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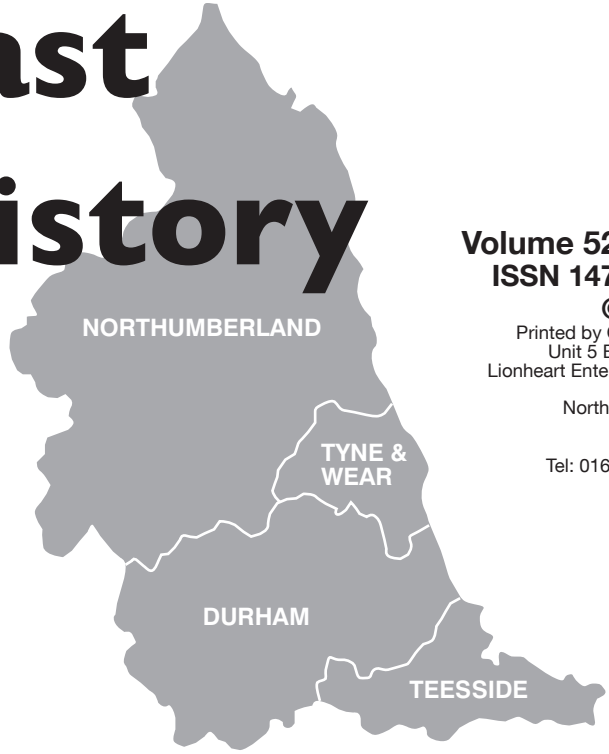

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Articles:

Note from the Editors

Despite the continuing disruptive circumstances resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic, this year's Journal is a bumper edition. The editors would like to thank all those who have contributed articles, reports and reviews, recognising the difficulties they faced in gaining access to libraries and checking references.

Two highly respected and valued members of the North East Labour History Society died this year. Nigel Todd died suddenly in March and John Charlton has written a short obituary. John's piece, however, offers only a summary of the story that made Nigel so respected and beloved across the progressive communities of the North East. We have therefore decided to dedicate next year's Journal to Nigel so as to properly commemorate his life. Archie Potts died in May. The North East Labour History owes its existence to the pioneering work of Archie, who helped set up the society in 1966 and we include an appreciation by Brian Bennison. We also posthumously publish a memoir article written by Archie just a month before he died.

One theme that emerges in this year's articles is the North East's links with its Imperial past. Hannah Kent writes about the extent to which a Black community existed in Tyneside during and immediately after the Second World War, in particular the role of the Colonial Office in setting up two hostels, one in Newcastle and the other in North Shields to house colonial war workers. Liz O'Donnell examines the ideological roots of the British government's juvenile migration policy in the early twentieth century in relation to two short-lived migration hostels for boys and young women set up in Newcastle in the 1920s for the exportation of Britain's 'surplus population' to its colonies. In a similar vein, Mike Greatbatch shows how much our attitudes to child labour have changed by exploring the experience of child workers in Newcastle between the 1830s and 1850s.

Brian Bennison writes about the singer and internationalist Paul Robeson, who although the object of so much vilification in his own country, could always rely on a warm, friendly welcome in the North East.

Peter Brabban completes his 'Sleepy Valley' war-time trilogy up until when peace is declared. However, the experience of war on each family member meant that the reunification of the Brabban family was not an easy business. Stuart Barlow also writes about conditions after the Second World War by exploring the widespread housing crisis and how some families in Tynemouth - like the squatters movement in other parts of the country - took matters into their own hands by gaining access to, and living in, disused army huts in the locality. John Charlton also draws on the post war housing crisis and its impact when charting the politics of the Labour Party in Newcastle in that period. On the coat-tails of the General Election triumph in November 1945, Labour was to gain control of the Newcastle City council but - much due to its inability to resolve the housing shortages - was to lose control in 1949.

The next three articles are related by being written as memoirs. They are also linked by being each author's own experience of trade unionism. Steve Grinter and John Stirling write about their involvement as teachers of trade unionism. Steve had a career working for the TUC, while John was a lecturer at Northumbria University (Newcastle Polytechnic). Both authors see trade union education (the education of trade unionists) as an enormously important part of labour history. John, in particular, encourages other tutors, TUC and union education officers and trade unionists to write accounts of their experiences. In such a vein, Janet Allan describes her memorable experiences as a newly-qualified solicitor with the law firm Thompsons, in their Newcastle office at the time of the miners' strike in 1984/85. Janet describes the outcome of the strike as being part of the process of deindustrialisation of the region, with no significant replacement for these historic traditional industries being identified or provided by government.

On the theme of deindustrialisation, Judith Green tells the story of Scotswood as a case study of the development and de-development of working class communities which bear the costs of industrial change. Over the course of the twentieth century Scotswood was transformed from a predominantly rural area into a built-up suburb of Newcastle. Now most of the local jobs had been lost, much of the housing and accompanying community facilities had also gone, and Scotswood had acquired an unwelcome reputation as one of Britain's dangerous places on the margins of civilised society.

In the Reports and Appreciations section, Tony Barrow writes an appreciation of the life of Bill Purdue, who died in November 2020 and was pre-eminent amongst a handful of academic historians responsible for raising the profile of regional history. Keith Hodgson remembers Bob Fryer, who died in December 2020, who was a huge loss to the trade union movement as well as the world of adult education. The front cover of this year's Journal is called *Youth on a wall, Jarrow, Tyneside, 1976*. It is accompanied by an appreciation, written by Peter Brabban, of the career of Chris Killip who died last October. His black and white photographs of the North East of England have become signifiers of the region's declining industrial landscape. Jennifer Hillyard writes a report about *The Common Room*, formerly known to many people as The Mining Institute, which is reopening following a two-year refurbishment. Linked to Judith Green's article about Scotswood, Sue Ward has written a report which encapsulates the activities on St James History and Environment Group in Benwell. Win Stokes, our Reviews Editor, has written a report on the North West History Society Journal. This journal is a skilfully produced publication which sets a high bar for other labour history societies.

The Review Section has nine book reviews, which includes a review of a book of poems by local poet Tom Kelly.

Patrick Candon
Liz O'Donnell
Sue Ward
Win Stokes
John Charlton
Peter Brabban
Steve Grinter
Rosie Serdiville
Mike Greatbatch

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 267.

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.

Some past copies of the North East History journal are still available, and these can be ordered via email to journal@nelh.org. Price per issue is £5, plus £2 p&p within the UK/ £5 international.

Past issues of North East History, volumes 36 - 51 (2005 - 2020) can be viewed online at our website: nelh.net/the-societys-journal/previous-issues. There is also a searchable index of articles and reports.

Notes on Contributors

Janet Allan was brought up in Thornaby, Teesside and joined the Newcastle office of Thompsons Solicitors in 1983. Initially dealing with personal injury, criminal cases and equal pay claims on behalf of trade union members, she subsequently became a partner and national head of Clinical Negligence before retiring in 2016.

Stuart Barlow is a retired architect who since moving to North Shields seven years ago has become interested in the history of the town and its people, especially the hidden history of its working people. This interest has led him to be a volunteer and a Trustee of the Old Low Light Heritage Centre on the North Shields Fish Quay, where he was involved in the Breaking Chains Exhibition held there in 2019..

Brian Bennison is retired. During the first lockdown of 2020 he wrote and self-published *John Swann's Story, 1744-1885. The Reconstruction of His Life and Times in County Durham and New England from Autobiographical Reminiscence.*

Peter Brabban was born three days after the NHS was launched and grew up in the pit village of Dipton, County Durham. After a secondary modern education he went on to a career as a portrait and fashion photographer and then as a campaigner and aid worker with NGOs like Oxfam, War on Want, Age Concern and lastly with the National Trust.

John Charlton was born in Newcastle a long time ago. He worked as a high school teacher on Tyneside and West Yorkshire then at Leeds Poly and Leeds University. After thirty years as a migrant in Yorkshire he returned to the homeland twenty years ago. A lifelong political activist and optimist.

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. He has been Secretary of the Friends of Saint Ann's Church, one of Newcastle's most important Georgian churches, since 2016 and is a tutor for the Explore adult education programme in Newcastle.

Judith Green was born and brought up on Tyneside and returned from university in 1974 to take up her first job as Research Fellow with Durham University working on the Benwell Community Development Project. Since then she has continued to work as a community organiser and researcher within a variety of jobs in the voluntary sector, local government and higher education, with a continuing but not exclusive focus on the West End of Newcastle. Now retired, she works in a voluntary capacity in West Newcastle with an interest in engaging the local community in exploring and celebrating their local history.

Steve Grinter trained as a teacher and then worked for thirty five years in trade union education. Prior to retirement in 2012 Steve worked for the International Textile garment and Leather Workers' Union (ITGLWF) promoting trade union rights in global supply chains particularly in South East Asia. The ITGLWF is now part of the global trade union federation IndustriALL which is based in Geneva.

Hannah Kent graduated from Newcastle University with a First Class undergraduate degree in English Literature and History in 2019. A truncated version of her undergraduate dissertation, which won the NELHS 2020 Sid Chaplin Memorial Prize, appears in this journal. Hannah has contributed to the follow up project of the African Lives in Northern England calendar, and helped to inform Tyne and Wear Archives

and Museums and the Imperial War Museum in their Second World War and Holocaust Partnership Programme. Her full dissertation is available to read by request.

Liz O'Donnell has been a lecturer in Further and Higher Education, an outreach developer and oral historian for Northumberland Archives, and a freelance heritage consultant. She is on the committee and editorial board of the North East Labour History Society and is a research associate in the Oral History Unit at Newcastle University.

John Stirling retired as head of Social Sciences at Northumbria University and now spends his time as a Trustee of the William Morris Society and the Lipman Miliband Trust

'One Aim, One God, One Destiny'? An Investigation of Black lives in Tyneside, 1939-1952

Hannah Kent

In October 1941 the Colonial Office (CO) opened West Indies House (WIH), a hostel for West Indian seamen in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In May 1942 a second hostel, Colonial House (CH), opened in North Shields, and by December 1944 a Colonial Students' Club was in existence, a stone's throw from King's College Durham, the forerunner of Newcastle University. These developments suggest that, in the early 1940s, Tyneside emerged as a new hub of Black life in Britain. However, the reality is somewhat different. Although the exigencies of the Second World War did prompt changes in the infrastructure around them, people of African descent were already here. The 'tramp trade' which operated out of the Port of Tyne transported raw materials like coal, as well as industrially produced goods, between Tyneside and colonial ports; it was responsible for an ordinary pattern of migration and settlement between West Africa, the West Indies and the UK which persisted throughout the twentieth century.[1]

Evidence shows that in the CO hostels of Tyneside, its pre-existing Black and multi-ethnic population, Black students and Black war-workers intermingled during and after World War Two. The lives of West Indians and Africans in Britain have usually been scrutinised in separate milieux: historians have published on war-workers, intelligentsia and seamen.[2]

Tyneside's hostels allow us to examine the interactions between them. Historian Diane Frost has asked whether Liverpool's Black population can justifiably be called a 'black *community*' (emphasis mine).[3] I examine Tyneside's Black population in the 1940s to consider if a 'black community' existed here.

Black residents on Tyneside

Using terms like 'Black' can lead individuals into constructing artificial groupings, or having over-simplified understandings of the interpersonal relationships between people, based on similarities in their physical characteristics. Often, there is considerable heterogeneity within any 'Black' demographic, and this was so in 1940s Tyneside.

West Indies Merchant Seamen's hostel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, 1941. © IWM (D5765).

The Ministry of Information photograph above was taken in 1941 to publicise the arrival of West Indian war workers in Tyneside. Those particular men were actually thousands of miles away when it was taken, therefore in reality the picture shows some of Newcastle's pre-existing Black population and the diversity among them.[4] Broadly, we can say there were three distinguishable sections of Tyneside's Black population in the 1940s: seafarers (newly arrived and previously settled), university students, and war-workers.

Black Seafarers

The vast majority of North Shield's Black population in the 1940s had arrived there due to the super-exploitation of colonial labour by the British shipping Industry. Steam ships were introduced into the British merchant fleet from the 1860s and, significantly, made many of the sailing skills traditionally required in its workforce obsolete.[5] The industry no longer required experienced seamen, merely men willing to occupy the new roles of 'donkeymen', 'firemen', 'stokers' and 'greasers' needed in the stokeholds (engine rooms) to feed and maintain the coal-powered furnaces which created the steam. British trade unionism had secured the National Maritime Scale (NMS) which required all seamen to be paid the same rates when engaged on British ships in domestic British ports; no such guarantees existed for labour employed in colonial ones. Labour contracts signed at ports around the Indian Ocean or on the West African coast, known as 'Asiatic Articles' and 'West African Articles', could (and did) offer lower rates of pay, lesser accommodation, and smaller food and water rations compared with those afforded by 'Standard' articles.[6] To keep labour costs low employers sought to create closed labour loops - starting and ending in colonial ports - using these non-standard articles. The repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849 - which had required that the master of a ship and three-quarters of its crew must be (white) British - had opened the door for shipping companies to systematically engage colonial labour on this basis.[7] However, knowledge of the NMS encouraged seamen

recruited in colonial ports to 'jump ship' (break off their contracts) in British ports to secure better terms of employment, and as a result some began to domicile themselves in the UK.[8] A North Shields West Indian recalled that 'it was common to see coloured and white sailors and firemen sailing from the Tyne' at least twenty-five years before the Ministry of War Transport recruited crews of West Indian merchant seamen for war-work, making it clear that Tyneside mirrored the national picture.[9]

Settled Black seamen were not welcomed in Britain. During the First World War the proportion of Black seamen in the Merchant Marine (later the Merchant Navy) swelled exponentially as they replaced white men enlisting in the Royal Navy.[10] In 1919 - with naval crews demobbed, most of Britain's 20,000 Black people concentrated in port areas, and standard-article seamen still being undercut by (non-white) non-standard-article seamen - violence broke out in Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool, South Shields, Newport, Barry, London Hull and Salford.[11] In South Shields, white mobs of over 200 people attacked Arab property and there was sustained violence in Liverpool and Cardiff. Liverpool's events in 1919 are remembered by the descendants of Black seamen in a manner comparable to the German-Jewish memory of *Kristallnacht*.[12] Whilst West Indian and African seamen on Tyneside were not directly caught up in these 'race riots,' several moved to North Shields from ports which were, and all were subject to their legacy.[13]

As a result of 1919's seaport riots the British government sought to curb, and reverse, Black settlement. It reclassified Black British seamen as aliens by introducing and amending legislation. The 1914 Aliens Restriction Act (ARA) had compelled aliens in the UK to register with the police for a fee and to carry a Registration Certificate. It enabled their internment or deportation (particularly if destitute), restricted where they could live, and revoked the citizenship of British-born women who married them. The 1919 ARA made it compulsory to provide documentary evidence of nationality - an Alien Registration Certificate or proof of British identity - in order gain employment on British ships; The Special Restrictions

(Coloured Alien Seamen) Order 1925 (SRCASO) automatically categorised 'coloured' seamen as aliens subject to their ability to prove otherwise. Proving otherwise presented a challenge. Registering births was not a uniform practice across the Empire, particularly in Britain's newer territorial acquisitions, nor was the issuing of passports. Discharge books (an employment record carried by all seamen) were no longer accepted after 1925; some who held birth certificates, army and navy discharge papers from the First World War, British passports or single journey passports had them seized by police or employers in order to leave them undocumented.[14] SRCASO obliged many undocumented colonial Britons, threatened with unemployment, to register as aliens.[15] The British Shipping (Assistance) Act 1935 was intended to usher in the recovery of the British shipping industry (in crisis in the 1930s) by propping it up with government subsidies. It only granted money to shipping companies on the basis that first preference in recruitment should be given to (white) British seamen, that any alien seamen employed had to have been in British employment for at least five years, and, in addition, that not more than two out of every thirty-five crewmen could be aliens.[16] This amounted to exclusion from employment on subsidised ships for those holding alien status, and, as outlined above, SRCASO meant many Black seamen did.[17] As a result, the 1935 Act impoverished many Black seamen, leaving them vulnerable to the deportation allowed by earlier acts. Nevertheless, some of North Shield's Black population weathered the interwar period.

The Colonial Office and contemporaneous newspaper articles identified Tyneside's West Indian, African and multi-ethnic people as one homogeneous 'coloured' group.[18] In reality, Tyneside's West Africans were composed of several peoples - Krus, Mendes, Timnes, Ibos, Ibdbos, Yorubas, and Akan and Ga-speaking peoples from the Gold Coast - each with separate backgrounds.[19] In Freetown (Sierra Leone), where the majority of African labour was engaged for work on British ships, Kru held a socio-economic position above the majority of African working-class people. This came from their monopoly over the seafaring profession. As a result, Kru and Mende

seamen shared an antagonism over employment roughly equivalent to that between standard-article and non-standard-article labour in Britain, and their sense of separateness migrated with them to North Shields.[20]

Additionally, North Shields' Black population included men of different classes and occupations. The majority had remained as seamen, but others had used that profession as a mode of transport. In the 1940s North Shields had a Black chauffeur, a Black electrician, a Black telephone inspector and Black landlords; it had inter-ethnic couples who adopted white children, could afford holidays in the Lake District and lived with the trappings of relative opulence such as drawing room suites, carpets, pianos and radiograms.[21] The 1932 Planning Act had seen the demolition of North Shield's waterfront slums and dispersed its occupants across the town, Black and white. In the 1940s West Indians, Africans and their inter-ethnic families lived primarily in a new council estate, The Ridges, (now known as the Meadowell) and the crumbling Dockwray Square.[22]

One particular middle-class West African was the nexus of the interpersonal networks which bound Tyneside's West Indian and African diasporas together and connected them to its indigenous population.[23] Charles Udor Minto founded and became President of the International Coloured Mutual Aid Association (ICMAA), an organisation concerned with the welfare of Africans, West Indians and their families in North Shields. He also became the warden managing CH, having advocated locally for such a space.[24] He was friends with union officials, the Port Welfare Officer and councillors. He also made a habit of visiting factories, labour exchanges, shipowners and the regional

Charles Minto MBE. 'King Honours N.-E. Men in New Year List,' SEN, 7, 01.01.49.

offices of the Ministry of Labour and National Service in order to build relations with managers and regional officials who could assist with issues like Black unemployment. He was given an MBE for his work in January 1949.[25]

A prolific letter-writer, he sent the Colonial Office epistles which chastised officials if he judged them to be neglecting their duties, mass-produced others as public information pamphlets, and wrote still more inviting individuals to visit CH.[26] He had been a seaman and a cook, but having been a professional boxer (middle-weight champion of Nigeria 1915 to 1921), fighting and training local children gained him white friends and made him widely-known and respected in Tyneside across ethnic lines.[27]

Students and Professionals

However, not every Black individual in 1940s Tyneside was a seaman or an ex-seaman. The presence of King's College meant that it was also home to African and West Indies students and graduates. Their journeys to Tyneside began with Student Advisory Committees and Education Departments in Africa and the West Indies. The brightest would then have competed for scholarships and bursaries offered by colonial governments and charitable bodies, or provisioned under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act 1940, to cover maintenance costs and their passage to the UK. Subsequently, university admissions tutors used the Colonial Office's Welfare Department to obtain additional information about applicants and gave preference to scholarship students intended for government service in the colonies.[28] In line with the Colonial Office's wishes, colonial students would normally have lived in King's College's Halls of Residence during term-time, but, with a residential capacity of nine beds, alongside its public club rooms, the Colonial Students' Club offered them an alternative.[29]

These students are significant to us in terms of mapping a Black presence in Tyneside because they made up most of Newcastle's Black population. Their presence also influenced the decision to locate a West Indian Seamen's Pool, and thus WIH, in Newcastle.[30]

In terms of graduates, King's College's Medical School and Law faculty had educated at least three Africans who decided - or were compelled by the outbreak of the Second World War - to remain nearby. Siblings Irene and Robert Wellesley Cole ran a medical practice in Newcastle, while Mr Koi Obuadabang Larbi became a missioner for the British Sailors' Society (BSS).[31] Larbi's social work widened the ICMAA's network beyond the North East, gaining the attention of the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP). Dr Harold Moody (the LCP's president) visited Tyneside in May 1941 and invited the ICMAA to affiliate with his London-based organisation. In parallel to Charles Minto and working with the ICMAA, these graduates made a substantial contribution to Tyneside's Black life.[32]

Other known groups

The British Honduran Forestry Unit (BHFU) were a volunteer civilian labour corps brought to Britain from British Honduras (Belize) by the Ministry of Supply to work as foresters in six camps across Scotland. They stayed at WIH and CH whilst on leave or having absconded from their camps, and a few may have done so after September 1943, when some of the men were redeployed to the North-Eastern Railway or industrial employment on Tyneside.[33] At least one member of the BHFU remained in Tyneside after the war, and he became an engineer before illness left him in poverty.[34] There were also some unofficial war-workers: at least two men came to Britain as stowaways hoping to contribute to the war effort and join the RAF; another group, 12 Sierra Leonians, were moved to WIH from Liverpool in late 1941.[35] They were enlisted in the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC).

Colonial Rest Home: Empire Accommodation at Colonial House, North Shields,1942. © IWM (D10712)

Surveying the different individuals and groups who made up Tyneside's Black population during the 1940s, and looking at their circumstances, one thing becomes clear: this population was not homogenous. The men, and the families which some of them established, can be differentiated by their respective experiences of, and length of stay in, Britain or Tyneside; they can be divided by class and educational status, occupation, place of origin and ethnic group. Having established this, we now turn to the relationships which the CO's hostels allowed these people to strengthen or to form.

The impact of CO hostels in 1940s Tyneside

As outlined above, in the inter-war period, the Home Office had facilitated social ostracisation and economic impoverishment, but the 1940s saw a considerable increase in the Colonial Office's intervention in and contribution towards welfare work for inter-ethnic port communities.[36]

In Tyneside it opened WIH, CH and the Colonial Students' Club, with the result that it played a key part in the construction of networks involving Black people.

To summarise the nature of the hostels, WIH was planned by the Colonial Office to house members of a Shipping Pool of West Indian seamen being recruited by the Ministry of War Transport for service in the Merchant Navy.[37] However, for the first few months of its existence the CO's Welfare Department (primarily J. L. Keith and Ivor Cummings) were casting about for 'odds and ends of coloured seamen' to fill WIH's 60 beds because their arrival was delayed.[38] Welfare officers in ports across the UK were approached, and posters were dispatched to West Africa too.[39] As well as specially-recruited West Indians, the hostel went on to house other Black WI and African seamen and, controversially, white European seamen, including ones sent by the Greek Consul.[40] In contrast, CH served as a community centre for a multi-ethnic group in North Shields, although its floorplans show a small residential capacity of six beds.[41] The Colonial Students' Club opened with 'the object of forming a centre of activity' for Black colonial students. This included presenting the Colonial Office with several memoranda 'putting forward suggestions for the development and organisation of West Africa'. The Club also provided accommodation during University holidays when Halls of Residence were shut and journeys back home impractical.[42]

Perhaps the most important function of the hostels was to enable West Indians and Africans in Tyneside to build relationships in their local community. Local social centres, such as the Christian Working Men's Club and Bishopsgate House, operated a colour bar which prohibited West Indians and Africans from making use of their facilities; other places like cinemas and pubs were sites of informal segregation which Charles Minto reported to be 'worse than a [colour] bar'.[43] In 1940 an appeal for alternative provision went out: 'We the coloured people in Northumberland County' need premises in which to 'fraternise with each other,' wrote Minto, in the *Shields Evening News*.[44] 'Do the general public

realise that the coloured people do not feel at home unless they get together to discuss their own little problems and topics […]?,' he enquired.[45] One sympathetic journalist echoed Minto's words, describing West Indians and Africans as having 'a racial disability,' writing that 'they would rather tackle their own problem than seek to intrude upon' the leisure facilities of others.[46]

The Club rooms at WIH and CH allowed for a vibrant cultural calendar, and strident social action campaign, to mature, and to service the needs of inter-ethnic families and couples as well as single West Indians, Africans and their white-skinned friends. English lessons were held, particularly for West Africans to whom English was a second language; groups for the wives and widows of seamen helped combat isolation and tackle compensation issues with the Shipping Office.[47] No longer dependent on charity for space, Tyneside's Black population was able to collaborate with outside organisations on their own terms. Cinema screenings and Christmas gatherings held in conjunction with the British Council and the YMCA demonstrate that Tyneside's West Indians and Africans were not isolationist but keen to maintain links with others active in their local area.[48]

A string of well-attended dances, lectures and concerts held at CH throughout the 1940s show that there was an appetite among Tyneside's Black inter-ethnic population for a pattern of regular social gatherings. Their attendees - Black Americans, Black students, Black doctors, Black seamen, white and multi-ethnic men and women - reveal that Tyneside's hostels were places of social mixing along national, class and ethnic lines, and that Newcastle and North Shields' Black residents had a common social network.[49] Tyneside's Black population called for an extension to CH on multiple occasions, thus demonstrating its importance to them.[50]

Additionally, they used CH as a site to honour and recognise their contributions in the Second World War. A memorial service for 22 seamen lost to enemy action was held in 1944; two parties for ex-POWs, RAF and soldiers were organised in 1945; and the hostel kept a roll of honour for

those lost at sea.[51] At CH they also chose to celebrate the contribution of African servicemen generally, for example, inviting members of London's 1946 Victory Parade to a party.[52] Tyneside's Black population was enmeshed in the international British war effort.

