engaged in 'work of national importance' and should be excused. As a committed pacifist and socialist he declared himself a Conscientious Objector unwilling to take part in any aspect of the war, that is, he was an absolutist.

A database of WW1 Conscientious Objectors (Sept 2015) identifies Trevena's motivation as Quaker and Socialist Labour Party.¹⁴ Jack Trevena had attended Fircroft College, a Quaker establishment, and would most certainly have been made aware of their pacifist views. Perhaps because of this there has been an assumption that Jack was a Quaker.¹⁵ However, having spoken to his niece and checked with the Friends' Library in London, the authors could find no reference to him as a Quaker. He was however brought up in a Primitive Methodist home and there was certainly a tradition within the church which argued that the taking of life could never be reconciled with the teachings of Christ. So his pacifism may have been in part a product of his upbringing and in part a product of his politics.

Before WWI there had been plenty of opportunity for political discussion in Stanley, through the miners' union, a very active ILP branch and of course Trevena's WEA classes amongst many others. The Stanley News of 30 January 1914 reported on a lecture, *'The War against the*

War', organised by the Annfield Plain Primitive Methodist Improvement Society and given by a visiting speaker, Mr Norman Angells, to which the local ILP were invited.¹⁶ Trevena and the WEA organised a big meeting in Consett entitled 'European Nations and the War'. In addition, several Workingmen's Clubs held war lectures and tried to set up a study circle on the causes of the war.¹⁷

Jonathan Rose has contested criticisms that the 'WEA's emphasis on objective scholarship and open-mindedness' via an established canon might be seen as a diversion away from a more radical stance, arguing that, whatever happened at the supply side, those receiving the education were perfectly capable of forming their own opinions.¹⁸ Clearly, this was the case regarding the war; with such a diversity of views within its ranks, it is evident the Association was not in the business of promoting a particular party line. Jack's own inspirational tutor, Philip Brown, had signed up and was killed in 1915. Trevena's conscientious objection was probably born of earlier convictions but underpinned by ideas drawn from the debates that he had helped to organise.

Trevena's appeal was refused and his case was put before a tribunal in Newcastle in July 1916, and reported along with others in the local newspaper. As was the practice, the tribunal was made up of local dignitaries including the Lord Mayor, Mr George Lawn, Dr F W Dandy, Mr Cairne, Mr Barker as well as military representatives Major Cross and Lieut. Kingsley Taylor. His appeal was heard alongside those of an insurance agent, a slaughterman, a boot repairer, a medical student androlleyman. The boot repairer was exempted from military service on the grounds that his was a reserved occupation (working in the interest of the community) provided he remained in the same occupation and military requirements did not change. The insurance agent claimed to be a conscientious objector but when questioned about whether he would use physical force to stop anyone hurting his wife he answered 'Yes', thereby undermining the veracity of his moral position, and his appeal was rejected. The medical student was exempted until he sat his

final exams; meanwhile he was required to attend Officer Training Corps. When it came to Trevena,

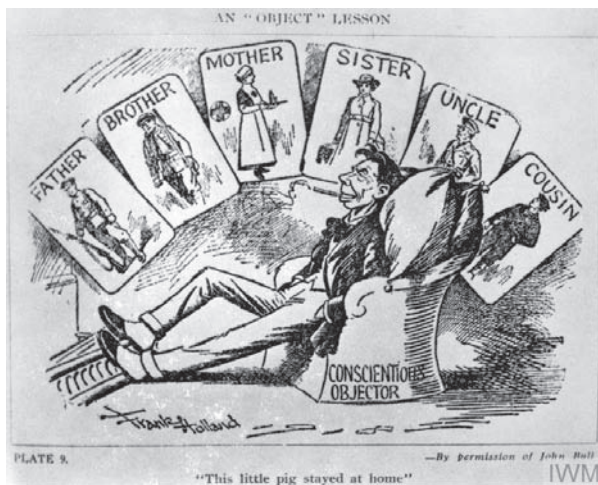
Mr W. Straker of CWS Printing speaking on behalf of the WEA committee appealed on behalf of their Organiser, 'the fruit of many years work would be lost if he had to serve and it would be a disaster, if at this time, Mr Trevena was withdrawn'. Mr Trevena made a personal appeal on grounds of conscience; to him human life was inviolable. England, he said, belonged as much to anyone else to lovers of peace, goodwill and love. He could not take it upon himself to end any man's life. The appeal was rejected but they gave him a month (to set things in order) and recommended him for non-combatant service.¹⁹

Jack's wife, Hilda served as District Secretary until Trevena was released, and she was the first woman to be appointed to that role. This too was not without controversy; one affiliated organisation, Hebburn Miners Lodge questioned Hilda's appointment and demanded (unsuccessfully!) that she be removed because of her husband's refusal to serve.²⁰ Possibly in response to some perceptions that her position was untenable, Hilda's voice, as recorded in the District Minutes, has a professional detachment and is largely limited to administrative procedure, in sharp contrast to the way her husband's forthright opinions had been reported, portraying a person on a mission to ensure the WEA's educational opportunities were actively and efficiently promoted.²¹

Trevena was assigned to the 5th Northern Company of Non Combatant Corps (NCC), Northumberland Fusiliers (with the number 3162) and called up on 17 October 1916. By the next day, 18 October, his military record shows he was in confinement awaiting Court Martial, where he was tried and convicted of 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline' and on 20 October he was sentenced to

112 days of imprisonment. Released to duty on 22 January 1917 he was confined again on 23 January, awaiting trial by District Court Martial 'for disobeying a lawful command given by a senior officer' and sentenced to be imprisoned with hard labour for nine months. The NCC was stationed at Morn Hill Camp, Winchester and so Trevena started this sentence in Winchester jail on 3 February 1917. Released on 30 June he was Court Martialled on 5 July and sent back to Winchester, and this time sentenced to serve two years.²²

The Non-Combatant Corps was dubbed the 'no courage corps'; with huge casualties on the Front any objection to military service was seen to be cowardly and unpatriotic. The NCC was expected to wear army uniform and carry out work duties for the Army but as an absolutist Jack Trevena rejected all military discipline, and his experience of disobeying an order, court martial and imprisonment was common amongst Conscientious Objectors. It has been dubbed the 'Cat and Mouse' treatment, echoing a strategy used against the Suffragettes.



'And this little pig stayed at home'

© IWM (Q 103334)

Interviews and memoirs give us an insight into the life of a WWI conscientious objector in Winchester Civil Jail. Harold Bing, a Quaker CO in Winchester at the same time as Trevena, recalled that,

‘The cell was about 6 feet by 13 feet with one small window above head height, you couldn’t see out of it except by standing on your stool for which you might be punished. CO’s were kept in solitary confinement, could speak to warders only when spoken to and prisoners spent long hours alone in the cell sewing mailbags. It was easier to face prison if you were young and fit and were able to read. Some died in prison, some went mad, some had a breakdown in health and never really recovered, it depended on the strength of your constitution and temperament’.²³



‘only their ideals for company’

Cartoon courtesy of the Peace Pledge Union

Ironically the Cat and Mouse treatment allowed news of the war to filter through, so many of the men were on short sentences and found ingenious ways of communicating. One such method was the *Winchester Whisperer*. Prisoners were not allowed paper other than their monthly or fortnightly letter home but using small sheets of brown toilet paper, a pen made from the needle they used for sewing mail bags and ink from the cobblers' wax used for waxing the thread, this little 5"x5" magazine was produced. It was made up of essays, poems, humorous remarks, cartoons and sketches. Each one would be surreptitiously passed up sleeves and under waistcoats. We don't know for certain if Jack Trevena contributed to the *Whisperer* but it is hard to imagine that someone with his interests and skills did not. He would most certainly have read it.

On 20 April 1918, by order of the Home Secretary, Trevena was given an early release; ill health had taken its toll. In May 1918 he was transferred to the Army Reserve and finally discharged on 31 March 1920. Trevena asked that the suspension of his appointment as North East District Secretary be terminated.²⁴

Controversy on Return to the North East

The controversy that had arisen out of the appointment of a pacifist's wife to the role of District Secretary deepened further after Trevena's release. The District Executive asked him to return to work immediately and gave Hilda their appreciation, placing on record their thanks and appreciation of the thoroughness and capacity with which she had discharged her duties, asking her to stay as honorary secretary. During her time as District Secretary she had stabilised the organisation, protecting courses and turning it outwards into a campaigning movement. Affiliations rose and new branches were formed.²⁵ With the possibility of longer meetings in their office in Westmorland Road, J G Trevena thought it necessary to arrange for refreshments and Hilda Trevena was 'empowered' to make the necessary purchases.²⁶ (The return to gendered 'business as usual' did not take long!)

However, a furious Percy Corder, District Treasurer, called on the November Executive meeting 'to agree that J G Trevena having as a Conscientious Objector refused to perform work of National importance as an alternative to Military Service is unfitted to act as District Secretary. The motion was seconded by the Chairman (Jeavons) another influential member of the Executive but the vote was lost 7:4.²⁷ Corder wrote to McTavish, the WEA General Secretary 'but the Association's Central Executive felt that dismissing an official because of his personal views would be foreign to the spirit of the Movement and President, Vice President and General Secretary were all authorised to go to the Newcastle District Council to lay down the law'. Procedural objections were raised by several members and a stormy meeting ended in Corder resigning as Treasurer and storming out of Burt Hall, where the meeting was held. Putting aside the political consequence of a Coalition Liberal Candidate supporting a CO, Harry Barnes, a major in the Northumberland Fusiliers, defended Jack Trevena and prevented the crisis deepening.

However, the controversy continued with Tynemouth WEA, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and North Shields Co-operative Society calling for a special District Council meeting to consider these matters, while Newcastle Co-operative Education Committee and Sunderland NUT announced they were seceding from membership.²⁸

In the end the national leadership came up with a compromise and offered the Trevenas a move to the newly created South West District. In September 1919 they moved to Plymouth where Jack served as District Secretary for thirty-five years.²⁹

Corder's changing perspective, and wider contexts

The controversy over Trevena's return raises questions about how the progress of the Great War impacted on fundamental beliefs. The chief objector to Trevena's reinstatement was the District's Hon. Treasurer, Percy Corder, Doctor of Civil Law, nephew (and biographer) of Robert Spence Watson, a committed Quaker and, before the war, outspoken pacifist.

Born 1863 in Bishopwearmouth, and educated as a Quaker at York's Bootham School, Corder became a lawyer in his uncle's firm (which still exists as Watson Burton) and was involved in the educational and social activities at Bensham Grove settlement, even living there from 1891 to 1893. His cultural and educational activities included committee work relating to the Northumbrian Small Pipes Society, the Shipley and Laing Art Galleries, the Newcastle Philharmonic Orchestra, and his appointment in 1895 as Vice Chairman of the council of Armstrong College. Political from childhood, ('he would make his brothers play at elections, marching in procession and shouting "Corder for ever!"'), he was, at various times, the Tyneside Liberals' Secretary, Registration Agent and Treasurer, and he spoke on issues of the day such as the Irish Land Question, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and 'The Waste of the War System' (1889). The obituary in his old school magazine states that even as his legal career took precedence over his political activities, he nonetheless voiced opposition to the jingoism of the Boer War.³⁰ From 1912, Corder became Honorary Treasurer of the North East District of the WEA, which was a role entirely in keeping with his career up to that point.

His later opposition to Trevena on grounds of his conscientious objection is therefore very surprising. However, "LR", his obituarist, says that:

The Great War came to him, as to so many, as a very great shock, though his intimacy with some of the leading Liberals gave him a knowledge of the facts denied to most. There must have been a very deep and painful wrench before he could throw himself unreservedly into support of the war, and it was certainly in no spirit of militarism that he did so, but in the desire for international law and order. He took the chair at a meeting very early on, when the idea of a league of nations was being explained and discussed.³¹

It is unclear why his proximity to the Liberal leadership might have led to such a profound change of heart, but change it did, and the same source asserts that his politics post-war were increasingly conservative. Meanwhile, his aunt, Elizabeth Spence Watson had remained resolutely supportive of Conscientious Objectors, attending the Leeds Peace Conference and 'attending tribunals as *amicus curiae*'.³²

And so it was that the tensions that existed in the WEA were to be seen throughout the suffrage, labour, co-operative and trade union movement; miners from East Hetton, Hebburn and Edmondsley called on the Durham Miners Association to expel conscientious objectors, and throw out all officials who sympathised, and asked miners not to work with objectors.³³

These conflicts were also evident in the experiences of two suffragists and prominent female members of the WEA in the North East: Lisbeth Simm, Labour Women's organiser, and Dr Ethel Williams, the first female GP in Newcastle upon Tyne. Ethel Williams was nearly lynched when, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, she organised a 'Stop the War' public meeting.³⁴ Meanwhile Lisbeth Simm took up a different position; heavily involved in the relief committees she believed that the way to end hostilities was through victory. 'The war sadly drove them apart, ending an association of like minded people across the class divide'.³⁵

One story powerfully illustrates the strength of feeling in the local villages towards COs. As casualties mounted and propaganda fuelled jingoistic fervour, Conscientious Objectors were seen to be legitimate targets. J G Winter, a miner from Cornsay Colliery, Co. Durham and one of the group calling itself the Quebec Radicals was, like Trevena, a Primitive Methodist and Socialist. Military records show he was called up in 1918 to the 3rd Battalion Durham Light Infantry but as an absolutist he refused to report for duty and on 6 July was sentenced to 112 days (without hard labour) in Wormwood Scrubs. He died on 13 July. A cellmate who witnessed his death told how he was beaten by warders and his body was returned to Quebec, County Durham for burial. At that time one might have expected a large turnout for a funeral out of respect for and in solidarity with the

family. Instead, the funeral party was catcalled and booed and the coffin stoned from the cemetery gates, Winter's ILP comrades defiantly tried to drown out the jeering by repeatedly singing the 'Red Flag'.³⁶

Clearly the WEA was not immune from the hostility shown by the wider society towards Conscientious Objectors, their family and friends. On reflection the WEA seems to have escaped the worst of it. Challenging military culture and standing up for a belief is as courageous now as it was then but today the right to conscientious objection is recognised by the United Nations.

Acknowledgements

In particular we want to thank Terry Middleton, Nigel Todd, The Friends Library in London, the Imperial War Museum, and the Peace Pledge Union.

¹ www.weainworldwar1.wordpress.com

² Workers' Educational Association, *The Highway: Commemorative Edition* (Newcastle, WEA, 2016), online edition: <https://issuu.com/weainworldwar1>

³ 1911 Census, County Durham Class: RG14; Piece: 29920.

⁴ *The Highway*, February 1914, p.99.

⁵ Nigel Todd, 'A working class hero is something to be', in *The Right to Learn: the WEA in the North of England 1910-2010* (London: WEA, 2010), p.18.

⁶ Todd, as above, pp.18-20, and WEA Northern District Council Minutes, 19 September 1914, Tyne and Wear Archive Service (henceforth TWAS), E.WEA/1/1/1.

⁷ *The Highway*, October 1914, pp. 6-7.

⁸ *The Highway*, December 1914, p. 51.

⁹ Nigel Todd 'The Correspondence Bureau', in *The Highway: Commemorative Edition* (Newcastle, WEA 2016), pp. 78-83.

¹⁰ Jack Lawson, *A Man's Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933) p131.

¹¹ Margaret Brooks, *Conscientious Objectors: In their own words*, www.iwm.org.uk/history/conscientious-objectors-in-their-own-words, accessed February 2016, p.1.

¹² Peace Pledge Union website, http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/cos/st_co_eurohistory.html, accessed 6th April 2017; Durbach, N. (2002). Class, Gender, and the Conscientious Objector to Vaccination, 1898–1907. *Journal of British Studies*, 41(1), 58-83, pp.59-61.

¹³ Peace Pledge Union website, as above.

¹⁴ <https://search.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/search/world-records/conscientious-objectors-register-1914-1918>; accessed March 2016

¹⁵ The Socialist Labour Party founded in 1903 was a left split from the Social Democratic Federation. It was a revolutionary socialist party and British Chapter of the American

SLP. In 1920 some of its members joined the Communist Party while others went to the Independent Labour Party.

16 *Stanley News*, 30 January 1914, p.8.

17 *The Highway*, February 1915, p.82.

18 J Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (Yale University Press, 2001) pp256-257.

19 *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 29 July 1916, p. 5.

20 WEA Northern District Minutes, 10 November 1917, TWAS, E.WEA.1/1/2.

21 WEA Northern District Minutes, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, Sat 9th Sept 1916 (TWAS, E.WEA.1/1/2) show that, even as Jack Trevena's status was in doubt due to the on-going appeal and tribunal, he had continued to lobby actively for the services of a typist to further professionalise his work and for better recompense for his own activities. Awareness of the precariousness of his position may, of course, have increased the urgency of these campaigns

22 The National Archives, WW1 Soldiers' Papers: Regimental Conduct Sheet, Non Combatant Corps, Northumberland Fusiliers, 3162 Trevena, J G, accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk 10 April 2017.

23 <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war/podcast-37-conscientious-objection> (Harold Bing SR358), Accessed 10 April 2017.

24 WEA Northern District Executive Committee Minutes, 30 May 1918, TWAS, E.WEA.1/1/2.

25 Todd, 'A Working Class Hero', p.19.

26 WEA Northern District, Executive Committee Minutes, 27 June 1918, TWAS, E.WEA 1/1/2.

27 WEA Northern District, Executive Committee Minutes, 9 November 1918, TWAS, E.WEA.1/1/2.

28 Todd, 'A working class hero', p.21.

29 Issues of *The Highway*, (November 1919, p15; December 1919, p.17; February 1920, p.89), all document Trevena's move and his energetic start to setting up the South West District, speaking on topics such as the new Education Act.

30 Obituary by "LR", Bootham 13/6, April 1928, 307-310, pp.308-309. With thanks to Ben Beck whose family history site (<http://benbeck.co.uk/fh/collaterals/3M01cousins.html>) provided this source material. Accessed March 2017.

31 Obituary, p. 310.

32 Ann Craven, 'The Genteel Militant', *North East History* 47, 2016, 73-86, p.80.

33 Robert Moore, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1974), p.200.

34 Nigel Todd 'The Correspondence Bureau', *The Highway: Commemorative Edition* (Newcastle, 2016) 78-83, p.78.

35 Ruth Tanner, 'Women in the WEA and the Impact of the First World War', *The Highway Special Commemorative Edition Highway*, (Newcastle 2016) 84-89, p.87.

36 Moore, p.200.

Conscientious Objectors 1916 – 1956

Oral History interviews with a Daughter and Widows in Newcastle

Sue King

Unlike other European countries, Britain did not experience universal conscription until 1916, when the supply of volunteers for the Front dwindled and the Military Service Act was drawn up. However, as early as 1757 the Quakers had been granted exemption from the proposed National Militia, and this precedent was followed in 1916, when allowance was made for conscientious objection.

Four oral history interviews made during the course of 2014 in Newcastle have yielded a history in miniature of conscientious objection from 1916 to 1950. Three of the women interviewed were widows of conscientious objectors, while the fourth was a daughter. All four were linked socially: conscientious objection brought them together and kept them together.

Arnold Stevenson

The earliest conscientious objector, described by his daughter, Monica Cheale, was Arnold Stevenson, born in Sheffield in 1890. Arnold's father died when he was eight years old so from that age he started work in the steel industry, sweeping up on the factory floor. Arnold attended night school and became proficient in five languages but continued to work in the foundry. He became a conscientious objector together with his two uncles, his mother's brothers, all coming from a family that was sympathetic to

pacifist views. All three had to attend tribunal hearings. Both uncles cited religious objections that were deemed acceptable, 'although they were kicked about a bit.' One uncle was beaten up outside the infirmary where he worked as a porter and left for dead. He survived and neither man was sent to prison.

At his tribunal, Arnold Stevenson did not cite religious objections. He explained that he had been raised as a Christian but he could not follow what he thought were God's tenets and those of the majority of his countrymen. He was therefore an agnostic. He thought it was wrong to kill one's fellow men over 'a cause of which he did not see the point.' Furthermore, he could not be treated as a deserter since he had never joined the army. During a spell of incarceration at Pontefract prison, Arnold was left naked in a cold cell with only an army uniform which he had refused to put on. As a result, he was found guilty of default of duty: 'treason, in the last analysis.'

The verdict of the tribunal meant that he was sacked from the steelworks. The only work he could find was on a farm in Lincolnshire with other objectors because there was a shortage of labour.

Arnold was placed on a list to go to Dartmoor. He did not go there straightaway because it had to be emptied of ordinary criminals. The general impression was that, when given a choice, most criminals joined the army rather than opt for 'pretty heavy work of national importance.'

At Dartmoor, the traditional punitive regime was soon abandoned. There were very few warders as most had joined up. The conscientious objectors accepted their place there so they did not require supervision and were not locked up. The inmates started language classes and a book department to share books sent in by friends. Arnold made a friend with a lawyer there, and together they walked all over Dartmoor, up to forty miles a day. He learned the names of all the plants there.

After the war was over, Arnold Stevenson never came to terms with the guilt of survival. Most of the friends with whom he used to socialise under the lamp on the street corner, had joined the Sheffield Pals and were killed.

Arnold told his daughter that he would have accepted the death penalty for conscientious objectors as a just sentence, and he would stop at every war memorial to read the names of the dead. He was unable to return to his previous blacksmith's job but did find less skilled work through a family connection. In the Second World War, he was a fireman, helping to rescue people from bombed buildings. On his deathbed, his last words were: 'do you think they will wait for me, the lads under the lamp at Sheffield?'

Granville Davies

The treatment of conscientious objectors during the Second World War was less punitive. Granville Davies decided in 1940, at the age of twenty, to become a conscientious objector because he refused to fight. He attended a tribunal at which he was granted permission to register for non-combatant service, as he was eager to do medical work. On 6 June 1940, he joined the second company of the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) at Great Yarmouth. The NCC was popularly said to be composed of 'Christians,



*Granville Davies, member of the
Non-Combatant Corps*

cranks and bolshies.' On parade on the promenade for roll-call, they were often subjected to insulting remarks from passers-by, usually women, and were once handed white feathers. The NCC were used as general labourers, unloading food at the docks, digging a trench for a water pipe at a hospital, and building accommodation blocks for troops. More skilled work involved building a gun emplacement. They refused to do the work. Instead, they were given unpleasant work to do but they were not severely punished for refusing to obey an order.

Granville tired of labouring work and tried to join the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) through the Quakers but lacked strong Quaker credentials. Instead, he learned that he could gain entry to the RAMC if he agreed to become a parachutist. He therefore underwent rigorous physical training because 'conchie' had not had any preparatory square-bashing. This was followed by medical training and parachute jumps.

On D. Day, Granville was parachuted at night into marshland near Varville, Normandy. Instead of a weapon, he carried a stretcher. The Germans had flooded the marshland as an anti-invasion measure; several men drowned as they made their way towards solid ground. On regrouping at a local farm, most of the parachutists then proceeded further but Granville was detailed to stay behind in a shed with a Canadian who had broken his leg on landing. They were discovered by Germans and were taken to a medical centre in Varville, housed in the same building that the British had intended to use for the same purpose. Granville became a stretcher-bearer at Varville and later at a sanatorium near Evreux, both times under German supervision. Patients there were of many nationalities and all were treated equally.

Granville was aware of the irony of being a conchie in a war zone. As the Americans approached Evreux, the German staff at the hospital disappeared. A German corporal and two men arrived seeking first aid and offered to surrender their weapons, to Granville! Later, during the Ardennes campaign, he was marching beside a man who was carrying a heavy Piat gun. Granville offered to swap his stretcher for it, to help the fellow out; he felt he had not compromised his principles because he had done it out of friendship. After VJ Day, out in Singapore, Davies wrote to his MP, Aneurin Bevan, suggesting that some of the behaviour of some of the British troops abroad constituted a disservice to the country's reputation worldwide. No inquiry was made into the allegations. Instead, Granville was 'carpeted' for 'washing our dirty linen in public.' There was no word even from the medical officer or the padre, of concern about the Army having 'dirty linen.'

Granville Davies was demobbed on 6 June 1946, after exactly six years' war service with the NCC and never having fired a shot. His conscientious objection did not affect his ability to find responsible work in Social Services later in life.

Michael Day

Michael Day, a physicist, was also able to serve in the Second World War despite being a conscientious objector. He initially joined the Home Guard before changing his mind and becoming a conscientious objector through the influence of a friend who was from a strict Welsh Chapel background. Michael then went before a committee and was registered as a Conscientious Objector on religious grounds. He came from Peterborough so he found work on a farm nearby which belonged to a wealthy sympathiser. All the labourers at the farm were conscientious objectors so he met no hostility at work. Michael viewed his time there positively; he became very fit, learned how to care for hens, and made many new friends.

Towards the end of the war, Michael started work on behalf of the Save the Children Fund, and was sent to Egypt for a few weeks. As the Germans were retreating, he was sent into Crete and Greece. Michael helped at a hospital, dealing with the problems of women and girls; he drove a jeep, although there were no roads, and had 'good fun'. Michael remained there for a year or two after the war, and when he returned to England he was able to resume his career as a medical physicist, working at the Newcastle General Hospital as a lecturer until his retirement.

Christopher Dowse

After the Second World War, conscription for National Service continued for some years. In 1955, twenty-four year old Christopher Dowse, a trained architect, was called up in Newcastle. He went to tribunal to register as a conscientious objector and his claim was accepted on religious grounds. He was given community service as an alternative to military service. Initially, he worked as an assistant at Hunters' Moor hospital but

his skin proved allergic to the medicaments in use. Christopher's second placement was as an assistant to the site manager at the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI). The drains there were constantly blocked with needles so he was asked to draw up a plan of the drains. He poured coloured dye down each drain and then a small man nick-named Dick Barton would climb down and see where it went. Christopher's plans were so good they were framed and hung for many years in a corridor at the RVI.

After completing his National Service, Christopher Dowse was able to return to work as a local authority architect, first in Durham and then in North Tyneside. His older brother completed National Service in the forces but did not appear to mind that his brother was a conscientious objector.

Conclusion

In the forty years covered by the war experiences of these four men, it is possible to trace a growing tolerance towards conscientious objection. There was greater understanding of the pacifist stance and also a willingness to use the talents of such people in non-combative ways, which ultimately helped the war effort. Nevertheless, for each man, conscientious objection made them stand apart from other men, and their families sought and drew solace from others of the same mind.

Sources:

All the above information and quotations are from the following sources, each of which can be accessed via the North East Labour History Society's 'Popular Politics Project' website (www.ppp.nelh.net):

Topic 682: Conscientious Objector WW1: Arnold Stevenson (full Oral History transcript).

Topic 722: Three Conscientious Objectors (Day, Dowse, Davies). Photograph of Granville Davies published by kind permission of his widow, Christine Davies.

The Bagnalls of Ouseburn: Watermen, Publican, and a Sporting Hero

Mike Greatbatch

With Ed Waugh's *Hadaway Harry* playing to capacity audiences at Newcastle's Theatre Royal this February, we are reminded that working class sporting heroes were once oarsmen rather than footballers.¹ Following the death of Harry Clasper in 1870 the rising star of the Tyne rowing fraternity was a 22-year old waterman called Robert Matthew Bagnall of Cut Bank, Ouseburn.

Bagnall's unsuccessful challenge to Joseph Sadler of London for the title of world champion in April 1874 ensured his place in the pantheon of Tyneside rowers and is often cited as Bagnall's greatest achievement in the numerous newspaper notices that occasioned his sudden death in January 1910 aged sixty-two. At least one of those notices also recorded that Bagnall, 'as an owner of wherries was known up and down the river'.² This other life, the working life, rarely features in histories of Tyneside oarsmen, where the emphasis is, perhaps not surprisingly, on their sporting prowess.

The following uses the example of Robert Bagnall and his extended family to illustrate the difficult social and economic circumstances that make the sporting achievements of men like Bagnall and Clasper all the more remarkable.

Bagnalls : Shipwrights, Nail Makers, and Watermen

In the 1790s, a young Ralph Bagnall was apprenticed as a nailor to William Hawks, owner of a smith's shop near Ouseburn Bridge, and in February

1793 he was one of three boys to 'run away' from their indentured service.³ Parish records suggest that Bagnalls have lived on the west side of the Ouseburn since at least 1813 when Margaret, daughter of Joseph and Margaret Bagnall, is recorded in the St Ann's register of baptisms on 17 January 1813. Joseph's occupation is recorded as shipwright, and their abode is recorded as Ballast Hills.⁴ When Joseph died in 1863, aged seventy-six, at the New Road, his occupation was recorded as 'waterman'.⁵

Ballast Hills denoted all that hinterland immediately inland of the North Shore, west of the Ouseburn. It was traversed by the Newcastle to Shields turnpike, or New Road (now City Road), and from 1827 an Edward Bagnall had a nail making business on the New Road close to St Ann's Church.⁶ In the 1851 census, Edward is recorded as an 83-year old widower living with his younger brother Joshua, also a 'Nailor', in Lime Street on the west side of the Ouseburn. The same census records Lime Street as the abode of another Joseph Bagnall, a married man with seven children. His occupation is recorded as that of a waterman, and his 14-year old son John is a 'Waterman's Boy'.⁷

By mid-century the Ouseburn was well established as an industrial centre, with earthenware, iron, and colour works, together with a huge flax spinning mill and steam powered flour mills lining both banks of the burn. The coal, clay, flint and other raw materials that these works consumed, together with much of their finished products, were all transported to their respective quays and mooring points by a shallow draft barge known as a wherry, and the men who crewed these wherries were men like Joseph Bagnall, the watermen.