The impact of these hostels was national and international as well as local. Their beneficiaries were used as focus groups to inform government policy-making, and throughout the 1940s the BBC recruited Africans through CH for their capacity to play African music or to provide African voices, making a series of radio programmes for transmission in West Africa, Malta, Gibraltar and other British territories.[53] These radio programmes were listened to, appreciated and created a genuine dialogue between metropole and the colonies. The Colonial Office relied on Black people resident in Britain to promote the war effort to their compatriots in other parts of the Empire.

Beyond the Colonial Office: The self-determined shaping of Black life on Tyneside

Many of Tyneside's Black residents were members of the ICMAA in the 1940s. In 1941 the Association had 126 members, but by 1949 it was claiming 'A steady membership of 10,000.'[55] The latter is either an exaggeration or an approximation of the total number of people in contact with the ICMAA since its founding - reflecting high rates of turnover in the seamen's hostels and Charles Minto's habit of travelling to ports in the North East to welcome and orientate new arrivals.[56] Nevertheless, throughout the decade the ICMAA represented a significant social organisation to which West Africans and West Indians belonged and can therefore be used as a bellwether for Tyneside's Black population as a whole. The Colonial Office kept a copy of the ICMAA's *Association Policy* on file, and by studying this document, alongside other evidence of their activities, it is possible to gain insights into the issues that Tyneside's West Indians and Africans perceived themselves to face, the beliefs they held and the ways in which they carved-out a space for themselves as a minority group.

Solidarity?

Community formation was a task that the ICMAA was keen to undertake, but this was a persistent struggle. Judging there to be common hardships shared by all Black individuals in Tyneside, the ICMAA's motto, 'One Aim, One God, One Destiny' reflects a desire for a singularity of purpose among West Indians and Africans on Tyneside, and its first aim calls for Christian solidarity.[57] But whilst the ICMAA held regular meetings to address Black grievances, it and the Black population as a whole, was plagued by intra-group antagonisms.[58]

Although rival ethnic groups existed among Tyneside's West Africans, in North Shields there emerged rivalry between individuals, friction between West Indians and West Africans, and between long-term settled people and newer or more temporary Black residents. The predecessor of the ICMAA had disintegrated spectacularly over the refusal of West Indians to accept the authority of West African committee members, and vice versa. At that time, in 1939, the *Shields Evening News* published a letter from an 'Old Member,' which asked 'who hates one another more than the coloured ourselves, and who does more harm to one another than ourselves?'[59]

The deepest division was between individuals which North Shields's Black population self-styled as 'Old-Timers' and 'New-comers'. A New-comer was someone who had moved to the area after 1939, including ex-BHFU men, WI seamen and stowaways that arrived during the Second World War.[60] The singling out of the New-comers, and the term itself, suggests that they were never fully integrated with, or accepted by, the pre-existing Black population of North Shields. Old-Timers often acted as a social police force to defend 'the good name of the coloured people,' with the implication being that New-comers compromised this. Old-Timers rationalised all incidences of racial discrimination as the consequence of the New-comers' arrival and behaviour.[61] North Shields' Old-Timers exhibited nativism in Britain; some of them seem to have valued the esteem of North Shields' white population more highly than any intra-Black unity.

In 1952 a researcher wrote that Tyneside's Black population could not be called a community. By this time, both the ICMAA and an Athletic Club had been dissolved, and WIH and CH shut. This suggests that the social groupings convened by the ICMAA and the Athletic Club were artificial. It suggests that outside them, no large-scale natural affinities existed, or persisted, between members, and that the reality of 'black community' in Tyneside was heavily dependent on formal social organisation and the provision of space.[62]

Social concerns

Families were a key concern of Tyneside's Black population, particularly the funding for children's academic and vocational training. The majority of Tyneside's multi-ethnic children did not have affluent backgrounds. Some lived in acute poverty. A letter from Minto to the Colonial Office described how, in 1941, an inspector from the Tyneside Council for Social Services (TCSS) referred the children of a Mrs Watkins to the ICMAA as an 'emergency case'. The ICMAA provided the children with a basic set of clothing including underwear, shoes and nightwear. However, Minto's letter also suggests that if the Watkins family was an 'emergency case,' theirs was not isolated. These children were just 'one case last week' - there were others, and on a regular basis. The ICMAA instituted a system of long-term support for some families, providing clothing to children between the ages of five and fourteen; it is possible that the ICMAA worked alongside TCSS on a systematic basis.[63]

The ICMAA saw education as incredibly important, and thus problems like non-attendance at school were met with targeted action. In 1941 the school-leaving age was 14 and in Tyneside the secondary-age children of many inter-ethnic families were in work rather than education. This is unsurprising. Family living standards could be raised with an additional household income. In a scheme which was designed to get children out of the workplace and into the classroom, the ICMAA, in partnership with the American Red Cross and Tynemouth Education Authority, began

making payments to parents who sent their children to secondary school; this payment compensated parents for the wage which could have been earned.[64] In this way the ICMAA placated any parental opposition and provided opportunities which allowed the children of West Indians and Africans to side-step the skills-related employment barriers of some of their parents.[65]

The results of ICMAA intervention are evident from their success stories. By 1949 there was full employment amongst North Shield's multi-ethnic young people. There was a trend away from maritime employment for men; and women were no longer confined entirely to domestic service. Of the men there were three industrial apprentices, a miner, a farmer, a bus driver, six seamen-firemen, a ship's steward and a trainee marine engineer; of the women, three trainee nurses, a window dresser and a scholarship entrant to secretarial college.[66] Where employment discrimination arose, as when two girls seeking work in a fish factory were refused on racial grounds, the ICMAA had found that they could successfully challenge it; here a solicitor's help was enlisted and the girls taken on.[67] The ICMAA therefore played a significant role in giving a generation of Tyneside's Black population more social mobility than their parents had enjoyed.

The seaport violence of 1919 and 1930 had left Tyneside's West Indians and Africans fearful of similar events, but it is apparent that this did not deter them from seeking personal and professional relationships with white-skinned people. By 1949 there were twenty inter-ethic families living in North Shields and an additional eighteen inter-ethnic couples; white men and women were invited to, and attended Black-organised events; and the ICMAA could rely on a committed group of white supporters.[68]

Tyneside's Black population actively sought links to influential, primarily white, figures in the local area. The headed notepaper of the ICMAA lists an ex-Mayor, four magistrates, a graduate, a councillor, four clergymen, a doctor and a union official among the association's patrons, and other sources make it clear that these persons of spiritual authority, civil leadership, and learning were supplemented by others such as the

Town Clerk.[69] Charles Minto's connections were also responsible for keeping the lesser misdemeanours of West Indians and Africans out of the courts, and allowing him to act as an advocate and interpreter in cases involving Black individuals.[70] The fact that local white people nominally and practically lent their support to the work of the ICMAA, and gave them positions of trust, makes it clear that inter-ethnic collaboration was a part of North Shields life.

All these things make it apparent that Tyneside's minority Black and majority white population experienced a nuanced relationship. On Tyneside in the 1940s, 'race' was not the non-issue which Barry Carr reported it to be but racism did not prevent West Indians, Africans, white people and their families from living cheek-by-jowl, nor from having friendships and romantic or professional relationships. In some cases, racial discrimination was even the catalyst for the forging of individual relationships and personal networks.[71] Poverty and factionalism may have been significant features of Black life in 1940s Tyneside, but self-organisation lent West Indians and Africans considerable agency in the fight against them.

Conclusion

The personal networks of West Indians, Africans and their children demonstrate that in Tyneside Black and white history are inseparable. This article seeks to include the racial stratification of labour in the shipping industry and the other structural and social manifestations of racial discrimination which Tyneside's West Indians and Africans experienced, as well as their efforts towards self-organisation to combat these. It also demonstrates that inter-ethnic collaboration was at the heart of Black life in Tyneside in the 1940s. Minto and Larbi's dynamism made them exceptional figures in the arena of race relations and Black social welfare in Tyneside and - in the Andersons, the Hills, Tyneside's Mayors, the CO Welfare department etc - theirs was a partnership with committed and willing local and national officials, Black and white. Tyneside hosted

several communities of which Black people were a part, but these were never solely or singly a 'black community.' The CO's hostels were the connecting thread between them.

A Note on Language

In the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s the word 'coloured' was a polite term in Britain used to describe people with non-white skin; in Tyneside at that time it was one with which West Indians, Africans and their children self-identified. In this paper I have used the word 'Black' consistently to refer to people of African descent born in British colonies in West Africa and the West Indies, and occasionally to their British-born multi-ethnic children as well. Black is capitalised to indicate that it is not being used in a derogatory manner. The term 'multi-ethnic' has been used to describe children who have one (Black) West Indian or African parent and one white-skinned parent, and the term 'race' is never used to endorse pseudo-scientific racial theories. Every effort has been made to avoid microaggressions; if any persist I offer my sincere apologies.

Finally, the set of prejudices and discriminatory practices meted out to individuals on the basis of their ethnicity, and in particular non-white skin colour, which we know today as 'racism,' was referred to as manifestations of 'the colour bar' for most of the twentieth century.

Notes

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3 Frost, p. 189.

4 The National Archives (TNA): CO 859/76/4, Cummings to Keith, 27 December, 1941.

5 Laura Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 47-48.

6 Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London: Routledge, 200), p. 83; Frost, pp. 59-60.
7 Costello, p. 35.
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12 Costello, p. 157. Richard I. Lawless, *From Ta'izz to Tyneside: An Arab Community in the North-East of England during the Early Twentieth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), pp. 79-81.
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14 Tabili, pp. 121-22; Costello, p. 144.
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16 Little, p. 95.
17 Tabili, p. 82.
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20 Frost, pp. 76-77. Collins, p. 81.
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23 Collins, p. 85.
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27 Discover North Tyneside: Minto Surname file, Charles Minto obituary clipping, SEN, 15 April, 1960. Junius, 'Youth News', *SEN*, 30 September, 1941. TNA: 1939 Register, RG 101/2950B1939. J. G .F. Peart, 'Sportsstalking', SEN, 07 September,

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'A Bridge Across The Seas': The Newcastle Migration Hostels for Boys and Young Women, 1927-1932.

Liz O'Donnell

Introduction

On 28 June 1927, a Boys' Migration Hostel, intended to prepare boys for farm work in Canada and Australia, was opened by Lord Lovat, the Under-Secretary of State for the Dominions, in a former police station in Newcastle. Lauded as 'the first municipally-aided training scheme in England for helping unemployed young men', of obvious benefit to a region suffering one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, it would surely also be welcomed by their destinations: 'The Dominions have plenty of openings on the land for the young manhood of the Old Country, and we shall be serving them well, along with ourselves, if we supply the labour required'.[1] Less than two years later a hostel to train young women for domestic service overseas opened its doors in the city to similar acclaim, Yet by the early 1930s, despite worsening unemployment, both hostels were on the brink of closure. This article examines the establishment, operation and demise of the two establishments.

The 1922 Empire Settlement Act

In 1905, Salvation Army founder General William Booth described overseas migration as

> [A] bridge across the seas as it were, to some land of plenty over which there should constantly be passing…our surplus population, instead of its melancholy gravitation, as at present, down to the filthy slums, the hated workhouses, the cruel casual wards..'.[2]

His words encapsulate both the long-term ideological roots and the short-term political origins of government migration policy in the early twentieth century. For Booth, migration as a vehicle to rescue slum dwellers, transporting them to 'some land of plenty', untainted by the corruption of cities, was at the forefront; for the British government, the goal was more the exportation of the 'surplus population' to its colonies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (redefined as the Dominions from 1926), especially during periods of high unemployment. Booth's image of a 'bridge across the seas' emphasised the close links with the colonies which migration schemes would strengthen, safeguarding the security of overseas markets and supply of raw materials, defusing class conflict at home, and guaranteeing the predominance of British migrants to promote racial and cultural solidarity within the Empire.[3]

Before the First World War, British governments were reluctant to promote migration officially, preferring to leave it to individual or philanthropic efforts. Dr Barnado's, the Boy Scouts, the Salvation Army and other churches were all involved, especially in child migration. Locally, Boards of Guardians used charities to send Poor Law children overseas, as did the Home Office, authorised through the Reformatory and Industrial Schools Act. These ventures were largely suspended during the war but interest was rekindled afterwards in the context of escalating unemployment, culminating in the 1922 Empire Settlement Act (ESA). It

was the first time the British government had backed large-scale migration directly, through an Overseas Settlement Committee and in cooperation with overseas governments, shipping companies and charities. £3m a year for 13 years was allocated to subsidise agreed migration schemes, to fund assisted passages, land settlement projects, and training courses in general farm work and domestic service, the two main areas of employment where workers were in high demand. This was the context in which the Newcastle hostels were launched.

Opening of the Newcastle Boys' Migration Hostel, 28 June 1927. Teresa Merz is the first women on the left, to her right Lord Lovat, the Lady Mayoress and Lord Mayor Arthur Lambert. By kind permission of Simon Pringle.

The younger the migrants, the more likely they were, it was argued, to adapt to their new lives, but although child emigration to Australia continued until 1967, a series of scandals had led Canada to virtually

cease unaccompanied migration of children under school-leaving age (then fourteen years). Juvenile migration became the focus of a small group of interested citizens in Newcastle, led by Colonel Hudson of Otterburn, Teresa Merz, a wealthy volunteer social worker, and the Mayor of Newcastle, Arthur Lambert. In May 1927 they launched an appeal for donations to establish a hostel to prepare boys aged 14 to 19 for farm work in the Dominions. 'One of the greatest problems facing the community today', they wrote, were the 'thousands of youths in our midst who are growing up… without having learned any trade whatever…(or) never even done any work', who were fated to 'swell the miserable ranks of the unemployable….(with) one prospect in life,… to be "street corner", "blind alley" men'. 'To be brief,' they concluded, 'we have too many here for the work in hand. They want them over there. We are all of one family'.[5]

Groups of 50 boys, of good character and health, would live in the hostel for 10-12 weeks, going out to farms or stables each morning to receive instruction in general farm work and care of animals.[6] In the evenings, equipment was available for training in milking, carpentering, boot-mending, harness-repairing and physical exercise, with lectures given by Armstrong College staff, and each boy taking his turn at house duties.

By late August 1927 the first batch of 47 trainees had 'graduated'. Before setting out for Canada or Australia, they were entertained to tea by the Sheriff of Newcastle. Miss Merz presented each boy with a bible and a knife and the Mayor delivered an inspirational message:

> You have the opportunity of planting your heels firmly on British soil just at the time of your lives when the opportunity is most valuable, and you have the satisfaction of knowing that though you are going to a far land, it is yet only another room in the British Empire. We know you are going with the resolve never to let old Newcastle down. One of the proudest things a Britisher knows is that his word stands all over the world. Live up to that.[7]

Newspaper coverage of life in the hostel included accounts of community singing in the hostel (the Mayor on piano), 'delightful gifts' of books, magazines and games for the boys' leisure time, and a stream of official visitors to see the scheme in action. Major-General Sir Granville Ryrie, High Commissioner for Australia, for example, visited in December 1927. '[T]he more settlers Australia is able to take,' he announced, 'the less unemployment will there be here. And further, these new settlers all become purchasers of British goods to the extent of £11 per annum. It is all for the good of the Empire'.[9]

Visitors interested in setting up similar programmes included the Mayor of Leeds and the head of the Migration Department at Boy Scouts headquarters in London, who was impressed by the 'new rubber milking instructor, which he thought really good, although a visionary hoof might give the young dairy farmer a "smack of reality"!'[9] Approval emanated from the very highest level; Teresa Merz was awarded an OBE 'For services in connection with the Newcastle Hostel for training boys for overseas settlement' in June 1928, and in January 1929, The Prince of Wales included a visit to the hostel as part of his three-day fact-finding tour of the 'stricken' northern coalfields.[10]

Out of 229 boys with an average age of 16 admitted in the first year, 149 emigrated (69 to Canada, 80 to Australia), 30 of whom were former colliery workers, 30 unemployed apprentices, 20 who had never worked and 69 engaged in 'blind alley' work.[11] 30 were rejected as medically or otherwise unsuitable, and there were 50 boys in the hostel in June 1928. Half the funding was provided under the ESA, the remainder coming from Newcastle Board of Guardians (10s a week for each boy whose parents were on outdoor relief), the Ministry of Pensions (for the sons of Great War veterans) and organisations such as the Miners' Welfare Fund, the British Legion, the Rotary Club, and each local council which referred boys to the hostel. There were contributions in kind from various firms as well as individual subscriptions, while members of the National Farmers' Union and Armstrong College lecturers donated their time to

train the lads. Henry Hunter, of Manor Farm, Kenton, found the trainees 'respectful, obliging and eager to learn'; it was a pity they had to leave, but 'our loss is a gain to the Colonies'. He urged them not to miss 'this great opportunity to…reap the golden harvest of prosperity'.

'Girls at home, doing nothing'.

The success of the boys' hostel and the decision by the Ministry of Labour and the Canadian government to subsidise four residential training centres to prepare women for domestic work in the Dominions prompted the indefatigable Miss Merz to seek support for one in Newcastle. 'I come across a number of girls at home, doing nothing, whose parents are on PL (Poor Law) relief', she wrote to the Clerk of Newcastle Board of Guardians, claiming that there were approximately 3,000 single women on unemployment benefit and over 6,000 on poor relief in Northumberland and Durham, many the daughters of miners who had had no occupational training.[13]

75% of the costs were paid by the government under their Houseworker Training Scheme. The Guardians agreed to fund female trainees on poor relief at the same rate paid for poor law boys, and Newcastle Education Committee provided an annual grant of £75 (£150 having been granted to the boys' hostel), subject to six places being reserved for committee nominees. Even the Northumberland Girl Guides' Association donated £5 to the new hostel.[14] The young women must be aged 18-35, single or childless widows.

The first trainees entered Harden, an 'airy sunny house in a large garden' in the Newcastle suburb of Benton, on 10 December 1928.[15] They received free board and lodging for eight weeks, 1s a week pocket money, free passage overseas and a guaranteed placement when they arrived. As well as doing all the housework in the hostel - cooking and serving meals, laundry and cleaning - the trainees sewed their own outfits of green frocks and white aprons, which they could keep when they left for overseas, and had lessons in domestic subjects by experienced teachers, which included cooking by four methods: electricity, gas, wood and coal.

Officially opening the hostel in February 1929, Mrs Amery, the wife of the Secretary of State for the Dominions, acknowledged that parents might find the prospect of their daughters' migration daunting:

> There is reluctance, natural enough, among parents to permit their daughters to embark upon such an enterprise…There are far waters to cross, the seas divide…but if parents could be persuaded to regard the waters as a link between themselves and daughters prospering and happy, still under the British flag, the thought of parting might not be so fearsome.[16]

Life and Work Overseas

In September 1929, Arthur Ponsonby, then Under-Secretary for the Dominions and Chairman of the Oversea Settlement Committee, paid a brief visit to the Newcastle hostels. He asked whether the migrants kept in touch and Teresa Merz replied that about 20 per cent did. Quotations from their letters were used to publicise the scheme, but, she added 'smilingly', 'the Press are keener to use the letters of the unsatisfactory type'.[17]

It is little wonder that the committee was wary of bad publicity. In September 1929, John Wilson, aged 15, was found dead at his placement with a bullet wound to his temple after only two months in Canada.[18] The hostel Superintendent described him as 'a fine cheery lad [who]…went away in splendid spirits,' but although a witness claimed the weapon had been accidentally discharged while John was looking down the barrel, and a fellow hostel boy claimed John had been happier in Canada than he had been in England, the inquest delivered a verdict of 'death by suicide'. At least one other boy is known to have committed suicide within months of his arrival in Canada.[19] Such stories could quickly bring the scheme into disrepute.

A lack of systematic records of individual trainees makes it difficult to know what happened to them. The names of 18 boys who trained at the hostel were found, several in the minutes of the hostel's Board of Management, including three deported from Canada after being jailed

for vagrancy in December 1929.[20] One of them, 17 year old William Melton, had only arrived in Quebec that August but absconded from his placement almost immediately. Even after a month in jail he refused to do any more farm work and by November he was back in Britain. Other hostel boys experienced imprisonment; George Blair was named in the Newcastle Board of Guardians' minutes in July 1929 after serving six months for shop breaking before being deported back to England.[21] He had been in Canada for just over a year.

The fates of six boys referred to the hostel by the Guardians in late 1927 and early 1928 raise questions about the overall efficacy of the scheme.[22] Because they were still minors, the Canadian government oversaw the boys' progress, recording the details on report cards.[23] Two 15 year olds, Henry Hall and Norman Heslop travelled with 46 other juvenile migrants on the SS Montclare from Liverpool to St John, New Brunswick in January 1928. Hall's card shows that he completed his stint under government oversight without incident; no more is known about him. Heslop, although 'a real good boy and doing A1', did not stay in Canada, returning to Liverpool on the SS Minnedosa in January 1931. He paid his own passage and his intention was to stay in England permanently.

Michael Lamb and Robert Airlie, both 14, journeyed with a Catholic Emigration Association party on the SS Montrose in March 1928, heading initially for the St George's Home in Ottawa. They received favourable reports: 'Good progress and character' (Lamb) and 'A good worker' (Airlie). In May 1935 Lamb was described as a janitor when he married, so had not stuck with farming. Two months before that, Airlie had called at the Department of Immigration in Ottawa, asking to return to 'the old country'. No further information about him could be found.

James Ward, 17, who was referred to the hostel in November 1927, cannot be found on any passenger list or report card, so must have left the course before completion. The sixth boy, Charles Edward Cursons, had lived with his widowed mother in Newcastle's west end, working as a coal hawker for 4s a week, no doubt classed as a 'blind alley' job. He had ambitions to go

to Australia, but instead travelled to Canada on the SS Montcalm in March 1928, destined for the British Immigration and Colonisation Association Hostel on Osborne St., Montreal, a distribution home for boy juvenile immigrants. Five years later, Cursons was heading back home in disgrace, deported after a stretch in the Ontario Reformatory, for forgery.

Out of the six poor law boys sent by the Board of Guardians to the hostel in late 1927 and early 1928, therefore, one left the course, two returned after no more than five years (and another wanted to), one became a janitor and the whereabouts of the sixth is unknown. Unsurprisingly, extracts from letters sent by the boy migrants quoted in the Annual Reports tell a different story. In April 1928, 'WL' wrote from Queensland, Australia, thanking Miss Merz for her letter, 'as it shows that you have not forgotten the old boys from the Hostel'.[24] After working on a banana plantation for three months, he was now employed on a large dairy farm, with 150 cows milked by machine, 'so you see I have a very interesting job, one that I like very much'; he was now saving towards his own farm. By 1931, brothers Victor and Lewis Grant Cruikshank, who migrated to Queensland in 1927 and 1929 respectively, had been successful in the Government Land Ballot for 770 acres and could even afford to spend £200 on farm equipment.[25] They were doing so well that their parents sailed to join them the following year.

A group of boy migrants setting out to Canada (No date). By kind permission of Simon Pringle.