The Tyne Wherry and the Ouseburn

The wherry was a large river craft capable of carrying a wide variety of cargoes up and down the Tyne and its tributaries. Their shell-clinker construction, whereby the hull is built-up of full-length overlapping planks of timber terminating in a sharp end, fore and aft, gave these craft a distinctive appearance, and they were a feature of the Tyne from at least the early 1600s.⁸

In December 1999, the author interviewed 93-year old George Hill who was born at 3 Tyne Street and spent his childhood observing the watermen navigate their wherries up and down the Ouseburn. George specifically recalled how 'wherries came up the burn with silver sand for the glasshouse' - Liddle Henzell's bottle works on Hume Street – and with coal 'to the bottom of Lime Street where the waggon-way went down to the burn. The block-carts used to come down the slip at low water, and the coal was shoveled onto the cart which then ran up to Leatham's mill on Lime Street'. This was in the early 1920s, as George recalled that he was 'about fourteen or fifteen when they brought the coal up'.⁹

These wherries could navigate as far up the Ouseburn as the ford linking Lime Street and Brewery Bank. In January 2004, workmen revealed an original iron mooring ring, approximately 13cm in diameter, still attached to a section of quay wall, set back to form a docking point at the southwest corner of what had originally been the first flax spinning mill, now the site of Ouseburn Farm. Beyond this point, there would have been insufficient tidal water, and even here the shallowness of the burn would have made navigation difficult.¹⁰

The method of navigation was the power of the River Tyne tide, travelling up the Ouseburn with an incoming tide, and out by the receding tide. To avoid hitting the quay wall, or beaching on a sandbar, the watermen would use a punting pole or a long sweep (oar) to navigate in the deepest part of the channel, combined with a large rudder at the stern.¹¹ An illustration published in the early 1900s clearly shows this technique, with the waterman, standing at the prow of his wherry, punting pole in hand, as it emerges from the Ouseburn beneath the old Glasshouse Bridge.

Once out of the Ouseburn and into the Tyne, wherries had sails that could be raised to catch the breeze or else used to tack into the wind. Either way, operating a wherry, especially one that was fully laden, could be dangerous and often resulted in fatalities. In October 1850, a wherry laden with coals during a gale 'manned by a father and two sons, was tacking in the Wallsend Reach, she suddenly capsized, and one of the

sons, named William Winship, being in the huddock at the time, was unfortunately drowned. The father and son continued to cling to the wherry until assistance reached them', which in this case was two hours later, when the wherry was 'righted' and William's body recovered.¹²

The huddock of a wherry was a low under-deck cabin, one at each end, with the large deep hold in between. The huddock provided basic accommodation, if the watermen needed to remain on board over-night. This might happen if the wherry became stranded at low water. One former waterman claimed he could be on board for a week, owing to being 'neaped' sailing down river to the ships at Shields. Serving as lighters for ships entering the Tyne at Shields, literally lightening the load of these ships by taking off cargo, was another vital role of the Tyne waterman.¹³

The size of wherries varied, and certainly increased in capacity over time, as did their numbers and frequency of use. In 1805, William Row's shipyard, just east of the Ouseburn, advertised a new wherry for sale 'that will carry 10 tons', but by the 1830s and 1840s these craft were much bigger, capable of carrying up to thirty tons.¹⁴ In the 1890s, the Tyne Wherry Company had a fleet of twenty-six craft that ranged in size from twenty to a hundred tons capacity.¹⁵ Given the narrow channel of the Ouseburn, it is likely that it was the smaller sized wherries that were best suited for serving this industrial waterway. In 1850 John Davidson, proprietor of the Ouseburn Fire Brick Works, advertised for sale 'an excellent wherry, burthen 12 tons'.¹⁶

By the second half of the nineteenth century, wherry owners had begun to install small vertical boilered steam engines to drive a screw propeller, and in 1881 one such 'steam wherry' was badly damaged in the Ouseburn when a 'marine boiler of some twenty-five tons weight' crashed onto it as it was being lifted from the quay of the Tyne Engine Works; the wherry having 'been brought alongside to receive it'.¹⁷

Watermen and Wherryman

In the eighteenth century, wherry operators were generally self-employed

carriers, charging a fee based on cargo and distance between different points along the Tyne. When the Tyne wherryman 'above Bridge', (that is between Newburn and Newcastle) met in Ryton on 12 January 1797 the report of this meeting lists over sixty different tariffs for goods and passengers.¹⁸

However, in the nineteenth century wherry ownership became increasingly associated with riverside industries, and watermen would be employed to operate various craft belonging to a particular firm. When the operators of the Phoenix Pottery, on the east side of Ouseburn ford, went bankrupt in 1843, a large boat and wherry were listed with their stock in trade and utensils for sale by auction.¹⁹ Thus the independent wherry operator became relatively scarce, and this was further encouraged by the use of wherries as dumb barges towed by a paddle steamer, often more than one wherry at a time, thereby dispensing with mast and sail along with the services of a skilled operator.²⁰

With a crew of just two or three (including children), the loading and unloading of a wherry could be back breaking work, often carried out in a hurry in order to catch the ebb tide before the still laden craft went aground. Throughout the nineteenth century, the numbers of watermen increased significantly, with no less than 132 recorded in the Ouseburn area in the 1841 census, and at least ninety-four recorded in the 1851 census.

Most of these watermen were regarded as no different from other manual labourers, and given the ready supply of such unskilled labour, any watermen lacking in experience could soon find themselves out of employment. In July 1839, the Lemington Stone Quay dismissed their two watermen 'for insolence and general misconduct' and for 'the damage and bruises' the wherry had sustained in their care, the two men being 'considered unfit to be trusted with it'.²¹

Working as a waterman thus became increasingly competitive and insecure, and was dependent on the prevailing prosperity of riverside industries subject to the vicissitude of overseas markets. Any slump in

trade, however short lived, could result in a sharp downturn in demand for wherry services, resulting in short work and under-employment.



*A waterman stands on the stern of a wherry taking a load of furnace waste from the Ouseburn Foundry, c1890.
Reproduced courtesy of Newcastle City Libraries.*

Life in the Ouseburn

In November 1862, the *Newcastle Journal* observed that the Ouseburn had become an impediment to the navigation of the Tyne 'because it is made the depository of all kinds of rubbish, which speedily find their way into the river'.²²

By this date the Ouseburn was certainly crowded, with both banks of the burn fully occupied by industrial premises, with much of the housing that characterised the area for the next seventy years having been built. That the channel of the Ouseburn was full of rubbish was also true, as all waste material, be it liquid or solid, found its way into the burn.

Such congestion inevitably resulted in tragedy. Thus it was, that on 18 July 1856, the *Newcastle Courant* reported on an inquest into the death of a boy who 'had been fishing with a rod, in the Ouseburn, from a keel, and is supposed to have fallen overboard and been drowned, as his body was found some time after he was missed in the burn'. The boy's name was Bagnall, and his father was Robert Bagnall, waterman, of Ouse Street.²³ Eleven years later, in June 1867, it was Bagnall himself who retrieved the body of a boy called Robert Willis, six years of age, of Brewery Street, Byker Bank, 'picked out of the Ouseburn, near Mr Hume's flour mill'.²⁴

Bagnall's prowess as a waterman could sometimes save lives, such as his rescue of Robert Williamson in June 1871. Williamson, aged thirty-six, was attempting to commit suicide. He had been drinking heavily for some time past and, having attempted to cut his own throat with a pocket-knife,

'he rushed out of the house where he had been lodging, and ran down Byker Bank towards Ouseburn Bridge. He mounted the parapet, and before anyone could prevent him from committing the rash act, he leapt from the bridge into the water below. The tide being high at the time, a keel, belonging to Mr Bagnall, was put off and the man was rescued'.²⁵

By 1871 there were three families of Bagnall watermen; Joseph was still living on Lime Street, and his sons Robert (aged forty-four) and John (aged thirty-eight) were living at Ouse Burn Bridge and Byker Bank respectively. One of Joseph's daughters, Elizabeth, also lived on Byker Bank, an unmarried mother of three children.²⁶

Joseph had lived on Lime Street for at least twenty years, possibly longer, in property on the west side of the street immediately adjacent to a passageway that the 1861 census calls Baglin Entry, leading to Baglin Yard; the choice of name seems too much of a coincidence. By 1861, Lime Street consisted of fifty-seven dwellings occupied by 372 persons, overwhelmingly on the west side, built into the steep bank immediately north of Cut Bank. On the east side of Lime Street was the slipway, a busy meeting point for wherries and horse-drawn carts; as many as eight watermen lived in Lime Street on the night of the 1861 census. There was also a pottery, some shops, and a number of public houses.

These public houses became notorious for their rowdy atmosphere, and in 1842, Joseph Bagnall was fined 2s 6d. for creating a disturbance at nearby Cut Bank 'when in a state of intoxication'. Taken to the police cells to sober-up, he was then assaulted by another drunkard, Thomas Wilson, with whom Joseph had to share his cell.²⁷ Heavy drinking was a regular practice for working men whose livelihoods consisted of long hours of manual labour and a home-life lacking in space, clean air, and even the most basic sanitary facilities.

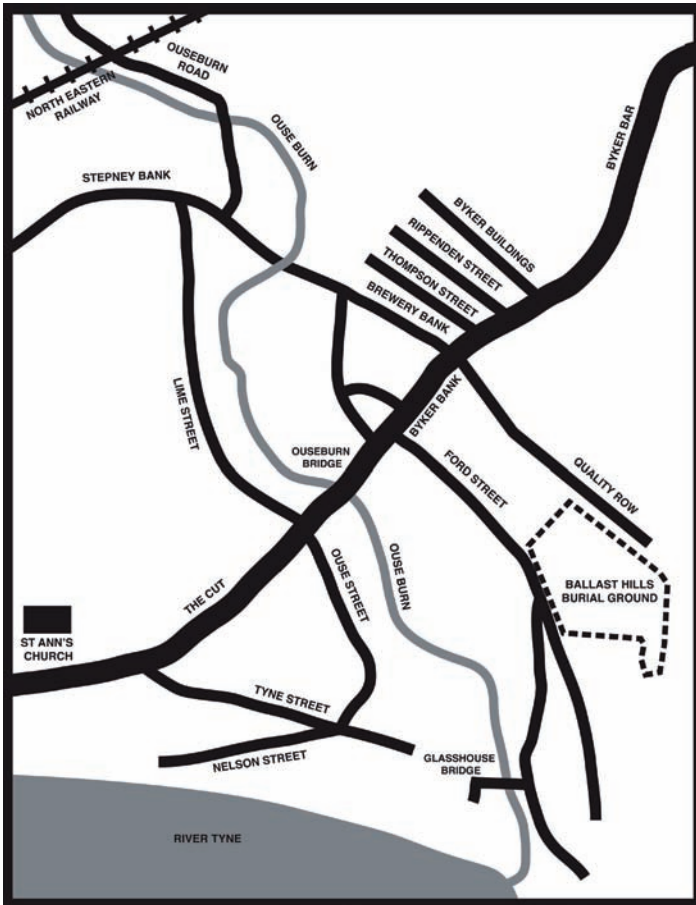
The Ouseburn generally was over-populated but Lime Street in particular was very over-crowded. In such conditions, disputes with neighbours or workmates became common, especially if exacerbated by competition for employment. In 1861, Joseph's son John, was arrested and charged with violently assaulting fellow waterman Joseph Sinclair in a public house on Lime Street. It was reported that Sinclair had been attending a monthly benefit society held at the pub and was about to return home (to Albion Row) when:

`being solicited to join a raffle, he consented, and was about to sit down, when Bagnall came in, and asked him if he was the same man he was two years ago, when he bound his {Bagnall's} father over to keep the peace, and if he dared fight him for £5. Sinclair gave his opponent to understand that he was not pugnaciously inclined, and put down 2s 6d. for his lot, and 1/2d. for refreshment. Bagnall, it appeared, had taken up the half-crown, which he again laid down; and when {Sinclair} was about to take it up {Bagnall} let drive at him with his fist. The injured man left the house and had proceeded four or five yards from the door, when Bagnall again came up to him, and knocked him down, rendering him so senseless, that he was unable to state what followed'.

John Bagnall was twenty-five years of age in 1861, and living with his wife and sister Elizabeth on Quality Row, off Byker Bank. He claimed provocation as his defence; Sinclair apparently said 'he could fight every Bagnall among them'. The magistrates found John guilty and fined him the sum of £5., a considerable sum, or face two months in the House of Correction for failure to pay. It was noted that 'the prosecutor and prisoner follow the same occupation, and the casus belli seems to have been some petty jealousy in regard to their work'.²⁸

Joseph's home on Lime Street appears to have been the centre of the Bagnall's family life, and in February 1864 Elizabeth Bagnall attempted to rescue a local barmaid, Elizabeth Carter, who was being violently assaulted by Alexander McKenzie, a man much the worse for drink. McKenzie had approached Carter, calling her 'a fine lass', and when she tried to avoid his advances, McKenzie 'seized her by the throat in a violent manner and struck her in the face'. When Elizabeth came to her assistance she was seized 'in the most indecent manner, and so firm indeed did he hold her that it was with the utmost difficulty that a powerful young man, who came up at the time, could loose his grasp.'

Both ladies required medical assistance. McKenzie's defence was that he was drunk at the time 'and had not the slightest recollection of the matter'; he was sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour, for each assault.²⁹



The Ouseburn area c1860, showing the ford at the bottom of Stepney Bank and Brewery Bank, the highest point to which small wherries could navigate up the river.

Robert Matthew Bagnall, world class oarsman

Robert Bagnall had two sons, Robert Matthew and Percival, and in the 1871 census they record their occupations as *wherryman* rather than watermen. By then, Robert senior is a wherry owner, and living with the family at Ouse Burn Bridge are a ten-year old boy and a sixty-year old woman, both of whom are recorded as Bagnall's servants; the boy working on the wherries and the woman working as a general domestic.³⁰

The family's growing prosperity is further confirmed by the 1881 census, where Robert claims to employ six men, and the family has moved uphill to Dunn Terrace at the top of Byker Bank, a much newer property than the one at Ouse Burn Bridge.³¹ For a waterman, this progression from general labourer to owner of a small business was quite an achievement. The family's status was further enhanced through the success of their eldest son, Robert Matthew, who by 1871 was one of the best scullers on the Tyne and tipped as a potential world champion.³²

Young Robert Bagnall had participated in local rowing contests since at least August 1868 when, as a 19-year old he competed in a handicap scullers' race between the Hamburg Wharf and the Mushroom Boat Landing. A month later he competed in another race, at the Skinnerburn, which he won easily.³³ By the summer of 1871, Bagnall was a member of Thomas Winship's four-man crew, winning the four-oared prize at the Bristol Regatta in July and the Tyne Regatta the following year.³⁴

In 1871, Bagnall travelled to Canada to participate in the Nova Scotia Regatta, at Halifax. As a member of Winship's Four, he shared in the prize money of 3,000 dollars (£600), beating the great Robert Chambers' crew who had led for the first two miles.³⁵

When Winship's and Chambers' crews returned to Tyneside, after competing in regattas at Quebec and on Lake Saratoga in New York State (USA), they competed against each other for a £400 prize on the Tyne on 22 November, which Winship's crew won. One notable feature of this race was that they used sliding seats, similar to an American design, and Bagnall's seat and slide from this race is now in the collection of Tyne and Wear Museums.³⁶



*One of Percy Bagnall's wherries (PB) moored outside his Ship Tavern c1900.
Reproduced courtesy of Newcastle City Libraries.*

Percy and Henry: end of an era

Joseph Bagnall died in 1872, and his widow Margaret continued to live on Lime Street until she too passed away in 1887.³⁷ Robert appears to have retired from the business sometime in the 1880s because in the 1891 census his son Robert Matthew is recorded as the wherry owner. Robert died in 1902, and with the death of Robert Matthew Bagnall in 1910, the family business passed to Percival and his cousin Henry.³⁸

In 1898/99, Percival moved from Byker Bank to Maling Street to become the licensed publican of the Ship Tavern, where his wherries became a familiar sight moored just outside this long established riverside public house at the mouth of the Ouseburn. However, ten years later, in 1909, Percival moved to Northumberland Street, where the family ran a beer-selling outlet, thereby ending all association with the wherry business.³⁹

Henry Bagnall, and his son Joshua (born 1885), continued with the wherry business until at least 1912, working as lightermen for a Tyne lead works. By then the viability of their small family business must have been precarious as after 1900 the wherry and lighter trade was dominated by just a handful of large firms, each with a fleet of wherries at their disposal.⁴⁰

Over four generations, the Bagnall family had been a constant presence in the Ouseburn. As workers with a particular set of skills they were able to achieve a degree of independence and self-esteem through self-employment. As such, they managed to rise above the squalor and brutishness of their everyday surroundings, and at least one of their clan even travelled beyond the Tyne, across the Atlantic to North America. When Robert Matthew Baganall died in 1910, notices appeared in newspapers throughout the United Kingdom, in recognition of a great professional sportsman and an equally skilled Tyne waterman.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Adrian Osler, Michael Hannon, and Newcastle City Library for their assistance in researching and editing this essay.

¹ 'Hadaway Harry fills Newcastle's Theatre Royal with Geordie pride and laughter', <http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/theatre-news/hadaway-harry-fills-newcastles-, 1808.theatre-12655701>, accessed 9 March 2017.

² *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 January 1910, p. 12.

³ *Newcastle Chronicle*, Saturday 2 February 1793, p. 2.

⁴ Register of Baptisms, St Ann's, 1812-15; microfilm copy of original, reel M.184, Northumberland Record Office.

⁵ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 19 December 1863, p. 8. His name is given as 'Bagilee'; one example of multiple variations in the spelling of 'Bagnall' in parish records and newspaper reports.

⁶ Parson & White's Directory of Durham & Northumberland (1827) and Pigot's Northern Counties Directory (1834).

⁷ 1851 Census, HO.107. 2407. In 1841 Joseph and wife Margaret were living on the east side of the Ouseburn; the family name is recorded in the census as 'Baglee', and this Joseph is very likely the son of the Joseph Bagilee who died at the New Road in 1863; 1841 Census, HO107/820/1.

⁸ Adrian Osler, *The Last Tyne Wherry – Elswick No. 2*, Tyne and Wear Museums

Information Sheet (Newcastle: Tyne and Wear County Council, 1980s); Newcastle All Saints Register of Burials, 'Elizabeth widow of Matthew Todd, wheriman, 13 October 1608'. For the construction of Tyne wherries, see Patrick Taylor and Alan Williams, 'The Newburn wherries: remnants of the River Tyne's industrial past', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, Fifth Series, volume XXXIX, 2010, pp. 401-425.

⁹ George Hill, 'Wherries on the Ouseburn', in *Ouseburn Heritage Issue 6*, ed. by Mike Greatbatch (Newcastle upon Tyne: Ouseburn Partnership, 2001), pp. 20-21.

¹⁰ Peter D. Wright, *Physical and tidal aspects of the Ouseburn and their impact on the evolution of waterborne trade by Keels and Wherries. A Few Thoughts*, unpublished paper supplied by the author, June 2003.

¹¹ Osler, *Last Tyne Wherry*.

¹² *Newcastle Courant*, 25 October 1850, p. 4.

¹³ 'Oldest Waterman on the Tyne', obituary of Ephraim Gilchrist, *Newcastle Chronicle*, 4 May 1912, 'Newcastle Worthies', Newspaper Cuttings, Newcastle City Library, p. 14. 'Neaped' refers to being beached on a sand bar, usually during a low spring tide.

¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 7 September 1801, p. 1, and 28 February 1840, p. 1.

¹⁵ Advert in Ward's Directory of Newcastle (1897-98), p. 46

¹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 15 November 1850, p. 1.

¹⁷ 'Serious Accident', *Newcastle Courant*, 1 April 1881, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 21 January 1797, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 10 and 17 February 1843, p. 6.

²⁰ 'Wanted to Purchase or Rent, two or three second-hand Wherries, capable of carrying with safety 25 to 30 tons each. Masts and Sails are not required', *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 17 November 1860, p. 2.

²¹ 'To Watermen. The Working of a Wherry', *Newcastle Courant*, 26 July 1839, p. 1.

²² 'The Newcastle Dock', *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 November 1862, p. 2. The same report notes that the Ouseburn 'is now only accessible by small wherries'.

²³ 'Coroners Inquests', *Newcastle Courant*, 18 July 1856, p.5. Robert was Joseph Bagnall's eldest son.

²⁴ 'A Boy Drowned', *Newcastle Courant*, 7 June 1867, p. 8.

²⁵ 'Desperate Attempt to Commit Suicide', *Newcastle Courant*, 23 June 1871, p. 8. Wherries are often identified as keels in newspaper reports, and even as late as the 1880s the historian Charlton refers to keels lying in the Ouseburn; R J Charlton, *Newcastle Town*, (London: Walter Scott, 1885), p. 375.

²⁶ 1871 Census, RG10/5104, RG10/5105 and RG10/5106.

²⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 11 February 1842, p. 7.

²⁸ 'The Police Courts, Newcastle, Thursday 24 October: Violent Assault', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 25 October 1861, p. 3.

²⁹ 'Violent and Disgraceful Assault, Newcastle Police Court, Monday 15 February', *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 20 February 1864, p. 6; and 'A Violent Old Man, Newcastle Police Court', *Newcastle Courant*, 19 February 1864, p. 2. The

reports refer to 'Mrs Elizabeth Bagnall', which suggests that it was Robert's wife who was assaulted as Joseph's daughter Elizabeth was unmarried.

30 1871 Census, RG10/5104.

31 1881 Census, RG11/5067.

32 Ian Whitehead, *The Sporting Tyne*, (Gateshead: Portcullis Press, 2002), pp. 28-30, and *Newcastle Courant*, 10 May 1872, p. 3 where Bagnall is described as 'the coming champion'.

33 *Newcastle Courant*, 4 and 25 September 1868, pg. 5.

34 Ian Whitehead, *James Renforth of Gateshead: Champion Sculler of the World*, (Newcastle: Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2004), p. 113; *Newcastle Courant*, 7 July 1871, p. 2 and 26 July 1872, p. 5.

35 *Newcastle Courant*, 8 September 1871, p. 2. The £600 prize had a similar spend value to £27,420 in 2005; National Archives Currency converter, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>

36 Whitehead, *The Sporting Tyne*, p. 11.

37 FreeBMD. *England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>; accessed March 2017.

38 1891 Census, RG12/4214 and RG12/4218. Robert's death was registered in October-December 1902. His younger brother John died in 1877, aged just forty-four years; *England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915*, via Ancestry. com.

39 Ward's Directories of Newcastle, 1899-1909 and the 1911 Census, Newcastle upon Tyne, *RG14*; Piece: 30564, in which his occupation is recorded as 'Inn Keeper Publican'.

40 1911 Census, *Newcastle RG14*; Piece: 30682, and 'Wherry & Lighter Owners', Ward's Directories of Newcastle, 1895-1937.

**‘Bibliography of
the Communist
Party of
Great Britain’**

By Dave Cope,
Lawrence & Wishart 2016
366pp

With introductory essays
by Andy Croft,
Bert Hogenkamp,
Kevin Morgan

Signed new copies at
reduced price of £40 for
readers of the journal from
Left on the Shelf

**Left on the
Shelf**

**looks forward to
next 50 years!**

Yard 91,
87 Highgate,
Kendal,
LA9 4ED

t: 01539 729599
e: [leftontheshelf@
phonecoop.coop](mailto:leftontheshelf@phonecoop.coop)
www.leftontheshelfbooks.co.uk



**SUNDERLAND TRADES
UNION COUNCIL**

**Congratulates
NELHS on its jubilee**

**Chair: Dave Allan
(Unite the Union)**

**Secretary: Gordon Chalk
(Fire Brigades Union)**

**Treasurer: Garry Rowley (Unite
the Union)**

Email: gordonchalk@outlook.com

**The past
we inherit:
the future we
build together**

In solidarity

**Education for Action
(Durham)**

Easington Colliery: My Pathway To Politics

Harry Barnes

In 1945, as an eight year old, I ran up a side street on leaving my junior school and suddenly stopped still when I saw a poster stuck on a lamppost ahead of me on the far side of Easington Colliery's main road. It was unusual to see posters in those days, apart from notices outside the two picture houses. This one said 'Vote for Shinwell' and was printed in green, which was then Labour's colour in the North East.

The main road was Seaside Lane that led down to the local pit. As I walked up home in the opposite direction more lampposts were flyposted in the same way. Then there was a single large poster on a board attached to railings. It did not merely say 'Vote for Shinwell' but it warned us of the dangers of Winston Churchill, Brendan Bracken (First Lord of the Admiralty) and other Tories being returned to office. I had come across something that seemed both unthinkable and exciting. Our wartime hero, who had seemingly led us to Victory in Europe and to a wonderful street party to celebrate the great achievement, was now under attack.

More drama followed. Shinwell's election address was delivered while I was at school. When I got home every house on our council estate seemed to have a copy placed in a front window, including our house and my grandmother's, four doors away. Then when I saw Churchill on Pathé News telling us not to vote Labour because our gentle Mr Attlee would preside over a new form of Gestapo, I was offended. He seemed to be saying that places such as Easington were full of Nazis, rather than pigeon fanciers, Methodists

and fathers in flat caps making their way to workingmen's clubs. Did he not know that the late Dennis Donnini, whose father ran the ice-cream shop on Seaside Lane, had just been given a posthumous Victoria Cross for bravery in the final days of the war?

In the general election, Shinwell obtained a massive majority of 32,257 and everyone I came across seemed to be Labour. So was I. It was tribal loyalty. My ninth birthday fell between Election Day and the announcement of the results; there was a gap between the two events because the forces' vote had to be collected in. The experiences of 1945 meant that politically I was at least into general elections. This one took place even before I saw my first FA Cup match, in a preliminary round when Easington Colliery drew at neighbouring Horden Colliery with, surprisingly, my dad (signed on the spot) turning out in goal for our rivals; Jack Dormand, the area's future MP and then Horden's regular goalkeeper, having failed to turn up.

Easington Colliery's social bond was always strong, but it was to become of really telling significance from 29 May 1951 when eighty-one miners and two rescue workers were killed in a major pit disaster. My father was in the pit at the time, but was not working in the seam that experienced the explosion. Compared to the impact of the disaster, electoral politics fall into insignificance. But there were general elections both sides of the disaster in 1950 and 1951. I followed the results as they came in on the wireless. Every fifteen minutes there was a summary of the seats held by each party. In 1951, now aged fifteen, I produced a large chart showing the party scores over time and how the Conservatives only took the lead and won the day as the late rural results came in.

The disaster added to the social bond in the community and my own loyalty to Labour started to have an ideological edge. Labour values increasingly began to be absorbed. The newspapers I saw were the Labour-supporting *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds News*. My mother had come from a solid mining community at Sunnyside near Tow Law and had absorbed clear Labourite values from the local Primitive Methodist tradition. British socialism is often said to have more to do with Methodism than Marxism.

So I was sent as a youngster to the local Bourne Methodist Chapel that had emerged from the Primitive tradition. It had some aspects of being the Labour Party at prayer.

By the age of twelve I had persuaded my mother to take me to their evening services and was then attending chapel three times on Sundays. Some of the lay preachers were Labour councillors, including George Walker from a neighbouring Methodist chapel in the Colliery. He served on the county council, was President of the local Miners' Lodge and was the person who persuaded the county's Methodists to run a Durham Big Meeting. It was based on the massive miners' Big Meetings but without the pubs being open during the day. So annually I joined the march behind Methodist banners in Durham, ending up in a large tent at the racecourse to hear preachers, such as my favourite, Donald Soper. He was clearly a socialist whom I later came across in the pages of *Tribune*. Whilst I came to attend the local Methodist chapel some five times a week and became Assistant Secretary of its Sunday school and Secretary of the Christian Endeavour, I never engaged in any form of direct political activity. But I recognised that the source of a sermon by one of our trainee lay preachers had surprisingly come from a preface to one of George Bernard Shaw's plays.

At eighteen, however, aspects of my background began to be both built upon and also significantly challenged. I was called upon to undertake my National Service. I joined the RAF and when undertaking my initial square bashing I was taken aback when we celebrated Winston Churchill's 80th Birthday with a special meal. Then, worse still, I went to a Methodist chapel Sunday evening service near West Kirby where I was stationed and Selwyn Lloyd read the lesson. I could not believe that they would let a Conservative government minister do this. But something much more significant then happened. As I had been employed as a railway clerk since leaving school, mainly at Horden Station, I was dispatched by the RAF to a Movements Unit in Basra to link in with Iraqi State Railways. This was a life changing experience.

On Sundays I was able to attend the local Anglican church. This was a new world. The vicar had the RAF attendees back for drinks after his

sermons. I was shocked when he offered us whisky, beer or orange juice. As I had signed the Methodist pledge against the devil's brew, I had to go for the latter. Then as my views were shifting, he preached a sermon against *Rational Press Association* books that a bookseller from India was selling in Basra. I attended the bookseller's shop weekly and had purchased (and absorbed) numbers of the works under attack. Via the bookseller I also obtained weekly copies of the *New Statesman* on rice paper and old copies of the *Observer* and *Reynolds News* which came by sea.

The big challenge to my religious views (and the development of my political outlook) came mainly from my experiences of the conditions for the bulk of the Iraqi people. I had never been overseas before, nor at home had there been any modern media from which I could draw knowledge of life in poorer nations. As I first travelled by train from Baghdad to Basra I saw mud-built homes, open sewers, extreme poverty and limited protection from the oppressive heat of the sun. I could only think that what I saw was Old Testament times that we were supposed to have left behind. Then when my work took me to the docks in Basra, I saw labourers struggling in unbelievable conditions, for example being bent double carrying large and extremely heavy old-fashioned refrigerators on their backs.