Finding out what happened to the young women who trained at the Benton hostel is even more difficult, very few being named in the records. 18 year old Jennie Lowe was the very first trainee to enter, having previously worked in a rope factory. Her initial destination was the Canadian Women's Hostel in Montreal. She was one of the first twelve 'graduates', the others being bound for Australia on the SS Orama; the party included three sisters from Ashington.[26] In September 1929, Rosalind Blevins of Wallsend (also 18) was one of twelve sailing to Australia; her sister Olive was already working as a domestic in Sydney and brother William employed on a sugar plantation in Queensland. Their mother hoped to join them before Christmas, making emigration a 'family adventure', according to a local paper, although not, apparently, a lasting one for Rosalind, who arrived back at the Port of London from Brisbane on 1 January 1931.[27]

The Orama party, destined for Australia, July 1929. Teresa Merz is standing, 4th from the right. By kind permission of Simon Pringle.

Opponents of Juvenile Migration.

At the official opening of the hostel, Lord Lovat praised the co-operation between municipal, farming and private interests in getting the scheme off the ground. 'This union of town and country, and of people of all political beliefs, shows that this scheme is founded on a solid basis', he declared, making Newcastle a model for other parts of the country.[28] Support and interest came from all quarters, with few voices raised in opposition. 'The attraction of Empire migration and settlement as part of a greater imperial economic and welfare strategy', according to Constantine, 'remained self-evident to many commentators in the UK between the wars'.[29]

Newcastle Labour Councillor William Locke, who represented Byker, however, was 'bitterly opposed' to juvenile migration.[30] Another councillor objected to sending the 'very pick of the nation' away; they should be kept at home to improve British agriculture.[31] His view echoed that expressed in Parliament during debates on the ESA. John Brotherton, Labour MP for Gateshead, asked why the government was intent on sending people away; organise national resources for peaceful production as they been had for destructive purposes during war. Neil MacLean (Labour, Govan) agreed: 'We spend £150 to put people out of the country and for half that sum you could put people on the land in this country'.[32] The Peebles Labour MP, J Westwood, political organiser for the Scottish miners, strongly denounced schemes sending young lads and girls to do farm work abroad: 'We should seek to cultivate our own lands, rather than send our people to barren lands abroad'. The attitude of the British labour movement towards migration schemes, argues Constantine, was 'variable but generally sceptical and sometimes hostile'; it was viewed by many as a way for governments to avoid extending state welfare provision.[33]

Opposition to juvenile migration also came from the intended destination, especially trade unionists, who suspected that, with many migrants leaving agriculture and heading for work in urban centres, wages would be driven down.[34] James Walsh, a Canadian delegate to the 1925 Trades Union Congress, said that while his members were not opposed to

immigration, they wanted people to know what hardship they would face in their early years, before they could 'expect to pick their ripe apples and oranges'. Two years later, a cable from the Australasian Council of Trade Unions to Ramsay MacDonald went further, warning against migration because there was not enough work, a situation that worsened considerably after the 1929 Wall Street Crash.[35]

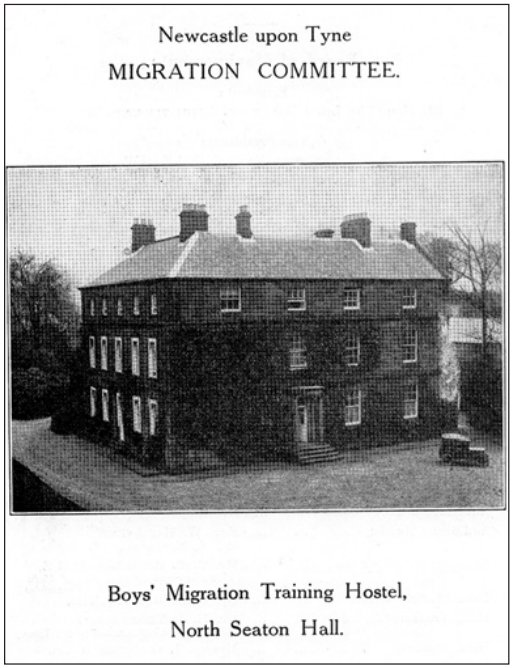
The governments of Canada and Australia, both at federal and state level, insisted on controlling the selection and numbers of migrants.[36] Those arriving on assisted or free passages from industrial blackspots were viewed unfavourably: surely they must be physically and mentally weaker, than those who arrived through their own efforts? Criminality, immorality, or anything that could result in someone becoming a burden to the state, such as physical impairment, could result in deportation, and it is certainly the case that more assisted than unassisted migrants ended up being deported back to the 'mother country'.[37]

'An invigorating outdoor life': The Move to North Seaton Hall.

In early 1930, the boys' hostel moved from the city to North Seaton Hall in Northumberland, a large house set in 25 acres of land. This would give trainees the 'opportunity to learn farm work in all its branches first hand, while living an invigorating outdoor life in an atmosphere unsullied by the works of man'.[38] The risk of infectious disease outbreaks would decrease, and with more training done on site, travel costs to farms would reduce.

The pamphlet published for the official opening of the new premises on 14 March included some impressive statistics. Out of 566 trainees, 170 had migrated to Australia and 270 to Canada.[39] 77 boys left without completing the course, discharged because of ill health, refusal to work, or failure to pass tests set by the dominion governments, and 49 were currently in residence. These numbers concealed serious financial difficulties, however, which would only worsen as the Depression reduced the Dominions' demand for workers. The Board of Management had already had to secure an overdraft to finance the move to North Seaton

Hall and 'Miss Merz kindly promised to endeavour to secure private subscriptions'. These were urgently needed as other sources of financial support for the hostel were being reduced or withdrawn altogether. The British Legion, for example, discontinued grants for sons of ex-servicemen in April 1930. Meanwhile, the reduction of sailings to Canada meant that the boys were stuck in the hostel for longer than the twelve weeks allowed in the funding model, but the Overseas Settlement Department refused to increase the government contribution to account for this. By summer 1930, with only 27 boys in the hostel, migrant schemes in Canada were completely suspended and severe restrictions on migrants imposed by Australia.[40]



Pamphlet issued on the hostel's move to North Seaton Hall, March 1930. With kind permission of Simon Pringle.

A group of local Migration Committees in northern England decided to coordinate efforts to keep training hostels open and revive the migration movement.[41] Proposals to shut hostels were resisted because closure, it was felt, would make reopening highly unlikely, so it was agreed to keep them open on a 'care and maintenance' basis. The Newcastle Migration Committee proposed that Public Assistance Authorities in Northumberland should send boys to the hostel to train for agricultural work at home, but this must have been unsuccessful, because by 1932, organised groups of holidaymakers from deprived areas were enjoying the facilities of North Seaton Hall.[42]

The Demise of the Women's Hostel.

A letter in the Blyth News in February 1930 asked why Northumbrian girls were so reluctant to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Newcastle hostel.[43] The author had met several young women, happy and earning good wages, at the Women's Hostel in Toronto. 'One lass, age 18, from Gateshead, previously a factory worker,' was now earning 35s a week plus board and lodging, presumably an attractive amount. Three others, it was claimed, had been able to return home for long holidays, their passage paid for by their employers. But despite glowing reports of the hostel's work in the press and high unemployment locally, it was more of a struggle to fill the spaces than for the boys' hostel, probably because of the unpopularity of domestic work. In April 1930, advertisements were placed in papers outside the region offering inexperienced women free training at Harden.[44]

The four women's training hostels in operation, including Newcastle, were not viewed favourably in Canada. Between 1928 and 1930, only 506 trainees were accepted and the vast majority left domestic service well before meeting an agreed one-year commitment.[45] From the migrants' point of view, there is evidence that many felt that life in the Dominions had been misrepresented to them. Promises of less arduous work, higher wages, and a more egalitarian way of life were not necessarily being fulfilled;

they often found themselves in isolated rural homesteads, working long hours with little privacy, while the 'romantic notion that young British women would find a virile Canadian mate and breed a future Empire race must have seemed a bitter farce to most'.[46] Many preferred work in hospitals or hotels, or better still as shop assistants, clerks or waitresses, and it was strongly suspected that some used the scheme to obtain free passage with no intention of settling for a life of domestic servitude.

Complaints in Canada about the quality of the young women and the adequacy of their training included their inability to prepare food common overseas, such as grapefruits, oranges and tomatoes; to try to overcome this, copies of the *Canadian Cook Book* by Nellie Lyle Pattinson were sent to the hostels.[47] When, in the summer of 1929, a delegation from the Canadian Women's Division of the Department of Emigration and Colonisation came to Britain on a tour of inspection, they found the Newcastle trainees had gone on strike to protest against the matron's habit of serving week-old leftovers, and that half the *Canadian Cook Books* had been stolen. They concluded that recruits from disadvantaged urban areas were lazy, immoral, and therefore unsuitable as servants.[48] Even the 'better type' of girl was accused of the 'British characteristics' of aversion to hard work and inability to adapt.[49]

In 1930 the Canadian government withdrew from the scheme, and by the end of that year both Canada and Australia stopped offering free passages for domestic workers. Unemployment in Canada led to public opposition to the importation of labour, and employment prospects were no better in Australia, where, in April 1932, the Daily Herald reported that because of the lack of work, women and girls were sleeping in Sydney parks, 'on the streets, living a life of shame', having 'sold their virtue,' after falling for 'extravagant, misleading, and, in many cases, indubitably false' promises of a better life.[50]

To keep the Newcastle hostel open, it was decided to train domestic workers for the home job market. There were openings in hotels and boarding houses for trained domestics, so courses of 8 to 10 weeks in

general housework, cookery and laundry were offered, with situations guaranteed after training. Trainees (including girls as young as 16) received free travel from their homes to the hostel, free board and lodging, 2s 6d pocket money a week, and the material to make an outfit. It would be 'a splendid opportunity of qualifying for the best type of domestic employment', but how long the women's training hostel continued is not known.[51]

Conclusion.

The ESA vision of millions of migrants resettled in a 'Greater Britain' was not fulfilled. With only about 130,000 Canadian migrants assisted under the Act between 1922 and 1935 (about double that number went to Australia in the same period), less than half the budget was actually spent.[52] The Newcastle hostels were doomed almost before they had begun. Imperial ideology was a powerful motivation on both sides, to preserve British values and exclude non-Europeans, but the needs and interests of Britain and the Dominions were not always complementary, especially when the latter suspected they were being used as a dumping-ground for 'dole-spoilt loungers'.[53] 'Economics could (and often did) trump ethnicity', writes Fedorowich, and so Dominion governments prioritised the needs of their own populations before those of the 'mother country', notwithstanding their desire to combat the degenerative influence of 'foreign' cultures.[54]

When assessing the success of juvenile migration schemes in this period, what are largely missing are the voices of the migrants themselves. Undoubtedly some would have been escaping desperate poverty to prosper in their new surroundings, and yet even among the rosy pictures disseminated through Annual Reports, a 'lurking sense of displacement and longing for England' can be detected.[55]. '[M]y boss is stone deaf,' wrote a boy from Ontario, 'he cannot hear a thing, and it makes it hard for me to work with him', hinting at the isolation he must have felt, while 'TWH' wrote in March 1931 that 'when I have a bit more money saved up I am coming home to see my mother and father, also my brother

and friends'.[56] Although few of the boys were as young as 14 (16 was the average age on migration), they were after all being removed from everything familiar to be sent thousands of miles into the unknown, well before they reached adulthood.

1 *Newcastle Journal*, 15 June 1927, p.3; 28 June 1927, p .8.
2 Quoted in Keith Williams, '"A way out of our troubles": the politics of Empire settlement, 1900-1922', in Stephen Constantine (ed), *Emigrants and Empire. British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 22.
3 See Stephen Constantine, 'Introduction', in Constantine (ed), pp. 1-21 for the background to migration in the interwar period.
4 Sir Arthur W Lambert, *Northumbria's Spacious Year*, 1929 (Newcastle upon Tyne: Andrew Reid and Co. Ltd 1930), p. 9.
5 *Newcastle Journal*, 27 May 1927, p. 10.
6 *Newcastle upon Tyne* Boys' Migration Training Hostel (MTH) 1st Annual Report (AR), July 1927-June 1928, Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS) 604/203, p. 1.
7 Newspaper cutting, 31 August 1927, in scrapbook belonging to Teresa Merz (Scrapbook), the property of Simon Pringle.
8 *Newcastle Journa*l, 24 Sept 1927, p.9 ; 15 Dec 1927, p.10.
9 *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer (Yorkshire Post)*, 16 Jan 1928, p.13; Scrapbook, 18 Feb 1928.
10 Scrapbook [nd]; *Yorkshire Post*, 30 Jan 1929, p.9.
11 MTH, 1st AR, p.2.
12 Janice Gothard, '"The healthy, wholesome British domestic girl": single female migration and the Empire Settlement Act, 1922-1930', in Constantine (ed), p. 86. The other hostels were in London, Cardiff and Glasgow.
13 Material relating to Women's Migration Hostel, 1928-29, in Newcastle Poor Law Guardians (PLG), TWAS 359/437.
14 *Newcastle Journal*, 21 Dec 1928, p. 3; 5 Dec 1928, p. 4.
15 Scrapbook, January 1929.
16 Scrapbook, 22 February 1929.
17 *Newcastle Journal*, 17 Sept 1929
18 Newcastle Journal, 17 Sept 1929, 22 Sept 1928, p. 9
19 Jeremiah Cassidy, born in Gateshead in 1912, hanged himself in a barn in May 1930, after only 8 months in Canada.
20 Minutes of Hostel Board of Management, 6 December 1929, found in Material relating to Newcastle Migration Committee (NMC), in PLG, TWAS 359/438.
21 As above, 4 July 1929, TWAS 359/436.
22 Genealogical data and ships' passenger lists were found on Ancestry (https://www.ancestry.co.uk/ accessed February-March 2021).

23 Department of Immigration: Juvenile Inspection Reports (c. 1913-1932). https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_mikan_161388 [accessed March 2021].
24 1st AR, p. 7.
25 3rd AR, April 1929-March 1931., TWAS 604/204, p. 5.
26 Scrapbook (nd).
27 Scrapbook, 11 Sept 1929.
28 *Newcastle Journal*, 29 June 1927, p. 9.
29 Constantine, 'Introduction', in Constantine (ed), p. 10.
30 Scrapbook (nd). He was reluctantly persuaded to represent the Education Committee on the Migration Committee.
31 *Proceedings of the Council of the City and County of Newcastle upon Tyne for 1927-1928* (Newcastle: J Dowling and Sons, 1928), p. 667.
32 *Daily Herald*, 28 March 1923, p. 2.
33 Constantine, 'Introduction', p. 15.
34 Michele Langfield, 'Voluntarism, Salvation, and Rescue: British Juvenile Migration to Australia and Canada, 1890-1939', in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 32:2 (2004), p.94.
35 *Daily Herald*, 11 Sept 1925, p .6; 2 December 1927, p .6.
36 Constantine, 'Introduction', p. 12
37 Kent Fedorowich, 'Restocking the British World: Empire Migration and Anglo-Canadian Relations, 1919-30', Britain and the World (2016), 9:2, p. 263
38 *Blyth News and Ashington Post (Blyth News)*, 20 March 1930, p. 5
39 *Newcastle upon Tyne Migration Committee: Opening of Boys' Migration Training Hostel, North Seaton Hall, Newbiggin by the Sea,* TWAS 604/212
40 Material relating to NMC, in PLG, 6 March 1930, TWAS 359/438; 25 July 1930
41 *Shipley Times and Express*, 15 August 1931, p. 2
42 Material relating to NMC, in PLG, 25 July 1930, TWAS 359/438; BNAP, 28 July 1932, p.4. In the later 1930s, the Tyneside Council of Social Services used the property for camps for the unemployed and from April 1936 it was used as an all-year round camp school for schoolchildren from poor families.
43 *Blyth News*, 27 Feb 1930, p. 2
44 The newspapers were the *Shipley Times, the Grantham Journal* and the *Hull Daily Mail.*
45 Paula Hamilton and B W Higman, 'Servants of Empire: the British training of domestics for Australia', in *Social History*, 28:1 {2003), p. 71
46 Gothard, p.81; John A Schultz, '"Leaven for the Lump": Canada and Empire Settlement, 1918-1939', in Constantine (ed), p. 163
47 Rebecca Mancuso, '"Give Me A Canadian": Gender Identity and Training Hostels for British Domestics for Canada, 1927 - 1930', in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38:4 (2010), p. 609. Trainees had also been instructed on cleaning old fashioned stiff short fronts and starched collars, which were rarely worn in the Dominions.
48 As above, p. 613; p. 609.

49 As above, p. 601.
50 *Daily Herald*, 13 April 1932, p. 3.
51 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 29 April 1931, p. 5; 20 May 1931, p. 5.
52 Schultz, p. 168.
53 Rebecca Mancuso, 'Work "Only a Woman Can Do": The Women's Division of the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization, 1920-1937', in *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 35:4 (2005), p.612.
54 Fedorowich, p.238.
55 Daniel Vallance, 'Child Immigrants to the "Edge of Empire": Fairbridge Child Migrants and British Columbia's Quest for the Construction of the "White Man's Province"', unpublished MA dissertation (University of British Columbia, 2013), p.39.
56 1st AR, p.8; 3rd AR, p.6.

Children of the Revolution: Child Labour in Newcastle's Iron and Glass Industries, c1830-1850

Mike Greatbatch

In the spring and summer of 1841, John Roby Leifchild visited a number of Tyneside manufactories in his role as a Sub-Commissioner charged with gathering evidence on the employment and condition of children in mines and manufacturing.[1] This evidence was published by Parliament in 1842, as the Report of the Children's Employment Commission, and provides a detailed (though selective) insight into the experience of child workers during a period that some writers continue to present as Tyneside's heroic contribution to the so-called Northern Powerhouse.[2] Today, children in Britain are overwhelmingly consumers (of welfare, education, luxury, and leisure) rather than producers, though elsewhere in the world they still form a major element of the industrial work force, whether it is mining cobalt in Africa for car and telephone batteries, dismantling ships in India, or mining coal in Pakistan.[3]

Historians past and present have argued that without child workers Britain would never have become the world's first industrial nation, but as other countries around the world catch up, an understanding of the contribution of child workers and the price they paid, has never been more relevant.[4] What follows is an investigation of the experience of twenty-six boys employed in Newcastle's iron and glass works, to illustrate how this employment was determined by their family circumstances, and how that early employment experience influenced their later life chances.[5]

Iron Works

Child labour had always been a feature of the North East economy; in agriculture and animal husbandry, the workshops of weavers and spinners which supplied the sailcloth and linen garment trade, the craft apprentices who sustained the workshops of Newcastle's guilds, and of course the extraction and distribution of coal. It has been estimated that by 1842 the proportion of the work force employed in British coal and metal mines that was either children aged 12 years or younger, or young people aged 13-18 years, was between 19% and 40%.[6] Leifchild identified no fewer than 1,932 young persons and 1,349 children working in the Tyne collieries, who accounted for 18.3% and 12.8% respectively of the total workforce.[7]

Important though the coal trade undoubtedly was, by the 1840s there were other Tyne-based trades that employed significant numbers of children. The introduction of machinery and steam power, combined with an increased division of labour, had resulted in a number of industries being concentrated in large factory units rather than the traditional workshop or domestic units. In the iron trade, the smiths' shops of the early 1800s had been superseded by large foundries characterised by significant capital investment and a clearly defined division of labour, often coupled with a specialised product range. For example the engine-building works of Robert Stephenson and Co. and Messrs Hawthorn, where Leifchild noted that the young persons employed (67 and 64 respectively, plus three children at Stephenson's locomotive works), were `a grade higher than the ordinary youths in iron works', and nearly all could write and read their names. However, he objected to the long continuous hours some of these youngsters were required to work: `occasionally for 18 hours, from 6 in the morning until 12 at night' and sometimes for up to thirty-six hours continuously (`24 hours the first day and night, and 12 hours afterwards').[8]

One engine manufactory where Leifchild found more widespread evidence of child labour was Crowther's iron works at Ouseburn Bridge. Originally established in early 1804 to manufacture engines for the Durham and Northumberland coalfield, by the 1840s the firm was carried

on by Crowther's widow, Susannah, in partnership with the engine-wright Joseph Smith. This partnership would be terminated in 1844, and the business subsequently reduced, so that by the 1840s Crowther's premises were more of an iron works than an engine builder.[9]

Table 1: Boys Interviewed at Crowther's Iron Works, 27 May 1841

Name	Age	Tasks Carried Out	Years Worked
Christopher Grant	14	Moulder - assists with moulding cast iron, including making moulds and lifting cast pigs from moulds	2
Christopher Dagget	13	Labourer - carries bricks, makes cores and small castings	2½
Samuel Pescod	13	Moulder - makes and dries moulds	3
William Pescod	15	Foundryman - casts engine bars	-
John Paterson	14	Strikes to a blacksmith - hammers hot iron	2
Elijah Ryles	15	Apprentice engine-wright	8 months

The foundry was capable of producing large quantities of pig-iron, which was then converted into more malleable cast iron on the basis of Henry Cort's puddling process, by then in widespread use for removing impurities from the iron by heating in a reverberatory furnace and then pouring the melted metal into moulds. Sand and loam (a mixture of clay and sand) was used to make the moulds; loam moulds were sometimes baked hard prior to use, and generally used to produce large symmetrical objects, such

as wheels or cylinders. To create voids in the finished casting, earthenware cores were inserted into the mould, to be broken and removed once the casting was complete. These cores were fundamental to casting anything that required an internal cavity, such as engine parts.

All the boys interviewed by Leifchild, apart from John Paterson and Elijah Ryles, were employed in the moulding process. They often started on general tasks around the foundry; Christopher Grant made fires or carried loam, then progressed to making cores for the moulds for six months, before moving to the moulding shop. There he worked on small moulds for tram wheels, sometimes ramming down the loam to create a tight fit around the pattern. Samuel Pescod began with general labouring tasks and then also progressed to making cores before making the moulds themselves, a task that required him to enter the hot stoves to dry the moulds.

All the boys were expected to be flexible in their labour, and to work for longer than their standard 12-hour shifts if needed to assist with urgent or additional jobs. Christopher Dagget once worked with five other boys from 2 a.m. through the night and the following day, until 5 p.m. This was because he was required to assist with a large cylinder casting, using a hand-held riddle (a large circular frame with a wire mesh) to sift the sand to ensure a uniform surface around the mould, and to `job about the foundry' the rest of the time. When Christopher Grant was required to work longer hours, he spent all night working with others to remove the heavy weights used to hold down the moulds on a heavy casting, and then lifting the hot pigs of cast iron with only `a bit of straw or rough apron cloth' to protect his hands from being burnt. The blacksmith's assistant, John Paterson, once worked `all a-Monday and Monday night, and Tuesday, and went away only at about 5 o'clock on the Tuesday night', carrying rivets at the boiler yard.[10]

Glass Works

By 1840, Newcastle and South Shields were the principal centres for the manufacture of crown and bottle glass, and Leifchild visited six establishments in Newcastle; two bottle works, two crown glass works

(primarily for windows), a plate glass works that produced best quality polished sheets of glass, and a flint glass works for producing fine pressed and cut glass. This last establishment was at Skinnerburn, and Leifchild noted that the workforce included ten boys aged between 14 and 18-years, twelve aged between 10 and 14-years, and another six aged 10-years or less.[11]

The hours of work were dependent on the contents of the furnace; once the molten silica (or *metal*) was heated to the required temperature it could be blown or rolled, a process divided into so-called *journeys* (shifts). In crown glass works there were generally three *journeys* a week, each one lasting from ten to sixteen or more hours, and in bottle works up to five *journeys* a week of ten or twelve hours each. In the plate glass works, hours of labour varied considerably, depending not just on the condition of the furnace *metal* but also on whether plate, sheet or crown glass was needed. In flint glass production there was just one j*ourney* per week, resulting in more regular hours, though these were equally long in duration. All these works employed boys whose hours of work often meant arriving early to clean and prepare the men's implements and then working throughout the night, so that some boys `unaccustomed to such hours are frequently overcome with sleep'. Furthermore, the overall number of workers did not change with demand, so if production needed to be increased in a particular week the same workforce of men and boys would simply work longer hours.[12]

Two of the glass works visited by Leifchild were Sir Matthew White Ridley's Newcastle Broad and Crown Glass Works, and William Richardson's North Tyne Crown Glass Works, both at the Ouseburn. In both works, Leifchild interviewed boys aged between 11 and 15 employed in blowing globes of glass using 8-foot long iron tubes known as *pipes* or in minding and carrying the *punties*, the rods of iron used by the men to lift the globules of glass back into the furnace for reheating and flattening. The blowers worked in teams of three, each boy taking turns to blow, cool, or clean a pipe. Punty minders worked alone, feeding the rods to the men continuously throughout the *journey*.

Table 2: Boys Interviewed at Ridley's Crown Glass Works, 3 May 1841			
Name	**Age**	**Tasks Carried Out**	**Years Worked**
John Brown	12	Carries *punties* (rods of iron 8lbs in weight) to the furnace, and cools the hot *punties* when withdrawn	1½
Benjamin Laws	12	Same as John Brown	2
Robert Gray	13½	Blows glass into globes, about 200 each *journey*, using iron pipes (13lbs weight) which he also cools and cleans prior to the next blow	3
James Jobling	13½	Same as Robert Gray but blows about 250 pipes per *journey*	2

All these boys generally worked 14-hour shifts but the blowers sometimes had to start earlier if there was anything to get ready for the men working the next shift. Thus Robert Gray would start work at midnight on Sunday and began to blow about 2 a.m. for twelve hours until 2 p.m. on the Monday, whereupon he went home and slept from 6 p.m. until 8 a.m. on the Tuesday, or until noon if not needed at the glass works, starting at the blowing again at 2 a.m. on the Tuesday night. The punty boys worked similar hours and sometimes much longer; Benjamin Laws having `a vast of times' worked 25-hours without going home and without stopping more than an hour at a time.[13]

Cookson's Plate Glass Works at Forth Banks was the only one that Leifchild visited that employed women; these 109 female adults were half the workforce, alongside 91 men, 15 older boys and 15 children. This

establishment polished plate glass made at Cookson's manufactory at South Shields, and each polishing bench required one boy, whilst each grinding bench required the work of pairs of two boys; the task of the latter was to throw sand and water onto the plate glass so that a mechanical runner could polish the surface. The polishing process was automated, the machinery running all day with plate glass moving continuously past the benches. The boys had to be constantly wary of being hit or caught by moving parts.

Some of the boys who worked here were very young, with at least one 8-year-old working at the grinding benches. The boys laboured at their benches in 12-hour shifts plus overtime. Employment was not long term; the works manager stated that the boys generally left at age 15, as there was no trade to learn.[14]

Table 3: Boys Interviewed at Cookson's Plate Glass Works (Forth Banks), April and May 1841

Name	Age	Tasks Carried Out	Years Worked
Jonathan Paul	13	A polisher, stands by the bench and dabs-on a powder of red oxide of iron with a brush	4+
John McKenna	14	A polisher	7 months
Samuel Johnson	11	A polisher	2
William Ormston	14	A grinder. Throws sand and water on the glass with a ladle for the runners to polish it	1½
James Downey	14	A grinder, as per William Ormston	1+
Francis McKenna	12	A polisher	2+

George Blakey	12	A grinder. Lost a middle finger after it was caught in a machinery wheel	6 months
Charles Wilson	12	A labourer. Received a blow to his head when the machinery started up as he was inside, scraping dirt off the bottom	3
Walter Brown	14	A grinder, throwing on sand and water. Got knocked by the runners a good few times.	6
Hugh Wanlas	13	A grinder.	3
Stephen Barras	15	A grinder	5
Richard Topping	10	A grinder	-

When Leifchild visited Cookson's Bottle Works at the Close, he noted that nineteen persons under the age of 18 were employed but only the evidence of two, William Richardson and Harrison Galloway, were included in his report. The Agent at the works also gave evidence, stating that the boys all worked the same hours as the men, with 12-hour shifts, five days a week, often working through the night. Evidence of two boys from the Albion Bottle Works at St Peter's confirms that they too worked five *journeys* per week, each lasting 14 hours.[15]

Table 4: Boys Interviewed at Cookson's & Albion Bottle Works, May 1841			
Name	**Age**	**Tasks Carried Out**	**Years Worked**
William Richardson	15	Puts pipes into the furnace for men to gather the fluxed glass for blowing	4
Harrison Galloway	14	Uses a fawcet or rod to take bottles to the annealing works where they are heated to a high temperature and then gradually cooled	7 months
Joseph Hornsby	11	Is a *taker-in*, handing blown bottles to the bottle finisher or taking them to the annealing oven if finished	6 months
John Thompson	-	Assists his father at the furnace	-
Note: the annealing works was a series of ovens in which the glass was allowed to cool gradually. The boys would take the glass to the hottest of these ovens.			

All the boys interviewed by Leifchild were supposed to have short beaks to consume food. If they lived locally, some boys could sometimes go home for meals but more often food (`a bit of meat and bread' or `meat and tatoes') was brought to them by a sibling. In the glass polishing works the boys had to consume their meals as they worked, resulting in contamination from the sand and red oxide. The latter could induce nausea and result in intestinal worms; Francis McKenna claimed that one boy's doctor `got a great worm from him, and two table-spoonsful of red stuff'.[16]

All the boys interviewed by Leifchild endured long hours working in hot dry conditions adjacent to furnaces and ovens, and in a workspace where there was continual movement. Common complaints recorded by Leifchild included headaches, tiredness, and burns, the latter caused by contact with hot iron or glass or simply as a result of not wearing shoes. Leifchild recorded that Christopher Grant at Crowther's iron works `very often gets burnt in the hands and arms with the metal flying about, when it is running into the mould'. The boy had `been off 2 or 3 times burnt in his feet', whilst another boy (Robert Elliot) `was burnt very sore in his feet 8 weeks ago.[17] A major hazard in all these works was fatigue and falling asleep. Leifchild noted that when William Richardson fell asleep at Cookson's bottle works `he is woke by a thrashing with a leather belt; just enough to waken him, not to hurt him'.[18]

In some cases the boys worked alongside their fathers, and this helped to reduce exposure to such hazards. John Thompson worked alongside his father at the Albion Bottle Works and when his legs ached from running about so much his `father lets him lie off a bit when he is very tired or unwell'.[19] However, in most cases the boys had to fend for themselves and quickly adjust to the environment in which they laboured. Time off work through injury or ill health may have offered a welcome respite for the child worker but it could spell disaster for their families, and especially those with multiple younger siblings or a single parent.

Family and Household Income

Britain's population was noted for its large number of infants throughout much of the century before 1816, the year that most studies suggest that it was at its youngest, with almost 40% under 15 years of age.[20] Analysis of age groups recorded in the census confirms that by the 1840s Newcastle's working class was overwhelmingly young. At St Peter's in Byker, where a number of the boys lived, of the residents of Percy Street on 6 June 1841 just ten (4%) were aged over 60-years whilst 129 (or 48%) were younger than 20. In neighbouring Chapel Street the proportion was similar, with

ten aged over 60 (3%) compared to 152 (51%) aged less than 20.[21]

Table 5: Family Structure in 1841			
Name	**Parent's Occupation***	**Number of Siblings**	**Age of Siblings****
Christopher Grant	joiner	2	9 and 19
Christopher Dagget	widowed mother	2	2 and 11
Samuel Pescod	widowed mother	2	10 and 15
William Pescod	widowed mother	2	10 and 13
John Paterson	cartman	5	4, 6, 8, 10, 12
Elijah Ryles	victualler/ shopkeeper	4	10, 17, 18, 20
John Brown	glass maker	5	1, 4, 6, 8, 14
Benjamin Laws	waterman	5	2, 5, 5, 10, 16
Robert Gray	labourer	5	3, 8, 10, 15, 15
James Jobling	smith	1	20
Jonathan Paul	sawyer	2	9 and 16

John McKenna	labourer	4	10 months, 3, 9 and 11
Samuel Johnson	widowed mother	2	6 and 10
William Ormston	waterman	2	6 and 11
James Downey	labourer	3	5, 8 and 16
Francis McKenna	labourer	3	6, 15, 18
George Blakey	waterman	4	1, 3, 14, 17
Charles Wilson	shoemaker	5	6 months, 2, 4, 8, 10
Walter Brown	waterman	unknown	unknown
Hugh Wanlas	plate glass worker	4	5, 7, 13, 19
Stephen Barras	-	3	12, 15 and 20
Richard Topping***	blacksmith	1	4
William Richardson	tobacco maker (widowed mother)	5	7, 10, 12, 17, 19
Harrison Galloway	farrier	2	8 and 11
Joseph Hornsby****	widowed mother	1	6
John Thompson	glass bottle maker	unknown	unknown

* widowhood confirmed by reference to 1851 census; rarely recorded in 1841.
** ages confirmed by reference to the 1851 and 1861 census records as ages in 1841 census were rounded down to nearest `5' for anyone aged 16 or older.
*** not found in 1841 census; in 1851 his father was a blacksmith and his siblings were aged 1, 6, 8, 9, 9 and 14 years of age.
**** not found in 1841 census; in 1851 his brother is 16 years old.
Source: 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census, Northumberland and Durham.

This trend is also reflected in the families of the twenty-six boys that form the present study, as summarised in Table 5. Despite the limitations of the 1841 census, it has been possible to identify the number and ages of siblings for all but two of the boys. This suggests that virtually all the boys were from families containing three or more children, including six families with up to six children. All the boys had at least one sibling. Furthermore, most of these siblings were younger, meaning that they were dependent on the wages of their older siblings or parents. Of course the census, and especially that of 1841, is full of unknowns; there may have been other siblings away from home (living or staying with extended kin) on that night, and ages vary from census to census. Nevertheless, by comparing the data recorded in 1851 and 1861, together with other contemporary sources, we can be reasonably confident that most of the boys belonged to large families with high levels of dependency.

This dependency was even more likely for those boys belonging to single parent families, of which there were at least five - the Dagget, Pescod, Johnson, Richardson, and Hornsby families. Losing a father could be a major economic and emotional blow for boys, and an experience that could blight their life chances for years to come unless an older male sibling or extended kin could offer support. The mother of Samuel and William Pescod lived with the boy's uncle, a shipwright called John Storey in 1841,

and following her death in 1849 the boys continued to live with their uncle until they married and set-up separate homes sometime after 1851.[22] William Richardson had five siblings in 1841 including James (17) an apprentice tailor, and Jane (19) who worked alongside their mother as a tobacco maker. The other three siblings aged seven to twelve years were thus dependent on the wages of three older siblings and a single mother.

Whilst lone parent mothers tended to be successful at keeping families together, often being viewed as deserving poor by Overseers and Poor Law Guardians, the challenges faced by orphans were much greater.[23] Leifchild noted that Stephen Barras, the 15-year old glass grinder, was an orphan living with his brothers of whom one (William, also aged 15) also worked as a glass grinder. The brothers lived together at Flag Entry in Sandgate, in one room, for which Stephen `paid 1s. a week'. Only the youngest of the four brothers did not work (Joseph aged 12) as the oldest brother, Samuel worked as a painter. It isn't obvious what other support the brothers received in the 1840s but by 1851 Stephen and his younger brother Joseph were living with their widowed aunt (Jane Clayton) at Byker Buildings, by which time Stephen had secured work as a cooper, the trade he served until his death 38 years later in 1889.[24]

Flag Entry in Sandgate was a fair distance from young Barras's place of work at Forth Banks but his was not the longest journey to work. William Ormston commuted to Forth Banks from Blagdon Street in Pandon, and Harrison Galloway, the 13-year old labourer at Cookson's bottle works at the Close commuted from Pipewellgate in Gateshead.[25]

Income v Life Chances

Factory employment created opportunities for young people to earn more regular wages and in his report Leifchild recorded the wages of thirteen of the boys in this study. This evidence suggests that 4s per week was the standard wage for a boy at the iron works, while 4s 6d was the standard wage for a boy at the glass polishing works, the latter receiving an additional 9d for those days they worked overtime. In some cases Leifchild also noted

how these wages had changed over time; thus Christopher Dagget at the iron works had started on 2s a week for about a year, then received 3s and by May 1841 was receiving 4s a week.[26] Frustratingly, Leifchild rarely recorded the wages of adult workers. One exception was John Brown's father at Ridley's glass works who earned 25s a week as a glass blower; his son's wages are not stated but Benjamin Laws received 4s per week for carrying out similar work to young John.

A few boys received as much as 5s per week in the glass bottle works, including William Richardson who worked at the furnace in 1841 and later served as a blacksmith until his death in 1891 aged 64-years. As such, he was one of twelve boys who lived beyond their 59th year. Those boys whose working lives beyond 1840 could be traced with some degree of confidence are recorded in Table 6.

The boys who died within twenty years of their interview with Leifchild all worked at Cookson's glass polishing works, where knocks from the polishing machines and contamination and worms from sand and red oxide were common hazards. The first to die was James Downey. Leifchild recorded that the boy `had the cholera, and has never been well since'.[27] It is a moot point whether boys like Downey and Blakey were allocated the most dangerous jobs because they were physically the weakest, or whether the nature of their work caused them to be weak and sickly.

By identifying the boys' later trades and date of death, we can see that early experience of furnace work often led to later service as blacksmiths or similar smith trades. This included three of the six boys who lived beyond 1900. The boy who lived the longest was Elijah Ryles, the 15-year-old engine-wright in 1841 who was recorded in the 1901 census as an engineer, four years before his death at the age of eighty in 1905.[28] Of all the boys featured in this study, he was the only one with a skilled trade.

Table 6: Trade and Abode: 1841 and at time of death					
Name	**Trade 1841**	**Abode 1841**	**Date (& Age) at time of Death**	**Last Known Trade**	**Last Known Address**
James Downey	grinder	Queen Street, Castle Garth	1844 (17)	labourer	Queen Street, Castle Garth
George Blakey	grinder	Forth Bank	1848 (18)	-	Forth Bank
Walter Brown	grinder	the Close	1849 (23)	-	the Close
Francis McKenna	polisher	Castle Garth	1852 (21)	-	Peel Street, Elswick
Hugh Wanlas	grinder	Sussex Street, the Forth	1857 (29)	labourer	Gateshead
Charles Wilson	labourer	Castle Street	1862 (32)	leather finisher	Blandford Street
Jonathan Paul	polisher	Forth Bank	1879 (51)	blacksmith	Ouseburn
John McKenna	polisher	Castle Garth	1877 (52)	boiler maker	Sunderland
Christopher Dagget	labourer	Stepney Bank	1886 (60)	wherryman	Lime Street, Ouseburn
Samuel Pescod	moulder	Ripponden Street	1887 (59)	shipsmith	Meldon Street, Byker
Stephen Barras	grinder	Flag Entry, Sandgate	1889 (63)	cooper	Little Blagdon Street, Pandon
Christopher Grant	moulder	Byker Bar	1890 (63)	iron moulder	Ipswich, Suffolk

Samuel Johnson	polisher	South Street	1890 (62)	engineer	Mill Lane, Elswick
William Ormston	grinder	Blagdon Street, Pandon	1890 (63)	labourer	Hill Street, Elswick
William Richardson	smith's apprentice	Head of the Side	1891 (64)	striker	Orchard Street, Elswick
William Pescod	foundryman & moulder	Ripponden Street	1901 (75)	blacksmith	Grafton Street, Byker
John Paterson	striker	Orchard Street	1903 (76)	blacksmith	Rosedale Street, Byker
Elijah Ryles	engine-wright	East Ballast Hills	1905 (80)	mechanical engineer	South Shields
Benjamin Laws	labourer	St Lawrence	1905 (76)	waterman	Dunns Terrace, Byker
Harrison Galloway	labourer	Pipewellgate, Gateshead	1906 (77)	boiler maker	Middlesbrough
Joseph Hornsby	labourer	Glass House Street, St Peters	1905 (78)	labourer	Spennymoor
John Brown	labourer	St Lawrence	unknown	unknown	unknown
Robert Gray	labourer	East Ballast Hills	unknown	unknown	unknown
James Jobling	glass maker	St Lawrence	unknown	unknown	unknown
Richard Topping	grinder	Gateshead ?	unknown	unknown	unknown
John Thompson	labourer	Ouseburn or St Peters	unknown	unknown	unknown

Source: Decennial census 1841-1901 and Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915 accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk, and Leifchild, 1842 Parliamentary Report.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay has been to reveal the human condition of some of the numerous child workers in Newcastle in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and by doing so to help to explain why so many had to work from such a young age, and through their lives to provide a counterweight to the `pioneer of industry' interpretation of our region's industrial past.

When John Roby Leifchild visited Newcastle's iron and glass works in the spring and summer of 1841, he also visited the local day and Sunday schools in order to ascertain the amount of schooling child workers were actually receiving. For most of the boys interviewed he records their ability to read and write, and their attendance at church or chapel, and generally found both wanting. He noted that the 11-year-old glass polisher, Samuel Johnson, despite his illustrious namesake, `can neither read nor write; and goes to no school or place of worship', a condition not uncommon amongst the boys employed at both of Cookson's works in Newcastle. Only at St Lawrence, where a Methodist chapel offered schooling to boys working at the local collieries, glass and iron works did Leifchild find satisfactory levels of literacy, though even here attendance was disappointingly low.[29]

For Newcastle's industrial workers, demographic pressure resulted in numerous younger siblings, and was often coupled with absent fathers, thereby creating conditions of family dependency on child earnings in industries whose hours of work mitigated against school attendance for most of the children thus employed. Furthermore, a finely-graded division of labour ensured that these same industries continued to be labour intensive and employers of children and young adults well into the second half of the century. By this time these archaic practices were finally being undermined by Forster's Education Act (1870) and foreign competition.[30]

Whilst a surprisingly high number of the boys in this study managed to survive to their sixties and seventies, the cumulative effects of hard labour begun at such an early age undoubtedly took their toll on the nine who died before their 60th year. The 13-year old glass polisher John McKenna

found employment as a boiler maker from the 1850s onwards but when he died, in Sunderland in 1877, he was aged just 52. The circumstances of his death were truly dreadful, having been found by police `lying in an apparently drunken state on the sands' near to a Graving Dock on the Wear. He was literally `dead drunk' and attempts to revive him all failed.[31] Leifchild described him in 1841 as `bad with worms' and `often has tooth-ache. Reads a very little. Cannot write or spell'; an equally tragic figure but one whose life and labour helped make our region an industrial powerhouse.

Acknowledgement

This article could not have been written without the assistance of Dr Richard Pears who helped me to locate a copy of John Roby Leifchild's report on foundries and glass works in the 1842 Parliamentary Report.

1 Children's Employment: Appendix to the First and Second Reports of the Commissioners appointed for inquiring into the Employment and Condition of Children in Mines and Manufactories: Reports and Evidence from Sub-Commissioners, (London: Houses of Parliament, 1842, XX). Hereinafter cited as `Leifchild'.

2 Adam Hart-Davis and others, *The Real Northern Powerhouse: The Industrial Revolution in the North East* (Newcastle: Tyne Bridge Publishing, 2015). In his foreword, Hart-Davis states that `by the middle of the 19th century the entrepreneurs of Newcastle were in full swing' and that the Industrial Revolution had expanded `to make Geordieland the real Northern Powerhouse', p. 7.

3 `Child labour, toxic leaks: the price we pay for a greener future', *The Observer*, 3 January 2021; `Coal workers are orphans: the children and slaves mining Pakistan's coal', *The Guardian*, 19 February 2020; `Progress on ending child labour stalls in countries supplying goods to west', *The Guardian*, 14 June 2019. All accessed via https://www.theguardian.com in January 2021.

4 Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (St Albans: Granada Publishing, 1982) for a contemporary (1840s) observation, and Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

5 Leifchild also visited potteries, paper mills, tobacco works, alkali and lead works, in both Northumberland and Durham.

6 Carolyn Tuttle, `Child Labour during the British Industrial Revolution', Economic

History Association (EH.Net Encyclopedia), edited by Robert Whaples. August 14, 2001. URL *http://eh.net/encyclopedia/child-labor-during-the-british-industrial-revolution/*

7 Leifchild, Part 1, p. 514.

8 As above, p. 688. The number of adult workers was 396 and 376 respectively.

9 Much of Leifchild's report is devoted to the larger iron works outside Newcastle, like those of Hawks, Stanley, and Co. in Gateshead or Losh, Wilson and Bell at Walker.

10 Leifchild, Part 1, pp. 707-708.

11 As above, Part II, pp. 12-13.

12 As above, Part II, pp. 1-2.

13 As above, pp. 3-6. Leifchild included evidence of seven boys at Richardson's works, but as these carried out similar tasks to the four at Ridley's works they have been omitted from this study.

14 As above, pp. 16-18.

15 As above, pp. 14-15.

16 As above, p. 17. Note that in the report, McKenna is spelled McKenny and in the census it can be either.

17 As above, Part 1, p. 707.

18 As above, Part II, p. 15.

19 As above, p. 16.

20 E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 217, quoted in Humphries, p. 38.

21 1841 Census Northumberland All Saints, HO 107.820/3.

22 Death of `Mrs Hannah Pescod, widow of the late Capt. Samuel Pescod, master mariner', *Tyne Mercury*, 22 September 1849, p. 8, and 1851 Census, Northumberland All Saints (Saint Peters) HO 107.2408.

23 For an excellent survey of these issues see Humphries, especially pp. 49-83 and 196-202.

24 Leifchild, Part II, p. 18, and 1851 Census Northumberland All Saints, HO 107.2408.

25 1841 Census Northumberland All Saints, HO 107.845 (for Ormston) and Durham Gateshead, HO 107.296.15 for Galloway.

26 Leifchild, Part 1, p. 708.

27 As above, Part II, p. 17.

28 1901 Census Durham, RG 13.4732.

29 Leifchild, Part 1, p. 721.

30 The Elementary Education Act of 1870 was the first to make school attendance by 5-13 year olds compulsory. It was the first effective measure to reduce child employment in factories.

31 `Singular death of a Boilermaker at Sunderland', *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 18 June 1877, p. 3.

Paul Robeson and the North East

Brian Bennison

Introduction

When I was a child my family lived alongside the railway at Stockton. Some Saturday mornings my father and I would wander up to the nearby station, buy a comic at the bookstall, get a platform ticket and do some train spotting. On one occasion, around sixty years ago, we were entering the barrier when two excited women bustled past and rushed into the waiting room. We went to see what was happening and saw the women talking to a large black man with a suitcase. When we were out of earshot my father told me it was Paul Robeson.[1]

The name meant nothing to me, although over time I came to realise what a significant figure he was.[2] I knew the man must be some kind of performer, because my father said he had been 'on the Globe' the previous evening. The Globe was a theatre with almost 2,400 seats and on the circuit of the biggest names in show business and leading touring companies like Sadlers Wells.[3] Robeson's visit was one of several he made to the North East.

Heard But Not Seen, 1922-1930

Robeson's first trip to Britain was on the White Star liner *Homeric* in 1922 to play opposite Mrs Patrick Campbell in *Voodoo* and he was back three years later to act in *Emperor Jones*.[4] For people in the North East their first exposure to Robeson would come when they had acquired a wireless set and could listen to him on transmissions by 5NO, the BBC's regional station opened in 1922.[5] When Robeson's recordings became available in Britain they were favourably reviewed in the North East press, although

some of the well-meaning coverage, adopting easy caricatures, now chafes a little. Reviewing one record, the *Berwickshire News* was emphatic that nobody in the world could sing spirituals like 'the coloured man', who

> lived in a land where the sun shone warm and the flowers were gay, where laughter came easily and even melancholy was tinged with gladness; and when the coloured man sings, whether for the delights of Heaven or the pains of Hell, the joyousness of a smiling country is in the carefree lilt of his voice and in every song of his race.[6]

A great deal of interest in Robeson was generated in 1928 when he came back to London with *Show Boat*. Recitals were arranged when his theatrical commitments permitted and Robeson began to set out on concert tours.[7] People in the provinces would soon have the opportunity to see and hear him.

By now Robeson's radio and record audiences in the North East were learning of his concerns around social justice and equality. For example, in 1929 Hartlepool's evening paper had carried Robeson's stark account of a colour bar at the Savoy, where he was refused a table.[8] There was also an encounter that sparked a lifelong empathy with the mining communities. Leaving a rehearsal of *Show Boat*, Robeson heard singing from a group of banner-carrying Welsh miners who had been unemployed since the General Strike. He joined them and when the march came to a halt he jumped onto the steps of a building to sing. Afterwards, so the story goes, 'he gave a donation so the miners could ride the train back to Wales in a carriage crammed with clothing and food'[9].