As I struggled with such experiences, I finally decided that the God I had believed in could never have allowed such conditions to function. Yet I never became a tub-thumping atheist, because the Methodists I had known seemed to me to be basically decent people. More forcefully I felt that it was mankind who were really guilty for allowing such major forms of exploitation to flourish. Democracy, justice and social equality seemed to me to be essentials. There was a corporal who was an atheist whom I discussed my religious problems with, but I found no real scope for political discourse. When I attempted to order a copy of *Das Kapital* from my bookseller, he checked this out with the local Chief of Police who told him that it was not possible. Then any attractions communism might have had for me were undermined when I read the full speech of Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin in the *Observer*.

As I was preparing to be demobbed in 1956, two huge political issues came to the fore. First there was the Suez invasion, which would eventually impact on Iraqi politics. I was fully opposed to Britain's involvement and being in the Middle East I was worried that it would postpone my demob. But the forces were not in need of a pen pusher for such military adventurism. I was also entirely opposed to the Russian invasion of Hungary. Shortly after I was demobbed these views were given scope at the first political meeting I ever attended in my life. It was held by the Communist Party in Newcastle, with their Party Secretary John Gollan speaking. Along with numbers of local university students, I cheered him when he condemned the Suez invasion and booed him when he defended Soviet action in Hungary.

I was in a quandary as to what to do politically. Communism was a no go area. Then Gaitskell became leader of the Labour Party and his politics did not appeal to me. I was now working in the Parcels Office at Sunderland Station and my trade union was the then moderate Transport and Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA). I became involved with them sufficiently to attend a TSSA Line Conference at Leeds, but as it was addressed by their right-wing labour President Ray Gunter I wasn't inspired.

So initially, as I settled down after my National Service, I was outside of any organised political activity and instead embarked upon a period of expressing my developing views by having letters published in the *Northern Echo* and the *Sunderland Echo*. Twenty-nine of these were eventually published. On the one hand I was arguing for the re-nationalisation of the steel industry with the Chairman of Dorman and Long, and then on the other debating with a local Communist Party Secretary with a letter headed 'Russia With Its Privileged Class Isn't Socialist'. This practice became dovetailed into a double tactic, which I have continued to be involved in ever since, of associating myself with people discussing and pursuing socialist ideas. I also joined the Labour Party to press for such values. To me it has always seemed essential to engage in this twin approach. Labour Party activity in isolation (especially today), being limited and insufficient.

My first involvement with left activity arose from my interest in the ideas

of G. D. H. Cole, who was also a Labour Party activist. I had followed his writings when in Iraq. Some of his books were even in our RAF Library and I read his articles in the *New Statesman*. In particular he wrote a series which was reproduced as a pamphlet entitled *World Socialism Restated* and which was associated with the establishment of a body grandly entitled the International Society for Socialist Studies (ISSS). In September 1957 I went to a weekend conference held in London and attended by some sixty socialists from twenty countries that was preceded by a public meeting, whose speakers included Kenneth Kaunda who was to become President of Zambia. The ISSS was an attempt to found a form of international left-wing Fabian Society, but it eventually faltered. I went on to follow developments that led to the formation of the early New Left, who at that time had similar values. I ended up on this tack on Aldermaston Marches for nuclear disarmament, marching with the New Left contingent and singing 'Gaitskell is our leader. He must be removed'.

It was shortly just after my early ISSS experiences that I finally joined the Labour Party. I did this because the local MP Manny Shinwell ran an essay competition on 'nationalisation' and to enter it I had to be a member of his Divisional Labour Party. I came second in the essay contest and to collect my prize of £3 I had to attend my first ever Labour Party meeting. It was a Divisional Meeting held at Blackhall Colliery just two months after my listening to G. D. H. Cole at the ISSS Conference. I was soon deep into Labour Party activity at Easington, becoming Branch Secretary the following year. I quickly persuaded them to have speakers at alternative monthly meetings, Arthur Blenkinsop the MP for South Shields being our first.

I had also discovered that local Fabian Society discussions were being held in the County Hotel at Durham and briefly became a visitor. Soon, however, a Fabian Society was founded in my own area at Peterlee and I became their Secretary. We started up in February 1958 with Bill Rodgers (then General Secretary of the Fabian Society) as our first speaker. Sam Watson (the Durham Miners' Secretary) and Shinwell were amongst later speakers. *Fabian News* reported that more than half the membership lived

in Peterlee and the rest in nearby mining villages. My involvement with the Fabian Society led to my attending their week-long summer school in 1958 that was held at Ruskin College in Oxford. I attended even though the main contributions came from people I perceived as being Labour right-wingers including Roy Jenkins, Tony Crosland and Hugh Dalton. Bill Rodgers being present in his role as General Secretary. In 1981, Jenkins and Rodgers were part of the 'Gang of Four' who defected from the Labour Party to set up the rival Social Democratic Party.

Although I was committed to participating in labour movement discussion meetings, there was plenty of organisational work to do. For the October 1959 general election, I put my efforts into being Shinwell's sub-agent covering Easington itself. Shinwell was disappointed that he did not quite achieve his 30,000 Labour majority. But when I discovered that we had lost the neighbouring Hartlepool seat by only 182 votes, I thought that my own efforts had been in the wrong place.

In the following April our local Fabian Society ran a day school at the Easington Colliery Secondary Modern School on public ownership. Again Shinwell was a speaker, alongside Ronald Parker from the Cleveland area who had expertise on the steel industry. Fabian News stated that the school was attended by sixty-three people. They came from miners' lodges, Labour women's sections, local Labour Parties and Ward Committees and many were said to have taken part in a vigorous discussion from the floor. The accompanying photo taken at the day-school shows from left to right Bill Horsfield our Treasurer, myself, Ronald Parker, Manny Shinwell and John Alderson our Chair. John was a teacher at Shotton Colliery. When I had obtained the second prize in Shinwell's essay competition he received the first prize. He also taught English to Ann who later become my wife, but whom I had not then met.

The Fabian Summer School I had attended in Oxford then had a significant impact on my life. When there, I was told that Ruskin College was 'for people like you' who had an interest in studying politics and economics full-time but did not have the qualifications to progress into higher studies. I

had not even known until then that politics was a subject that could be studied in an academic format. In 1960 after seeing an advert in Tribune I applied for a two-year full-time course at the college, with references from Manny Shinwell, my TSSA Branch Secretary and a former teacher of mine who was then a member of my local Labour Party. I submitted a couple of essays entitled 'Does it make sense to speak of a Welfare State in Britain today?' (long before Thatcherism) and 'Do you consider yourself more civilised than your grandparents?' After sending in my contributions I attended an interview at Transport House and was accepted, obtaining a grant from the Durham County Council, a pattern later destroyed by the 'Iron Lady', by which time I was a protesting MP.

Studying at Ruskin was an unbelievable experience. Tutorials, seminars, lectures followed by questioning, guided reading, essay writing, discussions with fellow students and shared social activities led on to the bonus of an Oxford University Diploma in Economics and Politics. I was then able to move on to Hull University to graduate in Politics and Philosophy. I left my home base at Easington Colliery on my marriage to Ann following the first year of my studies at Hull. My father had worked at the pit at Easington, whilst Ann's father worked at Shotton Colliery. We immediately moved to Hull and finally settled in North Derbyshire. But we took our background with us.

I was also able to draw from my Ruskin and Easington area discussion group backgrounds in teaching on trade union day release classes for twenty-one years via the Sheffield University Extramural Department; a standard area of work being with miners in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire. Then while I had eighteen years as the Labour MP for North-East Derbyshire, the interests and lessons emerging from my life in North East England were always with me.

Now in retirement for over a decade, one of my activities has been to run monthly Labour discussion meetings. They are solidly in the tradition of the Peterlee and District Fabian Society, with the dialectics of socialist debate. Furthermore, they are held in a Trade Union & Labour Club that was officially opened by Manny Shinwell fifty years ago.

The Northern Echo, Monday, April 4, 1960

5

Fabians' one-day school at Easington



Left to right: Coun. W. Horsfield, Mr. H. Barnes, Mr. Ronald W. Parker, Mr. E. Shinwell and Coun. J. Alderson.—[N.E.]

OWNERSHIP PUT IN PERSPECTIVE

Socialism's concern with people

THERE was no justification for saying that Socialism was synonymous with nationalisation, Mr. Ronald W. Parker, vice-chairman and political education officer of the Cleveland Divisional Labour Party, told a one-day school at Easington on Saturday, arranged by Peterlee and District Fabian Society.

Dealing with public ownership and the Socialist tradition, Mr. Parker said Socialism concerned human beings, their dignities and freedoms, and only indirectly their economic interests and property relationships.

The Labour Party was not a unity but a federation of various movements. No particular section could claim infallibility. The conclusion was that as Socialists they must above all be concerned with the equality of individual life.

Mr. Shinwell's warning

They had to realise that even if all institutions were nationalised, the nature of man would not necessarily change. The objection to present nationalised industries was that they were not organic creations, but if man himself had been created instead of evolved, he might have been as inefficient as the National Coal Board.

Mr. Emanuel Shinwell, M.P. for Easington Division, presiding, said that to adhere to rigid discipline while the party was in a state of confusion with new thinking, was a mistake.

"I am bound to say that in spite of the difficulties that beset us and the problems that lie ahead, the controversy now raging — although for the time being subdued — may revive again."

"In spite of the difficulties in connection with Labour Party policy and public ownership, there is one thing we must not do. That is to attempt to water down our Socialist principles and policy. If we do, it will destroy the enthusiasm and resolution of the rank and file, without which we cannot hope to gain a future electoral victory."

the co-operative party

politics for people

North East & North Cumbria Co-operative
Party congratulates NELHS on its
jubilee....

As we too celebrate the Co-operative Party
centenary.

Why not join us for lively debate?
Great things happen when you Co-operate!

Chair: John Creaby, **Secretary:** Ste Powers,

150 Whitefield Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle
upon Tyne, NE6 5SS.

nenc.coop.party@gmail.com <https://party.coop/>

Trade Unionism and Methodism. Some North East Labour Leaders Reconsidered

Peter Sagar

It is more than coincidence that the reconstructed Methodist chapel and the trade union banner hall at Beamish Museum are situated near to one another. The link between Nonconformism, especially Methodism, and the growth of the trade union movement in the North East was very close. Recent events have given some politicians the opportunity to repeat the view that 'the Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marxism'.¹ Some may now regard it as 'shop-soiled cliché incanted by Labour loyalists and pundits at every opportunity', but there is merit to it.² Perhaps it is a good time to revisit the role that Methodism played in the growth of organised labour in the region and look again at the lives of some early North East labour leaders for whom their religious beliefs were thought to have been a powerful influence.

Methodism and the Unions

Methodism's success in the North East was due to its appeal to working people and the poor. When early Methodist preachers stood in market places and on village greens they often scandalised 'respectable' people with their egalitarian outlook. But Methodists in leadership positions in trade unions strove to make their organisations acceptable to both the 'respectable' and their members. They had a view of society in which reason and reconciliation were the means of settling disputes caused, as they saw it, by temporary imbalances in the market or misunderstandings. Until the early 1920s union leaderships consisted largely of 'respectable' Liberal

Methodists who felt that they commanded the respect of the owners. Many of the radical voices heard on the coalfield during the nineteenth century were first heard within the sphere of Methodism, and then went on to develop a political language alongside that of the Bible.

Methodism proved itself conducive to protest, providing a vocabulary and nurturing oratorical and organisational skills. The churches also provided a base for study, which in turn led to heightened consciousness. It has also been argued that Methodism encouraged the adoption of an ethical socialism that was not so receptive to Marxism. Trade unions were heavily influenced by structures that came from the chapels: to this day the National Union of Journalists branches are referred to as 'chapels' and many miners lodge banners carry quotes from the scriptures.³

Over the years, labour and social historians have stressed the importance of Methodism. Wearmouth, the pre-eminent chronicler of Methodism and the working classes, writes of a religion which

appealed to the spirit in man and by doing so affected the whole of human life, the political, social, moral and spiritual. Its effect on Trade Unionism depended not merely on technique, organisation or evangelic effort, but chiefly on character, personality and experience. In that sense it provided an urge and a spur to personal and united endeavours.⁴

Others note that many socialist leaders came from lay-preaching backgrounds, and that the inherent radicalism of Methodism challenged Anglican paternalism and encouraged reformers on such issues as prison brutality. Inevitably there is not complete unanimity amongst historians, particularly with regard to the claim that Methodism was a radical force.⁵

It would be hard to deny that Methodism had an impact in the North East, not least 'the positive contributions made towards the improvement in morals in the mining communities'.⁶ It was concerned not only with individual self-improvement, but with a community self-improvement

whereby individuals would become greater by stretching out a helping hand to those around them. A desire to help take their communities forward propelled many towards trade union activism and it is generally agreed that a Sunday school education and experience of lay-preaching was instrumental in the development of some distinguished leaders of labour in the region. Below we reflect upon the role an exposure to Methodism played in the lives of four activists for whom religious beliefs are invariably cited as a determining factor in the way in which they went about their work.

Thomas Hepburn

Thomas Hepburn (1796 - 1864) was probably the most important of all early trade union leaders, one whom Methodists are quick to claim as one of their own.⁷ Hepburn was one of the first trade union leaders in the country and such is his significance that he is remembered at St Mary's Church in Heworth every October. But a detailed obituary of Hepburn and a monograph on his life make no reference to Methodism.⁸ This is because Hepburn, who was largely responsible for galvanising the Durham miners and led them during the great struggle of 1831 and 1832, seems to have turned his back on Methodism at the very time he was most active.

By all accounts Hepburn was a studious man. When he began work at the age of eight it was said that he could already read the Bible and he took every opportunity to advance his education, attending classes after work and through private study. Even after his marriage and with a young family, he went to school three evenings a week. Then around 1822 a group of Primitive Methodist evangelists visited the area and Hepburn 'attended their meetings, joined their society and became a class leader and local preacher'.⁹ There can be little doubt that his organisational skills, public speaking and powers of persuasion benefited from his involvement with the Primitives.

Hepburn was a formidable speaker. In 1831, for instance, he addressed over 20,000 pitmen on Newcastle's Town Moor. His method of rallying pitmen across the district replicated the Primitives' style of an 'orderly

procession to a large field meeting and addresses from a cart'.¹⁰ Although following a pattern familiar to Methodists, it is questionable whether by this stage he still regarded himself as a Methodist. One anecdote from 1831 looks to confirm Hepburn's faith; it was reported that with negotiations about to begin with Lord Londonderry, Hepburn told him that he always began with a prayer, at which the noble Marquis 'piously joined in the act'.¹¹ There was certainly a strong Methodist presence amongst Durham miners' officials: Lord Lambton's agent believed that the union was being led by 'chiefly Ranter preachers who have acquired a considerable fluency in public speaking'.¹² Hepburn himself, however, is said to have fallen out with Primitive Methodism as the disputes of 1831-32 progressed, 'possibly through impatience with a lack of sympathy and support from the official ranks of the connexion'.¹³ It is argued that Wesleyans pursued a policy of political neutrality - although some of the church's leaders tried to ally with Toryism - while those of a more radical bent were to be found further down the Methodist hierarchy, and especially amongst the Primitives.¹⁴ Nonetheless, one old pitman accused Hepburn of 'abandoning his religious duties and causing social dissension'.¹⁵

The unsatisfactory outcome of the 1831-32 strikes left Hepburn becalmed within a defeated, fatally damaged union. When the inquests began he was found to have been too moderate for some and not radical enough for others. He became a scapegoat, a 'sacrificed man'.¹⁶ Out of a job, he briefly tried running a school and then travelled around colliery villages selling tea. He was eventually taken on at Felling Colliery, on condition that he relinquished any interest in union affairs, although he pursued other causes. In 1840, for example, it was reported that Hepburn was an officer for the Northern Political Reform Union.

After a couple of decades of estrangement, Hepburn returned to the Primitives at Felling, where he once again became a class leader, preacher and Sunday School teacher. When he died, aged sixty-eight, he had been an energetic participant in chapel affairs for two periods of approximately

ten and a dozen years. There is little doubt, however, that his earlier phase of involvement with Methodism gave him the motivation and necessary abilities to effectively represent his fellow workers.

Thomas Burt

Thomas Burt (1837-1922), was a huge figure in the development of trade unions in the North East, and Britain's first working-class MP when elected for the Morpeth seat in 1874. It has been suggested that Burt was the most liked and respected labour leader in the second half of the nineteenth century and his work was crucial in making trade unionism acceptable not only to working people but amongst the wider public.¹⁷ Burt had an impeccably Methodist upbringing. Burt wrote that his father was a local preacher – with a library ‘the wonder and envy of any of his brother preachers’ – and that his parents ‘expected me, if they did not command me, to go to school once and chapel twice every Sunday’.¹⁸ His childhood home was one where ‘Primitive Methodist ministers of outstanding merit often visited ... and friendships began and were cherished’.¹⁹ Burt's formative years were also affected by contact with his uncles, who he looked up to as ‘men of spirit and independence, quick to revolt against all tyranny and injustice’.²⁰ As a young man he taught in Sunday school, but thereafter he was not intimately connected to Methodism.

Although trade unionism, politics and temperance were to occupy Burt's adult life, it could be argued that it was the democratic values inherent in the Methodist faith that informed his behaviour in these fields of activity. He respected Primitive Methodists for showing ‘practical sympathy with the aspirations and the efforts of the working people to achieve political and civil equality and to ameliorate their hard material conditions’.²¹ Burt also felt, for instance, that ‘the local preachers and members of the Primitive Methodist Connexion were the earliest and most successful advocates of temperance’.²²

Burt was typical of most North East labour leaders from a Methodist background in that he was very much a moderate. Perhaps it was Methodism

which taught him that attempts to find reconciliation were a better way forward than being militant. He was 'the soft-voiced, gentle-faced Thomas Burt' for whom 'the idea of Socialism and collective control, ideas which to him seemed strange and alien'.²³ As a consequence he was not only respected by miners, but also by the mine-owners and other industrialists. Burt's moderation was his strongest weapon in the difficult task of winning over his union members to his point of view and then going on to break down the walls of prejudice between masters and men. Similarly, it was quiet persuasion that was utilised during the challenges of winning support in Westminster. Like others from a Methodist background, Burt was judged to be 'an extraordinarily effective speaker'.²⁴

Whilst Burt's roots were indeed deeply embedded in Primitive Methodism, his views evolved in a manner that took him away from the religion of his boyhood. He remained within the nonconformist family but became inclined towards Unitarianism on an intellectual level, possibly because of its commitment to civil rights. At the same time, Burt continued to 'respect ... Primitive Methodism and appreciated its importance in the life of the miners'.²⁵ His successor as Morpeth's MP came from a similar background.²⁶

John Wilson

John Wilson (1837-1915), was a miners' leader and MP for Mid-Durham. He was a reformer, demanding the extension of the franchise. Wilson was Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association before being elected to the Commons in 1865.²⁷ He holds a particular allure for Methodists since he converted in his early thirties after an aimless period of gambling and drink. His father had had a number of jobs and the family moved around such that Wilson's education was 'spasmodic and varied' although he cultivated 'a love of reading'.²⁸ After school, Wilson worked underground at various collieries before going to America in 1864.

A few years later, when Wilson and his family were preparing to return to Haswell, an emigrant from that village asked him to carry back a family

Bible to give to his father, a Mr Hepple. When resettled in Haswell, Wilson found that Hepple 'availed himself of every opportunity to call and see me'.²⁹ These visits, ostensibly to chat about his son, gave Hepple the chance to counsel Wilson and groom him for membership of the Primitive Methodists. Wilson suddenly ceased gambling and then one Sunday morning, as he was hungover - 'having taken too much the night before' and 'nauseous' - Hepple and a friend arrived.³⁰ They suggested he became a Sunday school teacher and he agreed, later becoming a preacher. 'The outward effects', it is said, 'were immediate, tremendous and permanent'.³¹

As Wilson's career took him to the top of the Durham Miners' Association and into the House of Commons it was complemented by an equally strong adherence to Methodism. Wilson wrote that he had 'never undertaken any work in addresses or speeches which ... pressed so heavily upon me as the duty of preaching' as he 'occupied the pulpit in many parts of the United Kingdom and America'.³² At a commemoration service for Wilson it was said that he would 'never have been an MP, if he had not been a PM'.³³

John George Harrison

In his beliefs and writings, John George Harrison (1890-1921) offers a contrast to those Methodist labour leaders characterised as 'the pioneers of conciliation'.³⁴ He worked not as a miner, but as a schoolteacher, and his Methodism was matched by an explicit attachment to radical politics. Whilst at training college, Harrison became interested in socialism and pacifism, and read authors such as Robert Blatchford and Edward Carpenter. Later in the Deerness Valley, he became part of a group that in its religious activities 'discussed political matters, converted one another to new political ideas and then sought out potential converts'.³⁵ Here were Methodists who embraced a form of ethical socialism that led them to the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Harrison and his fellow Methodists had a 'near monopoly' of the local ILP branch: of the fourteen core members, twelve were Primitives and one a Wesleyan.³⁶ So notable were they that

they attracted one of the Pankhursts, Ben Tillett, Tom Mann and James Larkin to West Durham to speak.

Harrison endorsed the idea of the prophets being the first socialists, making the 'first passionate plea for the poor, the wretched and the heavy-burdened'.³⁷ And he argued that the 'finger posts of duty and expediency seldom point to the same direction. Compromise can never lead to the attainment of the highest ideals'.³⁸ Not all Methodists in Deerness Valley were necessarily ready for this more uncompromising, less deferential style of community action, yet Harrison was able to persuade a number to his way of thinking by questioning the social and economic order in religious and moral terms. The Bible was the basis for discussion and Biblical allusion was important. Through this approach Harrison bridged traditional Methodist thinking and a more secular ideology. The religious could adopt radical political views without a loss of faith.

The likes of Harrison were not deferential in the way that perhaps Thomas Hepburn and others had been. These were 'men belonging to a tradition of Christian radicalism of which the rulers of the land had much to fear ... which includes insurrection as well as pacifism ... in which the doctrine of the brotherhood of man might be translated into active levelling'.³⁹ But as Harrison moved towards the ILP he turned his back on Methodism, becoming 'almost convinced' by Christian Science. Then, after a brief return to Methodism, he was prompted by the outbreak of the First World War to join the Quakers. He was imprisoned and the ill-treatment he received probably contributed to his early death. Before he died, Harrison, who had become a member of the Brotherhood Church, 'an anarcho-Christian pacifist group of Utopians', was engaged in setting up a rural community with others in the church.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The conventional wisdom, be it expressed a century ago or today, holds that the most prominent of early trade unionist leaders and activists in the North East mining areas were, to a considerable extent, the products of

Methodism, and there is no shortage of unequivocal assertions to support this view. Webb, for example, writes that 'from the very beginning ... it is the men who are Methodists, and in Durham County especially the local preachers, whom we find filling the posts of influence'.⁴¹ The *Methodist Recorder* could state that

it was from the ranks of the Methodists that so many men expressed their faith in the Kingdom of God through politics, especially in County Durham... Members of Parliament, councillors, political and trade union workers, were men who had found their faith in the local Methodist chapel.⁴²

Of course, some of those claiming the centrality of Methodism in the creation of labour leadership were themselves enthusiastic Methodists, so an element of partisanship may be present. Nonetheless, as we have seen with the four individuals discussed above there is a clear link between their activism and their religious beliefs and training.⁴³ What they have in common is that they were all Primitives. Essentially a breakaway movement, the Primitives tended to concentrate their activities in the poorer areas. Without the connections of the Wesleyans, who were much more closely linked to the Anglicans, Primitive Methodism's greater engagement with working people helped propagate a radical stance.

What also emerges from the lives of Hepburn, Burt, Wilson and Harrison is the danger of sweeping generalisation. Their relationship with Methodism followed different patterns. None could be described as lifelong adherents: Burt, a Methodist from birth, gradually drifted away; Wilson, a non-Methodist until his thirties, stayed until death; Hepburn had two periods in adulthood and Harrison left Methodism for a political party and flirted with other religions. Yet what we know of their lives suggests that Methodism was at the heart of the ideas that guided them as they sought ways of achieving greater economic and social justice for their fellow men.

- ¹ See, for example, Tony Blair (*Spectator*, 9 September 2015) and Alan Johnson (*Guardian*, 21 January 2017).
- ² R. Seymour, *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics* (London: Verso, 2016) p. 91.
- ³ <https://www.nuj.org.uk/where/>.
- ⁴ R. Wearmouth, *The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Twentieth Century* (London: Epworth, 1957) p. 80.
- ⁵ For a summary of the historical treatment of Methodism see R. Moore, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) pp. 5- 14.
- ⁶ L. Satre, *Thomas Burt, Miners' M.P. 1837-1922; The Great Conciliator* (Leicester: Leicester University Press 1999) p. 8.
- ⁷ See G. Milburn, 'A Pioneer Miners' Leader. Thomas Hepburn', *Bulletin of Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch*, No 26 (September 1976), pp.4-8 (reprinted in No 81, (Autumn 2004) pp. 6-8).
- ⁸ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 12 December 1864, p. 3; J. Oxberry, *Thomas Hepburn of Felling* (Felling: R. Heslop, 1938)
- ⁹ N. Graham, 'Thomas Hepburn, 1796-1864. Primitive Methodist Preacher and Miners' Leader' in *Bulletin of Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch*, No 16, (October 1971), pp. 9-14.
- ¹⁰ As above.
- ¹¹ R. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800 -1850* (London: Epworth, 1937) p. 228.
- ¹² Quoted in Graham (1971).
- ¹³ Milburn (1976).
- ¹⁴ Wearmouth (1937) p.194.
- ¹⁵ Milburn (1976).
- ¹⁶ Oxberry, p.16.
- ¹⁷ For a summary biography of Burt see E. Thompson, 'Pioneers of Conciliation: Thomas Burt and John Wilson', *Bulletin of Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch*, No 47, (March 1987), pp. 9-18.
- ¹⁸ T. Burt, *Thomas Burt. An Autobiography with Supplementary Chapters by Aaron Watson* (London, Fisher Unwin, 1924) p. 85.
- ¹⁹ Wearmouth, (1957) p. 82.
- ²⁰ Burt, p.134.
- ²¹ Satre, p. 8.
- ²² *The Handbook of the Methodist Conference, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, July 14th to 25th, 1936*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cooperative Printing Society, 1936) p. 64.
- ²³ Wearmouth (1947) p. 82-3.
- ²⁴ Satre, p. 2.
- ²⁵ Wearmouth (1947) p. 84.
- ²⁶ John Cairns (1859-1923) succeeded Burt as MP for Morpeth in 1918. He was a

long-standing, practising Methodist.

For a summary biography of Wilson, see Thompson (1987).

B. Anderson, 'The Life and Work of John Wilson MP' in *Bulletin of Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch*, No 26 (September 1976), pp. 9-30.

J. Wilson, *Memories of a Labour Leader* (Firle: Caliban Books, 1980, facsimile of 1910 edn.) p. 202

Wilson, p. 203.

R. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes, 1850-1900* (Leicester: Edgar Backus, 1954) p.189

Wilson, pp. 212-13.

Wearmouth (1947), p. 118.

Thompson (1987).

Moore, p. 171.

Moore, Table 7, p. 170.

Quoted in Moore, p. 172.

Moore, p. 172.

Moore, p. 175.

Moore, p. 171.

S. Webb, *The Story of the Durham Miners* (1662-1921) (London: Labour Publishing Co., 1921) p. 43.

Methodist Recorder, 21 June 1973.

There are other equally significant figures from the Northumberland and Durham coalfield, who were known for their adherence to Methodism and could have been discussed. For example, William Crawford (1833-1890) who became Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association and was elected to Parliament in 1885; William Straker (1855-1941) who rose through the ranks of his union to become General Secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Association and courted controversy with his vigorous opposition to the First World War; and Peter Lee (1864-1935) the Durham miners leader who was President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and chairman of Durham County Council, the first to be controlled by Labour.



Workers' Educational Association North East

Congratulates NELHS on its Jubilee

As an organisation with strong ties to NELHS, we aim to further enrich our collaboration with you via our Heritage Lottery Fund supported project:

Turbulent Times 1918-28

(<https://weaturbulenttimes.wordpress.com>)



and our newly developed

WEA NE History & Heritage Branch

(<https://weaheritagebranch.wordpress.com>)

Congratulations on your first fifty years, and wishing you an even more successful future.

WEA North East, Joseph Cowen House, 21 Portland Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1QQ ☎ 0191 212 6100

=====

Rose Lumsden, a Sunderland Nurse in the Great War

Judith McSwaine

This essay is based on a study of the service of Rose Lumsden, a nurse in Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve (QAIMNSR) as recorded in her personal diary, together with information obtained from the War Office records and census information.¹ Rose's diary is an incomplete record of her service, with many gaps and little or no commentary or reflection on her experiences. However, it can still provide a glimpse of her resilience as well as her ability to seize the opportunities serving abroad offered.² In addition, evidence about her nurse training recorded at Sunderland Royal Infirmary illustrates the shortage of trained nurses during World War One and how this informed the post-war efforts to create a Register of Nurses, like that of Doctors and Midwives.