Personal Appearances, 1930-1939

In 1929 the announcement of the programme for the Newcastle Theatre Royal's forthcoming winter concerts included first visits to the city by Rachmaninoff and 'the great actor-vocalist Paul Robeson'[10]. It was

Robeson's race and repertoire that set him apart and journalists tried to capture the essence of his distinct appeal, something which today comes across as racist. Before his debut in the North East in March 1930 one newspaper said to hear him sing would be 'to learn at first-hand something of the tragedy, the yearning, the childish simplicity of his people'[11].

In November 1931 Robeson performed at Sunderland's Victoria Hall, before which he was interviewed by T.S.H. of the *Sunderland Echo*. We can only speculate on what prejudices the reporter had carried with him when he wrote afterwards that the 'six-feet negro, with his slight American accent, soon made one forget his colour by ease of manner and cultural conversation'[12]. There were four encores at Robeson's concert at West Hartlepool Town Hall, but the man from the local paper could not resist saying that 'the great giant of a man makes his accompanist look like a piccaninny'[13]. A return to Newcastle 1935 saw Robeson stuck in the lift at his hotel, but his fellow passengers - 'led by Mr Robeson, who exercised his powerful voice to the full'[14] - eventually attracted attention of staff and were released.


Town Hall, West Hartlepool.

Paul Robeson

WILL POSITIVELY APPEAR ON

MONDAY, November 16th

WITH

Lawrence Brown, and Vronsky.

Paul Robeson will sing "Old Man River."

Tickets, 6/-, 3/6, 2/6, 1/6

From S. S. EADES', 43 LYNN STREET.

Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail -11 Nov 1931.
Robeson had been suffering from laryngitis.

In 1939 Robeson brought 'Songs of the Folk' to the Newcastle' City Hall, which prompted a letter to a local newspaper from a Gateshead lady signing herself 'Woman in the Street' of which the following is an extract:

> I had only heard Paul Robeson on records and on the wireless. The joy of seeing and listening to this great artiste in the flesh was to me something wonderful. I felt that here was a man telling his vast audience in song the joys and sorrows of his race and of all the oppressed peoples. A great artiste, a great man.[15]

Robeson on Film, 1934-1939

By the time of Robeson's 1939 concert he was also an established 'film star' who the *Shields Daily News* called the 'coloured screen favourite of thousands of British filmgoers'[16]. The 1930s were the boom years of cinema-going in Britain with many new cinemas opened in the North East. By 1938 the region had over 300 buildings - large and small, picture palace and flea-pit - where films were being screened.[17] Through the medium of film Robeson became much more accessible to working people.

Between 1925 and 1939 Robeson was in thirteen films[18], the majority made in six years from 1933, during which there emerged an underlying tension between the appetite of cinema-goers and the way Robeson himself went about utilising his talents as a pre-eminent member of his race. In hard times it was natural that North Easterners sought escapism and pleasure at the cinema, and were unlikely to be concerned with aesthetic or political niceties. The draw for picture-goers was Robeson and his voice, and journalists tended to focus on the entertainment value of his films. But whilst audiences in the North East may have taken his films on face-value, Robeson himself often had regrets about the roles he had agreed to play.

When the American-made *Emperor Jones* was shown in 1934, most North East newspapers confined themselves to compliments like 'a gripping drama' that was 'greatly appreciated'[19]. However, one journalist

dug deeper and told patrons of the Albion, North Shields, that they could expect to see Robeson demonstrating 'three distinct, progressive stages in the spiritual development of the Negro race'[20], as his character moved from Baptist church to Harlem and on to a life amongst Africans. The film had a mixed reception from critics generally and Robeson doubted whether American film-makers would ever move on from 'visualizing the planation type of Negro'[21]. From 1934 he began to act in films made in Britain.

Sanders of the River was said to be 'for many white British the beginning of their attraction and affection for Robeson'[22]. In it Robeson plays an African chief loyal to his master, a British colonial administrator whom he assists in regaining control over the untamed native population. The regional press hailed it as 'a brilliant interpretation' of Edgar Wallace's novel with a 'stroke of genius' in the casting of Robeson.[23] Wearsiders were encouraged to go and 'hear him singing to his warriors and be thrilled to the core!'[24]. Yet by the time the film was revived at Black's Regal, Byker, the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* was pointing out that Robeson had been 'disgusted at the film's portrayal of the natives and the way his own role was twisted from his intentions'[25]. Scenes had been added to the film after its initial completion, 'cleverly worked in to support the benevolence and patronising attitude of Sanders control over the jungle-dwellers'[26]. The *Sunderland Echo*, meanwhile, had described the film as 'a fine tribute to British rule in Africa'[27].

Things got better with *Song of Freedom*. Although the story-line was regarded by one local reviewer as 'pretty thin', it marked 'a definite improvement' on Robeson's previous films.[28] One columnist thought Robeson - playing a London docker who becomes an opera singer and explores his African heritage - had been able 'to reveal the negro as a person of dignity and not as a figure which to filmgoers must be comically grotesque to be at all worthy of notice'[29].

Robeson films followed quickly one after another. *King Solomon's Mines* was another box office success in 1937, local reviewers pronouncing it full of 'fascination for old and young'[30], the only contentious element being

the way in which the female lead's hairdo stayed immaculate throughout.[31] Robeson's next film gave those who had perhaps listened to a broadcast of *Show Boat* in 1934 the chance to see him in a film version. Lauded in some quarters as 'opulent and spectacular', British notices were described as 'tepid'.[32] For one North East newspaper it 'sailed along merrily with a brisk swing in its progress', a critique that seems quite superficial when set alongside the views of individuals and organisations with an interest in equal rights.[33]

In early 1938 fans again queued at cinemas, this time to see Robeson in *Big Fella*, which newspaper readers in Blyth were told was 'one of the most romantic and thrilling films ever'[34]. The folks of Shields were misled to believe that Robeson had taken on the incongruous part of 'a happy-go-lucky dock labourer at Versailles'[35], rather than a man employed on Marseilles waterfront. Later in 1938 *Jericho* was released, with the national critics 'lukewarm' but 'polite[36]. The local verdict was that 'without being in any way a bad film, it discounts possibilities and goes happily on its sentimentally adventurous way'[37]. Like most of Robeson's films its story-line was constructed such that it allowed its star to burst into song at intervals. Robeson himself, however, was increasingly troubled by this and earlier films and spoke of suspending his acting career.[38]

A change of heart came in 1939 after Robeson was persuaded to star in a film dealing with the plight of a Welsh mining community and its struggle for a better life. The picture was completed in September 1939 and, after approving of a rough cut of *The Proud Valley*, Robeson sailed to New York.

A Widening Appreciation, 1933-39

At the end of 1933 Robeson's popularity in Britain was such that his picture appeared on the front cover of the New Year's Eve edition of *Radio Times*. In the years that followed readers of North East newspapers could not fail to notice the off-stage activities of one of their favourite singers and actors, none more so than Robeson's links to Russia. For instance, the *Chester le*

Street Chronicle ran an article on 'Paul Robeson and Russia' and readers of the *Sunderland Echo* were informed about a broadcast from Moscow featuring D N Pritt MP, 'formerly Socialist candidate for Sunderland', and Paul Robeson 'who is in Russia discussing the making of a film with S M Eisenstein'.[39] That visit has been described as 'a whirlwind of activity and of rising enthusiasm, Robeson for the Russians and the Russians for Robeson'[40]. The man himself made no secret of his admiration for Russia and its people, telling the *Sunderland Echo* that 'the Russian peasant and the Russian serf have been throughout the centuries oppressed in the same way as the negro'[41]. By 1937 MI5 had persuaded themselves that Robeson was 'a secret member of the Communist Party'[42], having joined in Moscow.

Radio Times 29 Dec 1933

It seems inevitable that Robeson's progressive stance on many issues and his support for a communist regime would alienate many in the UK, but examples of the public's awareness of Robeson and their respect for him continued to emerge from some unusual quarters. In 1936 for the Ashington Presbyterian Anniversary Children's Day the Rev. W Cullen's 'device to arouse the interest of the children' was a talk about Robeson and

his singing of 'I Gotta Shoe'.[43] A year later, under the heading 'Women Socialists Make Merry'[44], a newspaper reported that at a Boldon Colliery Labour Party Women's Section's social evening the painted egg competition was won by a Mrs Thompson with an image of Robeson.

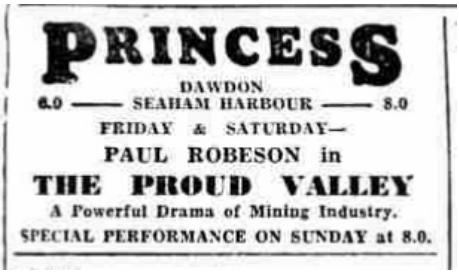
In the late 1930s newspaper readers were being kept abreast of Robeson's views and actions on many issues, such as the plight of Spanish children during the civil war.[45] In 1938 the highlight of a youth rally at Earl's Court was a recital by Paul Robeson in which he sang the Spanish and Chinese national anthems. The *Sunderland Echo* reported that amongst the 12,000 participants protesting against the bombing of non-combatants in China and Spain were a contingent of twenty from Sunderland 'represented by banners of the League of Nations Youth Group and the YCL'[46]. Robeson had struck a chord with some of the region's young people. In 1939 the Youth Column in the *Shields Daily Gazette* asked:

> Do you like the voice of the great coloured singer Paul Robeson? You will have a chance of listening to his songs to your heart's delight if you attend the Youth Centre at 8.30 tonight. A selection of gramophone records he has made are to be presented. Room C5 is the place to be.[47]

War and Cold War, 1939-1957

During the Second World War people in the North East could hear Robeson singing in wireless broadcasts, largely compiled from his recordings, and watch him again in his 1930s films which popped up in cinemas throughout the 1940s. But the most satisfying vehicle with which the public were able to re-engage with Robeson was *The Proud Valley* on its release in the 1940. North East critics felt that Robeson 'scaled new heights' and was 'seen at his singing and acting best'.[48] The plot of the film was somewhat implausible as Robeson, an American sailor called David Goliath who had jumped ship and rode a goods train to a Welsh village, stumbles on a male voice choir and is befriended by its leader when he

hears his remarkable voice. The choirmaster finds Robeson a job down the pit, but he himself is killed in an accident which closes the mine. In a dramatic climax, after the miners take it upon themselves to re-open part of the pit, the men are trapped by a roof fall and Robeson saves them from certain death by sacrificing his own life. The setting of the film held a familiarity for North Easterners, something that was exploited in local publicity for the film. It was promoted on account of its 'Stupendous Mining Thrills' and as 'the most sincere film of mining life ever screened'.[49] It must have been a heart-warming experience for cinema-goers to see their hero depicted as a man capable of rendering a debt of kindness with his own life. There was propaganda value in *The Proud Valley* and the BBC broadcast the soundtrack.


PRINCESS

DAWDON

6.0 —— SEAHAM HARBOUR —— 8.0

FRIDAY & SATURDAY—

PAUL ROBESON in

THE PROUD VALLEY

A Powerful Drama of Mining Industry.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE ON SUNDAY at 8.0.

Sunderalnd Daily Echo 21 May 1940.

Robeson's films were uplifting in difficult times. The Bedlington Women's Branch of the Morpeth Conservative Association adopted a ward in a military hospital, providing patients with comforts like cigarettes and chocolate. But as a special treat in Christmas week of 1940 they put on a 'talkie film presentation comprising films of Paul Robeson'[50]. When the Mayoress of Tynemouth opened the Princes Cinema on a Sunday to raise money for her appeal fund, it was *Show Boat* that was screened.[51]

Robeson appeared in one other film made in war-time as but one of scores of celebrated actors in *Tales of Manhattan*. On its release in 1943 it was described in a Newcastle newspaper as the product of 'ten

of Hollywood's most brilliant scenario writers' and consisting of 'comedy and tragedy, pathos and drama'[52]. Readers of a number of North East newspapers would have already known, however, of Robeson's regrets about a share-cropper sequence in the film and Hollywood's continuing fixation with the Negro as 'a plantation Hallelujah shouter'[53].

In the immediate post-war period any news of Robeson was limited to his activism and brushes with authority.[54] Such reports may well have raised doubts in the minds of the public about the extent to which Robeson was being diverted from his true calling and persuaded to support so many radical causes, something touched on by otherwise complimentary accounts of his life.[55] But then at the end of the decade came the news that after an absence of ten years Britons would again have the opportunity to see Robeson in person. When he disembarked from the *Queen Mary* in early 1949 he began a tour of London and the provinces. In March, stagehands arranging decorations at Newcastle's City Hall, along with tuners who had spent three days working on the organ, stopped in the afternoon whilst Robeson rehearsed and sang to them. He told them he would like to come back and 'do a lot of talking about my political views'.[56] Robeson also said, as he did on a number of occasions on the tour, that he hoped to travel around the country again but at 'greatly reduced prices' within 'the range of the working people from whom I came and for whom I sing'.[57]

What one biographer called his 'workmen concerts'[58] started off in Gateshead, where Robeson was guest of Labour MP Konni Zilliacus, whom he had known since 1930. In 1949 Zilliacus had relinquished one of his slots at the Paris Peace Congress to allow Robeson to sing and speak to delegates. In Gateshead Robeson sang at three venues in one day in May 1949. He first went to the Bensham cinema for a free concert at which many had to be turned away. Then, after being served tea at the home of the chairman of Gateshead Labour Party, Robeson went to St John's, Sheriff Hill, where he sang Negro spirituals to a full church with folk standing in the aisles. Later, two thousand people attended a concert at Gateshead Town Hall. Robeson's audiences included some specially invited

old people and twenty people who were blind. His visit to Gateshead came six days before a council election, much to the annoyance of the Rent & Ratepayers party, although some of the Labour's political opponents could not resist the chance to witness one of Robeson's recitals.[59]

Robeson returned to an America in the grip of cold war hysteria and McCarthyism. In August 1950 North Easterners read in their local newspapers that the State Department had demanded that Robeson surrender his passport because of his 'activities in Left-wing movements and his outspoken criticism of America's international dealings[60]. A State Department spokesperson was quoted as saying 'any trip abroad would not be in the interests of the United States', but the *Hartlepool Mail* later printed a statement from the Council of African Affairs (of which Robeson was the chairperson) stating the reason for the request for him to hand over his passport was 'the Administration's fear of Paul Robeson's worldwide prestige as champion of the oppressed and enemy of Fascism and Imperialism'.[61] Newspapers in the North East spent the next years covering Robson's attempts to recover his passport, but the situation remained one of a long period when domestic theatres, concert halls, film studios and record companies blacklisted him, and he was unable to make a living. One chronicler of this period in Robeson's life writes that he

> was adored in Britain. No other country in the world did so much to keep Robeson in the public eye during his long containment in the United States; and no other country did as much to protest his treatment.[62]

Letters were printed in newspapers in support of Robeson, with one in the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* in 1954 urging readers to join the worldwide campaign to restore his passport, asking them to write or cable the State Department in Washington and contact MPs and the American Embassy. In 1957 Newcastle District Trades Council set up a committee with the intention of bringing Robeson back to Tyneside. Pressure mounted as the

British Actors Equity Association, trade unions and other organisation issued invitations to Robeson to take part in events in Britain.[63]

Back Again, 1958-1960

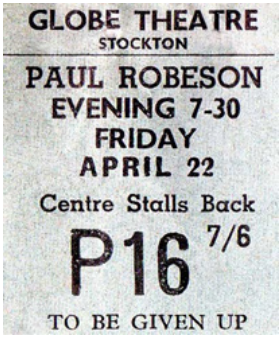
In the first weeks of 1958 press reports spoke optimistically of Robeson receiving an exit visa and travelling to Britain.[64] Television programmes were planned and a schedule of concerts, two of them in the North East, was put in place for April, although it was not until a Supreme Court ruling in June that Robeson was able to recover his passport. Within a few weeks he flew to Britain with a twenty-eight date itinerary that included concerts in Stockton and Newcastle.

Before Robeson's autumn concerts took place people in the region were again reminded how he was enamoured of Russia. A visit to Moscow triggered the headline 'Reds Welcome Paul Robeson' and a description of how he was 'besieged' by his Russian admirers.[65] Trips to Moscow for hospitalisation and recuperation confirmed for some their long-held suspicions about Robeson's chosen ideology and motives.[66] When Robeson's book *Here I Stand* was published in Britain, the *Newcastle Journal's* reviewer found it 'at times egotistically boring' and was disturbed by the question of what had 'happened now to [Robeson's] voice?'[67].

> The voice of Paul Robeson has always been a joyously resonant reminder of the deliverance of the Negro from oppression, a sympathetic kind of voice bereft of all stridency in its black velvety softness…Instead of the majesty that comes from pride, I detect raucous notes of defiance and even hate…now we have a bitter crusader sympathetic to Communism.[68]

Robeson's Stockton concert in October 1958 had quickly sold out. As well as singing, his show also encompassed poetry readings and a performance of the death scene from Othello. After four encores he was said to have met hundreds from the audience and autographed programmes, his

appearance demonstrating that 'he is still one of the world's great artists'[69]. Robeson returned to the region in mid-November to a packed City Hall which was 'enthralled' as he 'sang in English, German, Russian, Yiddish and African'[70]. The review went on to say that 'Robeson is a great artist and a great fighter. But it is his gift for making humanity aware of its kinship that we cherish most'[71]. One of those in attendance had written on their programme 'Thanks to God for sight and hearing. Grateful for return of such a talented artist'[72].


GLOBE THEATRE
STOCKTON
PAUL ROBESON
EVENING 7-30
FRIDAY
APRIL 22
Centre Stalls Back
P16 7/6
TO BE GIVEN UP

A ticket for the aborted concert arranged for April 1958 when it was thought Robeson would be allowed to travel to Britain. (Courtesy of Stan Laundon)


The ABC News

PICTURE OF THE MONTH

A report of a civic reception in Stockton in October 1958. (Courtesy of Gloria Clemmons)

Robeson was back in Britain in 1960 for a tour which again took in Newcastle and Stockton. One summary of the trip said that the concerts 'were greeted with almost unanimous praise' but 'the actual turnout was disappointing', and it was the case that tickets for the City Hall event were still being offered for sale on the day of the concert.[73] Nonetheless, the next day's headline read 'ROBESON RETURNS TO THRILL AGAIN' [74], under which the reviewer praised Robeson's great voice and personality and his ability to paint a broad musical canvas, before going on to say

> That urgent - and sometimes embarrassing - message on behalf of freedom and the brotherhood of man is still there. But as Mr Robeson grows older his gentle political propaganda jars less. He never lets us forget that his father was a slave but he does make us feel that the road to complete emancipation and race equality can be travelled with less weariness and bitterness because of the gift of song…He confided to us that he wanted this to be more of a get together than a concert and his running fire of wit and one or two message verses of poetry helped to achieve this effect.[75]

Robeson promised the audience that on his next visit he would include some Tyneside songs, but this was not to be. He went back to America with his physical vigour and mental health in decline. On his death sixteen years later readers of the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* were told that Robeson had become a recluse in 1961 and 'lived the last decade of his life in silence and bitter seclusion'[76].

Conclusion

Looking back at how Robeson's work was received in the North East, there can be no question that he was held in very high esteem, and both his reputation and the public's admiration continued to grow as the years passed. For example, in 2005 after a newspaper had recalled Robeson's 1949

visits to Tyneside, some readers felt compelled to offer their own treasured memories from almost sixty years earlier. One had been a schoolboy taken by an aunt from Anfield Plain to Sherrif Hill and remembered the 'tremendous atmosphere' in the crowded church as Robeson sang; another, then a twenty year old woman, explained how she met the singer - 'one of the highlights of my life' - after the City Hall concert which influenced her decision to become a music teacher; and someone, who was a young lad working in the Royal Station Hotel, still seemed in awe of the 'gigantic, overpowering man' who smiled at him in the lift.[77]

If North Easterners harboured doubts about Robeson's activism or thought him misguided in some of his beliefs, his dignity and humanity seem to have transcended any such feelings. Perhaps this was because, as on journalist observed after his last concert in the region, 'this brilliant artist's political convictions always have the gentleness born of a deep faith'.[78] Perhaps more fundamentally, the North East public recognised in Robeson shared ideals, like his support for the underdog and the merits of organised labour, which helped forge a strong bond between himself and people in the region.[79] Those who first came to Robeson simply as an entertainer and subsequently followed his progress would have learned a great deal about equality and oppression. And this path of discovery ran in both directions, for as one biographer argues

> In the North of England and Wales Robeson began to understand something few others did: the color line was not unique, but instead one of many barriers, including class, that divided people historically, politically, and culturally.[80]

Someone who witnessed one of Robeson's concerts wrote ''We feel that when he sings here amongst us in Newcastle and we hear the word 'brother' come rolling out in the special way of his, it is a family occasion'.[81] Paul Robeson, the internationalist who was the object of so much vilification in his own country, could always rely on a warm, friendly welcome in the North East.

1 The author remembers the encounter clearly but not the date, although it could only have been on the morning of 11 October 1958 or 23 April 1960.
2 Robeson's life as an athlete, lawyer, singer, actor and activist is covered in numerous studies and biographies. One of the most detailed is Duberman, M. B., *Paul Robeson* (London 1989).
3 www.stanlaundon.co.uk>history.
4 *Hampshire Independent* 14 July 1922; *The Stage* 13 July 1922 & 17 Sept 1925.
5 Genome.ch.bbc.co.uk>schedules>5no
6 *Berwickshire News & General Advertiser* 07 Aug 1928.
7 Duberman (1989) p. 121
8 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 22 Oct 1929.
9 Sparrow, J. *No Way But This. In Search of Paul Robeson* (London 2017) p.128.
10 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 24 May 1929.
11 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 17 Feb 1930. The concert took place on 10 Mar 1930.
12 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 13 Nov 1931.
13 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 17 Nov 1931.
14 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 28 Feb 1935.
15 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 06 Mar 1939. The concert took place on 28 Feb 1939.
16 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 24 Feb 1939; *Shields Daily News* 26 Mar 1938.
17 www.bbc.co.uk/nationonfilm/topics/entertainment/cinema.shtml; https:englandandnortheast.co.uk/1920-1939.html
18 For a list of all Robeson's films see en.wikipedia.org>wiki>Paul_Robeson_filmography
19 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 17 July 1934.
20 *Sunderland Daily Echo* and *Shipping Gazette* 08 Sept 1934.
21 Ramdin, R., *Paul Robeson. The Man and His Mission* (London 1987) p. 76.
22 Crighton, S., *Politics and Culture. Paul Robeson in the UK* (London 2013) p.7.
23 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 13 Aug 1936.
24 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 13 Aug 1936.
25 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 04 Apr 1939.
26 Ramdin (1987) p. 81.
27 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 26 Nov 1935.
28 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 26 Sept 1936, 02 Mar 1937.
29 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 26 Sept 1936.
30 *Newcastle Journal* 14 Feb 1937; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 26 Feb 1938.
31 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 16 July 1938.
32 Duberman (1989) p.203.
33 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 03 Mar 1937; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 09 Feb 1937. Sections of the black press in America thought that 'Uncle Tom had a true exponent in Paul Robeson' and criticised Robeson for portraying yet another 'shiftless moron' (Ramdin (1987) p.90 & Duberman (1989) p. 203)
34 *Blyth News* 24 Feb 1938.