Rose's Sunderland family

Rose was born in the Bishopwearmouth area of Sunderland, into a Master Mariner's household, which boasted both a general servant and a nurse-maid.³ In 1891 the family were living in Vincent Street, in a large house, but no longer employing live-in domestics; Rose and two of her brothers were scholars whilst her eldest brother, Arthur, aged fourteen, was employed as an apprentice grocer and appears to have been the sole earner in the household.⁴

In 1901 both Rose's parents died, and her elder sister Annie was working at Hartlepool Workhouse as a Charge Nurse, leaving Rose and her younger brother Harry living alone in St Vincent Street. Harry, aged

seventeen, had become a 'ship broker agent'.⁵ Rose had no occupation outside the home but this changed when she started Nurse Training at Sunderland Royal Infirmary in 1905.⁶ It is possible that, like other women in straitened circumstances who acquired work or training in a hospital, Rose had found a rare place where her experience of running a household and taking care of the family would have a value outside the home.⁷ By 1911, thirty-year old Rose was employed as a Sick Nurse and had become part of her brother Harry's household living in Otto Terrace; others living there on the night of the census included her sister-in-law and infant daughter, Harry's father-in-law, and a fellow nurse, recorded as a visitor.⁸

In 1913, after eight years of training, Rose qualified as a nurse from Sunderland Royal Infirmary with an award of Honours. On 17 August 1914 she volunteered for service in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve (QAIMNSR).⁹

The first 82 days, London to Salonika via Alexandria

When Rose left Queen Alexandra Military Hospital, Millbank, London on 9 November 1915, she had been away from Sunderland for two and a half months.¹⁰ She left England the following day on the RMS *Aquitaine*. Rose would serve out the whole war in Egypt, Greece and the UK, returning home twice, once before re-posting to Dartford Military Hospital and once to visit her sick sister-in-law.¹¹

Her diary begins with a log of the journey; anchoring off the Isle of Wight, passing through the Bay of Biscay, past Gibraltar. She arrived in Naples on 16 November 1915, and was able to visit Pompeii and the Cathedral and write letters to friends and family. Rose provides no clues in her diary of what she made of Naples or Pompeii; this matter-of-fact style of writing will be a characteristic of her diary-keeping. She is not effusive and does not share her emotions. Even when the reality of war is felt she logs events rather than comments on them. After leaving Naples on 17 November 1915 she recorded the ship being:

chased during the night for 50 miles by German or Austrian Sub: Marconi message sent from Aquitaine and Italian battleship came and fired on Submarine.¹²

When the ship sailed close to Stromboli, Italy, at 2.30 a.m. the following day she simply recorded that 'the Steward called us to see it'. After entries on the weather and her transfer to Hospital Ship (HS) *Massilia* in Lemnos, on 1 December 1915, the reality of war soon returned when the ship was ordered to 'proceed to Suvla Bay for wounded lying under shell fire on beach'.¹³ Rose now began to experience the work of a nurse during wartime at sea:

Dec 2nd 7 am: got so close to guns & had to move away further. Saw 2 B Aeroplanes scouting Suvla, fired on them but didn't bring them down. Wounded came off in lighters. Sad spectacles some of them, most of them suffering from frost bite, pneumonia and shell wounds 2 died before reaching ship taken back to Suvla Bay to bury. 6 died before Thursday afternoon. Watched bombardment of Turkish positions by our warships. Turkish high explosive shells burst quite close to *Massilia*.

Friday Dec 3rd Ship's Matron asked for volunteers for duty. 5 others and myself took charge of Poop Deck. more wounded arrived at 10pm. Ship sailed immediately after the last patient was taken on board. at midnight the ship was stopped and the 6 men buried at sea.

The entries following what must have been a harrowing two days recorded the ship proceeding to Malta:

north east history

22 Indian Lt. Transit's for 15716 Gen. Hing at Madras
Aquidains sailed Nov 25. Gen. Ld. 16 Reserve &
Canadian Sisters departed at Madras. 18 Gen.
Red being severe thunderstorm. Sunday, 30th Nov
Monday, 1st Dec. 2 rain most of the day.
Tuesday 30th Nov. Gen. Ld. 16 Reserve &
17, 18 & 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31.
Wednesday, 1st Dec. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st.
Thursday, 2nd Dec. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st.
Friday, 3rd Dec. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st.
Saturday, 4th Dec. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st.
Sunday, 5th Dec. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st.
Monday, 6th Dec. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st.

An extract from Rose's diary for the period 30 November to 6 December 1915. Reproduced courtesy of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

Sunday 5th Glorious day, smooth sea our patients much improved in appearance and spirits wonderful effect of soap and water and good food. all very elated at getting so near to home as Malta. 1 Officer and 3 men died. Buried at 8pm. Had a service on the Poop D at 7pm.

Dec 6 Fine day. Patients full of gratitude for what has been done for them. All Drs and Sisters gave up their mattresses and pillows for patients who hadn't beds when they came on board; our discomfort for the few nights was fully compensated by patient's appreciation.

Monday Arrived Malta most critical cases taken on shore (14). Ship ordered to proceed to Gibraltar.

Now aboard the H.S. *Morea* her diary continues:

Nothing unusual happened until the evening of Dec 9th Thursday. Ship suddenly stopped just as we were finishing dinner 6.45. went on deck saw 3 small lights in the distance no one had any idea what they were. All thought of German Subs but they [illegible] to be from 3 lifeboats of the SS *Oteric* (Andrew Weir & Co) containing 62 men, the ship bound for Alexandria was torpedoed at 4.30 in the afternoon. Submarine fired on one boat killed two and injured 4 of the crew (Chinese) 11 of the crew were English the rest Chinamen. After all were got on board lifeboats were left to drift away. The injured (2 compound fractures) were put to bed and wounds attended to. At 11pm ship stopped again, great excitement all got out of bed put on coats and went on deck were told not to be alarmed stopped by British cruiser to tell us another ship had been torpedoed that morning and would we watch for crew in life boats. Found 1 boat containing 5 men at 11.30 and other two with 25 men at 12. This ship, the *Bisuris* (Moss line) was sunk at 6 am after sub crew had taken off all the stores they [illegible] in this case were not fired on. Crew of 30, all Europeans, mostly English. No enemy subs were supposed to be in the vicinity. Friday morning sub sighted top speed put on by *Morea*, escaped harm.

Arrived Alexandria Friday afternoon Dec 10th

In total, the *Morea* picked up 120 men from the life boats of the two ships between 6.45 p.m. and 6 a.m. the next day. In this dangerous part of the Mediterranean, the *Morea* herself was sighted by a submarine and escaped harm at top speed to arrive in Alexandria on the afternoon of 10 December. Rose's descriptions of picking up survivors of the sinking of the S.S. *Oteric*

and the *Bisuris* are among the most detailed accounts of her journey, though once again the events evoke no personal response or commentary.¹⁴

At times Rose's record of her time in Alexandria and Cairo could perhaps be mistaken for a holiday diary, with reports of shopping trips to town and native bazaars, visits to Pyramids, the Sphinx, Cairo Museum, a Coptic Church, a mosque and the Zoological Gardens.¹⁵ There were picnics, teas and visits to her friends in the many hospitals in the area. On 10 January 1916 she bought postcards and a camera and attended a lecture on 'Moslem Women'.

Nevertheless, she was not sheltered from the war in this sensitive part of the world. On 17 January 1916, a week after buying her camera, she went to see the Hospital train which ran to Ismailia and Tel el Kebir.¹⁶ She took part in two trips bringing back two hundred and sixty patients. Neither their injuries nor Rose's reaction to the human cost of warfare are committed to paper.

January 1916 to 13 July 1918: thirty months nursing in Salonika

From the end of January 1916 to 13 July 1918, Rose served in Salonika, in Greece.¹⁷ Shortly before disembarking from HS *Egypt* to start her duties, the hospital ship was struck in an air raid sustaining 'considerable damage'; though no one was injured, everyone thought 'their end had come'.¹⁸ There were a dozen or more hospitals in and around Salonika. Rose does not record which one she had been assigned to but her first task was 'to make up camp beds' and 'get the tent straight'.¹⁹ The next few days were a flurry of activity, with two whole days spent sewing for theatre. Rose recorded that she was to take over the Operating Theatre and an Officer's Ward. On 7 February she noted a morning in bed after having inoculations - time to enjoy, perhaps, the twenty-three letters and six Christmas presents that had caught up with her in Greece. By 8 February she was assisting with operations such as knee cartilage, appendix, hernia, and eye cases.²⁰ From the end of February to the beginning of April, Rose noted frequent air-raids and attacks near the camp, for example:

Wakened at 5 am. Enemy [illegible] dropped many bombs,
did considerable damage many killed and wounded.²¹

While Rose did not record her response to being so close to the theatre of war, there was one entry that suggests that she did indeed feel the fear of being in a war zone:

Dreamt I had my head cut open bled profusely; Mother and
Harry were with me.²²

This is a significant entry as it is the only time in the whole diary that Rose noted her own distress.

The hospital tents continued to receive patients and be subjected to air raids. The beginning of May saw a 'record take in' and the camp had a 'visit' from a 'Zepp' at two o'clock in the morning of 5 May; the following days, 6-16 May, Rose recorded 'things much as usual'.²³

On 4 September 1916, while Rose herself was a patient in the sick tent, 'Sister Doherty died'. There is an image in the Lang collection at the Imperial War Museum of Rose enjoying an outing with Sister Doherty.²⁴ Yet the death and burial with military honours of one of her colleagues is recorded without commentary. In the absence of any emotional response we are left to speculate. Perhaps she was not able to express her feelings, or perhaps she had too much responsibility as a Sister to give time to her own responses. The many gaps in the timeline suggest that keeping a record of events was not easy; the threat of death or injury to the nursing staff and their patients was never far away. During an air raid in February 1917 there were '100 killed, many wounded' including a 'sister at 29'.²⁵ This hospital (No. 29) was attacked again in March; this time Rose recorded 'many patients killed'.

A diary entry dated 30 June 1917 related to a recognition of her work, when she recorded, inadequately perhaps, receiving the Royal Red Cross:

Had [illegible] note at 2.30 to attend RXClub at 5 to receive RRC from General Milne.²⁶

The Royal Red Cross (RRC) was widely recognized as the 'Victoria Cross' of nursing. The first British military order solely for women, it was awarded for 'special exertions in providing for the nursing of the sick and wounded soldiers and sailors of our Army and Navy'.²⁷

A year later on 24 June 1918, when Rose is informed that she has been mentioned in a dispatch by General Milne, the diary entry simply reads:

Picnic lunch & tea on hill overlooking LJA & self. At dinner had DRLS handed to me from Miss Colman congrats on 'mention' in Gen Milne's last dispatch. Came as a great surprise.²⁸

Once again, Rose records only the facts. She does not dwell on her reaction or feelings.

Throughout the diary, Rose records her time off duty in the same matter of fact style. However, there is a shift in Rose's record after the two entries describing events affecting Hospital No. 29 in February and March 1918. The diary becomes a record of her 'off duty' time, as if she is focused on holding on to her time away from work, time with her colleagues and Officers.

On 9 June 1918 she records a picnic to a beauty spot:

June 9 Pic nic to C Left C camp about 11 on mules. Had lunch & tea on [illegible] Climbed to top after lunch had a glorious view from the top took a photo of party. Came down had tea. Then mounted on mules and returned to camp arriving about 6.30. party consisted of 10.²⁹

At times her outings and trips out of camp do evoke some emotion: they are often 'enjoyable', 'most enjoyable' and, on one occasion, 'splendid'.

An outing with Colonel Collingwood and Captain Mellings '2 miles from Bulgar lines', earned the description 'absolutely glorious' and lasted from 2.15 p.m. until 3.15 a.m. the next morning.³⁰

This later excursion shows how the officers and nursing staff mixed easily off duty. There were also formal events when the most senior military medical men and nursing staff found themselves together. For instance, she briefly noted attending an evening on board the flagship, HMS *Exmouth*, with Colonel Withers, the senior Medical Officer on 16 August 1916. Later that year, on 13 October, she attended his birthday celebration in the Officer's Mess.³¹

The support of her colleagues is recorded when she falls ill herself. Rose's lists of visitors in September 1917 included several Captains, a Lieutenant, a Colonel, and Major Spinks as well as her fellow Nursing Sisters.³² Just before her return to '26 Casualty Clearing Station', three weeks after an operation resulting in twelve stitches (probably appendicitis though she only describes a pain in her right side), Major Spinks 'called by', and later when she suffered a problem with her shoulder and arm, Major Spinks sent a 'large box of veg'.³³

Among the many colleagues and Officers one special individual does emerge. On 5 May 1918 Rose celebrated with 'A' their year long friendship:

A year today since I met A. Celebrated it by going to DB,
had our tea there. Arrived back at 28 about 6.30 after a most
enjoyable afternoon.³⁴

Rose says little about this relationship but the initial A occurs often in the diary, recording meetings, outings and letters. On 1 July 1918, two days before she left for home she recorded that 'A came up for afternoon'.³⁵

Rose closed her record of the 'absolutely glorious' outing mentioned above, by referring to the camp as 'home', making it clear that she had found friendship and support among her colleagues. Perhaps, this is what helped her to deal with the stresses and strains of war and made a

confessional style of diary keeping unnecessary.

On 12 March 1918, when Rose was informed that she was to return to England, she had 'served over 2 years in Salonika'. By this time her professional and social networks were well established and included many high-ranking individuals. After this date, she records a whirl of social engagements: eleven outings to concerts, a pantomime, visits to old churches, and trips to town for lunch and tea with various colleagues and 'A'.³⁶ Finally, while 'A' may have been unable to see her off, Major Spinks did so, and brought 'a parcel of fresh eggs, tomatoes and melon'.³⁷ It seems fair to suggest that this gesture reflects how well regarded she was and how well she had coped with the demands of nursing in a war-zone.

Rose catalogued her journey home in her familiar matter of fact tone, commenting on the landscape ('gorgeous scenery of Salonic Pass'), recording her Cook's tour of Rome, and her domestic arrangements: 'having a good hot bath', a 'terrific' bed, and washing her travelling clothes. However, there were no reflections on her emotions, on her experiences, on the friendships she was leaving behind, on what she had achieved.

Once in London on 25 July 1919 she enjoyed 'a good day shopping ... and posted parcels to Simpson and Capt A, bought an umbrella'. Rose was posted to Dartford War Hospital in August 1919 as a QAIMNS Res (reservist).³⁸ In the intervening month she visited family and friends in London, Monkseaton, Sunderland, Hull, Liverpool and Selby. She commented that she 'was nearly spoilt for further military service' but, perhaps as we have come to expect, Rose stuck to her commitment. The last diary entry is on 27 March 1919 when she goes to Charing Cross from Dartford War Hospital to meet 'Simpson and May Clark'.³⁹

The impact of World War One on Nursing and Nursing training

Immediately before the outbreak of war, only 12,000 nurses with any form of training were employed in hospitals, compared to 24,000 doctors, all serving a population of thirty-six million people. The ratios of nurse to patient varied according to the status of the institution:

Officer Hospitals 1:4
Military Hospitals 1:16
Voluntary Hospitals 1:19
Poor Law Infirmaries 1:44⁴⁰

This lack of trained nurses in 1914 was the outcome of a long and contentious debate about the role of the nurse and the type of training they needed. As recently as 1904, in a Report from the Select Committee on the Registration of Nurses, Lord Knutsford, Chairman of the London Hospital Governors had expressed the view that nursing was ‘so childishly simple’ as not to be examinable. The view that nurses were simply the faithful carriers-out of the doctor’s orders was widely held in the medical profession.⁴¹

Rose completed her training just a year before the war, at a time when Sunderland Royal Infirmary had a well-established course of nurse training.⁴² The minutes of the Sunderland Infirmary Nursing Committee illustrate the movement towards the professionalisation of hospital nursing.⁴³ The curriculum was defined and controlled by this committee and the minutes record extensions to the programme of lectures on anatomy and surgical nursing, physiology and medical nursing, and hygiene. Practical nursing examinations were set by the nurse educators and successful nurses were awarded a gold medal if they achieved high marks in both theory and practice. This committee also agreed wage rates, with the maximum earnings set in 1908 at £40 for a nurse with ten years’ experience.

The Nursing Committee was in effect responsible for the nursing reputation of the Infirmary: ‘The success of nursing of this Infirmary depends upon the character and excellence of the charge-nurses’.⁴⁴ Trainees not maintaining these high standards could be disciplined and even risk their successful completion of training. Selecting young ladies aged 21-31 years, of good character, good education, good health, and at least 5’ 2” tall, for training was the key to success. As it would not be

until after World War One that compulsory schooling would be extended to the age of fourteen, the educational requirements alone would restrict the pool of applicants and their social class. However, this threatened to restrict the growth of professional nursing, and was a major challenge as the war continued.

Women's participation in male dominated occupations during World War One has been recorded and celebrated. Medicine also had to adapt its practices. The practice of drawing on 'distressed gentlewomen' to work as matrons and restricting recruitment to Nurse Training to 'respectable' women, proved inadequate to the wartime demand, both at home and abroad.⁴⁵

At the outbreak of the war, QAIMNS had two hundred and ninety seven nurses trained to care for the military around the world, and needed many more. If it was to increase in size, it could no longer restrict recruitment to its approved institutions. It was a call for qualified nursing staff that Rose Lumsden answered in August 1914, to become one of the 10,404 trained nurses serving in QAIMNS Reserve during the war.⁴⁶

As the horrible carnage of the war continued and intensified, there was an ever-growing need for trained nurses. Sunderland Royal Infirmary received a request from the War Department for probationers who had completed just six months training to be released to military hospitals.⁴⁷ Along with many other hospitals, Sunderland declined to supply these probationers. but did agree to train some auxiliary Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurses for military service.⁴⁸

The lack of formal training among the VADs would add to the difficulty of arriving at a registration system for nursing after 1918. Among the young, often middle-class, women who had volunteered without remuneration were women who wanted to continue nursing in peace time. They had valuable experience but were regarded as a threat to those arguing for the professionalisation of nursing and a national system of training. However, by 1919, Lord Russell, in a House of Lords debate on registration of nurses stressed that 'women now have the vote, they have to be considered more

than they used to be. It is not so easy to say ‘I don’t like this registration of nurses’. Women are now likely to get what they insist on having’.⁴⁹

The Nurses Registration Act of 1919 paved the way for the General Nursing Council Register to come into effect in 1923, sixty-three years after the Medical Register for Doctors and twenty-one years after the Central Midwives Board.

The training Rose Lumsden underwent at Sunderland Royal Infirmary meant that she would be able to take advantage of the Government’s long overdue move to professionalise nursing. Whatever her motivation to go into nursing in the first place – family circumstances, her sister’s influence or personal aspiration – her skills were put to good use during the war. What she made of her experiences is not recorded in her diary but it does seem that she accepted all the responsibilities given to her and made the most of serving in Egypt and Greece.

Acknowledgement

My thanks to Elaine Pope and Mike Greatbatch for their support and assistance in researching this essay, and to Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums both for their assistance with research material and for permission to reproduce an extract from Rose Lumsden’s diary.

Notes

- ¹ A corps of military nurses was first established in 1881 as the Army Nursing Service. In 1902 it was reorganised and became Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS); renamed the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) in 1949. The majority of military nurses in the First World War worked in these services. See <http://www.qaranc.co.uk/qaimns.php> [accessed 6 June 2017]
- ² R. Lumsden, *Diary of service in field hospitals in Egypt and Salonika in Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service (Reserves)*, Tyne and Wear Archives DX101/1 (hereafter *Diary*). All quotations from the diary are as they appear in the original, with no attempt to correct grammar or spelling; where her handwriting is difficult to read the following convention is used: [illegible].
- ³ 1881 Census, RG11/4995.
- ⁴ 1891 Census, RG12/4139. The house has at least five rooms.

- 5 1901 Census, RG13/4713.
- 6 Sunderland Royal Infirmary, Staff Records 1898-1973, Tyne and Wear Archives
HO.SRI (hereafter Staff Records).
- 7 Rose would later make a meticulous record of household expenses and letters sent
and received during WW1, Tyne and Wear Archives DX101/3/1.
- 8 1911 Census RG14; Piece: 30150.
- 9 Staff Records.
- 10 *Diary*, 9 November 1916.
- 11 *Diary*, 10-15 August 1918 and 11 January 1919.
- 12 *Diary*, 16-17 November 1916.
- 13 The decision to evacuate Suvla Bay after a protracted but unsuccessful campaign
was taken in December 1915. The preliminary stage of evacuation was satisfactorily
completed by 10 December; see Sir John de Robeck's Gallipoli Evacuation
Despatch at http://www.1914-1918.net/derobecks_gallipoli_evacuation_despatch.html
(accessed May 2017).
- 14 The sinking of SS *Oteric* was reported briefly in the *The Times* on 15 December, p.7,
and an eye witness account by the Captain appeared in the *New York Times*,
20 February 1916, p.2 (accessed via <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>, in
May 2017).
- 15 *Diary*, December 1915- January 1916.
- 16 Hospital trains were used to evacuate wounded soldiers from the Casualty Clearing
Stations to Military Hospitals away from the battlefields. During the Gallipoli
landings and the Sinai and Palestine Campaign, Tel el Kebir was a training centre
for the First Australian Imperial Force, No 2 Australian Stationary Hospital and
also a site of a large prisoner of war camp. Some 40,000 Australians camped
in a small tent city at Tel-el-Kebir of six miles in length. A military railway was
eventually constructed to take troops from the camp to their vessels in Alexandria
and elsewhere for embarkation to Gallipoli landings. The camp was later converted
for use as a holding camp for refugees fleeing the Russian Civil War from what used
to be the southern Russian Empire; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell_El_Kebir,
accessed on 11 April 2017.
- 17 The Salonika Campaign against Bulgarian forces lasted from October 1915 to
September 1918. The allied forces were made up of British, French, Greek, Italian,
Russian, and Serbian troops, plus troops from British and French colonies.
- 18 *Diary*, 1 February 1916.
- 19 *Diary*, 3 February 1916.
- 20 *Diary*, 8 February 1916.
- 21 *Diary*, 27 March 1916.
- 22 *Diary*, 5 April 1916.
- 23 *Diary*, 1 to 5 May 1916.
- 24 Lang (Sister) IWM Photographs 2004-08-01.
- 25 29 General Hospital was one of two dozen military medical facilities in and around

Salonica; see <http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo:4141/Diary>, 30 June 1917.

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Who-we-are/Museum-and-archives/Collections/Medals-and-badges#Honour%20medals>, accessed 6 June 2017; see also <http://www.qaranc.co.uk/royalredcross.php> It is still awarded today. See for example, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/onthe frontline/2497002/Major-Janet-Pilgrim-wins-the-Royal-Red-Cross-first-awarded-to-Florence-Nightingale.html> *Diary*, 24 June 1918.

Diary, 9 June 1918.

Diary, 9 February 1918.

Diary, 16 August and 13 October 1916.

Diary, 13 August to 30 September 1917.

Diary, 26 May 1918. A Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) was part of the evacuation chain that included Aid Post and Field Ambulances. Further back from the front line, the job of the CCS was to treat the injured sufficiently to either return them to duty or to send them to be evacuated to a Base Hospital. See website *The Long Long Trail*, <http://www.1914-1918.net/ccs.htm> (accessed 29 May 2017).

Rose variously refers to Capt A, JAA and, as here, just A. The first occasion, on 11 October 1917 records 'Letters from A with – enclosed'. *Diary*, 11 October 1917 and 5 May 1918.

Diary, 1 July 1918.

Diary, 18 March to 13 July 1918.

Diary, 3 July 1918.

While the Reserve was expanded during the war, the size of the regular service was maintained throughout, thus avoiding a surplus of staff that would be difficult to get rid of when the war was over; 'The Military Nursing Services', <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/8.html> (accessed 21 March 2017).

Diary, 27 March 1919.

Robert Dingwall, Anne Marie Rafferty, Charles Webster, *An introduction to the Social History of Nursing* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 72.

HMSO Select Committee Report (1904: 55 and 37), cited by Dingwall et al, p. 83.

When the Nurses Home was originally opened in 1888, it was described as 'an institution Sunderland could have done with years ago'; *Newcastle Courant*, 28 September 1888, p. 4. A Mrs Gregory was appointed matron, and she brought six nurses with her from Newcastle Nurses Home. Nurse training began the following year and by 1911 there were eight sisters, five staff nurses and thirty-four nurses in training. Rose was one of these trainees. Nurses Instruction Committee, later Nursing Committee minutes (indexed), 9 May 1907 - 15 May 1933, Tyne & Wear Archives, HO.SRI/11/1.

Nursing Committee Minutes, as above.

As above.

Dingwall et al, p.69.

north east history

- ⁴⁶ The National Archives, War Office (1914-20) *Directorate of Army Medical Services and Territorial Force: Nursing Service Records, First World War. Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. Name Lumsden, Rose.* WO 399/5035 Available at: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C10797834> ; last accessed on 9 June 2017.
- ⁴⁷ Nursing Committee Minutes.
- ⁴⁸ VADs were given short training in basic nursing (3-4 months). The experience of being a VAD in WW1 is the subject of a well-known memoir *Testament of Youth* by Vera Brittain.
- ⁴⁹ Earl Russell: *House of Lords Debates*, 27 May 1919, col 846; cited by Dingwall p. 84.

The Yemeni Seamen, South Shields

Peter Livsey

This essay was originally written to accompany the 'Beyond the Western Front' exhibition at Newcastle City Library in 2016. This Heritage Lottery funded project focused on the hidden and largely unrecognised histories and stories of the black, asian and ethnic minorities' involvement in the First World War, here in the North East.

The *Strathcona* was a 1,880 ton steam cargo ship. On 13 April 1917 she was en route from the Tyne to Marseilles with a cargo of coal. She was captured by German submarine U-78 off the Orkneys and sunk by explosive charges. Although she was registered in Hamilton, Ontario and her master was Canadian, she was crewed from the North East of England. Three officers were taken prisoner and interned in Ruhleben Camp near Berlin: the master, the chief engineer from West Hartlepool, and the third engineer from South Shields. Among those killed in the attack, the second engineer and the young mess steward were from South Shields, and the first mate was from Middlesbrough. These three are recorded under their ship's name on a panel of the Merchant Marine Memorial on Tower Hill, London. However, that is not the whole story. On the Indian Merchant Marine Memorial in Mumbai five other seamen are recorded as having been lost with *Strathcona*. They were men from Yemen, then part of Britain's Indian Empire, and their last port was reported to the Board of Trade as South Shields.

Before the First World War only a small number of Yemeni Arab seamen lived in South Shields, having originally signed on to ships docking at Aden.

This compared with over 1000 seamen from Germany, Scandinavia, the Low Countries and the Russian Empire, making up 30% of the seagoing workforce from the port. Many of these northern European countries became enemies or neutrals in the war while many British seamen were called into the armed forces. Many more Yemenis were drawn in to fill the gap and more boarding houses were opened to accommodate them. They worked mainly in the engine rooms as firemen and trimmers, stoking and shifting coal. A few were donkeymen, maintaining the smaller engines on deck. South Shields became the second largest centre of Arab seamen in the UK after Cardiff. Many of the seamen remained in South Shields after the war, at first in the increased number of boarding houses, between voyages, and then increasingly marrying local women and setting up home in the dock area.

Said Saleh was a donkeyman on the *S.S. Zillah*, a 3,779 ton steam cargo ship. On 22 October 1917 she was en route from Archangel, in the allied Russian Empire, to the UK with a cargo of timber. She was sunk by a torpedo fired by German submarine U-46 approximately 25 nautical miles north east of Kildin Island, in the Barents Sea off Murmansk. Eighteen men were lost, of whom eight were Arab seamen. One was Said Saleh, whose last address was a lodging house in Cardiff. A month later the owners replied to a letter from his wife in South Shields that the lifeboat he was in was still missing. He and his Arab shipmates are recorded on the Memorial in Mumbai. His wife, previously married to Ali Hassan, who owned a boarding house, was born Maud Deans in South Shields. She had given birth two months before to a son, Norman, who in the 1990s would be a great help to researchers with family documents and information.

Salem Abuzed was a fireman on the Sunderland steamer *S.S. May Scott* which was one of a number of British ships caught in the Elbe by the outbreak of war in August 1914. The crew, including some from the North East and two other Arabs, were interned in Ruhleben, near Berlin. This camp contained a wide cross-section of British society and citizens of its Empire. They formed a unique community. There were tourists,

businessmen, students and travelling entertainers as well as many merchant seamen. The proportion of merchant seamen grew as more were captured at sea during the war. The huts were segregated by 'race', but the prisoners sometimes mingled. The younger Europeans became aware of different customs and one was taught Arabic from the Qur'an by an Arab seaman.

Some inmates organised activities and quite enjoyed their experience. Salem Abuzed had a less happy time. He was released in January 1917 and got back to his lodgings in South Shields in April. He was interviewed by the *South Shields Gazette*, which took an interest in the internees and raised money for food parcels for them from its readers. Salem said that the Germans particularly ill-treated 'coloured' seamen. When he refused to carry out a task that was against his religion he was beaten and then thrown into a cramped cage for seventy-two hours with only one slice of black bread a day to eat. Even after release back into the huts he was on the edge of starvation when parcels began to arrive from home. He still became ill and was three months in hospital before he was released. Salem Abuzed made his home in South Shields, having received the Merchant Marine Medal at the end of the war. He opened his own boarding house. In 1935 he was a vocal opponent of the Council's scheme to rehouse the Arabs in segregated blocks of flats. He told the *South Shields Gazette*, 'I know what a camp is like. England is a free country and they cannot do things like this to us'. After much debate, the scheme as planned did not go ahead.