35 *Shields Daily News* 26 Mar 1938.
36 Duberman (1989) p.210.
37 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 26 Feb 1938.
38 Duberman (1989) p.213, 223.
39 *Chester le Street Chronicle and District Advertiser* 08 Feb 1934; *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 13 Aug 1936. The discussions with Sergei Eisenstein were about Robeson taking the main part in a possible film of the life of Haitian revolutionary Toussant L'Overture.
40 Duberman (1989) p. 186.
41 *Sunderland Echo* 13.11.1931
42 Goodman, J., *Paul Robeson. A Watched Man* (London, 2013) p.15
43 *Morpeth Herald* 12 June1936.
44 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 01 Apr 1937.
45 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 03 Mar 1939.
46 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 08 Jun 1938 & 13 Jun 1938.
47 *Shields Daily Gazette* 19 Dec 1939.
48 *Morpeth Herald* 02 Aug 1940; *Shields Daily News* 14 Sept 1940.
49 *Blyth News* 15 July 1940.
50 *Blyth News* 27 July 1940.
51 *Shields Daily News* 08 Mar 1940.
52 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 24 Apr 1943.
53 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 23 Sept 1942; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 23 Sept1942; *Shields Daily News* 23 Sep1942.
54 See, for example, *Shields Daily News* 30 Jan 1947; *Shields Daily News* 22 Apr 1949; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 18 July 1949
55 Robeson's obituary in the *Guardian* 24 Jan 1976 said that he 'was used as a stalking horse by left-wingers on whom he wasted a lot of talent and time'.
56 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 8 Mar 1949.
57 *Leicester Evening Mail* 05 Apr 1949; *Burnley Express* 13 Apr 1949.
58 Ramdin (1987)p.156.
59 Goodman (2013) p. 43: Potts, A., Zilliacus. *A Life for Peace and Socialism* (London, 2002) pp. 132-3; Bath, J. & Stevenson, R. F., *The Gateshead Book of Days* (2013) unpaginated; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 08 Mar 2005.
60 *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* 04 Aug 1950.
61 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 04.Aug 1950 & 5 Aug 1950.
62 Goodman (2013) p. 273.
63 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 23 Jun 1954; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 12.06.1956; *Shields Daily News* 06 Feb 1957.
64 *Shields Daily News* 15 Jan 1958.
65 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 10 Aug1958, 15 Aug 1958.
66 Before his 1958 British concerts Robeson spent a month in Russia, where the US Embassy in Moscow told the State Department that his television appearances were 'Soviet exploitation of an obviously politically illiterate…for its own propaganda

purposes'. Before his 1960 concerts Robeson spent three weeks in Moscow for 'a rest cure and to have medial check ups'. (Duberman (1989) pp. 467-8 & 482).

67 *Newcastle Journal* 16 Oct 1958.

68 *Newcastle Journal* 16 Oct 1958.

69 *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* 11 Oct 1958.

70 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 14 Nov 1958.

71 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 14 Nov 1958.

72 Creighton (2013) p.12.

73 Duberman (1989) p.483; 14 Mar 1960.

74 *Newcastle Journal* 15 Mar 1960.

75 *Newcastle Journal* 15 Mar 1960.

76 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 24 Jan 1976

77 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 01 Mar 2005 & 18 Mar 2005.

78 *Newcastle Journal* 15 Mar 1960.

79 In 1949 Robeson had told *Reynolds News* that his militancy and politics had been learned from the British Labour Movement (Goodman (2013) p.27).

80 Goodman (2013) p.13.

81 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 14 Nov 1958.

The War Came Early to Sleepy Valley - Part Three, 1943 - 1946, D-Day Dodgers

Peter Brabban

This is the third part of the story of the Brabban family during World War II, providing a view of the working-class experience of the War. In part one we found the family coming to terms with the UK being at war. While Tommy the male head of the family having been called up found himself on the beaches of Dunkirk. In Part Two, Mary, the female head of the family, went out to work as a bus conductress, Tommy was posted to North Africa, and ended the period taking part in the battle of El Alamein and gaining promotion to Staff Sergeant.

1943 is regarded by historians of the Second World War as a watershed year for Britain, the year when the outcome of the war swung towards a victory for the allies. By January, the British people had experienced nearly two and a half years of war. Even though the threat of a German invasion had receded or had indeed disappeared there was no sign of an end to the conflict. Britain at the start of 1943 was moving into a period of huge wartime production, and factories producing war materials were working at full tilt. Despite this, it was clearly going to take time and a great effort to overcome the Nazis.

County Durham

In Sleepy Valley the Brabban family were getting on with life the best they could without the main breadwinner Tommy. Mary was now the de facto head of the household and was holding down a job as a bus conductor

with Tommy's old employer the Northern Bus Company. Her Aunt Emma was living with the family and available to carry out the everyday tasks. Emma had also developed a strong emotional attachment to the youngest of the family, little Mary Louise. Jean, the oldest child, had just entered the Alderman Wood Grammar School in Stanley and Teddy was making his way through junior school.

The topic of conversation for a huge number of Britons in the early months of 1943 was the Beveridge report, published in December 1942 under the title *Social Insurance and Allied Services*. It became the most unlikely best seller of the war years, widely read and discussed even more. Mass-Observation found that 92% of people in a random sample knew of the Beveridge report's existence. This was confirmed by a nationwide survey a fortnight later. 88% thought the government should implement it.[1]

Parliament debated the report in February 1943, and it quickly became clear that that the two major parties had very different views about Beveridge's proposals. The Conservatives were divided between old style laissez-faire economic liberals and a small but growing group of 'progressives. With no common ground they followed Churchill's lead in refusing to talk about a post war settlement while the war was still on. This was a tactical blunder of the first order, because it handed control of the post-war agenda to the Labour opposition. For most Labour MPs, the Beveridge Report provided a blueprint to create a fairer society in a post-war world. The coalition government took a middle line between Labour enthusiasm and Conservative caution, welcoming the Beveridge scheme in principle but making no promises about spending or priorities. At the end of the parliamentary debate, 121 MPs voted against the coalition. It was the biggest anti-government vote of the war.

The details and arguments of the Beveridge Report were put to the people of Sleepy Valley and other areas in North West Durham when the *Stanley News* dedicated its edition on 11 March 1943 to the report with the front page dominated by It reported that Mr J. Beatty Chairman of the

Durham County Federation of Labour Parties had said 'It is not socialism, but an important step towards it'.[2]

Another report had been published towards the end of 1942 which was closer to the Brabban family and their experience of the war. A Ministry of Information survey in Leeds of a thousand families in 1942 concluded that being a soldier's wife was a principal cause of poverty and many were in debt to friends and relatives. For wives of better paid workers, used to higher living standards and higher rents army allowances could bring a sudden descent into poverty.[3] This situation was recognised by the government.

A War Office morale report concluded in 1943:

> it was 'generally accepted as axiomatic that a private soldier's wife and children in an urban area who had no resources other than his pay and allowances could not manage. …… Not only were the poorest groups affected, but better paid working-class families, whose income had sharply contracted, suddenly found themselves unable to keep up with rents, insurance, and hire purchase payments. Many wives took war jobs and since nursery places were few and costly, they often relied on relatives or minders to look after their children.[4]

By 1943 the diet for many poorer Britons, unskilled working-class people and the unemployed, had improved quite considerably. 'In general it would be broadly true to state that personal consumption was stabilised at the pre-war skilled artisan level, and that of other classes cut down to approach it'.[5] Rationing allowed working-class people a better-than-average diet, but it also meant that other consumer goods such as clothing were in short supply and getting dearer. The points system helped to ease the pressure, but for most working-class families it was a case of make do and mend. That while many were earning a larger family income than ever

before, there was very little to spend this money on. In the later years of the War Britain and Britons looked shabbier and shabbier.

Tantobie, as a pit village, and Sleepy Valley were affected by changes in the coal industry, in which the biggest trend in coal during the war was a consistent fall in coal production, due in the main to a reduction in manpower. As Angus Calder outlines

> At the fall of France and the loss of European markets the coal owners had laid off large numbers of miners. This resulted in nearly 80,000 miners joining up and another 7000 getting jobs in the munitions industries. Most of these defectors were of younger miners, leaving the pits with an ageing workforce. By 1943, 40% of coal workers were aged forty or above. Poor wage rates were the basis for many of the disputes in the coal industry, despite government orders banning strikes and other forms of action. In 1942 the coalition government tried to address this issue in a White Paper which awarded miners with a national minimum wage (something for which the miners unions had been campaigning for two decades) and a series of wage increases. By the start of 1943 an adult miner's weekly wage had increased from £4-11s in March 1942 to £5 in 1943.[6]

The pitmen of Sleepy Valley and Tantobie in 1943 were better off than they had ever been before.

North Africa

The New Year, for Tommy Brabban and his mates in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and the Seventh Armoured Division was one of constant movement. as the Eighth Army pursued the Germans and Italians ever westward. A sense of what this constant movement meant for soldiers like Tommy can be seen in the diary of an REME officer:

> The day started like hundreds of others in a Western Desert year, with a fine clear blue sky and the sun up and already warm at 06.45 hours.
>
> The last man coming off guard is noisily clearing up the nights brew can and enamel cups, determined that everyone else should be as awake as he is; the Signals Corporal is heard calling up HQ CRÈME (HQ Corp REME) and chats in clear with his friends. When this friendly banter is finished, CRÈME's instructions come over in code, giving the instructions for the day's jobs.
>
> The unit being highly mobile, everyone except HQ staff is on individual rations, and very soon the whole camp is awake. The vehicle crews cook of the day is frying up his own idea of Australian tinned bacon, biscuits, onions and eggs (if he has been lucky enough to scrounge some), whilst the remainder of the crew are washing and shaving (if there is enough water), and finally rolling up bedding rolls. After breakfast there is just time to wash up the dishes in the washing water saved for the occasion and then out into the blue for "spade drill".[7]

Tommy's ultimate boss, General Montgomery, was being criticised for what was seen as the slow advance of the Eighth Army in pursuit of the Axis forces. Montgomery was well aware of how Rommel had made his forces vulnerable by advancing beyond his supply lines and was keen not to follow suit. This suited Tommy and the other REME men in the 2nd Echelon because it allowed them enough time to set up the frontline repair bases and do the necessary repair work before moving on to the next forward line.

For six months the Allies pursued the Axis forces, who were now caught in a pincer movement because of Operation Torch, in which the US and other nations landed their troops in Algeria and Morocco and were

gradually moving eastwards trapping the Afrika Corp. After six months of battling their way into Tunisia, the last redoubt of the Axis troops, the Eighth Army, including Tommy Brabban, entered Tunis on 7 May 1943. A week later the Axis powers in Africa surrendered. The war in Africa was over.

The Seventh Armoured Division came to a rest at Homs near the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre of Leplis Magna. It was decided to hold a grand victory concert party in this ancient theatre. I sometimes think of Tommy playing his violin for his mates in this amazing venue.

For five months Tommy and the Seventh Armoured Division were quartered at Homs, resting and recuperating before starting training exercises for an amphibious landing. It came as a blow when they were transferred out of the Eighth Army and into the Fifth, dominated by US troops. The Seventh Armoured became a reserve division. This separation from their old mates was made even more painful when the Eighth Army took part in the invasion of Sicily in July 1943.

Italy

However, REME did not have to wait too long before going back into action. On 9 September, the first wave of Fifth Army troops landed on mainland Italy at Salerno. This was the first invasion of mainland Europe and it was tough. Although the first waves of troops soon captured the beaches and the ground just beyond, the Germans had taken up positions in the hills behind the beaches and could view the allied troops activities clearly and hit them with artillery fire at any time. German reinforcements were brought down from the North and a number of counter-attacks were launched, often led by Panzer tanks. The Salerno beach-head became a killing field, with more and more troops landing and trying to find cover. On 15 September Tommy and the rest of the Seventh Armoured Division landed on the beaches. Tommy's brother-in-law Fred Ramsey was serving as an asdic operator in one of the destroyers escorting the invasion. The arrival of the Seventh Armoured Division was noted by a Commodore

Oliver returning from a visit to Corp headquarters. He wrote, 'How wonderful it was to see them with gleaming tanks and polished equipment, after watching nothing but unshaven dusty troops for days. It was a dose of salt to see them'.[8] This was no parade ground drill because as soon as they landed, they drew German artillery fire, which lasted for another two days. During this time George, one of Tommy's closest friends from his unit, was killed by enemy fire. By 19 September it was clear that the Germans were withdrawing from their positions. The imminent arrival of the Eighth Army from the South, and the continuing build-up of allied forces on the beaches was forcing the Germans northward to positions on their Gustav line.

A Christmas picture from Tommy Brabban in Italy

Over the next few days, the Fifth and Eighth Armies prepared to move northwards to capture Naples and eventually the rest of Italy. Because of the terrain in Italy, they were few passable roads and the motorised columns found themselves all channelled onto them. The main road that ran alongside the coast up to Naples became the site of one of the greatest traffic jams ever created. Tommy would be spending most of his time over the next year based in Naples. In later years Tommy would recall how he was shocked at the poverty of the Italians, how the children had no shoes and how begging for food was commonplace. Much of this impression came from his time in Naples, a city that was dependent on the allies to prevent famine and ill-health. Norman Lewis wrote in his diary of occupied Italy, *Naples '44*, of his first impressions, 'The city of Naples smells of charred wood, with ruins everywhere, sometimes completely blocking the streets, bomb craters and abandoned trams. The main problem is water'.[9] The Germans had left the city and its surroundings in a pitiful state; short of food with water and electricity mains destroyed. Tommy helped set up the Second Echelon workshops, first on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, and then again when the workshops had to be moved because Vesuvius had begun erupting. Tommy acquired a souvenir of this eruption, a piece of lava moulded into the shape of an ashtray, which was still with him in the 1970s.

County Durham

Even though the Germans were on the back foot in 1943, they were still not done with bombing In March 1943 the Luftwaffe dropped four incendiary bombs at Barcus Close, on the road from Tanfield and Sunniside.

By now the workforce had been supplemented with millions of women, quite a few like Mary Brabban, mothers with small children. According to historian Geoffrey Field, 'Mothers with young children were the guilty secret of Bevins labour policy - an estimated three-quarters of a million women with children under fourteen worked in industry. For them childcare and shopping were a perpetual nightmare'. Mary was not unusual in another aspect of her employment, the fact that she was replacing her

husband Tommy. 'In some places like the Wearside shipyards and the Consett steel works --- kinship ties greatly eased the social integration of women into industries that had been exclusively male'.[10]

In Sleepy Valley, the fruits of what Angus Calder has described as 'patriotic collectivism' were evident in the number of communal events taking place. In April 1943 the Perth Theatre Company, sponsored by CEMA (the predecessor of the Arts Council) put on a production of *Othello* at the Jubilee Hall in Tantobie. Not to be outdone, the local Tantobie Community Players performed a programme of two one act plays, *School for Scandal* and *The Wise Woman* the following month in the same venue. The Tantobie- based 'concert party' mentioned in earlier parts of this narrative were still performing weekly at the Working Men's Club. The 'Holiday at Home' initiative also continued with a parade, races and competitions on the sports ground at Tantobie. Jean and Teddy, the older two of Tommy Brabban's children were experiencing many changes. Jean completed her first year at the Alderman Wood Grammar School in Stanley, while Teddy was in his final year of elementary school and was preparing to take the scholarship exam to join het. His memories of this time include playing games based on the news of the war. With his friends he built a model of what they thought the Burma Road was like. While some boys pushed model cars along the road, others 'bombed' the cars.

As 1943 drew to a close a change occurred in Sleepy Valley that piqued the interest of the adults and excited the children. The anti-aircraft (Ack Ack) unit based in the huts across the road from the Brabban household moved out. They were replaced by American troops. Within minutes of arrival, the troops were surrounded by children staring through the perimeter wire at these exotic creatures.

1944

County Durham

The fifth year of war dawned in Sleepy Valley with a sense of weariness and stoicism. As Field puts it, 'A distinct war-weariness and fatigue permeated

civilian life by 1944. Years of air raids, overwork, limited leisure, family dislocation, and scarce rations had created a large reserve of easily ignited discontent'. Attitudes to the war had also changed. It was clear by 1944 that the Allies had the upper hand and that it was only a matter of time before Germany would be defeated. This meant that many Britons were focusing on what post-war Britain would be like. This in turn had an impact on their attitudes toward everyday issues at work or home. 'The Ministry of Labour's regional officer for the North East warned of 'a spirit of determination on the part of workers ---- not so much to get on with the war as to assert their power, their principles and prerogatives and to ventilate their grievances, not only against their employers but against the whole structure of society.[11]

For many women, Mary Brabban included, the burden of going out to work and being responsible for housework as well was becoming onerous and exhausting. Diana Murray Hill, a Mass Observation diarist who worked for two years in an aircraft factory, wrote about her growing fatigue and depression.

> Scarcely perceptible at first, and then steadily and more steadily growing till, aided by other factors like lack of sleep, petty illnesses, and factory disturbances, it permeates and then predominates your whole life ……the browned off man has his finger on you, and after a year, two years or more, unless your morale and health are very sturdy he can make you very poor shadows of the War Effort girls.[12]

The newly arrived GIs in the Ack Ack unit brought a glimmer of light into this atmosphere. Mary Brabban heeded the call to make the GIs feel at home by inviting one to Sunday tea at Ivy Place. Teddy Brabban coached his little sister Mary Louise in the phrase 'Got any gum chum?' in the belief that the GI would be more likely to respond positively to a pretty little girl than an eleven-year-old boy. The visit duly took place and Teddy

got his gum; the GI enjoyed a day with a family and even brought along some much-needed food. In May the Gis started South to be part of the D-Day landings.

Naples, Italy

The veterans of the Desert War, like Tommy Brabban, had to learn a whole new style of warfare. Most of the Italian territory they fought over was mountainous with few winding roads and with the Germans manning defensive positions on the heights with minefields and booby traps galore in the approaches to these positions. Italy became a battle of infantry and artillery with tanks acting as back-up. Life was dangerous for the tank recovery crews, who often had to retrieve tanks under the eyes of German spotters and artillery fire. Progress was slow and bloody as the German Gustav Line held up the allied advance. Allied troops would joke that, 'when the Luftwaffe flew over we duck, when the RAF flew over the Germans would duck but when the USAAF flew over everyone would duck'. Because the advance had slowed down progress Tommy and his mates at Echelon Two found themselves based in Naples for months on end. Once again Tommy met up with his younger brother Frank. This time they followed their love of music to the San Carlo Opera House to a performance of *La Bohème*. Tommy's Christmas photo of this year shows him in a park in Naples.

The allied attacks on the Gustav line lasted six months and cost 98,000 casualties. In May 1944 the breakthrough occurred when the French broke the line. The Germans began to fall back and the road to Rome was opened. Allied forces entered Rome on 5 June 1944. It was a great victory, and Tommy and his mates celebrated. But within one day the news was overshadowed by news of the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. 6 June. It felt to Tommy and his fellow soldiers that once again their struggles had been pushed to being a side show. This feeling was made far worse when the rumour spread that someone (it was reputed to be Lady Astor) had described them as being D-Day Dodgers. This anger gradually turned to stoic cynicism especially

after a song was created called 'We are the D-day Dodgers' (see Appendix) which the men were soon singing as a form of rebuke.

Sleepy Valley, County Durham

September 1944 was a big month in the education of the Brabban children. Teddy had passed his scholarship to the Alderman Wood Grammar school and joined his sister Jean. Little Mary Louise started Tanfield Lea Elementary School. She can clearly remember walking to school holding the hand of her mother Mary.

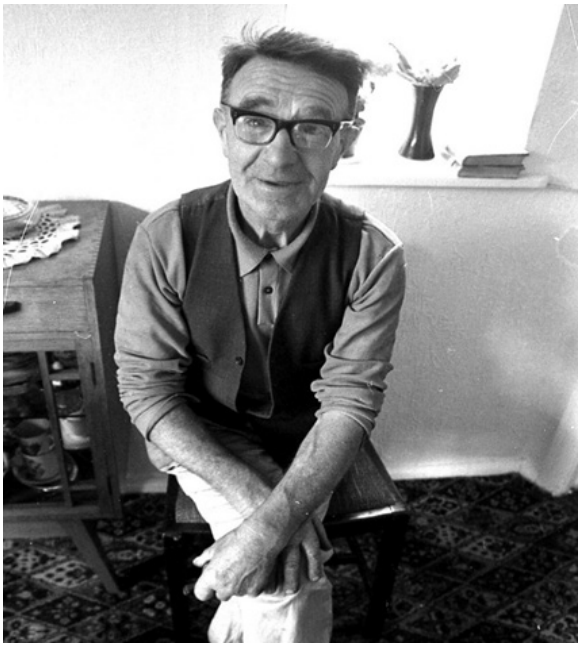
Aspects of wartime existence began to change. The anti-aircraft measures such as the Ack Ack battery disappeared and on 17 September the blackout measures were eased into what was called the 'dim out'.

Italy

For Tommy in Italy the signs of the war coming to an end were even clearer. In August 1944 he got orders to transfer back to the main REME workshops in Burford, Oxfordshire. There is a family legend that Tommy was transferred back to the UK after having been wounded when a jeep he was in passed over a landmine and Tommy was hurt and had to transfer back to the UK for treatment in hospital. Of this legend only the hospital part is true.

Tommy's military service dragged on. For eleven months he was at the main workshops, presumably training others to go out into the field. In June 1945, a month after VE Day, he was involved in an accident at Burford and was rushed to hospital in Reading. After five years of active service during which the Germans had been trying to hurt him and failing, it took an accident involving the British Army to put him in hospital. Tommy languished in hospital for over three months, during which time he made contact with his cousin Percy Smith and his family. Percy was a milkman, he owned and operated a milk delivery company in nearby Wokingham, Berkshire. The Smiths became an important part of the life of the Brabban family, who spent many a summer holiday staying at the

Smith house in Chestnut Avenue. Tommy was released from hospital and sent back to the Central Workshops where he was eventually demobbed on 9 August 1945. For six long years he had been away from his family.



Tommy's cousin, Percy Smith, the milkman from Wokingham

Sleepy Valley

Mary watched the end of the war with some trepidation, knowing that more change was on the way. She was going to have to get to know the man she had last seen six years before; she knew that the job she had done for three years and from which she had gained some status and independence was coming to an end.

The Brabban family joined in enthusiastically with the VE Day celebrations in Tantobie but waited with baited breath for the return of Tommy, father and legally head of the family.

VE Day in Tantobie (kind permission of Mary Robson)

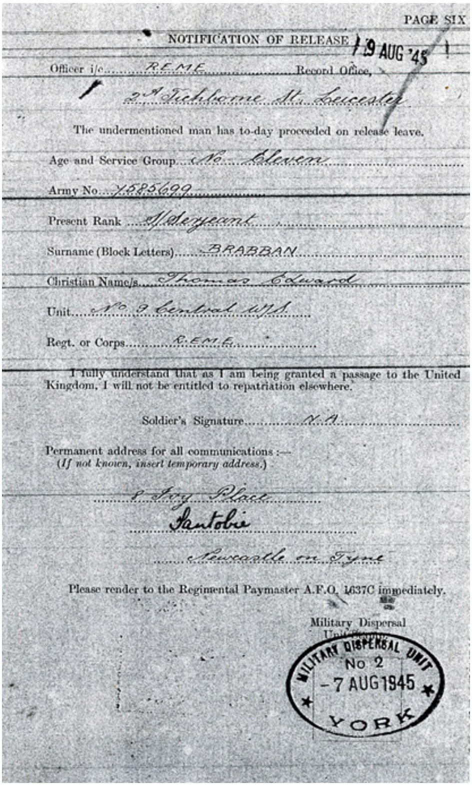
Postwar

For many returning soldiers their return home was not how they thought it would be. As explained by Geoffrey Field,

> Soldiers found their wives were no longer the young girls they had left behind; they had acquired new interests; they had grown more independent … Many men did not welcome their spouses' increased independence; some wives found themselves viewing their husbands more critically; and many children…. found the reappearance of fathers difficult, especially if they had only vague memories of them.[13]

The reunification of the Brabban family was not an easy business. Both Tommy and Mary struggled to deal with the loss of status and independence. Tommy was 'demoted' to once again being just a driver,

taking but never giving orders. Mary was forced to give up her job and return to the kitchen sink, and to adopt a subservient role. The children also responded differently. Jean and Teddy were quite happy to have their Dad back but for little Mary Louise it was traumatic. She had never known her Dad, never mind live with him. When Tommy moved into 8 Ivy Place, Great Aunt Emma had to move out, so for Mary Louise who had been so close to Emma this was a big blow. As Mary Louise had been brought up in a matriarchy, it was terribly confusing, and she kept asking why this strange man was living in their house, and 'when is he going to go?'



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NOTIFICATION OF RELEASE 19 AUG '45

Officer i/c R.E.M.E. Record Office,

2A Tichborne St. Leicester

The undermentioned man has to-day proceeded on release leave.