Sources

The key work on the Yemeni community of South Shields is Richard I. Lawless, *From Ta'izz to Tyneside* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), which has a section on the First World War.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records can be accessed online (www.cwgc.org). So can the cards which seamen filled in to apply for their Merchant Marine Medals (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/). and Hassan Abbas, Ahmed Naggi and Hamed Sulliman asked for their medals to be sent to South Shields.

An identity card scheme, usually with a photograph, was instituted immediately after the war. These were used in an exhibition last year at South Shields Library, curated by Adam Bell, to create a database for seamen born in the town. Those of Arab seamen residents can also sometimes be tracked down, for example Ahmed Naggi, Hamed Sulliman and Ali Saleh. These identity cards can be accessed online via www.findmypast.co.uk

The Tynemouth World War One Project (www.tynemouthworldwarone.org) has documented the case of Joseph Crispin, born in Sierra Leone, whose last address was a lodging house in North Shields. He died after his ship was torpedoed off Scarborough in August 1918.

Tyne and Wear Archives hold the papers from the trials of those charged following the South Shields 'riot' in 1930; Tyne and Wear Archives Service, T95/152 (10). Among them were Ali Saleh, Thibuth Mahomed, Ali Annan, Said Sad and Mohammed Ahmed, all Arab seamen who had sailed on merchant ships in the war. Their service records (all positive) were transcribed for evidence, showing the dangerous voyages they had undertaken. Such 'service books' were kept by the seamen themselves to show to the next captain, and other examples may come to light.

Thousands of merchant seamen died sailing to and from Britain in the First World War, maintaining exports and bringing in vital supplies. They came from many ethnic groups. For some of those from overseas the North East became home. For those who did not survive, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission provides a fitting epitaph: 'the sailors of Asiatic or African birth who took the same risks and met the same fate'.

The North East Spanish Civil War Memorial Board

Lewis Mates & Don Watson

In November 2016 the Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, Councillor Hazel Stephenson, unveiled a memorial board to commemorate the men from the North East of England who were killed with the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. The board, in the grounds of Newcastle Civic Centre, was an initiative by the Tyne and Wear Unite the Union Community Branch and members of the North East Labour History Society (NELHS). It was sponsored by the International Brigade Memorial Trust, the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' (GMB), Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) and Unite trades unions, the North East Co-operative Society and Barrow Trades Council. The board explains how the Spanish Civil War came about and why people from many nations volunteered to fight in it against fascism. It lists the names and birthplaces of the thirty-five men from this region who were killed in Spain.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by around sixty people and addressed by NELHS member Councillor Nigel Todd and John Coan, a regional officer of Unite the Union. Both speakers emphasised how the solidarity of the British labour movement with the anti-fascist forces in Spain continues to be an inspiration in the struggles of today.

After the unveiling a meeting was held inside the Civic Centre at which NELHS member Lewis Mates gave a short talk about the North East volunteers and the Spanish Civil War. This article is adapted from that talk.

Beginnings

Eighty years ago the democratically elected Spanish Popular Front government was four months into a titanic struggle with the forces of reaction: the army, the Catholic Church and the right, including Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera's fascist Falange. The Nationalists were supported militarily by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. In North East England, as elsewhere, solidarity efforts were soon underway, organised by the trade unions, the Labour, ILP and Communist Parties and supported by their members and individuals of no party affiliation.

For some there was also the chance to fight fascism directly, in the Communist-organised International Brigades or in other armies of the Republic, such as the POUM militia, in which Eric Blair (George Orwell) famously served with around thirty other British and Irish volunteers. In the end around 120 people from the North East, including women in the medical services, would serve in Spain fighting Franco's Nationalist forces in the International Brigade before their withdrawal in October 1938.

The thirty-five whose names are recorded on the memorial plaque would not return home.

Those Killed

All of those killed, like all their comrades from the region, had working class backgrounds. They were miners, shipyard workers, council workers, bus conductors, construction workers, labourers, and bricklayers. Several Tynesiders, Wearsiders and Teessiders lost their lives in Spain. Others killed were from County Durham villages including Blackhall, Blaydon, Burnhope, Chopwell, Great Lumley, Shiney Row, and Spennymoor; others came from Bellingham and Blyth in Northumberland.

The youngest killed was Edgar Wilkinson, a communist and National Unemployed Workers' Movement bus conductor from Sunderland who died at Jarama. The oldest was Bob Elliott, aged thirty-six and a Communist councillor from Blyth, killed in action at Brunete in July 1937. The casualties were not boys; the average age of those killed was twenty-seven.

At least six had wives; thirty-year old Stephen Codling, a Communist miner from South Shields, also had an eight-year-old daughter. The wife of Robert Mackie of Sunderland was pregnant when he went to Spain. They all had families of some sort, who suffered their loss not knowing in some cases how and when (and even if) they had died. Some of them could not understand why their sons or brothers had gone to Spain at all.

The first North Easterner killed was William Hudson, of Newcastle, at Chapineria in October 1936. The last two were Alfred Lichfield and Frank Airlie, both from Tyneside, on the Ebro in July 1938. In between, North-Easterners were killed in many of the most significant battles: Cordoba in December 1936, Brunete (July 1937), Fuentes de Ebro (October 1937), Teruel (winter 1937-38) and Caspe (March 1938). A full quarter of them were killed at the battle of Jarama in February 1937, which was both the British Battalion of the International Brigades, and the North East contingent's real baptism of fire.

Motivation and Inspiration

What of their motives? Many were members of a political party; in fact almost as many Labour Party as Communist Party members were among those killed. Others were unemployed and had been involved in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. From the evidence of the remaining testimonies the rest were motivated by the need to fight fascism.

This is the case, for example, of Edward Tattam, from Whitburn near South Shields, who went to fight after his thirty year old brother Bill was killed at Brunete. Edward had served in the military and his father claimed that he was not interested in the conflict until his brother died, after which he set out on personal revenge. But Edward wrote to his mother of the need to defeat fascism before its 'filthy coils' took hold. Tragically, Edward Tattam was also killed, in March 1938. The family, though a left-wing one, remained hurt at the confusion and lack of information over their second son's death.

The regional Communist Party commemorated three men in particular, featuring prominent images on commemorative propaganda. Wilf Jobling was aged twenty-seven when he was killed at Jarama in February 1937. Jobling was an NUWM leader who had worked with the councils of action during the 1926 miners' lockout. He had been a pupil at Chopwell Socialist Sunday School before then and, in the late 1920s, he had studied at the Lenin school in Russia and became a leading regional Communist activist.

Bob Elliot was a Blyth communist councillor (for Croft ward) and an unemployed miner who joined the party in 1926.

Cliff Lawther was the twenty-five year old youngest brother of the famous left-wing family of Chopwell. Will, the eldest brother, and an important miners' union official, had asked Ellen Wilkinson (MP for Jarrow) to try to find information on Clifford's fate after his letters home stopped coming following the battle of Jarama in February 1937. Before that Clifford had told his family of the wonderful experience fighting alongside people from all countries against what he regarded as the greatest threat to humanity.

While these three deaths represented a particularly keenly felt political loss to the Communist Party in different ways, all those who died left a void in their families' lives and in the wider movement.

For example, Thomas Dolan was a twenty-four year old unemployed shipyard worker killed at Jarama whose mother did not understand her son's choice to fight and attributed it to the bruising experience of unemployment, although she later became involved in solidarity work with the International Brigade.

Their selflessness acted as an inspiration at the time and since. Sam Walsh, a twenty-two year old construction worker from the west end of Newcastle, converted his brother Johnny before he went to Spain. Johnny became a lifelong activist and to his grand-nephew, Brian, Sam has been a lifelong inspiration.

The plaque outside the Civic Centre is a fitting tribute to a generation that did not just talk, but acted, to defeat what they regarded as the terrible threat of fascism and, in so doing, to try to build a better world.



Their example is an inspiration to us all.

For more information on the North East International Brigaders and the solidarity campaigns in the region see: Don Watson and John Corcoran, *An Inspiring Example: the North-East of England and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (London, McGuffin Press, 1996) and Lewis H. Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2007).

Commemorative Plaques and Monuments

The last twelve months have seen a number of individuals from our region receive lasting recognition through the dedication of a commemorative plaque or similar monument, or the publication of a book. The following short essays showcase the lives and achievements of three of these people.

Joe Wilson, 1841-1875

Dave Harker

Joe Wilson was born in Stowell Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, on 29 November 1841, and his twin brother Thomas arrived twenty minutes later. Their father soon died, but Joe had some schooling, served an apprenticeship, became a printer, wrote songs, printed them, and sang as an amateur. Late in 1864, after the local singer-songwriter George Ridley died, a policeman encouraged Wilson to turn professional and he appeared at the Oxford Music Hall (formerly Balmbray's) in the Cloth Market. After the local star songwriter and singer Ned Corvan died in the autumn of 1865, Wilson started selling his songs and became a favourite across Northumberland and Durham, regularly playing the huge Wear Music Hall in Sunderland. In 1869 he married Isabella English, a 19-year-old singer, and became stage-manager of the Alhambra Music Hall in South Shields. However, the owner prohibited alcohol and audiences dwindled, so Wilson left by late 1870, he was manager of the Cambridge Music Hall in Spennymoor, then became manager of Princes' Music Hall in Carlisle,

where he introduced concert hall entertainment. He subsequently became the landlord of the Royal Adelaide Hotel in New Bridge Street, Newcastle, where dealing with drunks turned him into a part-time temperance campaigner by 1872. The lack of engagements forced him to seek waged work setting type for his own songs and he contracted tuberculosis. In 1874 he performed from Brotton in North Yorkshire up to Glasgow, but stopped touring in the autumn. He died in poor circumstances in Railway Street, Newcastle, on 14 February 1875, aged thirty-three, and was buried in an unmarked grave in Old Jesmond Cemetery. Soon afterwards, his eight-month old son was buried next to him with a little wooden cross to mark the spot.

Wilson wrote at least 360 songs, recitations, acrostics and poems about local people in the terraces, tenements, pubs and streets of Tyneside. He used old Tyneside, Scottish and Irish tunes, those of contemporary concert hall hits, national 'standards' and songs from the USA. As his brief autobiography shows, Wilson began adult life as a skilled worker, went on to self-employed status as a performer, tried to be a concert hall manager and ran a pub, and then returned to employee status once engagements began drying up. Consequently the views about workers in his songs can tell us a good deal about those who, like him, aspired to petit-bourgeois values, attitudes and status in the later 1860s and early 1870s, and also about their attitude towards their working-class roots.

Bonny Sally Wheatley, *Maw bonny Gyetside lass* and *Mally didn't come* are poignant love songs, and *Aw wish yor Muther wad cum* was about men's selfishness in relation to childcare and housework. *Keep yor feet still!* was a song about a wage slave sharing a doss-house bed with another who interrupted his dreams of marriage, and *The Row upon the Stairs* was about women squabbling over cleaning the communal part of their tenement. *Ne Work* was about the humiliation of unemployment, but his only real 'protest' song, *Charity!*, was about the miserliness of the parish authorities to an old widow in distress. He believed that working men and women had to 'shuv ahead - an' fettle reetly', as individuals, rather than tackle

the social arrangements which oppressed them collectively, and while *The Strike* supported the engineers' 9-hour movement in 1871, Wilson was reconciled to the continuation of the class society. In 1874 *The Glorious Vote be Ballot!* was highly sceptical about working men's ability to refuse bribes of beer in return for their newly-acquired votes. *Drunken Dolly's Deeth* welcomed the demise of a 'venomous rat', while *Flog'd in Jail*, enthusiastically described legalised torture – 'Gan at it! - hit him hard!'. *Murder throo Drink: The Gallows*, showed absolutely no pity for a man being executed on his twentieth birthday, because alcohol 'corrupts the mind, the body an' blud'.

Thomas Allan, a former Newcastle engineer who had become a wealthy stationer and leading teetotaler, and Tory, bought Wilson's copyrights when he was terminally ill, and in 1890 erected a gravestone. That same year he published most of Wilson's surviving lyrics in *Joe Wilson's Tyneside Songs and Drolleries, Readings and Temperance Songs*. In 1891 *Allan's Illustrated Edition of Tyneside Songs and Readings* included a handful of Wilson's songs, but omitted or sanitised radical songs by Corvan and others.

In 1908 Charles Ernest Catcheside of South Gosforth, a former music hall singer turned whisky salesman who was known as 'Catchy' because he conned fellow Freemasons, recorded *Aw wish yor Muther wad cum*, and in 1911 'Catcheside-Warrington' composed piano arrangements for J. G. Windows' *Album of Tyneside Songs*. It included several by Wilson, as did two more albums in 1912 and 1913, and one more appeared in a fourth *Album* of 'folksongs' in 1924, with piano arrangements by the church organist and music teacher Samuel Reay. J. G. Windows reissued their four albums as *Tyneside Songs* in the late 1920s, and again around 1950, and they remained in print until 1999, so they decisively shaped Wilson's legacy. His songs influenced dozens of north-east songwriters and singers. There have been at least 147 commercially published recordings (including 39 re-releases) of 36 Wilson songs, and 37 versions of *Keep yor feet still!* Yet well over 300 remain unrecorded.

Today few North East youngsters know much about the history and culture of their own region, and many have never heard of Wilson, though their parents might sing one of his choruses and their grandparents might know verses or whole songs.

For a further discussion of Joe Wilson's life and work see D. Harker, *The Gallowgate Lad. Joe Wilson's Life & Songs* (Newcastle: Wisecrack Publications, 2017).

Harry Clasper, 1812-1870

David Clasper

In February 2017, a blue plaque was unveiled on the High Level Bridge to commemorate the achievements of Harry Clasper, the Tyneside sporting hero. He was not only an early sporting legend but a pioneer in the design of racing skiffs.

Born on the banks of the Tyne at Dunston in 1812 and christened Henry, he was one of thirteen children. When Harry was two years old his family moved down river to Jarrow, where his father had secured work at the notorious Jarrow Pit. At the age of fourteen, Harry went to work at Jarrow pit alongside his father, but only stayed there for a fortnight after escaping with his life when a violent explosion threw him to the ground. Instead he took up an apprenticeship at a South Shields boatyard, before moving to Mr Brown's boatyard in Jarrow. There is no doubt that Harry was a clever lad and with the skills and knowledge he had acquired he built two boats of his own.

Harry's father had moved on to Hetton Pit but when age and the heavy work caught up with him, Harry had to leave boatbuilding and return to pit life to help support the large family. However, after the great coalfield strike of 1831, the family returned to Dunston. He married a cousin, Susannah Hawkes, in 1836, marking his wedding certificate with a 'X'. He had various working roles on the river, and then took on the tenancy of the *Skiff Inn*, at Derwenthaugh. Attached to the inn was a boatyard and here Harry built the forerunner of all racing skiffs we know today. At the same time, he was putting together a formidable rowing crew with his four brothers.

The crew's first major race was in 1837 when they easily beat a local crew. They carried on beating all opposition from the district until 1842

when Harry's friends challenged the Thames Watermen the undisputed champions of the world. The race took place on the Tyne with the London crew winning. Harry blamed the defeat on his boat, the *Saint Agnes*, which was double the weight of his opponents' boat. He had wanted to use the *Five Brothers*, a boat he had just built.

In 1844, Harry took the *Five Brothers* to the Thames Royal Regatta, where it created a lot of interest among the Thames Watermen, although some said it would be impossible to row as it was shaped like half a gun barrel. Others frowned on the fact it had no keel and was fitted with outriggers. The Claspers picked up £50 for getting through their heat but just missed out on the championship. They went back in 1845 with a new boat, the *Lord Ravensworth*, and brought the world championship back to the Tyne. Their return to Newcastle with the trophy brought the city to a standstill.

Harry continued to improve the lines of his boats and the designs of his oars. He took on and beat younger men, including Campbell, on both the Clyde and Loch Lomond, to claim the championship of Scotland. On the 5 June 1862 Harry's friends gathered at Balmбра's Music Hall to honour him with a testimonial and hear his good pal Geordie Ridley perform the *Blaydon Races* in public for the first time. Although time was catching up with him, Harry still carried on his boatbuilding business and coached young scullers. In the summer of 1870, by then living at the *Tunnel Inn* in Ouseburn, Harry was struck by a mystery illness. He died on 12 July, and it appears that the whole of Newcastle went into mourning. His funeral was planned for the following Sunday, and crowds began to gather in dense numbers before the procession was to leave Harry's home, so that the constabulary had to be called to clear the route.

Newspaper reports suggested that 130,000 people had accompanied Harry to his final resting place in the graveyard at the rear of St Mary's Church, Wickham. His grave is marked by a large stone statue of gentleman in a Victorian frock coat holding in one hand what are believed to be plans for his boats, which differ little from those used by today's

gold medal Olympians. Wetherspoon's has named its pub next door to the church, formerly Whickham Town Hall, the *Harry Clasper*.

For a detailed account of the life and times of Harry Clasper see D. Clasper, *Harry Clasper. Hero of the North* (Gateshead: Gateshead Books, 1990).

The Eighth Plinth Campaign in Middlesbrough

Emma Chesworth

There are more public statues of men called John in Great Britain, than there are statues of women who are not royal or mythical. Indeed, non-royal and non-mythical women are about as well represented with statues as unaccompanied animals, including lions, dogs and Samuel Johnson's pet cat. In Middlesbrough there are currently seven public statues, all of men. The Eighth Plinth campaign is looking to secure the borough's first female statue and following a public vote it will be of Ellen Wilkinson MP.

Statues are a very visible and powerful symbol commemorating historical figures for all to see but on the basis of the 826 statues listed by the Public Monuments and Sculptures Association, you might think the country is made up almost entirely of males. In London, for example, in Parliament Square, there are eleven statues of important political figures, all of whom are men.

I launched The Eighth Plinth campaign after running a small one-day event called Middlesbrough Hidden Women in 2015. I handed out maps showing a trail around the town centre. In seven different venues there was a large poster highlighting a different woman, each of whom had made a positive impact both in the town and further afield. Feedback was very positive, but the most frequent comment was, 'How did we not know about these women?' The Eighth Plinth campaign started as a way of giving them the prominence they deserve.

After much public consultation a shortlist of six women was drawn up, although many more could have been included. They were:

- Alice Schofield Coates, a suffragist and the first female elected to Middlesbrough Council;
- Gertrude Bell, explorer, archaeologist, and mountaineer;
- Viva Talbot, an artist who created hundreds of woodblock prints of Teesside steelmaking;
- Mary Jaques, who created the first cottage hospital in Middlesbrough in 1859;
- Marion Coates Hansen, a suffragist and the second woman elected to Middlesbrough Council; and
- Ellen Wilkinson, MP for Middlesbrough East from 1924 to 1931, later becoming the first female Minister of Education.

The Eighth Plinth website provided biographies of the women and allowed people to choose between them. Thanks to the power of the internet we saw votes come in from Poland, Australia and California. The winner was Ellen Wilkinson.

During The Eighth Plinth campaign I was frequently told: ‘there are bigger things to worry about than statues’. True, but the campaign is still worthwhile. Being able to see women from history marked by public monuments informs future generations.. We cannot be what we cannot see. We don’t want our youngsters thinking it is only men who warrant celebrating.

The tide is changing, and there are campaigns across the country to see women commemorated. In Manchester, Emmeline Pankhurst will be set in stone after a public vote and in London’s Parliament Square, suffragist Millicent Fawcett will take her place. There are also active campaigns to secure statues of Mary Wollstonecraft and suffragette and socialist Sylvia Pankhurst. Here in the North East we can cite numerous examples of women who have had a significant and lasting impact on the lives of working people, but haven’t received the public recognition they deserve.

north east history

The Eighth Plinth campaign may inspire others to consider promoting similar projects in their own communities.

Information on the Eighth Plinth Campaign is available at www.eighthplinth.com

Thomas Wilson, 1773-1858

Mike Greatbatch and Ian Daley

On 30 March 2017, a blue plaque was unveiled by Allison Ilderton-Thompson, the Mayor of Gateshead, in memory of 'a great Low Feller', Thomas Wilson. The plaque describes him as a pitman, poet, schoolteacher, businessman, councillor and local benefactor, and is affixed to the former Gateshead Fell Reading Rooms and School that Wilson established and financed on behalf of Low Fell residents in 1841.

Today the former Reading Rooms are The Bank Bistro, and following the ceremony, those in attendance had an opportunity to share stories about the great man indoors, thanks to the hospitality of the restaurant manager.

The event was organized by Gateshead Local History Society and supported by local Labour Party members. Ian Daley from the Society joined the Mayor to say a few words about the life of Thomas Wilson and why the Society had raised the money to pay for the plaque. The following is based on a detailed hand-out that Ian prepared for the event:

Thomas Wilson is considered one of the North East's greatest dialect poets. He was born in the mining village of Low Fell on 14 November 1773 and began working down the local pit at the tender age of eight years. He had worked his way from trapper boy up to hewer by the age of nineteen, the year in which he also became a school teacher at Galloping Green, Wrekenton, about a mile from his father's home. Wilson himself had gained his own rudimentary education at a school run by Samuel Barras near Carter's Well.

In 1803 Wilson started work for Losh, Lubben and Co. in their counting office and just two years later he entered into a partnership with William Losh and later Thomas Bell, to establish the Losh, Wilson and

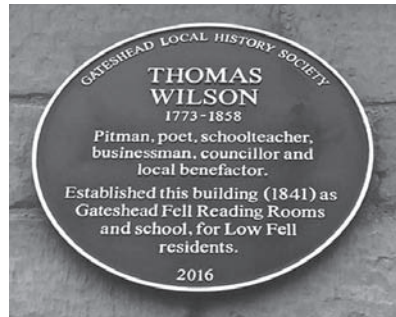
Bell Ironworks in Walker. His fortune was made and he was now in a position to demolish his parent's humble old cottage and build Fell House near Lowrey's Lane in Low Fell, where he lived until his death in 1858. He is buried in St John's Church at Sheriff Hill.

Wilson began to write dialect poems in the 1820s. His most famous poem was *Pitman's Pay* and was published along with his other poems in book form as the *The Pitman's Pay and other Poems*. Several of his poems have been adapted with music and are still sung today, especially *The Washing Day*.

Thomas Wilson also took his civic duty very seriously and was elected to Gateshead Town Council following the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, and then served as an Alderman until his retirement in 1853. He never became Mayor despite being invited to stand for this office on countless occasions.

Books and papers were a constant feature of Thomas Wilson's life, and today collections of his papers, note-books, and many rare original

documents from the 1770s to the 1840s survive in regional libraries and archives thanks to a thirst for knowledge and spirit of public service that informed his actions throughout his life.



Ian Daley and the Mayor of Gateshead, with Thomas Wilson's plaque, Low Fell, 30 March 2017. Photograph reproduced courtesy of Mike Greatbatch.

Gender and Social Transformation in the 1970s Community Development Projects: Lessons from the North East

Susan B. Hyatt

Women and History from the Bottom Up

The Community Development Project (CDP) was established by the Government in the late 1960s. Inspired by the United States War on Poverty, most particularly by its emphasis on Community Action Programmes, the Home Office eventually established twelve community projects located in deprived areas. Two of the most important projects were located in the North East of England, one in North Tyneside, the other in Benwell (West Newcastle). This essay considers the role that these projects may have played in shaping the perspectives and later lives of the many women who were the backbone of much of the community-based activism launched by the CDPs.

In its entirety, the CDP experiment ran from 1969 to 1978. Each of the twelve individual projects was intended to last for five years. All of the projects were staffed by both an action team and a research team, with the intention that every intervention would be thoroughly studied and its efficacy evaluated. As was the case in the United States, the designers of the CDP experiment also assumed that problems of urban deprivation had their origins in the characteristics of local populations — in individual pathologies — and that these could best be resolved by better field co-ordination of the personal social services, combined with the mobilization of self-help and mutual aid in the community.¹

The War on Poverty had been officially launched five years earlier, in 1964, when President Johnson, in his State of the Nation address, announced his intent to create what he called 'The Great Society', consisting of an ambitious assemblage of interventions to address poverty. These included youth employment, health initiatives, early childhood education and, perhaps most importantly, funding for locally-based Community Action Programmes. It was the last of these far-reaching initiatives that caught the attention of a British civil servant named Derek Morrell.

In October 1969, Morell convened a conference of American and British academics, front-line anti-poverty workers and policy experts to 'discuss the evaluation of experiments in social policy'.² By this time, however, the escalation of the war in Vietnam had cost the Democratic President, Lyndon Johnson, a second term and this led to the precipitous termination of many aspects of his vision of the Great Society. Johnson was replaced by Republican Richard Nixon in the 1968 election and Nixon swiftly began to disassemble the architecture of the War on Poverty programmes, including disbanding the Office of Economic Opportunity, the federal agency responsible for coordinating the various anti-poverty initiatives. The human and economic costs of the war depleted the federal coffers and exhausted the American public. Thus, by the time the CDP was launched in Britain, the War on Poverty in the United States was already beginning to wind down, though many of the programmes and agencies originally established in the Johnson era have lasted into the present, albeit in somewhat truncated forms.

Assessments of the success and failure of both the CDP and the War on Poverty often rest exclusively on evaluations of the inability of these programmes to address the large-scale economic changes that were sweeping the globe in the early 1970s, as manufacturing was beginning its move out of the west and into the lower-wage economies of the Third World or, to use the current preferred term, the Global South. Progressive thinkers and social activists on both sides of the Atlantic would find themselves largely in agreement with this statement in the 1974 Inter-

Project Report, published by the CDP Information and Intelligence Unit:

Analysis of the wider context of CDP areas has led us to recognise what many social scientists have been asserting in recent years: that the problems of multi-deprivation have to be re-defined and re-interpreted in terms of structural constraints rather than psychological motivations, external rather than internal factors.³

It seems obvious in retrospect that from the beginning, neither the CDP nor the War on Poverty was equipped to address the widespread and fundamental crises provoked by the global economic restructuring that produced rapid and widespread loss of industrial jobs. However, several of the reports issued by the CDP did address the multiple crises of deindustrialisation, globalisation and welfare retrenchment as they played out in local communities, during a time when the full impact of these shifts was otherwise scarcely being considered. As one of the reports authored by the CDP Inter-project Editorial Team noted,

The rationalisation and reorganisation of industries in the sixties was a problem for working-class people in almost every community from the East End of London to villages dependent on a single pit in Fife or West Glamorgan.⁴

Everywhere, plants and pits were closing, and manufacturing was beginning to move overseas in search of cheaper labour and greater corporate profits. At the same time, the state was investing less and less in public sector resources, particularly housing. Clearly, these were *not* the kinds of transformations that could be significantly tackled by 'the more effective coordination of service delivery'.⁵

However, there is another dimension to both the CDP and War on Poverty that is perhaps somewhat less frequently addressed and which

deserves greater scrutiny —that is the involvement of ‘ordinary’ people, many of them women, who became engaged in local-level campaigns aimed at challenging the on-the-ground conditions hobbling their beleaguered communities.

In recent years, beyond the evaluations of the policies and programmatic legacies of the War on Poverty, feminist scholars have looked at another dimension of these endeavours: that is, their impact on working-class and low-income women, who became drawn into the campaigns and mobilisations that were spawned by community action and self-help initiatives. In the United States, these endeavours and their long-term impacts on the lives of women have recently received renewed scholarly attention.⁶ Many of these grassroots movements extended into the 1970s and even into the 1980s, and many of them were distinctive for the fact that poor women were often in the forefront and in positions of leadership, in addition to serving as the ‘rank and file’.⁷

Building on this body of work by feminist scholars, who have created histories of the War on Poverty ‘from the grass roots up’, we might attempt to go back and do the same for the CDP.⁸ Such an approach makes possible a more complete and nuanced view of the multiple consequences and contributions of the local-level movements that were the cornerstone of the CDP.

The Importance of the Local

In their retrospective view of the CDP, Green and Chapman note the fact that one of the strengths of the CDPs was ‘the genuine neighbourhood base of the projects’.⁹ As they write,

The commitment to fundamental social change did not mean simply working with ‘easy’ or ‘politically advanced’ groups where organisation and consciousness were developed and strong ... All of the projects worked with local people to take up a whole range of housing issues, for instance, including rent levels, repairs, modernisation.¹⁰

Just as there were local variations in the ways that community action played out in communities across the United States, so were there also differences among the twelve CDPs. All of them, however, devoted significant energies to local-level action, though about six of them (including the projects in Benwell and North Tyneside) also collaborated across community boundaries in order to analyse the multiple and parallel negative consequences of national policies for the lives of local people. These so-called 'radical' projects developed analyses of poverty and inequality that challenged the more commonly accepted 'culture of poverty' explanations that emphasised the social and psychological deficiencies of the poor. The radical projects argued for a structural analysis of the root causes of inequality.¹¹ In all twelve of the CDP areas, however, whether they were considered 'radical' or not, local people, many of them women, were drawn into various forms of community action, and this is perhaps the most understudied dimension of the CDP experiment.

One of the more contentious issues that arises in evaluating the legacy of the CDP is assessing the extent to which the projects did or did not explicitly engage with issues that affected primarily women, along with children and ethnic minorities. As Green and Chapman write, 'Strong on tenants and workers, the CDPs tended to be less aware of specific issues relating to children, black people or women outside of the arena of paid employment, for example'.¹² Similarly, in his personal recollection of his key role in the Benwell CDP, Gary Craig has written,

One area where the CDPs largely failed (though some material emerged from local projects later in the day) was in widening the analysis beyond the more traditional forms of political struggle and its typical political constituencies, to include those who had been even more marginalised in shaping the destinies of local communities, particularly women and members of ethnic minorities.¹³

Yet, as all of the former CDP workers whom I interviewed acknowledged, the local residents who were most likely to be drawn into campaigns about such issues as housing, education and childcare were women. This was the case even though the CDPs initially saw their primary mission as engaging the energies of those working-class men who were being displaced from the industrial labour market.