Age and Service Group No. Eleven

Army No. 7585699

Present Rank S/Sergeant

Surname (Block Letters) BRABBAN

Christian Name/s Thomas Edward

Unit No. 9 Central W/S

Regt. or Corps R.E.M.E.

I fully understand that as I am being granted a passage to the United Kingdom, I will not be entitled to repatriation elsewhere.

Soldier's Signature N.A.

Permanent address for all communications :—
(*If not known, insert temporary address.*)

8 Ivy Place
Fantobie
Newcastle on Tyne

Please render to the Regimental Paymaster A.F.O. 1637C immediately.

Military Dispersal Unit

MILITARY DISPERSAL UNIT No 2 -7 AUG 1945 YORK

Dad's Demob paper.

After a while the family settled down, although the rows between Tommy and Mary went on for decades. The atmosphere had improved enough for the author to be born in 1948. The wartime history of the Brabban family shows how modern warfare caused great changes for this working-class family. Yet much of the history of the conflict fails to portray this and instead the overriding narrative gives a very middle-class view of the War.

On 19 March 2021 it was announced that 29 London bus drivers had died from Coronavirus; will they be remembered in the future? Working-class people tend to disappear from the narratives of major events. In the midst of the Covid-19 crisis we all acknowledged the crucial role being played by the delivery drivers, the dustmen, the shop assistants and other low paid jobs. In wartime Britain, these jobs and many more undertaken by working class people were crucial to survival. Yet it is now extremely hard to find their tales in the output of materials about the conflict. They have stopped being part of the overwhelming narrative. I expect the same thing will happen to the working-class people who so recently we called heroes.

Writing about the Second World War has become problematic in recent years as the political right have taken the war and especially 1940 as a shibboleth. The phrases 'our finest hour' and 'we stood alone' have become shorthand for a view of British (but more especially English) exceptionalism. This view, no matter how inaccurate, was the backbone of the Brexiteers' arguments. In their eyes, 1940 was the year that Britain stood alone in the face of German aggression and eventually overcame it when 'we won the war'. These claims are a nonsense, based on Churchillian rhetoric and the propaganda of the time. At the head of a huge empire, Britain could never claim to have been alone, as one of the world's richest economy in the 1930s, Britain was not weak and helpless. This is history and politics based on a cartoon, specifically Low's cartoon of the serviceman standing on a stormy shore shaking his fist at approaching aeroplanes and shouting 'Very well, alone'. The accepted narrative of the Second World

War is very powerful, and it is hardly surprising that even those who were alive at the time frame their own stories within this narrative. As historian David Olusoga wrote in the *Guardian* on 15 March 2021,

> Trapped in a make-believe past, we are unable to recognise how our real history shapes our culture and our attitudes. To those accustomed to privilege, equality can feel like oppression. And to nations accustomed to hearing only comforting myths of exceptionalism, simple, irrefutable historical fact can sound like slander.[14]

Appendix; D-day Dodgers. (Sung to the tune of the soldiers' favourite, ' Lili Marlene')

We're the D-Day Dodgers, way off in Italy
Always on the vino, always on the spree;
Eighth Army scroungers and their tanks,
We live in Rome, among the Yanks.
We are the D-Day Dodgers, way out in Italy

We landed in Salerno, a holiday with pay,
The Jerries brought the bands out to greet us on the way.
Showed us the sights and gave us tea,
We all sang songs, the beer was free
To welcome D-Day Dodgers to sunny Italy.

Naples and Cassino were taken in our stride,
We didn't go to fight there, we went just for the ride.
Anzio and Sangro were just names,
We only went to look for dames
The artful D-Day Dodgers, way out in Italy.

Dear Lady Astor, you think you're mighty hot,
Standing on the platform, talking tommyrot.
You're England's sweetheart and her pride
We think your mouth's too bleeding wide.
We are the D-Day Dodgers, in sunny Italy.

Look around the mountains, in the mud and rain,
You'll find the scattered crosses, some that have no name.
Heartbreak and toil and suffering gone,
The boys beneath them slumber on.
They are the D-Day Dodgers who stay in Italy.

Notes

1 J. Gardiner, *Wartime Britain* 1939-1945 (London: Headline, 2005), p. 582.
2 *Stanley News* 11 March 1943, p. 1.
3 G. G. Field, *Blood, sweat, and toil: Remaking the British Working Class 1939-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 135.
4 Field, p. 256.
5 A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London, Cape 1969), p. 35
6 Calder, p. 352.
7 M. Sibbons, *From the Archives : An eclectic mix of stories from the history of REME* (London: Osprey Publishing, 2016) p.151
8 H. Pond, *Salerno* (London: Pan Books, 1961) p. 214
9 N. Lewis, *Naples'44: An Intelligence Officer in the Italian Labyrinth* (New York: Carroll & Graf 1983) p. 25
10 Field p. 142; p. 139
11 Field p. 103; p. 110
12 Field p. 137
13 Field p. 290
14 D. Olusoga, 'The royals are just like much of our press - trapped in a fantasy version of Britain's past', *The Guardian*, 15 March 2021.

Squatting in Tynemouth in 1946

Stuart Barlow

Seventy-five years ago, tens of thousands of families walked into empty army camps across the country in response to a widespread housing shortage after the Second World War (WW2) and to escape inadequate housing conditions.[1] I became aware of a local manifestation of this national movement, the occupation of vacated army camps in Tynemouth, from Kristopher McKie's presentation, 'A Homeless History of Newcastle', at *The History for Change Conference* held at Newcastle's Literary and Philosophical Society, in October 2018.[2] Subsequent correspondence with McKie prompted further research into this hidden history of the North Shields and Tynemouth community which is the focus of this paper.

Squatters move in

On Monday 12 August 1946, the *Shields Evening News* proclaimed that '[t]he squatter invasion in Tynemouth has started', when three families moved their furniture into the huts of a former heavy anti-aircraft battery camp on The Broadway, Tynemouth, just behind what is now a Sainsbury's convenience store. Two days later eighteen families moved into the old Churchill Street army camp, at Rosehill just outside Wallsend. This quickly increased to thirty families. Then the names of three families were chalked on hut doors at a barrage balloon tethering site at the Albert Edward Dock, now part of the Royal Quays Marina. A few days later, five families moved into huts at the Spanish Battery camp, at Prior's Haven, Tynemouth. By the end of the first week of occupation, sixty-nine families were squatting

at these camps. By the end of August there were twenty-seven families (forty-seven adults and thirty-one children), at the Broadway camp and six families (twelve adults and seven children) at the Spanish Battery camp. Squatting at the Albert Edward Dock did not last long, however, as the huts were demolished within a week of their occupation. A year later, in June 1947, six families walked past guards to move into the huts on an anti-aircraft gun site opposite Whitley Bay cemetery.[3]

The *Shields Evening News* reported that the prime movers behind the 'invasion' of the Broadway camp were Fred Robinson and George Henry Evans. They had called a meeting of the families who had subsequently moved into the camp. The meeting had been organised to draw up a list of 'do's and don'ts' to avoid damage to the camp, and to establish a central fund, into which each family paid ten shillings, to cover future rent and rates. A committee was set up to run the camp and George Evans was elected as its Chair. The residents of the Spanish Battery camp also elected a committee to run their camp and set up a central fund into which families paid ten shillings/ week. The Spanish Battery Committee decided to contact the Broadway Camp Committee to establish a common approach for both camps, but unfortunately, there are no reports of the outcome of these talks. The residents at the Churchill Street camp similarly elected a committee to organise life in the camp and to establish a fund. The squatters in Whitley Bay were also prepared to pay rent, provided the sanitary arrangements in all of the huts were 'put right'.[4] Such actions, preparing to pay rent and service charges, and setting up structures for self-management, were being repeated across the country. As Don Watson points out in his book *Squatting in Britain 1945-1955*, local newspapers were often impressed by how well squatters organised themselves. He also describes some of the more ambitious attempts across the country to organise the coordination of squatter camp committees on either county or city-wide levels.[5]

The squatters and camp life

The Shields Evening News reported on the backgrounds of some of the squatters. Fred Robinson, at the Broadway camp, was a former prisoner of war and his wife and two children had been living with his wife's family in Cullercoats. George Evans had become tired of his family lodgings in Hotspur Street, Tynemouth. He saw their hut as 'the first home of their own in four years of married life'. Mrs Scott was trying to get a home together before her husband returned from Singapore. At the Spanish Battery camp, Mrs Amos had been demobbed from the Auxiliary Territorial Service, and had been sleeping on the floor of a three-bedroomed house shared by twelve people for eighteen months. Mrs Taylor had been living with her 'folks' with two children. After moving in from Camden Street North in North Shields, a Churchill Street camp hut was the first family home for Mr McBain, a demobbed navy stoker. Mr W. W. Brown, a miner, had been living with his parents for two years with his wife and two children. Mrs Shell, an eighty-one year old women, had moved there with her daughter, after not having had 'a real home' since being bombed out at Willington Quay in 1944. All the families in the Whitley Bay camp had moved in to escape overcrowding and all the men had been in the services, along with several of the women (four of whom were expecting children).[6]

These descriptions bear out Watson's comments that the families involved in squatting often had much in common. Many had a background of war service, and were recently married couples with children who were frustrated with having to live with parents or in-laws, or in expensive lodgings. Even the Tynemouth police reported that the motivation for many of the squatters was to 'escape overcrowding frequently in expensive lodgings, e.g. man and wife and one child living in two rooms, rent 21s a week; woman and two children living in one room let by her mother at 15s a week'.[7]

The Nissen huts at the Broadway camp were divided into two rooms. One had a coal-fired cooking range and the other was used as a combined bedroom/ dining room. At the Churchill Street camp the 'wives [had]

arrived with scrubbing brushes and cleaning materials to make the corrugated Nissen huts fit to live in' and operated a communal cook house. Despite the huts' limitations, the squatter camps always had willing applicants, and many people had to be turned away from the Broadway camp. When a family moved out to a permanent house there were over forty applications for the vacant hut. The Broadway camp huts had both toilets and baths when the squatters moved but no water or electricity supplies. The water supply was connected within a couple of days, and Tynemouth Council agreed to empty the dustbins, but it took longer for electricity to be connected to the camps. By the beginning of September, the Council had surveyed the Broadway Camp to see how the huts could be made habitable for an extended period. Repairs had also been undertaken to the Spanish Battery camp huts at the end of August, and unsafe blast walls had been demolished.[8]

One of the greatest challenges in the camps, apparently, was 'wash day' as there were no wash-boilers and clothing had to be boiled in pans on the huts' army stoves. Cooking also posed problems, with stoves having to be lit at 5.00am in order for tea to be ready for breakfast. To begin with, the camps also faced problems with the supply of fuel. The local coal merchants would not supply coal, because the Ministry of Fuel and Power classified squatter camps as unauthorised properties which were not entitled to coal delivery permits. One Spanish Battery squatter resorted to bringing a bag of coal from Willington Quay in a wheel barrow, a distance of four and half miles. However, the Ministry of Fuel and Power quickly authorised the local Fuel Office to supply the squatters with delivery permits. George Evans, Chair of the Broadway Camp Committee, said he was 'thrilled to bits' at the news and Mrs Taylor, wife of the Spanish Battery Camp Committee Chair, thought '[i]t was wonderful'. By November, electric cookers had been installed in some of the Broadway Camp huts, but the size of the Spanish Battery's power cable prevented their installation as it could not carry the load. The Council promised to install suitable cookers before winter had set in.[9]

By the beginning of 1947, however, The Shields Evening News was reporting on deteriorating conditions in the camps. Huts in the Spanish Battery camp were reported as being difficult to heat during one of the harshest winters on record, and water was running down the walls inside the huts. Occupants were complaining that their children were catching colds and suffering from earache as the result of these conditions and the draughts. Admittedly, one occupant at the Broadway camp reported that their stove warmed their hut "just like central heating". In February Tynemouth Council declared one of the huts on the Broadway camp unfit for human habitation as the roof was leaking and dripping melting snow inside. By June the Council considered the hut beyond repair and the military authorities demolished it.[10]

The reaction to squatting in the community

Just after moving into the Spanish Battery camp one of the squatters, a Mrs Robson, told the *Shields Evening News* that she was indignant that '[s]ome people seem to think that because we are moving into places like these that we belong to the lower end of the social order'.[11] As Watson points out, squatters just wanted to become mainstream council tenants, and not to live in overcrowded accommodation.[12] But how were the squatters received by the local community? Despite the *Shields Evening News* using what might be considered a pejorative phrase when it described the occupations of the camps as '[t]he squatter invasion', the initial reaction of the paper could be viewed as sympathetic. Its regular feature column 'Round the Town' by 'Collingwood' recognised that the squatters were part of a movement spontaneously springing up around the country, and a striking example of self-organisation. 'Collingwood' even compared the squatters' actions favourably with those of Londoners who took over tube stations as shelters during the blitz, and saw their actions as legitimate expressions of discontent which were deep-seated in origin.[13]

As one might expect, the Shields Evening News received a range of letters on the actions of the squatters. One signed 'Democracy' in August

1946 described the action of the squatters as 'mob law and should not be tolerated' and expressed surprise at the support they were receiving. This drew a number of responses, with 'Democracy' criticised as fortunate in having a house of his own and not being compelled to live in 'rooms'. One letter, signed 'Borough Road North Shields', objected to the use of the term 'mob rule' and felt that the average squatter was 'a peaceful fellow, un-armed, who has fought for his country and who thinks, rightly enough, that his country owes him a home'. K Nightingale suggested that the slowness in providing new housing after the war had driven people to use their own initiative to find accommodation. J Johnston pointed out that 'Democracy' had attacked 'the result' rather than 'the cause' of the problem, which was the local authority's failure to make use of army camps and other untenanted properties to relieve the housing problem within the town.[14] A similar letter, signed 'Ex-RAF North Shields', criticised the Government for not promoting a policy of taking over old military sites and fitting them up as temporary homes. 'The latest move by homeless ex-servicemen should be a warning of the stirrings of discontent in a situation that threatens to raise the most serious repercussions in the future' the writer said.[15]

Another letter, signed S Beal Ex-RAF NCO, highlighted the housing problems facing families such as his. Along with his wife, three boys and two girls, he had been living in three rooms off a yard on Church Street, North Shields, which they shared with four other families. All their water had to be carried upstairs to their rooms. They had been on the council's housing list for over eleven years, waiting for a house of their own.[16]

The attitude of the *Shields Evening News* changed as time went on, however. By the end of September its stance was that the squatting movement had begun as 'a social rather than a political problem', taking over huts that were standing empty, but that recent events in London had a sinister political element aimed at the Government. Although the paper didn't mention them by name it appears they were reacting to the occupation of the Duchess of Bedford House, in Kensington, which had

been targeted by the London District Committee of the Communist Party. Members of the Communist Party had been involved with, and taken the initiative within, the squatting movement from the start. Up the coast in Blyth local Communist Councillor Ned Breadin had urged people to occupy empty army huts in response to overcrowding and the occupation of another anti-aircraft battery on Teeside was led by the Communist Pat Durking. While the North Shields Communist Party branch had provided leadership before the war in the local Unemployed and Seaman Minority Movements there is no mention of their involvement with the Tynemouth squatters in the local press during this period.[17]

Council, Government and Political Reactions

Tynemouth Council's record on postwar housing was questioned by two ex-service men in their letters to the Shields Evening News prior to the squatters' actions. The first, signed 'Ex-RAF', said that too many houses in the borough were occupied by at least two families and criticised '[the] feeble trickle of new houses', after twelve month of peace, as well as the Council's decision not to erect any pre-fabricated houses.[18] 'Ex-Regular (invalid) North Shields' complained that the Council would not consider him or his family for a house because he had been working away, on war work, for the last five years. In response to the Council suggesting he should seek accommodation privately, he observed that they should know:

> […] this source […] has "dried up". Were the position reversed and I was seeking accommodation the other end, in addition to family points etc. I should get one point for each 50 miles my home was from my work and be considered equally with residents.[19]

The issue highlighted in these letters had arisen partly because, at the start of the 20th century, Tynemouth Council had been reluctant to building council housing as they considered there was 'no real housing problem

in North Shields'. This attitude was possibly influenced by the large proportion of councillors, mainly from the Conservative Party but some from the Liberal Party, who had interests of one sort or another in the private housing sector. For many years the Council did not even have a Housing Committee. By the early 1930s, over a third of all housing within Tynemouth Council was considered overcrowded, one of the highest figures in the country. The bankside tenements, running along the riverside in North Shields, were turning into dilapidated slums. With uncharacteristic energy, in 1930, Tynemouth Council reformed its Housing Committee and started rehousing people from the bankside tenements and those in overcrowded privately rented properties onto the then new Meadowell Estate.[20]

The Council still had a Conservative majority after the War, and its attitude towards the squatters appeared to be one of standing off while awaiting Government instructions. The military authorities asked the Council not to eject the squatters and to ensure that minimum sanitary arrangements and a water supply were provided. The Council did make it clear, however, that the squatters' actions would make no difference to their position on 'any housing list'. The Council also avoided setting rents and rates for the squatters, despite the Ministry of Health (MoH) asking them to do this.[21] When they were asked, towards the end of August 1946, to take over the Broadway Camp as part of their temporary housing allocation they delayed making a decision until they had undertaken a survey to establish the work required to make the huts habitable for a number of years. In the end only the Broadway camp was offered to the Council by the MoH and by the end of September, the Council had agreed 'to do whatever we can to make these unsatisfactory dwellings as habitable as possible'. The Spanish Battery Camp, however, was not part of this discussion. It would be another eighteen months before it was transferred to the Council on a two-year loan or until such time the squatters' left.[22]

In October 1946, the Housing Committee reported that £265 had been set aside for repairs at the Broadway Camp. This proved insufficient

to cover the repairs required by the MoH, who appeared to have higher standards than the council. By the middle of December, the situation at the squatter camps had become more regularised, with the Borough Treasurer authorised to fill vacancies in the camps with families from the general housing waiting list. The Council finally got round to approving rents levels starting on 1 January 1947, but subject to review once the final costs of repairs were known. The Council also agreed that the money the Squatters' Committee had collected could be set against the costs of electricity, with any surplus being used in lieu of rents owed. By the end of January 1947, the Council had also confirmed that squatters would be included within the allocation scheme for new permanent housing.[23]

Strangely, the attitude of the Conservative Tynemouth council appeared almost more cooperative than the official response of the Labour Government, which had swept into power in July 1945 with a commanding majority on a reforming programme. This included making council housing provision central to its housing policy, in response to the failure of the private sector to provide good and affordable housing during the inter-war years. Yet when the squatter movement erupted in 1946, the Government showed irritation and frustration rather than sympathy. Clement Atlee said redundant camps 'should not be allowed to stand empty [to] provide a temptation to squatters'. While visiting his South Shields constituency in September 1946, Home Secretary James Chuter Ede said steps should be taken to recover possession of the camps. He did also say, however, that any camp not required would be offered to local authorities by the MoH as a contribution to their temporary housing allocation if they connected water, electric lighting and other public utilities to them. Locally, the Labour Party made housing a central issue of their Tynemouth Council election campaign in October 1946, but the party focused on the 'terrible legacy' of the Council's housing record before and during the war, rather than giving any active support to the squatters.[24]

Even more left-wing government ministers were far from supportive of the squatter movement. The Shields Evening News reported on their front

page that Ellen Wilkinson, the MP for Jarrow who had championed the Jarrow March, had condemned the action of squatters who had taken over empty luxury flats in London, claiming 'flat seizing is anarchy'. Aneurin Bevan, father of the NHS and ardent campaigner for good quality council housing, requested local authorities to take immediate action to secure the eviction of squatters from Council and private property, withhold all facilities (including gas or electricity) and cut off any services already connected at the time of occupation. Bevan was reported as believing that

> The Government are confident that [….] the principles of social justice on which the system of allocation of available housing accommodation is based [….] cannot be usurped by individuals, nor can the public authority permit the claims of the needy, who have been waiting a long time for homes, to be over ridden by violence and lawlessness.[25]

Is it too harsh to suggest that at that time Aneurin Bevan and Ellen Wilkinson had been incorporated into the government machine and were not willing to defend, or understand, the actions of ordinary working class people who saw themselves as 'refuges from overcrowding'?[26] Bevan did, however, subsequently push for greater numbers of council housing to be constructed and suggested requisitioned hotels should be offered to local authorities as temporary accommodation.[27]

Other sections of the labour movement, however, were more active in supporting the squatters. The *Shields Evening News* reported, in September 1946, that the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards' National Council (E&ATSSNC) were calling on shop stewards' committees to mobilise support behind the squatters' actions, because the Government could not expect engineering workers to back a production drive while 'attempts are made to throw their workmates on the street'. The E&ATSSNC had been established in 1941 and was active during the war. Locally, the Tynemouth District and Whitley Bay Trades Council severely

criticised the council when they gave a large empty house in Preston village, just outside North Shields, to the local Air Training Corps Cadets rather than using it for housing. Even though councils had a wide range of powers to requisition empty houses Tynemouth Council's record was poor in this area.[28]

The end of squatting in Tynemouth

As life in the squatter camps entered a third winter, with the huts deteriorating, it suddenly seemed that the camp residents might be immediately re-housed. At the end of September 1948 the MoH had told Tynemouth Council that the Broadway camp was required for Territorial Army training. The Council offered to re-house the camp families, as they had been allocated extra houses by the MOH. However, the offer was withdrawn within days after the War Office decided it did not need the camp after all and the Council lost its extra allocation. Naturally, the camp residents took this news badly. They just wanted to 'live like human beings for a change' rather than experience another winter in leaking huts with no hot water or toilets. At the end of October the Broadway camp residents wrote an open letter, printed in the Shields Evening News, demanding their immediate rehousing after living for 'over two years under conditions which are absolutely disgusting in this modern age'. They were not necessarily demanding new homes; they just wanted to live in 'dry, clean houses with decent sanitary arrangements'.[29]

The squatters then organised a petition to support their demands which they reported was being well received. A letter the Shields Evening News, from a 'Squatter Supporter', confirmed that there was a lot of support for the petition in the town. Another letter, from 'Un-Housed Ex Serviceman', suggested that the squatters were just fighting for what was due to them, rehousing. Others were less sympathetic. Some felt that it was wrong that squatters should be allowed first preference for houses. 'Like a Squatter' for example, was anxious not to be by-passed if the squatters were re-housed. 'Still Waiting' suggested that it would be unfair

to rehouse all the squatters at once while he and his family had to live in two damp rooms with water coming up through the bedroom floor in heavy rain. Then a letter again highlighted poor housing conditions in the town. 'Cellar Dweller' had to live in two damp basement 'cellers', where hot water or baths were unheard of and they had to queue for the toilet. The Shields Evening News also reported that a 'docker' had refused to sign the petition, and that some of the collectors had been abused. Finally the Broadway camp residents wrote letters. One, from 'Ex-Service Squatter', stated that they were annoyed about 'the clumsy way our hopes were built up and then rudely shattered'. 'One of the Few' pointed out that ninety percent of the squatters had been in the service during the war, while 'Former Nissen Hut Dweller' stressed that the majority of the Broadway camp residents were not squatters because they had been placed there by the Council pending rehousing.[30]

In March 1949 the Ministry asked Tynemouth Council to confirm numbers of huts available at the Broadway and Spanish Battery camp sites and cost for making them habitable for another winter. This seems to have nudged the Council into moving towards ending the use of the camps, with the Housing Committee, soon afterward, recommending that vacant huts at the Broadway camp should be demolished. By the summer about half of the Broadway camp families had been re-housed, many into new houses on the adjoining Marden Estate. The remaining families, however, still faced living in huts considered 'no longer fit for human habitation'. Two years later, in August 1951, there were still four families at the Broadway camp, including two who had been there since the start of the occupation. All the huts at the Spanish Battery camp had also become vacant. The *Shields Evening News* did not record when the last families actually left the Broadway camp. The Whitley Bay camp was empty by August 1951, but it would take another eighteen months before the Churchill Street camp was empty, marking the end of the squatters' story in Tynemouth.[31]

Conclusion

Did the squatters who moved into the Broadway and Spanish Battery camps influence, or change, Tynemouth Council's approach to alleviating the housing shortage after WW2, or were they just a temporary embarrassment? The fact that the camps still had occupants in them five years after the first influx of families might suggest that squatting had little impact on Tynemouth Council's approach to housing. But what it did show, I believe, was a change in people's attitudes. From an acceptance of poor housing conditions pre-war, people now felt that, after the sacrifices of the war, they were entitled to better housing. This was what they had voted for in the 1945 general election when Churchill was swept out of office. Those wartime experiences gave people the confidence, as Watson puts it, to believe 'that they could change their individual circumstances through acting collectively with other in the same position. In doing so they challenged not so much the authority of government [or councils] as the assumption that it knew best'.[32]

1 Don Watson, *Squatting in Britain 1945-1955 - Housing, Politics, and Direct Action* (London: Merlin Press, 2016), provides an excellent account of the squatter movement after WW2.