As one of the North Tyneside CDP final reports, North Shields: Women's Work, indicated, many of the women in the area were employed in the low-wage service sector. Photograph courtesy of Ken Grint.

Only one local CDP report used a feminist lens to analyse the experiences of women and it was published by the North Tyneside CDP in 1978. Entitled, *North Shields: Women's Work*, this report includes case studies of five individual women and of low-wage employment. These are positioned alongside discussions of the gendered segmentation of the workforce and its origins.¹⁴ The authors of this report meticulously interrogate the

ways in which domestic labour has been analytically divorced from the world of 'work' as paid employment. The report is an excellent record of the exploitation of women's labour and it demonstrates how gender oppression and class oppression are inextricably intertwined. It also argues, however, that it was not just the CDPs that failed to engage explicitly with the challenges facing working-class women during that period; the Women's Liberation movement of that era also largely bypassed working-class and poor women and their concerns. As the authors of the North Shields report on women's work write,

The problem is compounded by the fact that the feminist movement has been in the past - and is still today - dominated by middle class women whose concerns, because of their class backgrounds, have at times been different from those of the working class. Working class women, because they experience both class and female oppression, are in the best position to articulate and fight for the liberation of both women and the working class - and yet, precisely because of their double oppression they are least likely to be actively involved in either movements (*sic*).¹⁵

This booklet, as do many others published by the CDP, features multiple photographs of local working-class women engaged in community action: organising rent strikes and protesting against the planned closure of a Newcastle hospital, to name just two examples. One can't help but wonder what the impact of these expressions of collective action was on these women's lives and viewpoints.

In an article by one of the North Tyneside female CDP workers, Penny Remfry acknowledges some of the challenges that the CDP workers faced in balancing the pressures they felt to both politicise the working-class populations they were organising while working to ensure the provision of better social services. As she writes,

Consequently, at the local level we concentrated a great deal of our time resources throughout the Project's life on taking up housing issues which have always been an important area of labour movement activity. The area of play provision for children on the other hand, although we did put a lot of resources into it in the early years of the Project, we abandoned to the local authority. One of the major reasons for this was that we couldn't see beyond the service provision aspect of securing playgrounds and play schemes for the area into the political potential of the content of the activities that can go on in play activities - the questioning of sex role stereotypes, the encouragement of collective, as opposed to competitive, work and relationships, for example.¹⁶

However, today's evaluations of the CDP and its relationship to gender may be somewhat skewed because the most easily available primary sources of information about the CDP are the National Inter-Project Reports, the official Local Reports, many of which were final summaries of the particular project's undertakings and activities, and the documents produced by the Community Development Project Political Economy Collective, which were written after the CDPs had ended.¹⁷ Individual projects, however, also produced reports and surveys that were locally distributed and discussed, many of which were linked to women's issues. Most of these can today only be found in the personal libraries and archives of the former CDP workers.¹⁸

One such report was compiled in 1976 by the Nursery Action Group which was part of the Benwell CDP. Entitled *Work and Play in Benwell*, the report resulted from a survey undertaken in Benwell as part of a campaign to secure greater access to nursery places for working women living on two council estates in Newcastle's West End. The survey also included interviews with Trade Union representatives to assess their commitment to fighting for better childcare provision for working mothers. The report ruefully includes the following observation in its conclusions:

Although most of the Trade Union spokesmen contacted felt that their Unions had formulated clear and favourable policies on child care, it is clear that there is not enough pressure from within their organisations, even by their own women membership, to make their policies a reality in the near future, if at all.¹⁹

Perhaps another reason the multiple roles of women in the CDP have not been recognized as fully as they might have been is that the first point of contact for many of the community women, and a place where paid women workers were often found, was staffing the 'Information Shops'. These played a range of roles in the CDPs - they were, for local residents, places where their questions could be answered regarding such matters as accessing statutory services and ascertaining the status of many of the ongoing modernisation projects that were disrupting everyday life in many communities. The view among the 'radical' CDPs was that while the Information Shops would help individuals resolve their problems, 'they were also significant for identifying and acting as a base for collective issues.'²⁰ Yet, it is possible that the relationship between the full-time Information Shop workers and the action teams was never fully resolved. As one of the North Tyneside CDP reports notes, 'The place of the shops in relation to the overall work of the project was a source of concern early on ...'²¹

One of the few paid CDP workers to have been recruited from a local working class mining community and who was employed in the Information Shop on Meadow Well estate, which was part of the North Tyneside CDP area, was Lynne Caffrey. As she described her experience to me in a 2013 interview:

So, I went to work with CDP. I was a young mother at the time... At that point, I hadn't been to university and I hadn't done a degree. I had an instinct about what was right and what was wrong... I suppose part of my job was identifying

trends and issues that used to come across the door, that people used to come in with, the same types of problems that showed that there was another way of dealing with it which was on a collective basis, not an individual basis, getting groups of people together to make a protest or meet with councilors or talk to government agencies ...²²

As an advice worker, however, Caffrey felt that her work was somewhat separate from the action team on Meadow Well. As she described it:

And I think my colleagues realised after a while, that in actual fact, keeping your finger on the pulse of what was happening locally meant that you should actually come into the centre and spend some time in there. So people started doing that, people started going, 'Right, well half a day a week I'll come in, and I'll sit on the advice desk and I'll talk to people'.



In addition to their involvement in working to secure service provision for their communities, women involved with the CDPs also engaged in direct action, as seen in this image of a 1970s protest against government cuts outside Wallsend Town Hall. Photograph courtesy of Dave Turnbull.

Caffrey stayed with the North Tyneside CDP for two years; following that experience, she worked for the North Tyneside Council running their welfare rights centre. She also gained several qualifications in teaching and education and completed a course on research methods at a local university. Since 2010, she has served as an elected Labour Councillor on the Gateshead Council where she currently chairs the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board. Caffrey's personal and professional trajectory parallels the lives of many of the anti-poverty activists portrayed by Nancy Naples, who studied the long-term impact of the United States War on Poverty on the lives of working-class women; like theirs, her experience of working in the CDP propelled her into a career of public service and activism and motivated her to seek further education.²³

Another former Information Worker with the CDP whom I interviewed in 2010 was Sue Pearson. Sue Pearson was hired to work in the Information Centre at the Benwell CDP. As she described her role to me,

Well, I was the information worker, as it was called. Part of the project strategy to address politics, and my job was to run the advice center, which was at the front of the project's offices, and open to the public every morning.

She noted that most of the people who were drawn into local campaigns, particularly around housing issues, were women. As she recalled, 'There were women who were community activists, very, very bright, without formal education, who made a big difference to people's lives, and certainly many of them were encouraged by the project'. Sue, herself, also went on to a life of public service, later working for twenty-seven years for Age Concern, and serving two different stints as an elected representative on the Newcastle City Council.

It may be, then, that in some cases, the Information Centres were local women's initial point of contact with the projects, where they often - though not always - encountered female advice workers. This dimension

of the CDPs has received rather less scholarly attention than have other aspects of the projects, although this may have been the very space where women's contributions to the CDP, and where their own transformations and contributions, become most visible.

Gender and the Legacy of the CDP

In their concluding remarks to Volume 3 of the North Tyneside CDP final report, the authors make the following observation:

But while it is possible to talk of working class political traditions in North Shields at a general level not all working class people share exactly the same experience, and people's response to issues depends to some extent also upon their own specific situations. It may have been noticed by the reader in the course of the description of the Project's work around housing for example that the tenants' groups with which we worked were comprised mainly of women. Men, too, of course share the same housing conditions, but in the main they did not become actively involved in housing issues. This is true also of other 'community' issues, such as the provision of recreation facilities for children. In fact at the level of generalisation one could say that by and large 'community' issues are 'women's' issues in the sense that it is predominantly women who become actively involved in them.²⁴

The impact of this engagement in activism through their experiences with the CDP for working-class women has been recognized but not fully scrutinized. And, as some of the men who were involved with the CDP have acknowledged, during the time when they were employed by the projects, they were not very conscious of or sensitive to the struggles that the local women, even those who were involved with or employed by the CDPs, were undergoing. In 2013, for example, in an interview with

me, one of the former directors of the North Tyneside CDP remarked somewhat regretfully,

I didn't realize until later that some of these women were being beaten by their husbands for attending housing campaign committee meetings. And there was a kind of hidden agenda and protest going on in terms of conflict in the home. Because a lot of these working-class women, instead of attending to their husbands when they came home from work, were actually getting ready to go out at 6:00 to attend the housing campaign meeting.

Much of the retrospective work on the CDP era and its legacy has focused on the critique of the national poverty policies that underlined the establishment of the twelve projects. The authors of one of the key inter-project reports, *Gilding the Ghetto*, summarized the government's orientation toward addressing poverty as follows:

Their brief rested on three important assumptions. Firstly, that it was the 'deprived' themselves who were the cause of 'urban deprivation'. Secondly the problem could best be solved by overcoming these people's apathy and promoting self-help. Thirdly, locally-based research into the problems would serve to bring about changes in local and central government policy.²⁵

It is well worth revisiting this critique today; it remains sadly relevant. Certainly, one of the most important legacies of the CDP is the extraordinarily well-written and thoroughly documented group of reports, which capture the particularly critical moment of welfare retrenchment and economic restructuring that set the stage in the 1970s for the emergence of the Thatcherite neoliberal policies that were to follow shortly thereafter.

The fact that it was mostly women who participated in many of the grassroots actions organized and were inspired by the CDP is also significant and deserves greater scholarly analysis. Furthermore, the CDPs provided models for others to imagine the potential for everyday people to undertake action on their own behalf. One of the former CDP workers, a woman who was on one of the Research Teams and whom I interviewed in 2010 recounted this story to me:

One of the people who researched the project, and who is a good friend of mine, did a project recently looking at the legacy of CDP. And one of the case studies they looked at was Southwark. And again, if you're looking at the story of the inter-project initiative, my memory is that Southwark wasn't particularly centrally involved in [the report] '*The Costs of Industrial Change*.' Which is not to suggest that they wouldn't provide the information or whatever, but I don't remember them playing a leading role. But again, when these interviews were conducted in this part of Southwark, there were people who had been around then who gave a completely different story of how important this had been, how this has enabled them to develop tenants' organisations and community organisations and how it had really made a difference.

The CDP is mostly remembered today for the powerful critiques that the teams generated, in which they deconstructed and condemned politically expedient explanations for poverty that focused on addressing the putative inadequacies of the poor, themselves. However, perhaps the history of the CDP should be equally valued for the smaller-scale local-level protests and grassroots movements they inspired, for the tenants' organisations and other community groups they spawned, many of which endured long after the projects, themselves, had ended. The importance

of 'the local' has been somewhat overlooked in retrospective views of the CDP and yet, that may have been where the greatest potential for transforming the lives of working-class people, the women in particular, was most present. The Information Shops were often a first point of entry where those changes began. These local-level campaigns intersected with people's lives at the level of the everyday, and they left behind a subversive residue of resistance on the social landscape, a legacy whose implications have yet to be fully explored.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all of the CDP former workers who allowed me to interview them. In addition to Gary Craig and Judith Green, I would also like to thank Penny Remfry, David Corkey, Lynne Caffrey, Sue Pearson and Marj Mayo. Thanks as well to Patrick Condon and Brian Bennison for their comments on an earlier version of this essay. The research and interviews on the history of the CDP were funded by the Indianapolis Arts and Humanities Institute and Indiana University's New Frontiers in the Arts & Humanities Programme. The research was also carried out in association with the IMAGINE project, Work Package 2: Historical Perspectives on Community-Based Regeneration, which was funded by the Connected Communities program of the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK.

Notes

- ¹ Community Development Working Group, 'The British National Community Development Project 1969-1974', *Community Development Journal* (1974), p. 162.
- ² Community Development Project Home Office. *Experiments in Social Policy and Their Evaluation: Report of an Anglo-American Conference held at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire* (October 29-31, 1969).
- ³ CDP Inter-Project Report, *The National Community Development Project* (1974), p. 8.
- ⁴ CDP Inter-Project Editorial Team, *Gilding the Ghetto* (1977), p. 32.
- ⁵ Martin Loney, Community Against Government: *The British Community Development Project 1968-78* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), p. 2.
- ⁶ See, for example, Nancy Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community*

Work, and the War on Poverty (New York and London: Routledge, 1998); Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 2005); Annelise Orleck, 'Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up', in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, ed. by A. Orleck and L.G. Hazirjian (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp. 1-28.

7 See Orleck and Hazirjian, *Storming Caesar's Palace*, for a particularly detailed account of poor women's organising.

8 See *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*.

9 Judith Green and Ann Chapman, 'The British Community Development Project: Lessons for Today', *Community Development Journal* 27 (1992), p. 250.

10 Green and Chapman, p. 252.

11 Green and Chapman, pp. 244-245.

12 Green and Chapman, p. 252.

13 Gary Craig, 'The National Community Development Project: A personal view of its legacy,' *Concept* 7(2) (2016), pp. 11-17.

14 North Tyneside CDP, *North Shields: Women's Work*, Final Report Volume 5, (1978). Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic.

15 *North Shields: Women's Work*, p. 81.

16 Penny Remfry, 'North Tyneside Community Development Project', *Community Development Journal* 14 (1979), p. 188.

17 Some of the CDP reports were written accounts of their work to be submitted to their sponsoring government agency, the Home Office; others were written with the intent that they would be more widely read by the public. A selection of these 'public' reports is available at: <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/collections/CDP>

18 I am indebted to Judith Green for this point.

19 Nursery Action Group/CDP, *Work and Play in Benwell* (1976).

20 North Tyneside CDP, *North Shields: organising for change in a working class area*, Final Report, Volume 3 (1978), Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic, p. 19.

21 *North Shields: organising for change in a working class area*, p. 19.

22 I interviewed about 20 former CDP workers in Summer 2010, Spring 2013 and Summer 2014. My interest in the CDP was sparked by my own experience working as a community organiser in Chicago in the 1980s, as well as by my doctoral research on community action on council estates in Bradford in the 1990s. Naples, *Grassroots Warriors*.

24 North Tyneside CDP, *North Shields: organising for change in a working class area*, Final Report, Volume 3, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, CDP (1978a) p. 82.

25 *Gilding the Ghetto*, p. 4.

Living through the 1970s: Gender and the Community Development Projects revisited

Judith Green

This is intended as a companion piece to Sue Hyatt's thought-provoking essay on gender and social transformation with specific reference to the Community Development Projects (CDPs). It focuses on the work of the Benwell CDP, and picks up the themes of the involvement of women as workers and as activists, and the extent to which the project explicitly engaged with issues that affected primarily women.

Telling my story

I am personally part of this story. From 1974-79 I worked as a researcher on the Benwell Community Development Project. The project's remit was to investigate the causes of localised poverty and to develop activities and interventions to tackle this. Whilst employed by Durham University, I was based in the study area and, consistent with our underpinning action-research model, worked as part of a team carrying out practical development and support work with the local community as well as research.¹

As a researcher, it is illuminating to find yourself becoming the subject of historical research, and prompts questions about who holds the power to impose particular interpretations of historical events as well as methodological issues about the status of 'personal views'.² Despite the long history of research methodologies such as action research and participant observation and the current popularity of notions such as participatory

research within social sciences and humanities, it is not uncommon for academics to assume that having participated in the events under study makes one's account less reliable and lacking the necessary objectivity. To make explicit the evidence base of my account, I have adopted the phrase 'triangulated reminiscence': my own memories and documentation of events and ideas from forty years ago have been systematically checked against documentary sources both primary and secondary, and against recent discussions and interviews with other colleagues and participants in these events. My account is also informed by having maintained a working relationship with the Benwell area, in different roles, over the subsequent period, and having intermittently reviewed the CDP experience for a wider audience through articles and talks.³

Women working in CDPs

One view in current circulation is that women were in a minority among CDP workers. This is not strictly true. In Benwell, seven out of a team of thirteen were women, and the corresponding figure for North Tyneside was eleven out of nineteen. However, the women on the whole tended to be less visible and arguably less powerful. Both Action Directors were men, as were three of the four Assistant Directors. The Research Director in North Tyneside was a man (Benwell had no Research Director, having successfully argued for a flat structure within the research team) while only one of the four Research Fellows appointed to the core research teams was a woman. All the secretarial staff were women.⁴

This pattern was replicated within the special projects that were part of each CDP, such as Benwell's Community Law Project and North Tyneside's income maintenance project. These gender inequalities reflected those in the wider society of the 1970s, including academia. When I was appointed in 1974 to the post of Research Fellow at Benwell, for example, I was the only woman interviewed out of six candidates.

Both CDPs were explicitly committed to more democratic and egalitarian ways of working, internally as well as in their work with local

communities. Both adopted flat structures of management, rejecting the hierarchical model decreed by the Home Office. Planning and decision-making was done by team meetings, where a Director was one among equals. There was a genuine effort to find better and more inclusive ways of working, and attempts to address the differentials in income and influence within the staff teams appear in retrospect quite radical even if they fell short of the ideals they expressed.⁵

Compared with the average workplace at this period, these were relatively safe places for women, although there were examples of behaviour that would now be seen as unacceptable, such as mocking up a 'page three' display with the face of a female staff member.⁶ However such incidents were relatively rare, and male colleagues did not share the sorts of views and expectations of women's role and behaviour that prevailed outside the projects, as exemplified by a senior councillor's demand that a woman CDP worker should wear a skirt rather than trousers when visiting the town hall. Sue Pearson, who worked as an information worker with Benwell CDP, considers that the project reflected the wider world of organisations with which they worked. As she recalled later, they were

much more women-friendly than most. So you noticed it less because they were people who purported to believe in equality for women and tried to put it into practice..... It was a much more benign environment than the outside world. I mean the revolutionary far left was notorious.

Issues of gender and power lurking beneath the well-meaning democratic ideals of collective working must have influenced the project's priorities in more subtle ways, but these issues were not explicitly confronted during its lifetime.⁷

Identifying issues

The Tyneside projects took very seriously the avowed aim of the CDP

programme to identify and address the causes of poverty. They were also committed to the idea of action-research, believing (with a nod to Marx) that the purpose of their work was to bring about change rather than just to understand the world.⁸ This involved working at the grassroots level to help to develop and support independent working class organisations, and trying to link their struggles with wider movements in order to influence policies and decisions at a broader level. Within this framework, the local projects identified housing and industry as the two main areas of work. Income was also an important element of work through welfare rights and advice provision, but it was generally regarded in practice as an individual rather than a collective issue, valuable mainly as a way of making contact with local residents and identifying problems. Benwell's perspective reflected the main currents of thinking within the Left in Britain at that period, whereby the particular interests of women tended to be subsumed within a generalised notion of the working class.⁹

Housing emerged very early as a priority. The scale and nature of Newcastle's housing problems are hard to imagine now. The city, post-war, had the worst slum problem outside London, and this was far from solved when the CDP arrived in the west end in the early 1970s. Many homes lacked inside toilets and hot water, and some even had no electricity or running water indoors.¹⁰ Large-scale clearance was underway, causing major transitional problems such as rat infestations, while vulnerable people were isolated in streets of largely boarded-up houses. The development of large new housing estates brought a whole new set of issues such as design problems, road safety and lack of facilities.¹¹ It was women caring for families who bore the main impact of these problems and mainly, but by no means exclusively, women who were the community activists.

The parallel focus on industry was one of the innovative aspects of the CDPs' work. Their research identified that their areas were undergoing a process of de-industrialisation, largely as a consequence of global restructuring.¹² This was undermining the economic base of the communities, and was a significant cause of localised poverty and

deprivation. The projects' response was to seek to build links with working class organisations opposing job losses, primarily through local shop stewards' committees and trades union branches. In West Newcastle this was very much a men's world, since the industrial base of the area was heavy engineering. These workplace struggles were happening within a wider political context. A major debate was taking place nationally about the proper role of the state in relation to private capital. At the grassroots level, shop stewards in certain industries tried to develop strategies to counter de-industrialisation in their own workplaces and companies, and to link up with other groups trying to develop alternatives locally and nationally. The CDPs were not alone in seeing their involvement with a male-dominated shop stewards' movement as progressive:

For me the enemy was the multinationals and corporate capital that had so much power over communities and the fate of workers... This would be a counter-power... to the power of corporations, and would therefore be of benefit to democracy and to working class communities.¹³

The Tyneside CDPs engaged with these struggles by supporting workplace campaigns and the development of networks across factories and companies, and also by trying to influence the wider policy debate through published research.

This was not the only work undertaken in relation to industry and employment. Benwell CDP worked extensively with women in the local clothing industry where low pay and part-time and casual working were prevalent, carrying out research on their career choices and employment experiences and how these interacted with their caring and other domestic roles. We looked critically at the legal mechanisms meant to protect and improve their pay and conditions (notably the long established Wages Council system and the recently introduced Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination laws). We worked alongside women in local factories,

including many who were not in unions, as well as with local trade unions, to try to achieve such improvements, aware that it was not enough to have rights on paper without efforts at the grassroots level to enforce them.

The project supported local groups campaigning for childcare and holiday play-schemes for children of working mothers. One such was the Nursery Action Group, set up by working mothers, independent of the CDP but using its resources. A joint report set out the case for local nurseries for children of working mothers, underpinned by research findings from the work with women in the clothing industry.¹⁴ This was a radical argument in the 1970s when women were only just beginning to enter the labour market in significant numbers following the post-war push to encourage them to be full-time housewives and mothers. On Tyneside, relatively few women had been employed in the dominant industries of heavy engineering and shipbuilding. The widespread belief that women worked only for 'pin money' was being used as a justification for low pay and poor conditions. The project aimed to show that, in reality, their contribution to the household income was essential, often keeping families out of poverty.

Work focusing on women's employment was not ghettoised within the project. It was John Darwin, one of Benwell's researchers, who worked with Newcastle Trades Council on campaigns around the Working Women's Charter, part of a national campaign to press for changes and provision (such as childcare) that would improve the position of women in employment. He saw his role as helping to raise awareness of the inequalities between men's and women's pay, encouraging women to become involved in some of the activity within the Trades Council and individual unions around the Charter, and also influencing perceptions more widely.¹⁵

The project brought the Working Women's Charter campaign to the local neighbourhood level with an exhibition and other activities. Similarly the project did some work specifically around the public sector which was a major employer of women locally, supporting campaigns against the impact of public sector cuts, including local hospital closures. Research

on the development of public services and current spending cuts was used for local information and campaigning purposes, and some of the findings contributed to a national report.¹⁶

Published reports such as *The Costs of Industrial Change* were intended to raise awareness and influence policy by documenting de-industrialisation as a key cause of the area's economic and social decline in order to challenge the official explanation of poverty and deprivation being a result of personal deficiencies. However, these reports and other related writing also pointed towards future developments that would replace the relatively skilled and secure manufacturing jobs, offering an analysis that is eerily prescient of the widespread growth of low paid, insecure, part-time, zero hours and casual employment, affecting men and women alike.¹⁷ It was certainly not an adequately gendered account, simply noting almost in passing that most of the 'new' jobs were being taken by women. It failed to envisage the consequent 'crisis of masculinity' that the loss of traditional 'men's jobs' would precipitate, and the consequences of this for the social fabric of the west end, culminating most obviously in the 1991 riots.¹⁸

Marginalising women's issues

Of all the women's issues, that of women in paid employment was the area where the project was arguably most comfortable, with its underlying assumption that is best summarised in the contemporary slogan that 'A Woman's Place is in her Union'. I have written elsewhere about the marginalisation of women's issues, arguing that the CDPs did not ignore women, but they largely failed to integrate into their analyses an understanding of the specific processes of gender oppression, and they often failed to identify issues such as domestic abuse or the vulnerability of women in public spaces which might have been amenable to research or collective action. In our work with women in the west end of Newcastle, we understood how their domestic situation affected their role as workers, but we did not theorise the domestic situation itself or men's power over women at all levels of society.¹⁹

The women colleagues whom I interviewed for this essay recalled isolated incidents where proposals for work with women had met a wall of indifference which had undermined their efforts to understand and respond to the experiences of local women.

It was all this macho stuff, wasn't it? It wasn't regarded as important ...

And when you did try... it never ended well.²⁰

Those issues were not deemed to be very sexy... But.... talking to women coming in and dealing with issues that they brought in, and seeing the degree of isolation that those women experienced although they had very common problems, just seemed to me that there was a need really to focus on something that would bring those women together and help them support each other.²¹

All the women with whom I discussed this felt that we had lacked confidence in pushing such views within the project, and this was seen as characteristic of the times. As a former North Tyneside worker explained,

Women's voice was very weak in those days. We were just finding our voice. Looking back, I don't think we wanted a discussion in the team about women's issues. We just went and did it. Perhaps I didn't feel confident enough about arguing it at that time. It was all very new.²²

Some workers did work on explicitly women's issues, but not officially as part of their CDP work. Penny Remfry, for example, belonged to a group of women who set up a women's refuge in North Tyneside during this period. This was true to a lesser extent of some male workers also, such as Colin Randall of Benwell CDP who enthusiastically supported a group of

women participating in invasions of ‘men-only’ bars in the town.

Conclusion

I have tried to indicate the need for a nuanced approach to the issue of gender and community practice. It is tempting to argue that in CDP women’s issues were subjugated to male priorities, but it is more accurate to admit that perhaps we were all – men and women alike – too blinkered by the dominant gender-blind perspectives of the time. It is also too easy to excuse our failings by saying that these were different times. There were things we could and should have done better. But on the whole, maybe it should be seen as a story of people struggling to develop a radical community practice at a period of economic and political crisis, and one which was truly democratic rather than the tokenism of ‘community engagement’ that has characterised the subsequent decades.

Notes

- ¹ The best account of the CDPs remains Martin Loney, *Community against Government: the British Community Development Project 1968-78* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1983). See also: Judith Green, ‘Action-research in context: revisiting the 1970s Benwell Community Development Project’, *Community Development Journal* (2017), pp.1-21.
- ² See, for example, John Stirling, ‘History, Heritage and Nostalgia: How We Remember the Past’, *North East History*, 47 (2016), pp. 109-112.
- ³ Most of the independent sources used in writing this essay cannot be accessed by other researchers. The interviews cited are not archived and the documentary sources (apart from published reports) are from my personal archives. I have also relied on my earlier writings/presentations about CDP. Published articles are referenced in endnotes but there are no records available of talks given to conferences etc.
- ⁴ For Benwell, this total includes the secretarial staff and the cleaner, but excludes sessional advice workers and researchers contracted to carry out particular pieces of work. The figures for North Tyneside CDP are based on information provided by Bob Davis.
- ⁵ Benwell CDP seriously considered an informal income-sharing plan at one stage. See A. Armstrong, S. Banks, G. Craig, *Re-examining Benwell Community Development Project and its Legacy*, report by Centre for Social Justice at Durham University (2016): www.durham.ac.uk/socialjustice/imagine, accessed 7 June 2017.
- ⁶ Sue Pearson, interview, 2017.

- ⁷ Judith Green and Ann Chapman, 'The lessons of the Community Development Project for community development today', in Open University and Health Education Unit *Roots and Branches: Papers from OU/HEA Winter School on Community Development and Health*, (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1990). A revised version of this paper was published in the *Community Development Journal*, 27 (4) 242-258.
- ⁸ Judith Green, 'The Community Development Project revisited', in P. Carter, T. Jeffs and M. Smith, eds, *Changing social work and welfare* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp160-178.
- ⁹ The phrase 'the Left' encompasses a large section of the Labour Party as well as the bewildering range of Trotskyite, Communist and other far-left groups that flourished during this period.
- ¹⁰ Interviews with Councillor Jeremy Beecham and community activist Lyn Boyd, 2017.
- ¹¹ CDP video footage on the Archive for Change website under the title 'West End News', <http://archiveforchange.org>, accessed 24 May 2017.
- ¹² National CDP, *The Costs of Industrial Change: Industry, the State and the older urban areas* (London: CDP Information and Intelligence Unit, 1977); Benwell CDP *Permanent Unemployment* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Benwell CDP, 1978); North Tyneside CDP *North Shields: living with industrial change* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, 1978).
- ¹³ Hilary Wainwright, interview, 2017.
- ¹⁴ Nursery Action Group/Benwell CDP *Work and Play in Benwell*, (c1977).
- ¹⁵ John Darwin, interview, 2017
- ¹⁶ CIS/CDP *Cutting the welfare state: who profits* (undated). Counter Information Services (CIS) was an independent research organisation run by journalists committed to publishing in-depth reports on issues not adequately covered by the mainstream media.
- ¹⁷ Articles include Judith Green, Ursula Murray and Bob Davis, 'The new sweatshops', in *The State and the Local Economy* (London: CDP PEC/PDC, 1979).
- ¹⁸ Bea Campbell, *Goliath: Britain's dangerous places* (London: Methuen, 1993).
- ¹⁹ Green and Chapman, as above.
- ²⁰ Sue Pearson, interview, 2017.
- ²¹ Kathy Leblisque, interview, 2017.
- ²² Penny Remfry, interview, 2017.

That Was Then And This Is Now: Trade Unions And Plant Closures

John Stirling

Introduction: That Was Then

In December 1979, the then Newcastle Polytechnic held a conference of trade unionists, activists and academics in response to the wave of job losses and redundancies taking place in the region following the closure of major manufacturing plants.¹ The focus was on the fights by trade unions to keep plants open and the alternative strategies that were being developed. In 2005 the last coal mine in the region closed, followed in 2012 by the Alcan works at Lynemouth. This time there were no marches, alternative strategies or conferences at Northumbria University. This essay reviews the circumstances that provoked the conference and the development of an active, campaigning opposition centring on ideas of ‘workers’ control’. It argues that North East workers were part of a national movement and that they and their organisations played an important and, at times, a leading role. It focuses on the period 1975-85, when major initiatives were taken by trade unionists to develop alternatives to plant closure both nationally and regionally, and concludes with some brief reflections on the changed historical situation for trade unions today.

The National Picture

Before focussing on the decade from 1975 onwards it is important to describe briefly the earlier political and trade union background. Politically, Labour had won elections in 1964 and 1966 before the Tories came to power from June 1970 under Edward Heath. Labour then

won twice in 1974 under Harold Wilson, who was succeeded as Prime Minister after his resignation in April 1976 by Jim Callaghan. Each of these administrations was faced with the growing power of trade unions which they sought to engage, with varying degrees of success, in policies to control incomes (and prices to a much lesser extent). They were also faced with a growing deindustrialisation focussed on major manufacturing plant closures alongside the advance of robotics and information technologies in a rapidly globalising economy. In the unions nationally, a leftward shift was shown by the election of Jack Jones in the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), Hugh Scanlon in the Engineers (AUEW) and Alan Fisher in the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), all in 1968. These elections reflected a growing level of workplace organisation led by lay union representatives responsive to their members rather than bureaucratic union structures.²

Alongside these developments were much more radical union activities which had some expression in militancy and strikes and which featured new strategies of factory occupations inspired by the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) work-in with, Darlington and Lyddon suggest, a high point in the 'glorious summer' of 1972.³ This militancy was also associated politically with the development of workplace-based organisational strategies by, for example, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) and, in the case of the Communist Party (CP), the election of 'Broad Left' candidates to union offices. Moreover, shop stewards in multi-plant companies were linking together in Combine Committees, which were becoming engaged with local Trades Councils such as those in the North East.

These developments inside the unions were paralleled by activities outside, as the Labour Party advanced ideas on industrial democracy and planning agreements.⁴ Out of them arose more radical documents from a consortium of Trades Councils (including two from the North East) and union Combine Committees.⁵ These were linked with ideas of local governance and popular planning as well as an engagement with some local communities via the Community Development Projects (CDPs)

established in the early 1970s.⁶ The Institute for Workers' Control (IWC) was established in 1968 and by 1970 had over 1000 delegates at its conferences.⁷ Workers' control also became associated with ideas of 'alternative plans' particularly in response to potential job loss and plant closure. The Lucas Aerospace plan was the best known nationally but there were local variants in the North, as discussed below.⁸ A further national and local dimension was the development of workers' co-operatives with notable 'rescues' of manufacturing plants such as Triumph and KME stimulated by Tony Benn's period of office in the Department of Industry.⁹ Workers' co-operatives did not always sit well with trade unions, as they could be associated with privatisation in the public sector and self-exploitation in the private. Nevertheless, trade union organisations such as the Wales TUC saw opportunities as did the Greater London Council and Tower Hamlets Trades Council, both of which worked with the Industrial Common Ownership Movement to produce an advice note for trade unions.¹⁰

It is impossible to do justice to each of these initiatives here but the twenty years roughly between 1965 and 1985 saw a ferment of ideas and actions within the trade union movement which were cross-pollinated with ideas from outside and had organisational outcomes funded by national and, more commonly, local government. Each of these saw national issues and ideas played out in the North East, and the region was often to play a leading role in initiatives.

The North East Unions

The plant closure report from the 1979 conference documented the significance of coal, shipbuilding, steel and engineering for the Northern economy and showed the extent of decline through job loss and closures. To summarise, as deindustrialisation progressed what remained of manufacturing industry became part of a corporate 'branch plant' economy and service sector jobs failed to replace those lost. It was in this context that local unions were drawn into, and often took a leading role, in campaigning for alternatives.

The North East had always had a high level of trade union density, with well-organised workplaces in those areas of the economy most affected by the spate of closures. However, the union response was not simply through the orthodox routes of trade union bargaining and campaigning but also through new forms of action and organising linked to ideas of industrial democracy and workers' control. This essay develops this historical account by focussing on three key areas: state intervention, shop steward organisation and alternative production. In each of these areas the North East Trade Union Studies Information Unit (TUSIU) had a pivotal role, and it is necessary to begin by briefly reflecting on its history.

TUSIU was founded in January 1975 following a meeting in June of the previous year which had been an interesting coming together of different participants from the region's major unions (though not the TGWU or any from the public sector); the WEA, an adult education department and the Open University; two Trades Councils and two CDPs.¹¹ Its main functions, established in its founding document, were to serve as a resource centre and to provide research and education for the region's trade unions. It initially budgeted for £10,000 for a two-year period (to provide staffing) and it was run by a management committee representing the founding organisations. TUSIU proved to be a vital resource in relation to providing research documents for union campaigns as redundancies and closures took place in the period from 1975-85 and beyond.¹²

Combining Together

Trade union organisation in the private sector had traditionally been based on individual workplace branches, sometimes affiliated to a geographical branch and then an area or region. Union branches might also choose to affiliate to local Trades Councils which were formally affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) but often developed separate spheres of activity. However, the growth of multinational and multi-branch capital meant that workplace branches were isolated within a company and traditional union structures did little or nothing to coordinate them.

A response to this corporate power was for unions to begin to organise on a cross-plant basis and establish committees which 'combined' the different workplace branches. In the North East, workers came together in power engineering (C. A. Parsons for example) and, most significantly, at Vickers with its strong base on the Tyne. As well as TUSIU working with the Combine Committees, Hilary Wainwright at the Tyneside Socialist Centre (and the OU) became an active agent in supporting policy development and action. The Combine Committees 'founding document', *Trade Union Strategy in the Face of Corporate Power*, had a strong North-East input from the power engineering sector, Vickers, and Wainwright herself.¹³ This was followed by *The Combine Organisation Handbook*, a practical guide to forming combine committees. It warned not only of likely management hostility but also of the possible responses of 'official trade unions' which depended on their 'national politics'. According to the handbook, 'the TGWU, ASTMS, NUSMW are more accommodating than the AUEW and EEPTU which tend to be more hostile'.¹⁴ In the North East, the AUEW (and especially its white-collar section TASS) became a key union in much of what followed.¹⁵

State Intervention

The development of the Combine Committees and the growing engagement of Trades Councils were indicative of the broader movement for workers' control through the development of organisations that might be able to implement such ideas. As these initiatives gathered pace, the Labour Party and the TUC published a document on economic planning and industrial democracy for their 1982 conferences.¹⁶ This recognised the growth of Combine Committees and their role, calling them 'a key development' in 'the emergence of multi-plant trade union machinery'. It went on to recognise the importance of union representation up to Board level; rights to information and to propose a National Planning Council. In spite of what would widely be regarded as a most radical agenda today there was a critical response from the Combine Committees and Trades

Councils with the North East again playing a prominent role. The Trades Councils in North Tyneside and Newcastle had been two out of the four sponsoring a 'workers' inquiry' into the government's failure, through the National Enterprise Board (NEB) and through planning agreements, to arrest the continuing round of closures in manufacturing industry and the devastation this brought to local communities.¹⁷ Following this critique the same two Trades Councils were amongst the original sponsors of *A Declaration of Popular Planning for Social Need* in Spring 1982, and by the autumn the Vickers Combine had added their name to *Economic Planning Through Industrial Democracy*.¹⁸ The emphasis was on the word *through*, in contrast to the *and* used by the TUC and Labour Party in their document.

This dissatisfaction with State policies, campaigning against multi-plant corporate closures and the new organisation of trades unions was exemplified in the North East by the campaign against the closure of Tress Engineering. In a vituperative statement supporting the workers and demonstrating the local interconnections, Jimmy Murray, the then chair of Vickers' shop stewards committee, said that 'in a microcosm the Tress closure shows the partnership between the government and the unions to be that between a rapist and his victim'.¹⁹ What he was pointing to was the fact that the company had been publicly owned through the NEB.

The campaign highlighted the tensions created by the offers of redundancy payments as against the fight for jobs but also had a strong political element given the role of the NEB and the senior union figures who sat on its Board. The pamphlet about Tress, *A Fairey Story*, concluded with a further call for change and, in particular, for the development of 'workers' plans'. These became a major focus of national strategies and had a strong Tyneside dimension.

Workers' Plans and Alternative Production

While much of this discussion reflects workplace-based trade union criticisms of their own unions and the Labour Party and Governments, an important part of the argument was to offer positive alternatives. At the

national level the 'Lucas Plan' (linked to the firm Lucas Aerospace) caught the public attention as did Mike Cooley's book associated with it and the organisation which grew from it, the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems (CAITS).²⁰ However, again we see a very strong regional focus with the Vickers' shop stewards taking a leading role alongside TUSIU.²¹ Equally, the Trades Council in Newcastle was actively involved in preparing a 1982 document calling for *Alternative Production on Tyneside*.²² This placed an emphasis on companies involved in the arms trade, defence and nuclear energy, which were particularly significant for the North East where companies such as Swan Hunter, Vickers (Elswick), NEI and the Royal Ordnance Factory in Birtley were major employers.

Central to the plans were three interlocking issues and ideas. Firstly, that state intervention, if it could be trusted at all, was ultimately a top-down approach denying the active agency of workers (linking back to the issue of workers' control). Secondly, that giant corporations had no interest in local communities or in developing products that served a social purpose: profit was the sole goal. Thirdly, that workers themselves, if linked with academics and other activists, had the skills, knowledge and resources themselves to produce viable plans for the future of the places where they worked.

The Vickers plant in Elswick was under threat from the loss of orders for its tanks and this provided a stimulus for an already active Combine Committee of shop stewards. Such Combine Committees challenged the traditional organisational structures of trade unions and, with that, the established collective bargaining structures. This was true in Vickers and gave a hostile management an excuse not to bargain directly with the Combine. As Beynon and Wainwright (1979) note, Vickers 'steadfastly refused to recognise the existence of the Combine Committee or to countenance any discussions or negotiations with its officers'.²³ The relationship between shop stewards and local full time union officials was also affected by this problem as well as political disagreements. However, the key actors on the Combine Committees were also shop-floor

representatives as accountability and engagement were important issues for the combines.

As the threat of closures and redundancies grew at Vickers, the Combine Committee worked with other local activists and drew on national resources and campaigns to develop their own plans published in *A Farewell to Arms?* (TUSIU again) and *Building the Chieftain Tank and the Alternative*.²⁴ These documents contextualised the problems the workers faced in terms of the history of the company, the local crisis in employment, and declining manufacturing industry. Most importantly in terms of the argument here, positive proposals were made for alternative, socially useful products. Whilst the two documents' proposals do not overlap completely there are, inevitably, marked similarities. The TUSIU document suggests energy conservation equipment, recycling equipment, brewing, mining and agricultural machinery whilst *Building the Chieftain Tank* adds ideas including equipment for a revitalised canals system and finally suggests, 'Britain's piers are falling down. Rebuilding them is essentially a nineteenth century engineering job for which the Elswick plant was built. One could start with the Saltburn pier which gives pleasure to many people in Newcastle'.

Conclusion: This Is Now

There are two aspects I want to draw attention to in conclusion to this short review. Firstly, some brief comments on the situation in relation to plant closures today and secondly in terms of the way the history of the period is recounted.

This essay began with Newcastle Polytechnic's conference on plant closures when the national unemployment rate stood at 5.3 per cent, identical to 2015's 5.3 per cent. Equally, closures and redundancies have continued to be reported across the Region, notably the closure of Ellington Colliery in 2005, the Alcan works at Lynemouth in 2012 and the Steel plant in Redcar in 2015, each with long histories of engagement with the Region and high levels of job loss. The 1979 conference focussed

on union resistance and the development of alternative strategies, yet these are mostly markedly absent from debates on recent plant closures.²⁵ There are a number of reasons for this and not enough space here to discuss them in detail but, crucially, there is the very marked decline in private sector trade union membership and, even where it remains, in the power of its shop-floor organisation. Linked with this is the closure of local community and trade union resource centres which played crucial roles in providing research, reports and publications for campaigns. Their funding was slashed as local government was ravaged by cuts and became a centre for the distribution of government resources rather than local agencies providing public housing, transport or radical resource centres. Finally, 'alternative plans' might have seemed feasible in a manufacturing economy but are not so easy to envisage for call centres and services.

Secondly, the recounting of history which is done in this essay largely through a documentary analysis from my own (very limited) 'archives'. It also focuses primarily on private sector manufacturing, leaving out the important events for the region's unions in the public sector and the coal mines.²⁶ Documents are written for a particular time and, most importantly, reflect accounts or decisions, actions or plans but rarely the debates surrounding them or the personalities involved. History moves on through debate, argument, action and the individual agency of those involved. Given the significance of the North East's involvement in the national trade union actions described above it is essential that the voices of participants are recorded. Bob Davis, for example has recorded the archive video tapes available at Teesside University that include important interviews with people such as Jimmy Murray (mentioned above) or the *Save our Shipyards* campaign tapes.²⁷ The North East Labour History Society is also making available oral histories on its website. If your memory has been prompted as somebody engaged in the events documented above we would be delighted to hear from you via the Secretary whose contact details are in this Journal.

Notes

- ¹ Al Rainnie and John Stirling, (eds) *Plant Closures: The Trade Union Response* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, 1980).
- ² The *Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations 1965-1968* (London: HMSO, 1968) - the 'Donovan Report' - estimates (p. 26) that there were 175,000 shop stewards and 3000 union full time officials.
- ³ Ralph Darlington and Dave Lyddon. *Glorious Summer: Class Struggle in Britain 1972*, (London: Bookmarks, 2001). For UCS see Willie Thompson and Finlay Hart, *The UCS Work-In*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972)
- ⁴ See, for example, TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee, *Economic Planning and Industrial Democracy: The Framework for Full Employment*, (London, TUC, 1982).
- ⁵ See for example, Joint Trades Councils and Joint Forum of Combine Committees, *Economic Planning Through Industrial Democracy*, (no place of publication/publisher, 1982).
- ⁶ For the North Tyneside example see Patrick Candon 'Kicking up the Dust in North Shields: the Story of a Home Office Experiment in Community Action in the 1970s and its Aftermath', *North East History*, 45 (2014) pp. 43-62.
- ⁷ See Richard Hyman, 'Workers' Control and Revolutionary Theory', in Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds), *Socialist Register 1974*, (London: Merlin Press, 1974), pp. 241-78.
- ⁸ Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott, *The Lucas Plan: A New Trade Unionism in the Making?* (London: Allison and Busby, 1982).
- ⁹ See for example Tony Eccles, *Under New Management*, (London: Pan Books, 1981).
- ¹⁰ See, for example Chris Logan and Denis Gregory *Wales TUC, Co-operation and Job Creation in Wales: A Feasibility Study*, (Wales: TUC, 1981), and *Trade Unions and Co-ops: An Advice Note for Trade Unionists*, (ICOM, London, no date 1983?).
- ¹¹ See TUSIU, *Founding Meeting for TUSIU 21st January 1975*, (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1975).
- ¹² This is not the place for a full account of the work of TUSIU which still needs to be done, but for an overview of the period see TUSIU 1975-1985: 10 Years, (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1985).
- ¹³ See *Trade Union Strategy in the Face of Corporate Power – the Case for Multi-Union Combine Shop Stewards Committees*, (Solihull?, 1980).
- ¹⁴ Transport and General Workers Union, Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staff, National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and Electrical, Electronic and Plumbing Trades Union. Joint Forum of Combine Committees, *The Combine Organisation Handbook* (no place of publication or date) p.24.
- ¹⁵ For the role of TASS in a major dispute on Tyneside see Dave Neville, 'The 1972 dispute at C. A. Parsons', *North East History*, 40 (Newcastle upon Tyne 2009) pp. 10-30.

- ¹⁶ TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee, (1982). pp 9 and 27.
- ¹⁷ Coventry, Liverpool, Newcastle and North Tyneside Trades Councils, *State Intervention in Industry, A Workers' Inquiry*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: 1980).
- ¹⁸ *Popular Planning for Social Need* (no place of publication, Spring 1982), *Popular Planning for Social Need, Supplementary Information* (no place of publication or date), *Economic Planning Through Industrial Democracy* (no place of publication or date)
- ¹⁹ Tress Shop Stewards, *The Closure of Tress, A Fairey Story*, (Newcastle upon Tyne, no date) p. 19. The document acknowledges the role of the Tyneside Socialist Centre in both the campaign and the writing of the report.
- ²⁰ For Lucas see Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott op. cit. Mike Cooley, *Architect or Bee? The Human Price of Technology* (Nottingham, Spokesman, 1980). More generally see Collective Design/Projects, *Very Nice Work If You Can Get It: The Socially Useful Production Debate* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1985)
- ²¹ Huw Beynon and Hilary Wainwright, *The Workers' Report on Vickers* (London: Pluto Press, 1979). Beynon and Wainwright note the importance of the CDPs saying that 'the organisation of this committee was assisted financially by the Community Development Project on Tyneside', p. 201.
- ²² Newcastle upon Tyne Trades Council, Tyneside Anti-Nuclear Campaign and Tyneside for Nuclear Disarmament, *Jobs for a Change: Alternative Production on Tyneside* (Newcastle upon Tyne probably 1982).
- ²³ Beynon and Wainwright, p. 168.
- ²⁴ TUSIU, *A Farewell to Arms? The Future Facing Vickers Elswick on Tyneside* (Newcastle upon Tyne: TUSIU, no date), Vickers National Combine Committee of Shop Stewards, *Building the Chieftain Tank and the Alternative* (no place of publication or date). There may well be other examples as, for example, *Alternative Employment for Naval Shipbuilding Workers (Vickers Barrow)*, following the same format as the Elswick publication but again with no publication details.
- ²⁵ The focus here is on the private sector rather than the public sector and union responses there. The steel industry closures nationally and locally did involve a more widespread campaigning response and Alcan provoked more academic reports on the impact of closure but still not the vibrant campaigning of the past period or any 'workers' plans'.
- ²⁶ For one view of the public sector over a similar period and an example of an innovative campaign see Phil Lenton, 'NUPE in the North: Union Organising and Activism', and Keith Hodgson, 'Campaigning at Craigielea', both in *North East History*, 47 (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2016) pp. 113-130 and 131-133.
- ²⁷ Bob Davis, 'Thirty Years on: A Footnote on the History of the Regional Film Archive', *North East History*, 45 (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014) pp. 29-42.

Davey Hopper 1943 - 2016

A Personal Appreciation of the Durham Miners Leader

John Creaby

Whenever I hear Ewan MacColl's song *The Big Hewer*, it is Davey Hopper whose memory will be evoked. His sudden and untimely death just a week after the Durham Miners' Gala seemed hard to believe. The evening before the Big Meeting, in the Royal County Hotel, my wife Margaret and I had been chatting to Davey about the state of the Labour Party and Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, before we headed off to hear Corbyn speak to the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) in the grand Miners' Hall, a building known to everyone as Redhills.

The next day, with the Big Meeting (the 132nd) having its largest attendance for over fifty years and after years of indifference by Labour Party leaders, Corbyn was the main speaker. The annual Gala was back in its rightful place as the main labour movement rally and celebration. Davey adopted his usual stance, not shying away from controversy and solidarity, supporting striking workers. This time it was the Durham Teaching Assistants, with Davey pointing to their banner. In his speech of introduction to speakers, Davey, as always, had that mischievous irreverent humour which gave emphasis to the issues. Nobody there knew then that it would be the last time his booming north-eastern voice, that of a Wearsider, as he would remind me, would be heard.

Davey began work at Wearmouth Colliery, where Sunderland Football Club stadium now stands, in 1958 where his dad, a union safety inspector

and dedicated NUM member, was a miner. Davey himself was now also a miner, and he was encouraged by his dad to attend the Wearmouth Lodge (his local union branch), where he was on the Lodge Committee. However, it was the solidarity and underground co-operation and dependency on your 'marra' (a stronger term than 'mate') that was to be the basis of Davey's socialism. By the 1960s, married with three children and working at the coal-face, he was to see the end of 'piece work' (where the men picked the face teams and the whole team shared the piece-rate earnings equally) through the introduction of the National Power Loading Agreement. Davey saw his pay halved and its effects on his family (with four children by 1970) were considerable.

Davey took an active part in the 1972 miners' strike for higher wages, which resulted in substantial increases. He always said that it was his involvement in that strike which increased his interest in the union, and more particularly in socialism. He read with great interest the history of the miners, the labour movement and socialism. This continued through his life and he liked nothing better than to discuss what he had read and proposed to put into practice, as I and others came to know. He was the quintessential miner autodidact.

The militancy of the strike and his developed awareness was to bring him into conflict with the right-wing leadership. As part of the Left Group of mainly young rank-and-file miners, aptly titled the Durham Left, in the late 1970s, he was to campaign for a more progressive policy, especially in relation to the approaching pit closures. Alan Cummings, DMA President, has recalled those days when through this broad left group and along with other likeminded colleagues they were able to make democratic changes to the DMA. In 1981 they were successful in obtaining a rule change regarding elections to the union's Area Executive Committee and Davey was elected in 1982. Davey's leadership potential was being recognized; he became the first rank and file Durham miner to be elected to the union's National Executive Committee in 1983 and was voted in as Secretary of his lodge.

It was at the start of the Miners' Strike in 1984 that I first met Davey. As a trade union Regional Secretary I had an agreement from my Area Executive that we would send out details about and contacts within Coal Communities Women's Support Groups to our branches. Information from Northumberland was immediately available, as I knew the officials, but it was less easy to obtain for Durham. I did not know Tom Callan, General Secretary of Durham NUM, at all; he was not active in TUC or Labour Party regional politics, where I was well known as being on the left. This may be why he was slow in replying to my request, but I was anxious to get this information out to branches. Through Sunderland Trades Council, I met Davey. His colliery had supported my members in the Coles Cranes occupation, opposite them on the Wear, in the 1970s. As my office was in Sunderland, I was able to meet him and a colleague and, true to his word, by that afternoon I had the information, and he also put me in contact with Davey Guy, Labour activist at Dawdon Colliery.

The involvement of Davey and his family in the strike was all-embracing, not only in terms of commitment but also in leadership and at the forefront of advocacy. This often brought him headlines in the media with some difficult situations affecting him and his family, but they solidly supported the strike right up until the defeat. He would often talk about this hardship of the mining communities without mentioning his own personal and family hardship, as an article in the Tyne & Wear County Association of Trades Council's journal, *Rostrum* demonstrated (the journal is undated but was published during the strike). Nor, as others have recalled, did he talk of the harshness of comments he faced, sometimes even from comrades. He always shrugged it off; it was their fear and struggle talking. His venom was retained for the employer and the Thatcher Government. The strike and its ending is part of labour movement history but for Davey and the coal communities it was also a threat to culture and tradition.

Davey was elected General (Regional) Secretary of the Durham Miners after the strike. Alongside the President, Davey Guy, he set about changing

the insular nature of the union with the rest of the labour movement. Whilst negotiating strongly, they were hampered by the Coal Board, at the command of the Tory Government, escalating pit closures, redundancies and harsh work practices. The main task initially was fighting for the men sacked or facing charges. By the time Monkwearmouth, Davey's colliery, and the last pit left in Durham, closed in 1993, the union's resources had been exhausted by the strike with no working miners left to pay subscriptions. But the 'two Daveys' stayed and the DMA continued, its role being that of representing ex-miners at tribunals and linkage to welfare agencies. They embodied the desire of their marras that the coal communities, their villages, their mining heritage and their place in the collective labour movement should be maintained. That meant saving that great festival of miners and their families, the Durham Miners' Gala, the pitmen's Big Meeting.

It was agreed that the Big Meeting would now be a celebration, led by the miners' banners of all trade unions, and all elements of the broad labour movement with their banners. With the two Daveys' support and encouragement, many in the coal communities set up Community Banner Committees to refurbish historic banners or where necessary make replicas. The Gala is not only a festival of the labour movement, both local and national, but also the occasion for those engaged in struggle, at home and internationally, to participate and speak from the platform. Davey was a passionate internationalist and anti-fascist, and hated discrimination of any kind. He stood no nonsense about whose banners should be represented, as long as they embraced a socialist principle. He won that argument and that's what we witness now.

In particular, I know that Davey overcame years of cultural and negative prejudices towards women's activism and the LGBT community, through the solidarity and active participation he experienced during the strike. He also read, listened and discussed the issues, and spoke forcefully on the subject in the Irish Club in Newcastle. He wasn't afraid to say that he had been wrong.

When Davey's wife Brenda died at the early age of fifty-three in 1997 the Hopper family was heartbroken and it was a stressful time for Davey. He had lost the one person who for thirty-one years had been at his side throughout the struggles. Friends knew they were devoted to one another. Davey always said it was the comradeship and sincere compassion of the communities that pulled him through these personal dark times.

Under his leadership the Miners' Hall at Redhills in Durham became a centre for local and national campaigns, worker's art exhibitions, films and debate. His association with other campaigns and solidarity action was exemplified by his regular invitations to Ireland as a speaker at the annual memorial parade in honour of Jim Connell, who wrote the Red Flag in 1889. He enjoyed the folk singing at congresses and party conferences. He was a member and good friend to the North East Labour History Society, submitting the occasional article and paying for space in the Society's annual journal to pledge the DMA. He was a man of many parts.

From the beginning of the new century, Davey voiced his opposition to the Blair government's refusal to reverse Thatcher's anti-union legislation. He campaigned passionately against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, expressing his disapproval from the Gala platform and reasoning that it was a betrayal of working folk. He was to remain always on the side of those in struggle and castigated two Labour Party leaders, Kinnock (1983-1992) followed by Blair (1994 -2007), for not having the courage to appear on the Gala platform when previous leaders were prepared to attend, even if it meant being barracked. It was not until Ed Miliband attended in 2012 that a Labour leader again appeared on the Platform.

Among many international struggles, Davey played an important role in Cuban Solidarity. It was through this involvement that he met Maria Zarzabal, whom he married in 2006, becoming stepfather to her two children. Friends said it gave him a new lease of life.

At the reception in Dawdon Miners Welfare Club following Davey Guy's funeral in 2012, Davey spoke with some emotion about their work together for the miners, the coal communities and the labour movement.

Everyone felt a sense of sadness and he recalled the loss of other activists in the union.

Apart from his passionate support for socialism, Davey enjoyed the dog racing at Boldon and his beloved Sunderland Football Club. The Monkwearmouth Colliery banner was hung in the Club's stadium entrance where the colliery had been sited. Not shy of argument and noting local racist activities, in 2013 as part of the anti-fascist campaign Davey demanded the banner be taken down when Paolo Di Canio was appointed coach. He highlighted Di Canio's statement that he was 'a fascist, not a racist' and the evidence of him giving Italian fascist salutes. Di Canio lasted six months; it may have been the winning of only three games, but I'm sure the anti-fascist campaign helped!

After speaking in support at Jeremy Corbyn's Newcastle hustings rally, he was immensely happy when he was elected party leader. You could see the pleasure it gave him to introduce Corbyn, as a speaker at the 2016 Gala and inviting him to return in 2017 after his re-election. After such a magnificent Big Meeting, Davey was set for further campaigning but it was not to be.

The night before the funeral, to celebrate his life, a wake was held with a few speeches and music, not mournful but happy jig music. The Sacriston Club was full to capacity, including many miners and families, trade union activists, local and national officials, actors, in fact a broad spectrum of politics and community.

On 29 July 2016 I arrived early in the morning at Redhills as the attendance was beginning to grow. Outside the Miners' Hall there was a marquee and sound system, a colliery band and banners from miners' and other unions. As I stood at the entrance awaiting the funeral cortège, with the band playing and the banners flapping in the breeze, I witnessed something that had never happened in the history of this century-old building. As the band played the miners' hymn, *Gresford*, the coffin, followed by his family, was taken into the Debating Chamber, where Davey had chaired many meetings, to be met by the sound of Bob Marley.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, the veteran national Labour and trades union figure, former General Secretary of UNISON, acting as humanist celebrant, led the commemoration. There were eulogies from Alan Mardghum, a mining activist and long-time friend who took over as lodge secretary from Davey, and from his friend, Geoff Shears of Thompson's, the solicitors who work in close partnership with the DMA.

Many were tearful during a highly poignant moment listening to Paul Robeson's recording of *Joe Hill*. Jeremy Corbyn and Alan Cummings, chair of the DMA, both spoke. A respectful silence for Davey was followed by Bethany Ellen Coyle, founder of the North East Socialist Singers, leading us all in the *Red Flag*. The chamber had been full and hundreds lined the exit. It was estimated there were 900 people, but there may well have been more.

Alan Cummings said that Davey's legacy would surely be the Durham Miners Gala, which has grown over the last few years to rival the turn out in the 1960s. Jeremy Corbyn wrote of him being a pillar of strength for the working class, a huge loss who would be greatly missed. But Davey Hopper's spirit will live on through his beloved Big Meeting, the great working class gathering celebrating our traditions, history and struggle.



*Photograph courtesy of
Alan Cummings and the DMA.*

The Davey Pearson Photographic Collection

Alan Diment and Allen Mulliss

Over the course of two decades, Davey Pearson captured tens of thousands of photographic images. His main focus was the social and political life of the people of North East England but his travels took him further afield. From the wild coasts of Ireland to the capricious streets of London and the vividly beautiful hills of Northern Italy, Davey would seldom travel anywhere without his camera.

The bulk of Davey's work brings us back home to Newcastle upon Tyne of which more than 15,000 images exist in the collection. Davey was born in 1951 in the relatively impoverished Byker area of Newcastle. After an early stint in the merchant navy, he went on to work in several care homes in the North East, but it was photography that remained his true calling.

Davey was a socially awkward man who found that his hobby could bring him enduring friendships and make him a familiar figure in the area as his camera captured weddings, parties and many a night out in the pubs of Newcastle. He was self-taught and mainly self-financed, although a grant from Northern Arts helped pay with the costs of film and developing.

There was a more militant side to Davey Pearson. His politics were firmly to the left and his earliest photographs depict the picket lines and police cordons of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. From that point on, whenever there was a strike or a demonstration then Davey appeared to be there through Thatcher's Britain to New Labour and beyond. He would never miss the Durham Miners' Gala or a May Day march, as is evident from the multitude of photographs he took of these events.

Davey was just as interested in photographing the everyday life of the region. His subjects include shipyards, scrap yards, brass bands, buskers, art exhibitions, children playing in the streets and people united at all kinds of celebrations. Above all else, Davey's photography is about people. There seem to be as many pictures of crowds collectively observing events as there are of the occasions themselves.

When Davey died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage in February 2003, the turnout at his funeral was appropriately large. Davey left behind a legacy which captured twenty years of experience, around 60,000 photographs in total - boxes and boxes of prints and negatives that were in need of preservation. Thanks to the intervention of his good friend Charlie Allen this material has found a home in the archives of the Ouseburn Trust in Newcastle. So began an on-going, volunteer-led mission to first digitise the negative stock and then pore through each image, identifying and cataloguing what lies within. New helpers are always welcome!

The plan is that the Davey Pearson Collection can be made available for research and form the core of future talks and exhibitions organised by the Ouseburn Trust. That way the life and work of Davey Pearson can live on and inspire generations now and yet to come. If you would like to view or know more about the Davey Pearson collection, please see the Trust website www.ouseburntrust.org.uk/photo-archive or contact Lesley Turner at lesley.turner@ouseburntrust.org.uk to make an appointment.



A protest against European Union fishing regulations by almost seventy fishing boats that sailed up the River Tyne from South Shields to Gateshead Millennium Bridge in December 2002.



A brass band and members of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) marching from Gateshead to Newcastle over the Tyne Bridge, as part of a May Day parade and rally.



City of Leicester Teachers Association members with someone dressed as a fat cat outside Gateshead Town Hall in Arthur Street, Gateshead, as part of a May Day parade and rally.



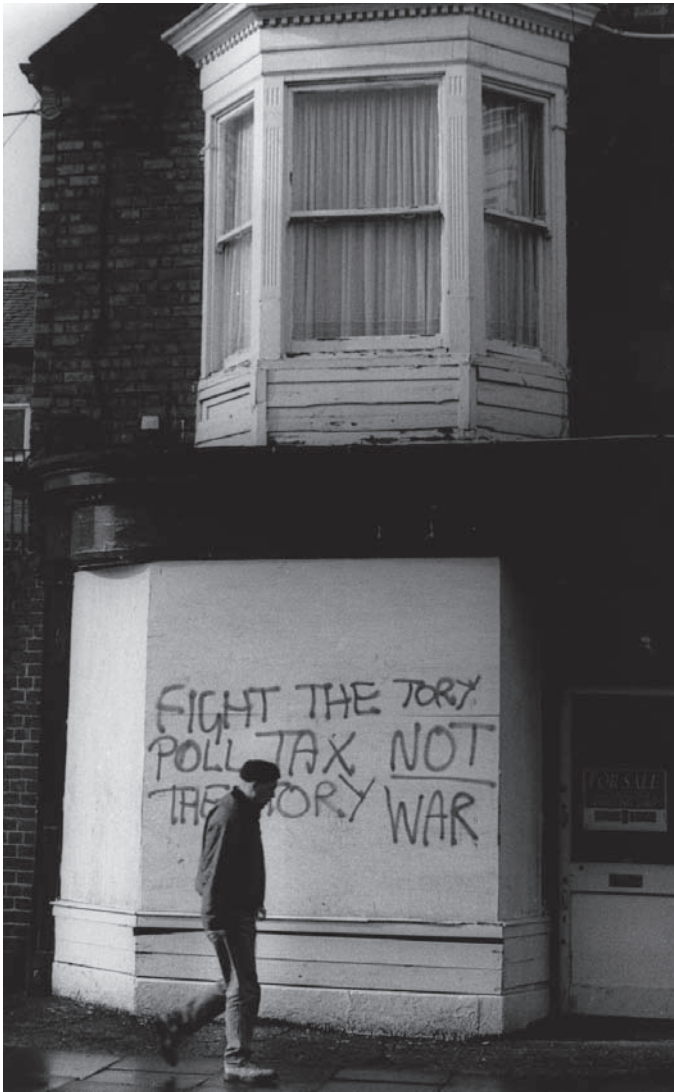
Brass band instruments and the banner for the Mainsforth Lodge of the National Union of Miners left outside the funfair held at the Racecourse recreation ground in Durham as part of the Durham Miners' Gala.



Protesters at a TUC March & Rally for Jobs & Recovery, walking from John Dobson Street into Northumberland Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1992.



A group of protesters gather in the rain in Queen Victoria Road, Newcastle to demonstrate against proposed changes to Newcastle General Hospital.



An unidentified location in the North East with 'Fight the Tory Poll Tax not the Tory War' sprayed on the boarded up window of a house.



*Ellington Colliery brass band playing outside Ellington Colliery Institute,
Lynemouth Road, Hirst, Ellington.*

*All photographs courtesy of the
Davey Pearson Photographic Collection, Ouseburn Trust.*

North East Labour History Society



Reviews - Secretary's Report -
Constitution and Membership Form -
The Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy

Reviews

Dave Harker. *Cat-Gut Jim the Fiddler. Ned Corvan's Life & Songs* (Wisecrack Publications, 2017) (ISBN 978-0-9957418-1-2) £20.00.

It is apt, as folksinger-songwriter Johnny Handle points out, that this richly illustrated and content-packed book about a mid-nineteenth century songwriter should appear as a result of self-publication and funding via subscription. Even more appropriate, that it should have inspired Ed Waugh's new play, *Mr Corvan's Music Hall*.

This portrayal of Ned Corvan, arguably the region's greatest music hall performer and songwriter, is not only a biography of the man at centre stage but also a richly detailed ensemble piece filled with vignettes about Corvan's social context. There are cameos of family, friends, rivals and enemies. And mediators. Always mediators: Harker's work has long been concerned with the interference of those who would appropriate, edit, censor or otherwise 'improve' the work of working class writers and this is no exception. From quite early in his career, Corvan was subject to the whims of printers and editors, some of whom continued to profit from songs long after their originators' deaths. Now, thanks to modern print technology, this book corrects the layers of editorial adjustment and Bowdlerism. Where possible, Harker has included photographic reproductions of the earliest available printed songsheets and has dedicated an entire chapter to Corvan's own manuscripts.

Born 1827 in Liverpool, Corvan was raised in Newcastle's All Saints parish in a Victorian North East where technological progress existed cheek by jowl with profound squalor, and where frequently short lives were enriched by the entertainment of travelling players. Corvan's own career as a songwriter, performer, artist and fiddler coincided with the early

development of concert rooms in the region, including his own short-lived music hall at South Shields' Fairles Arms. Early proprietors and performers were definitely of the precariat, never far from the shadow of the bankruptcy courts. Ned's family may have suffered regular upheavals as a result. Yet railways and steamboats meant that Corvan – in a rapidly evolving cultural infrastructure – could perform as far afield as Leeds and Dundee.

Politics are never far from the surface in this book. Those familiar with Harker's previous output will be aware of his distinction between the "Bob Cranky" caricatures so beloved of middle-class writers and the more nuanced portrayals of local life originating from writers and performers within the working class, with Corvan firmly within the latter tradition. Ned's lyrics could be explicitly radical (*The Queen's Second Visit*), particularly in contrast with the output of other writers such as J P Robson. His songs may have dealt with migration, industrial disputes, disasters and international events, yet he was still subject to the mores of his day. To his credit, Harker does not flinch from engaging with less savoury aspects of Corvan's output, including comic portrayals of domestic violence (*Mally's Dream*) or sharing a stage with blackface minstrels.

In assessing the impact on halls and theatres of stricter licensing and the Temperance Movement, Harker demonstrates that working-class appetites were both catered for but also deemed in need of control. Not long after Corvan's death, in 1865, printer Thomas Allan already appeared to favour the songwriting of Joe Wilson, whose work had more currency but who would also shortly join Allan in signing the teetotal Pledge. Corvan's songs were included but with bawdier elements amended or removed. Catcheside-Warrington's famous Tyneside songbooks also featured only a few Corvan songs, and those heavily revised. Even Alex Glasgow is cited as saying that in writing 'Joe Lives!' he concentrated on the wrong Tyneside songwriter. The 1980s saw the publication of Keith Gregson's collection of Ned's songs with biographical notes, but even so, there remain few commercially available recordings of Corvan songs.

Corvan's legacy was at least partly secured when he wrote *Who Hung*

the Monkey? and famously debuted it in East Hartlepool, a piece of comic legend regularly quoted since and even adopted in ironic fashion by Hartlepuddlians. But, as Harker suggests, the recognition Corvan deserves, like his grave, has been buried ‘under the tarmac’. This comprehensive account of Ned’s songs and life goes a long way towards rescuing Ned, the man, the writer/performer, the proprietor, the husband and father, from the ‘enormous condescension of posterity’.

The book is available from the author via: d1harker@btinternet.com

Jude Murphy

Peter D. Wright, ***Life on the Tyne. Water Trades on the Lower River Tyne in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, a Reappraisal*** (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 199 pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-2633-8, £70.00 hbk. Illus.

Leona J. Skelton, ***Tyne after Tyne. An Environmental History of a River’s Battle for Protection, 1529-2015*** (The White Horse Press, 2017), 277 pp. ISBN 978-1-874267-95-9, £65.00 hbk. Illus.

These two books share a common theme, the River Tyne, but their approach could not be more different. On the face of it, Peter Wright’s book is an economic history, but it is one that includes a wealth of material of interest to social and labour historians. Leona Skelton calls her study an environmental history, and it is history viewed from the perspective of a river, in which natural systems are judged to be agents of historical change in their own right. As a result, its value to labour history is not so great.

Peter Wright’s book draws on the author’s PhD thesis from Newcastle University (2011), a wide range of primary and secondary source material, and the author’s personal experience of navigating small boats around the

rivers and coastline of our region, to produce a book which details the nature of trade on the Tyne during the period 1600-1800.

Some of the early chapters cover familiar territory but does so in a very readable and succinct manner. An excellent summary of the coal trade is followed by a discussion of the long term problems caused by the practice of dumping ballast on the shores of the Tyne and the concurrent failure to remove the inevitable build-up of sand and gravel that increasingly made navigation of the Tyne so hazardous in the latter period of study. Indeed, the reliance of Newcastle Corporation on the employment of keels to transport coal to the lower reaches of the Tyne simply served to shift the bulk of trade away from Newcastle quay (eight miles up river) towards the mouth of the Tyne where ships' masters could unload in more reliable waters and avoid the danger of grounding.

The manner in which Newcastle Corporation managed the dumping of ballast is described in detail, using evidence from the Common Council minutes, the Newcastle Chamberlain's Accounts and various early charts of the river. Other chapters are aimed at quantifying the numbers of keelmen and others engaged in these trades. All Saints Parish registers are used to estimate the numbers of boatmen, skippers, keelmen, watermen and wherry-men, and there is a useful evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the sources available for the period, and the pitfalls inherent in these sources.

A similar detailed investigation of boat ownership follows, in which probate inventories are used to estimate ship valuations and ownership. The latter is important because most keelmen and watermen never had sufficient wealth to own their own craft, being instead hired by the hostmen to carry out the work. Wright's research also reveals the important role of shipwrights as builders and owners of many of the keels on the river, and consequently their role in hiring these keels to those keelmen and watermen who actually crewed them.

A chapter detailing the pattern and growth of the Tyne shipping trade, including the growth in general cargo in addition to coal, is followed by

a contemporary perspective of events, as recorded in the diary of Ralph Jackson, a young apprentice hostman during the years 1749 to 1756. This diary provides an insight into virtually every aspect of the water trades on the Tyne in these years, and leaves the reader in no doubt as to the role of those engaged in these trades in shaping the nature and history of the river.

By contrast, Leona Skelton's study presents changes in the Tyne's history through major natural events (such as flooding) or through the actions of the various institutions set up to regulate or conserve the river and its uses, from the Tyne River Court of the old Newcastle Corporation (1644-1834) to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its Tyne Catchment Plan of 2012.

She places her study firmly in the realm of 'environmental history', a relatively new school of history developed originally in the USA in the 1990s and now gaining momentum here in UK universities and in Europe. She claims that previous histories presented the Tyne as a backdrop to social and economic activity, whereas her study reimagines the Tyne 'as an agent of history, as an important character no less worthy of deep biographical analysis than any military or political leader'.

The eight chapters of her book examine different periods of river conservancy, in addition to chapters on flooding and the Tyne fisheries. Skelton contrasts the early modern period of the Tyne River Court (1613-1834), a period of 'deep insights into the management of the river', with the increasing use of the Tyne for waste disposal from the 1840s, and the Tyne Improvement Commission's (TIC) intrusive reshaping of the river's sand bars, riverbank, and inlets to facilitate greater navigation and industry during the century after 1850.

This latter period of physical change lasted until the late 1960s. Since then habitat conservation, culture and tourism have emerged as priority influences and concerns. Hence the title of the book, *Tyne after Tyne*, as 'one new and different Tyne was created after another' as people's 'conceptualisation' of the river changes over time.

The trouble with this approach is that the author's appraisal of past

agencies often appears unduly influenced by twenty-first century anxieties about environmental pollution. Thus the Tyne River Court Jurors' 'positive relationship with the River Tyne estuary of which they were so proud and on which they relied so heavily' is presented as largely harmonious and benign. The reality, as Peter Wright demonstrates so emphatically, is that the convenience of using shallow draught boats like keels and wherries to transport coal and goods allowed the River Court to avoid any outlay of capital on effective river improvement, such as dredging and the removal of islands and sand bars. Ultimately this neglect led to Newcastle losing its monopoly over the river after 1850.

Skelton's approach suffers from the absence of any detailed evaluation of the communities that benefited from the Tyne, or the lives of those who worked on the river, or in adjacent riverside industries. The various conservancy agencies are presented value-free, with little discussion of their socio-economic membership and political context. Institutions do not make history, people do, and throughout most of its history, the Tyne has been regulated and developed by a commercial elite. Only in recent decades has this monopoly been challenged as a wider appreciation of environmental issues and increased leisure time combined to make water quality, drainage, and bio-diversity (not just fish) issues of both local and national concern.

Both Wright and Skelton cite a wide range of primary and secondary sources, most of which are readily available to consult within our region.

Mike Greatbatch

Geoffrey Evans & James Tilley, ***The New Politics of Class: The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class*** (Oxford University Press, 2017), 237pp .ISBN 978-0-19-875557 3, £27.00 hbk.

On 8 June many readers of this journal were awaiting the General Election exit poll with some trepidation. Some opinion polls had been predicting Tory majorities of more than a hundred. More nuanced commentators shared this gloomy prognosis but did not especially blame the Labour leader, identifying instead a long term decline in the Labour Party's electoral base that was rooted in complex factors including changes in social structure and attitudes deriving from these changes.

By the following morning it was clear that the party in crisis was the Tories, not Labour. Labour had lost a handful of seats but won over thirty, and the predictions of major losses in the heartlands of the North and the Midlands were not borne out.

At the time of writing this review it is not clear what the future for Labour holds. A further early General Election is anticipated which the Labour Party will approach with enthusiasm and a serious hope of forming a government. This possibility flies in the face not only of the commentariat but also that of mainstream political and social science of the past thirty years. Statistical and attitude surveys have noted the decline of manufacturing industry, once the solid electoral base of the Labour Party. They have variously described large areas of Britain where former workers in coal, steel, chemicals, engineering and their descendants have struggled against the sense that the passing of their work places means that their identity as workers has disappeared too. It has become fashionable to label them 'the left behinds.'

For over thirty years the Labour Party concentrated its attention on a more dynamic section of the population - the middle class - where the electoral terrain was contested with Tories and Liberal Democrats. The very idea of class was denied, to be replaced by virtuous notions like 'working families.'

Evans and Tilley have attempted to redress this picture, identifying the enduring presence of class in people's lives. Along with other recent writers like Lynsey Halsey and Selina Todd they focus on the way in which this society reproduces class location through the inequalities of education, housing and health. Evans and Tilley's distinctive contribution to the discussion is to tackle the diminishing participation of the old working class by focussing on the programmes offered by the Labour Party to the electorate in successive elections. In short, the Party has produced manifestoes (or in the case of local elections no programme at all) which make it largely impossible to distinguish between the contestants. The elector therefore makes the rational decision that elections do not matter, so why bother. This leaves diminishing tribal loyalty as the only incentive on offer.

As a late piece of evidence the authors cite the Brexit vote as an indication that when a real choice was offered participation was very high. In the June Election the Tories based their reckless charge to the polls on what they saw in Labour's heartland. On the one hand they probably lost out because tribal loyalty is still strong. Yet, on the other hand we may have witnessed something which even these Labour sympathisers failed to see as possible, the impact of the Labour manifesto. For the first time for decades this was starkly different from those of the Tory or Liberal Democrats. It became a focus for a wave of discontent flowing from the depredations of austerity based on neo-liberal economics. When Labour Party constituency activists across the country reported huge numbers of volunteers such as at Battersea (1000), Cambridge (750) and Tynemouth (at least 500), something was obviously changing. This is a worthy book. It would be a pity if the result of 8 June consigned it to obscurity.

John Charlton

Don Watson, *Squatting in Britain 1945-1955: Housing, Politics and Direct Action* (Merlin, 2016), 206pp. ISBN 978-0-85036 -728-7, £16.99 pbk.

After the First World War the state of the country's housing stock, the legacy of Victorian market-driven industrialisation, was terrible. Under the minority Labour governments of 1924 and 1929, municipal house building had been encouraged and financed, but it was only minimal on account of the interwar depression. The houses built by councils, though, were generally of good quality.

At the conclusion of World War II what had been already a very bad situation in the cities and major towns had become catastrophic, due to the combined efforts of the Luftwaffe and the neglect of maintenance during the emergency. Don Watson refers to a single-room dwelling where, 'it was hard to tell where the decay stopped and the war damage started' (p.105).

Aneurin Bevan, who was the Minister of Housing as well as Minister of Health in Attlee's government, well understood that the market could not take care of a housing emergency. He was convinced that a national building programme of publicly owned high-quality housing was essential, and proceeded to initiate one. Despite the challenges inherent in this ambition, Bevan and the government did not in any way approve of the grassroots popular response that began at the end of the war and reached its height in the following year.

It is that response, the squatters' movement, which is very ably and comprehensively described and analysed by Don Watson in this fascinating volume. The movement was spontaneous but soon developed a locally-organised character and found able leaders, organisers and spokespeople, some motivated by a specific political project, others simply by their experience and perception of the crisis; in London for example, some of the leaders had been active in prewar housing campaigns and in the campaign for Tube stations to be used as deep shelters during the Blitz.

The most prevalent form of squatting involved the occupation of buildings used by the military or other authorities during the war and now vacated. Some of these had been requisitioned, and were of good quality, but the hastily constructed Nissen huts in army or RAF encampments were of varying usefulness; some well appointed and with facilities such as water and electricity, others little more than corrugated metal shelters. It was common for squatters in Nissen huts or poor quality vacated housing to carry out their own improvements co-operatively.

Don devotes a chapter to the 'Luxury Squatters', who by drawing attention to the properties of the mega-rich standing empty while people (often bombed out of their homes) were in desperate need, were as much making a social and political point as they were seeking accommodation. This was most publicly a London phenomenon but it was by no means confined to the capital. It involved the occupation of high-quality accommodation that was otherwise vacant (in some cases waiting to be let at upmarket rates) and especially luxury hotels. The London event generated a major political crisis and eventually the squatters gave way in the face of legal and police harassment but exacted promises of alternative accommodation.

More generally local authorities, were sometimes supportive and helpful, at other times hostile and obstructive, even resorting to eviction. How they reacted usually depended on their political complexion.

Don Watson's nine chapters are solidly based on intensive archival research, published work and personal interviews, and treated in an engaging and readable manner and illustrated with striking photographs. The resonance with today's housing crisis in the UK is unmistakable.

Willie Thompson

Sid Chaplin, *Hame: my Durham*, ed. Michael Chaplin (Mayfly Press, 2016), 320pp. ISBN 978 1 911356 06 9, £12.99 pbk. Illus.

This is a unique compilation, both in its form and in its content, which makes it a challenge to review. The bulk of the content is a collection of short stories and poems evoking life in the mining villages of County Durham between the two world wars; some are grim, some humorous but all are a reminder of what a fine wordsmith Sid Chaplin was, and it is fitting that they should appear in print in the centenary year of his birth.

Interspersed with the stories are notes by Chaplin's son Michael, himself no mean writer. These notes provide both a chronological account of his father's life and development as a writer, and information on the context in which the stories must be placed. Much of the background information about the coal and coking industries of South Durham that fed the furnaces of Consett and Teesside will be familiar to students of local social and economic history, but not to others. What makes the material in this compilation so vivid is the specificity of the geographical locations. These are not some notional pit villages; they existed and still do exist. The differences between then and now provide one of the themes of the book, illustrated in a series of photographs entitled *Revisiting Sid Chaplin's County Durham* and by Michael Chaplin's closing essay, *Into the Wood*.

There is also that sense of then and now in Michael Chaplin's account of how his father became a recognised writer, from the early days of WEA classes and the Spennymoor Settlement to the war years working in the pit and writing in his spare time, to the point in 1946 when a £300 book prize enabled him to forsake the pit and produce two well-regarded novels. These in turn brought him to the attention of those at the London headquarters of a newly nationalised coal industry seeking to advertise itself through a house magazine. As a mining journalist on *Coal* Chaplin further honed his skills, and returned to the North East to produce more novels. In 1968 these received national attention with the production of Alan Plater's musical *Close the Coalhouse Door*, based on Chaplin's novel *The Thin Seam*.

He also contributed scripts for the TV series *When the Boat Comes in*; a far cry indeed from the WEA classes and the Spennymoor settlement.

I myself was brought up in a South Durham colliery village with a coke-works at its centre in the years immediately after the Second World War. Little had changed from the pre-war days and I can recognise the characters and situations featured in Sid Chaplin's stories. I can also remember as a student in London being sent Sid Chaplin novels, which never quite achieved the modish status of a Braine, a Sillitoe or a Storey but which to my mind were infinitely superior. Then there was the shock of returning to the village after my family had moved to Newcastle and finding the mighty coke-works and the pit-heap completely obliterated. This book speaks to me on many levels, which is why it has been so difficult to review, but it is an absolute delight to read.

Win Stokes

The Journal of the North West Labour History Society, No. 41, 2016-17, and Alison Ronan, **Unpopular Resistance** (North West Labour History Society, 2015), 36 pp. £3.50.

This is a unique compilation, both in its form and in its content, which makes it a challenge to review.

Our North Western counterpart, in addition to sharing our own aims and aspirations as a Society, also publishes a Journal for its members every autumn, very different in format from ours but well worth its £7.95 price.

What marks it out is its colourfulness and the quality and abundance of its illustrations. This is helped by the magazine format and layout, which possibly belie the seriousness of the very varied content, but would certainly induce a non-specialist to open its pages.

The contents of this particular issue are impressive in linking the local to the wider picture. An article on the 1916 Easter Rising looks at the part played by the Manchester Volunteers, whilst the Spanish Civil War is

evoked by the story of Jimmy Shand of Salford, and by an essay relating to the brief appearance of Picasso's *Guernica* in Manchester in 1939. Other essays examine the impact of the cotton famine induced by the American Civil War through the experience of one cotton town, and another presents a personal recollection of a Mosleyite March in Manchester in 1962.

The significance of 1916 in the story of World War One is also illustrated in the cartoons of Sam Fitton from the *Cotton Factory Times* and the poems of Winifred Mabel Letts, written when she was nursing the wounded in various hospitals.

Other short essays present individual pieces of research as well as a wide selection of book reviews. If there is one criticism it is the focus on the Manchester area. What about Cumbria? However, our own tendency to concentrate on Tyneside suggests that we are in no position to throw stones

Alongside the Journal we also have Alison Ronan's *Unpopular Resistance*, a short account in the same format of the opposition to the First World War in Manchester and Salford, and its links to similar movements elsewhere. Although there has been work done on the anti-conscription campaign and the treatment of conscientious objectors this local study underlines how serious and widespread this opposition became as the war progressed.

Win Stokes

Secretary's Report

During the year we have continued with the First Tuesday programme, holding eight meetings and covering a range of topics from the Squatters' Movement of the 1940s to the nineteenth-century radical music hall singer-songwriter Ned Corvan.

This is the Society's fiftieth anniversary year and a sub-committee, consisting of Brian Bennison, John Charlton, Peter Nicklin and John Stirling, has organised a number of special events with high profile speakers to mark this major achievement. This has included a one-day conference on 'Fifty Years of Labour and Social History' held in conjunction with the Histories of Activism group at Northumbria University. The Society is grateful for a grant of £500 from the North East Area Miners Social Welfare Trust Fund to help finance our Jubilee activities.

The history of the Society features in this issue of our North East History journal, which has been produced by Mike Greatbatch, Brian Bennison, Win Stokes, and Sue Ward.

Peter Nicklin has made significant improvements to the Society's website www.nelh.net which now includes oral history material from the Popular Politics project. John Stirling, Judith McSwaine and myself have worked to update the membership list.

The Sid Chaplin Prize for 2016 was awarded to Leanne Carr for her study of photographs taken in Easington Colliery in the 1984-85 Miners Strike.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the twelve years of service given by Mike Cleghorn as Treasurer; he was a key member of the team that kept the organisation going at a difficult time.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Brian Bennison for his assistance during the year.

David Connolly

Officers:

President:	Archie Potts
Vice President:	Maureen Callcott
Chair:	John Creaby
Vice Chair:	Kath Connolly
Treasurer:	Judith McSwaine
Secretary:	David Connolly
Journal Editors:	Brian Bennison, Mike Greatbatch, Win Stokes and Sue Ward

Committee Members:

Brian Bennison (Gosforth)	Peter Nicklin (Newcastle)
Peter Brabban (Newcastle)	Liz O'Donnell (Morpeth)
Pat Candon (Tynemouth)	Ben Sellers (Durham)
John Charlton (Newcastle)	John Stirling (Morpeth)
Mike Greatbatch (Newcastle)	Win Stokes (Tynemouth)
Lynda MacKenzie (Newcastle)	Rob Turnbull (Hexham)
Paul Mayne (Newcastle)	Don Watson (North Shields)

How to contact the Society

Email: secretary@nelh.org

Write to:

David Connolly, 1 Exeter Close, Great Lumley, Chester-le-Street DH3 4L J

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.

Journal:

The Society shall publish an annual journal, *North East History*. The Committee shall appoint the Editor/s of the Journal. The Editor/s shall report to the Committee on matters affecting the production of the Journal.

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	2006	Elsbeth Gould
1989	Elaine Knox	2007	Candice Brockwell
1990	Sylvia Clark	2008	Ruth Blower
1991	Martin Searles	2009	Rob Doherty
1992	David Ridley	2010	David Reed
1993	Pauline Lynn	2011	Deborah Smith
1994	Kathleen Smith	2012	James English
1996	Reg Brown	2013	Aidan Harper
1997	Angela Goldsmith	2014	Molly Courtice
2000	Robert Hope	2015	Adam Woolley
2004	Craig Turnbull	2016	Leanne Carr
2005	Craig Armstrong		

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

Membership Form

Please complete all sections, ticking appropriately ✓.

1) Your details

Name
Address
.....
Post Code: Email:

2) Annual Subscription rate

Individual: £15 <input type="radio"/>	Students, unwaged: £7.50 <input type="radio"/>
Institution: £25 <input type="radio"/>	
Please add £5 if international postage is required.	

3) Payment method:

<input type="radio"/> Standing Order: I have completed a Standing Order Mandate which I have sent to my bank/enclose with this form.
<input type="radio"/> Cheque: I have written a cheque made payable to: North East Labour History Society and attach it securely to this form.

Send this form (**and cheque** or **Standing Order Mandate**, or **both**) to:
Judith McSwaine
Treasurer
12 Whitfield Road
Forest Hall
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 7LJ

North East Labour History Society

Standing Order Mandate

To the Manager

Bank
Address

I/we hereby authorise and request you to debit my/our

Account Name:

Sort Code:

Account Number

Amount £

Frequency Annually

beginning date: .../.../..... and, there after on .../....., each year until
you receive further notice from me in writing.

And Credit

Beneficiary	North East Labour History Society
Bank	Unity Trust Bank, plc
	Birmingham
Sort Code	60-83-01
Account No.	58254950

Signed Date

.

North East History Volume 48

- **Fifty Years of the North East Labour History Society**
- **Picketing, Photography and Memory: Easington 1984-85**
- **Jack Trevena: WEA District Secretary and Conscientious Objector**
- **The Bagnalls of Ouseburn: Watermen, Publican, and a Sporting Hero**
- **Trade Unionism and Methodism**
- **Rose Lumsden, a Sunderland Nurse in the Great War**
- **Gender and Social Transformation in the 1970s Community Development Projects**
- **Commemorative Plaques and Monuments – some recent examples**
- **Davey Hopper 1943 – 2016. A Personal Appreciation**



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.net Supporters are welcome to contribute to discussions

Journal of the North East Labour History Society

<http://nelh.net/>