2 The project A Homeless History of Newcastle brought together homeless people, through Crisis Skylight, with a historian and museum curator to explore the history of homelessness in Newcastle. See http://homelesshistorynewcastle.blogspot.com/ [accessed 2 February 2021] for more information. Details of the work undertaken by Crisis Skylight Newcastle can be found on their web page; https://www.crisis.org.uk/get-help/newcastle/.

3 *Shields Evening News* (henceforward SEN), 13 August 1946, pp. 1 and 8; 14 August, p. 1; 15 August, p. 5; 16 August, pp. 1 and 5; 20 August, p. 5; 31 August, p. 4; 19 August, p. 5 (all 1946) and 13 June 1947, p. 4. Editions of SEN are available on microfiche at North Shields library or on The British Newspaper Archive on https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/ under the heading *Shields Daily News* (1864-1959).

4 *SEN*, 14 August, p. 1; 15 August, p. 5; 16 August, pp. 1 and 5; 19 August, p. 5; 20 August, p. 5 (all 1946) and 13 June 1947, p. 4.

5 Watson (2016), pp. 64-67 and 95-97.

6 *SEN*, 13 August, pp. 1 and 8; 16 August pp. 1 and 5; 21 August, p. 4; 13 November, p.7 (all 1946) and 13 June 1947.

7 Watson (2016), p. 60.
8 *SEN*, 13 August, pp. 1 and 8; 14 August, p. 1; 16 August, pp. 1 & 5; 11 September, p.5 (all 1946)
9 *SEN*, 16 August pp. 1 and 5; 19 August, p. 5; 20 August, p. 5; 21 August, p. 4; 22 August, p. 4; 13 November, p. 7 (all 1946).
10 *SEN*, 28 January, p.8; 24 February, p.4; 26 May, p.11; 16 June, p.3 (all 1947).
11 *SEN*, 16 August 1946, pp. 1 and 5.
12 Watson (2016), p. 63.
13 *SEN*, 15 August 1946, p. 2.
14 *SEN*, 16 August, p. 2; 17 August, p. 2; 19 August, p. 2. (all 1946).
15 *SEN*, 15 August 1946, p. 2
16 *SEN*, 20 August 1946, p. 7
17 *SEN*, 11 September 1946, p. 2; Watson (2016), pp. 103-104, 89-93 & 95-97; and North Tyneside Community Development Project (CDP), *North Shields: Working Class Politics and Housing 1900-1977 - Final Report,* Volume 1 (Nottingham, The Russell Press Ltd, 1978), pp. 26-33
18 *SEN*, 6 August 1946, p.2.
19 *SEN*, 08 August 1946, p. 2.
20 North Tyneside CDP (1978), pp. 9-11, pp16-18, 34-36 and 38-40.
21 *SEN*, 14 August, p. 1; 15 August, p. 5 and 19 August, p. 5. (all 1946). The Ministry of Health was responsible for housing at this time.
22 *SEN*, 28 August, p. 5; 31 August, p. 4; 11 September, p. 5; 24 September, p. 7. 24 August, p. 3; 17 August, p. 4 (all 1946) and 24 January, p.4 and 24 February (both 1948).
23 *SEN*, 20 October, p. 3; 17 December, p. 4; 19 December, p. 3 (all 1946) and 30 January 1947.
24 Watson (2016), pp. 53 and 76 and SEN, 7 September, p. 5 and 28 October. P.5 (both 1946).
25 *SEN*, 12 September, p1 and 14 September, p. 1 (both 1946).
26 Watson (2016), pp.53-54 and 69.
27 'The Spirit of '46: How mass occupations won the battle for homes', Counterfire web site, https://www.counterfire.org/articles/history/21182-the-spirit-of-46-how-mass-occupations-won-the-battle-for-homes [accessed 28 January 2021].
28 *SEN*, 17 September 1946, p. 1; Richard Croucher, Engineers at Wat 1939-1945 (London: Merlin Press, 1982), pp. 113, 314-315 and 351; North Tyneside CDP, as above, p. 44; SEN, 13 November 1946, p. 7.
29 *SEN*, 25 September, p. 1; 26 October, p. 2; 28 October, p. 3; 29 October, p. 1; 30 October, p. 2; 2 November, p.1 (all 1948).
30 *SEN*, 1 November, p. 2; 2 November, p. 2; 3 November, p. 7; 4 November, p.2; 5 November, p.2; 6 November, p.2 (all 1948).
31 *SEN*, 21 March 1948, p.4; 8 June 1949, p.6; 16 August 1951, p.5 and 5 December 1952, p.9
32 Watson (2016), p. 184.

The Labour Party in Newcastle: the struggle for office, 1945-1960

John Charlton

The City Labour Party entered the Newcastle political scene as a tiny minority in Edwardian times. It was to be almost half a century before it achieved a majority in the council chamber but it did become very influential, especially in the field of council house building. The article seeks to explain the problems of winning and holding office in the industrial city.

Newcastle was the fifth largest industrial and commercial city in Britain. In 1945 there were more than 20,000 ship-building and engineering workers in the city concentrated in workers' districts spread along the River Tyne, east and west of the city centre. True, the majority of shipyards were in Wallsend, beyond the city boundary and hence, the bulk of ship-yard workers lived there. However, the colossus of Vickers Armstrong was wholly in the town, occupying three miles of river side. But, ship-building and engineering was not the whole story. There were still coal mines within the borough, at Scotswood and Denton. In addition to manufacturing and extractive industry, there were thousands of skilled and unskilled manual workers in bus and rail transport, building and construction, postal, telephone, hospital, local government services and the retail trades.

The city's other major role as a commercial hub at the centre of a wide region meant that, there was also a large professional and white collar population employed in banks, insurance, property and legal offices and facilities connected with its status as an international port. The working population was completed by droves of small businesses; builders, plumbers,

electricians, joiners, painters and decorators, taxi drivers, scrap merchants, cinema staff and the ubiquitous small shops. The working population was also very diverse in its origins. The reconstruction of the town centre, the great bridging of the Tyne and major industrial developments throughout the 19th century drew in thousands of migrants from Ireland, Scotland and agricultural areas of England, many of whom were to impact on local politics.

For most of its long life borough affairs had been run by an elite of businessmen and professionals like lawyers and accountants. Before 1835,[1] it had been a self-perpetuating oligarchy of the principal freemen, members of the trades guilds which went back medieval times. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 broadened the franchise to include many more property owners but, the character of representation changed little. A liberal oligarchy inherited power but, party affiliation rarely surfaced in council matters. Members of the same families from the business elite occupied the council benches generation after generation. The situation was little disturbed by extending the franchise to heads of households in the later 19th century, nor, by the inclusion of some women in 1880[2]. The central preoccupation, for the most part dwarfing public health and housing, was finance, or more precisely, how to keep the rates low.[3] It is probably no exaggeration to say that this was the major motivation of many men who served on the borough council.

Arrival of working men

What began to make some difference was the arrival of working men in the Council and, even before that, the threat of their arrival. They first appeared under the auspices of the Liberal Party. This was part of the Party's national drive to accommodate to the growing voice of labour on the national scene, in the last two decades of the 19th Century. Before the First World War working class and socialist candidates made only modest progress in terms of numbers elected. Only half a dozen reached the council chamber but, those who did created a lot of noise forcing social issues onto the agenda in a way never heard before. Their best year was 1912 when five men were

elected. Numerical progress was halted in 1914 but, existing councillors, several trade union officers and, women's suffrage activists, became closely involved in civilian 'war work.' This raised the profile of labour activists and gave them some leverage in the post-war world.

By the early 1920s the Labour Party, or as the press insisted on calling them, the 'socialists' had 19 members on the council. Among the social issues working class housing was supreme. It is argueable that Tory and Liberal councillors were little interested in public housing and yielded to the considerable pressure of Labour enthusiasts. None was more enthusiastic than James Smith, a skilled engineer, elected for Byker Ward in 1911. Joining the new Housing Committee in 1912, he became its Chairman in 1919. Smith was an ILP activist, chairing mass meetings in the Bigg Market in 1908. He was 38 when elected and too old for conscription in 1915. A box of his papers has survived and show him to be a man of ideas who regularly spoke at party and union meetings. Over a dozen detailed speakers notes survive on a range of subjects including working class housing.

James Smith (second from the right) at the official opening of High Heaton housing estate. 15th March 1926.

James Smith pushed a programme of council housing in the 1920s, including new estates at High Heaton, Walker, Walkergate and Fenham.[4] In 1927 the Housing Committee was involved in a scandal concerning alleged back hand deals with a builder. An internal report declared there was 'no case to answer,' and though Smith was not named rumour was rife and, in 1929 councillors elevated him to Alderman, then manipulated the aldermanic election in 1931 and banished him from the council. There was an eerie ring forty years later when a namesake, Dan Smith, also Chairman of the Housing Committee, suffered a similar, if much more serious end to his career.

By 1930 the LP was only one seat short of winning a majority. In the mayoral election of that year, Labour's candidate was elected for the first time. His election, with the help of independents, was aided by his own status, for David Adams was a partner in the shipping company, D. Adams & Co. and a former MP[5]. During that year the local papers reported LP confidence that they would assume control at the next municipal elections.

Unfortunately for the Party, in the Summer of 1931, Ramsay MacDonald jumped ship. By Autumn he was careering towards a General Election which, in November, resulted in the near destruction of the LP in Parliament.[6] Council elections took place right after the General Election. In the backwash the 'Socialists' in Newcastle lost a seat, and, in the following year, three, setting the local agenda for, in Auden's words, 'the low dishonest decade.'

The Party arrived at 1939 with 19 councillors out of 57 and 4 Aldermen out of 19. Yet, war was again kind to the Labour Party. The national coalition was somewhat replicated locally, as Labour members were co-opted into responsible positions and, were therefore much in the public eye. With the political complexion of the Kemsley newspapers and their normal hostile attitude to Labour during peace time, this was not detrimental to the Party's reputation.

Forty-five

When the Labour Party surged into office nationally in July 1945, that victory, let alone its stunning scale, came as an enormous surprise. The count had taken place 21 days after polling day, a situation created by the need to collect and distribute nearly two million ballots, cast by service personal, 60% of whom, were overseas. The long interval created plenty of time for speculation, as had the actual election period of three weeks since the dissolution of Parliament. The overwhelming consensus was that the electorate would return Winston Churchill, the much respected war leader. The co-writer of the First General Election study,[9] wrote, of Newcastle, "…moving about the (four) constituencies (she) found no evidence that three of them were about to go Labour….People in buses, shops and newspaper kiosks all seemed to be pro-Churchill. They all thought it a shame that he had not been allowed to continue on to the end of the Japanese War (14th August,1945)."

In the period before polling day the Tory press exuded confidence. Indeed, they proclaimed it on the front page and editorials every day. It is difficult to be sure whether they assumed victory or, were terrified of defeat. The latter is suggested by the breadth and intensity of anti-Labour and pro-National Government coverage.[10] They seized on any ambiguity in Labour's conduct and hammered away at it, till a new one appeared. Typical was the seizing upon Harold Laski's speech at the LP Conference in May 1945, where he had indicated in his Chairman's address, that a Labour government would be bound by Conference decisions. The press roared at 'unconstitutional influences.' Similarly, they highlighted Churchill's conference speech which branded the Labour leadership as closet dictators in the mold of Mussolini. This was a claim against the mild figure of Clement Attlee with whom he'd sat in the Cabinet for five years. It may well have rebounded at the ballot box. The letters columns and editorials were crowded with sharp and overblown warnings of the risk to freedom represented by voting Labour. On the eve of the election the *Newcastle Journal* looked like a Tory Party bulletin. The front page carried a large box with a benign portrait of Churchill at the top. Below were small

pictures of every Tory Candidate in the north east and, at the centre in a large black font were the words: 'A vote for these is a vote for HIM.'[11]

On election day itself all candidates were listed with small gobbets selected from their speeches. The Tory quotes were largely about the need for stability and loyalty to Churchill while, the Labour ones stressed references to great policy changes, like nationalisation. After polling day the pressure was kept up because not all constituencies had polled on July the 3rd. Several, including Wansbeck and Berwick, in the north, had delayed polls. The new message was the prediction of a strong Tory victory and rumours of defeat in London, for Attlee and Bevin. On election day Attlee took 83% and Bevin 67% of the vote. Figures were clearly plucked from the head, ranging from a Tory landslide to a majority of sixty. A more detailed assessment for the north east in the *Journal* 'gave' ten seats to the Tories, with five doubtful, one to the Liberals and thirteen to the 'Socialists.' They were still clearly trying to influence the voters who had not voted and Wansbeck was listed among the 'doubtfuls,' or 'close things.'

The result was a trauma for the Tories. 'Doubtful' Wansbeck gave Labour a majority of 24,000. The most remarkable result in the area was Tynemouth where Grace Coleman,[12] an economics lecturer, adopted in 1939, turned an 8,000 Tory majority into a 4,000 Labour one. Labour swept the board. Only two Tory seats survived, Hexham, the Speakers' seat with no contest and, Berwick won from the Liberals. Nationally Labour and its allies had a majority of 199 over the Tories.

Len Edmundson was a young engineer. In July forty five he was working at South Shields. He recalled,

> "We had come to a mid-day break. I was a bit later than the others cleaning my hands. The wireless was always on in the factory. They were announcing the election results. I was amazed. I couldn't imagine the Tories catching up. I rushed into the canteen and told the lads round the table. They could hardly believe it. There was a great feeling."[13]

In the press following the final results, comment was muted. It was easy to imagine an editorial office where coverage was discussed. The rabid Tories would want an offensive, the more circumspect not wanting to provoke the victors, successfully counselling, 'wait and see.' Potted biographies were published of the victorious candidates and here, a waspish approach was allowed. Of Lyall Wilkes, the future High Court Judge, elected aged 31 to represent Newcastle Central and described as "an extreme left winger," the writer said, "No government is likely to go far enough in nationalisation of industry and administration to scare Major Wilkes." Arthur Blenkinsop, in at Newcastle East, an 'intellectual' of 35, was said "to advocate extremes of policy with an air of sweet reasonableness." Across the river at Gateshead, Konni Zilliacus's extremism in foreign policy was hinted at with, the rather graceful description, "A citizen of the world by instinct."[14]

Detailed analysis of their disaster was some way ahead and defeated Tory candidates covered a range of explanations from the patronising Colonel who lost Hartlepools, "It was just time to give the other chap a chance," to the prescient man at Jarrow who blamed the service vote and, the simply banal, Tom Magnay at Gateshead, who said he thought "the voters would lose their pensions."

First time in office

Local Tories might have gleaned something of their fate from the local government results of November 1944. In Newcastle Labour won four seats, something of a breakthrough in a city where the LP had struggled to hold onto and often fail to win, in even strongly working class wards like Byker, Walker and Elswick. On the coat tails of the General Election triumph in November 1945, the LP was to gain control of the city council.

The Party won six seats but, this was nothing like the national landslide to Labour. Indeed, against the local background, it was disappointing. Just before the local elections the Home Office issued its report on corruption in the City Council.[15] Members of the war-time administration were investigated and found guilty of a series of offences: stealing a fire engine

and a fire pump, using police horses for personal pleasure, misusing petrol supplies, and, taking food set aside for victims of bombing. The Chief Constable who was District Controller was dismissed and, the Deputy District Controller, Councillor Embleton severely reprimanded and barred from public office. The naming in the report of two prominent Labour Councillors, Tom Larkin[16] and Adamson Dawson Russell, may have spread responsibility in the public eye, though the Progressive administration under Embleton was centrally culpable.

Gaining control of Newcastle and holding on to it was to prove an ongoing difficulty. Newcastle's east end had a strong Liberal tradition[17] rooted in ship-yard and railway craft unionism. Though that was to wither and collapse after the war, it was strong enough to deny Labour locally where Progressives[18] deftly clung on to a slice of the Liberal's working class vote. In Walker and Byker wards there may have been a additional twist: religious affiliation. From the 1920s, at least, the Labour Party in Newcastle was perceived as an Irish Party,[19] and, indeed it adopted green for favours, rather than the more common red. A surviving cash book records donations to the Irish cause. Certainly there was an overlap of Labourism and Irish nationalism.[20] St Anthony's and St Lawrence's wards, with large populations of Irish origin, were solidly Labour after the First World War. At least six of the 1947 Labour councillors were Catholic. The religious question may have had some effect elsewhere too. The Vickers plants at Elswick and Scotswood were noted as bastions of Masonry and Catholicism respectively. Benwell Ward was firmly Labour before World War Two, while Elswick continued to trouble the Party, right up to the nineteen sixties. However Elswick Ward, while having blocks of working class council housing to its east and west, had a central area of substantial middle class properties on Grainger Park Road and Westgate Road. Restructuring of wards in 1945 also acted to Labour's disadvantage. Only one of the five new wards created, Scotswood, was unambiguously working class and Labour in composition. Broadly, two of the other new wards encompassed the big expansion in owner-occupied properties of

the 1930s: Kenton and Walkergate. A third, Westgate, took in similar developments in Spital Tongues at the north west end of the city centre, and the fourth, Sandyford, the older owner-occupied area of south Jesmond.

The 1945 Labour Group was still largely a party of elderly survivors of pre-war city politics. One Alderman, John Chapman, had been elected in 1912, though he was not the longest serving councillor. A Tory member had been there since 1902. All but two of the leading figures in the Labour Group were over 70 in 1945.[21] This should not be seen as an ageist remark but, to indicate that they were people whose ideologies had been formed in a completely different set of political circumstances, and, also in permanent opposition. The Labour councillors were a diverse mixture. There were the survivors of Irish Nationalist politics, including Tom Larkin, Tom Tully, Catherine Auld and John McCloughlin. There were socialists from the SDF, BSP, ILP, John Chapman, James Clydesdale, Mrs Frances Taylor, and, an active Socialist Leaguer, Bill Stokoe. James Pearson was a retired trade union official and Tom McCutcheon came from a Liberal Party background.[22] Their politics was shaped in pre-war struggles in Irish republicanism, Board of Guardians elections, and mass unemployment, recently infused with responsibilities thrust upon them by the management of 'the people's war' on the home front. To the extent that they were by 1945 a more confident bunch, this reflected their war-time roles of co-option into the management of town affairs.[23]

At the November elections of 1945 Labour made ten gains giving it control of the City Council for the first time. Of the group of 29 councillors and 3 aldermen, 15 were new to the Council. They included two railwaymen, a joiner, an electrician, a retired police officer, a chartered surveyor, a retired civil servant, a doctor and five 'housewives'. Among the latter were three former clerical workers and a former school teacher. This intake of predominantly white collar and professional workers to which may be added trade union officers, this characterising the social composition of Labour council members. Blue collar workers were a very small minority and that was to remain the case for the future. Few Labour

members lived in council houses and, the small number who did, were barred from participating, or voting, in council business pertaining to council housing. It is important to note that very few employers would grant workers time off for council business, a point illustrated in 1946 when John Langdown, a wood-cutting machinist at Parsons, was fired for taking unpaid time off to electioneer.[24]

Among the 1944-45 intake there were a number of individuals who were to become dominant figures in the Council for the following twenty years. They included Gladys Robson, Catherine (Kate) Scott, Peggy Murray, Peter Renwick and three Russells, Frank, and the couple Dr Henry and Theresa. Also elected was Rosie Dixon, a loud and vigorous women from the east end, described in the press, as 'Newcastle's Bessie Braddock.'[25] She had been a strong community activist during the war and was noted for her active championing of the less well off in her ward. When the new Council assembled in late November 1945 there was certainly a rather self-satisfied, air about the Labour members. They revelled in congratulating each other on achieving high office: the mayoralty and shrievalty (sheriff). Jimmy Clydesdale was not the first Labour mayor but, the first elected by a Labour majority. His proposer was fulsome in his praise, pointing especially to his activity for the blind, commenced during the Great War, following his loss of sight from an accident, as a teenager. James Pearson, elected, as Sheriff also had a long history of service, since he had been elected to the Board of Guardians in 1902.

These elections passed without incident but when Aldermanic elections came, a number of Progressives grumbled that some of their old stalwarts were being 'swept into oblivion,' failing to recognise the extreme generosity of Labour in not taking more seats, as they were entitled to do. The first meeting of the Council gave no hint that the Labour Party had any coherent policy for the City. The City LP minutes for 1944-5 give no indication whatever of any planning for victory. Unfortunately, neither the 1945 minutes, nor the records of the Labour Group have survived. In fact, the LP inherited a plan, one designed by the Progressives during the late war

and a plan for a new Town Hall had its origins in the century's first decade!

Despite the absence of a grand plan members of the Party were enthusiastic advocates of change. They did not drag feet. By the 1946 elections they could boast progress on several fronts, the most important of which was housing. Len Edmondson said, "I think you could say with certainty that housing was the big issue. It was the question most discussed by young factory workers who expected the Labour Government to deal with the crisis…with Labour councils to follow suit."[26]

Labour inherited a mess. The Tory-Liberal (Progressive) record between the wars was dismal. The 'land fit for heroes' was a bad dream. In the first two years after the war only seven council houses had been built and, by 1924, only seventy four. In twenty years between the wars the City Council managed six hundred per year.[27] In September 1945 the Housing Committee reported that there was a pressing need for 15,000 new homes which the Labour Party promised to build in ten years.[28] Expressed in numbers, the problem was massive and the Housing Committee minutes yield up the personal traumas suffered. A letter from a homeless woman was read out.

> "I am sorry to be writing to you again, but, since my previous letter I have been confined and so now my two children have to live in a small box room which consists of a single bed and chest of drawers and my own luggage. There are no cooking facilities or fireplace, the results being that the three of us have to exist in this room, as far as sleeping goes and have our meals out. My husband has been demobilised for the past six months only to live in lodgings. I have no place to put a pram or cot, so I have to carry my baby about. I am heartbroken to be placed in such circumstances. This is what I have had to put up with for the past two years after my husband had served King and country for almost seven years and losing our home through enemy action."[29]

Labour made a decent start in trying circumstances. Although the new Labour Government placed a strong emphasis on public housing over private, on a ratio of six to one, there was strict control over the release of central government funds which had to be apportioned to schools and hospitals, as well as housing. For some time there was a shortage of skilled labour, but most importantly a desperate shortage in building materials which had to be divided between health service and educational facilities, factory building (hence jobs) and, housing.[30]

Against this grim background, by the end of their first year in office, they could claim 1,597 permanent houses completed and 1,500 temporary ones under construction. In addition 57 war damaged houses had been rebuilt.[31] By 1947 the figures had grown to 3,334 new homes under construction, with 2,775 families re-housed. The Council had also taken advantage of new legislation to requisition 1104 properties, including eighty five acres of the Blackett Ord estate, north of Blakelaw.

Debates in Council showed a sense of urgency, to some extent provoked by the squatters' movement.[32] Squatting had started with the relatively uncontroversial occupation of disused army camps and aerodromes but, in the late summer it erupted in London and Birmingham with the taking of empty houses and flats. By early September it was front page news almost daily. Always ready to land a blow on the Labour Government, the *Daily Mail* encouraged squatters, praising "that robust common sense…to take matters into their own hands."[33]

In the late summer and autumn of 1946 local papers were reporting squats in Middlesbrough, Greatham, dubbed "The Whippit Quick Colony", Seaham Harbour, "Liberty Villas", South Shields, "We're here and we mean to stay," Grindon, Hetton, Eppleton, Washington, "We are willing to pay rent," Seaton Burn, Cambois, Ouston (Birtley), Leadgate, Whingate, Choppington, Blyth, Whickham (Hillhead), Lemington, Longbenton, Tynemouth, Wallsend, Walker and Kenton. In August the press was reasonably friendly. *The Weekly News* carried a broadly sympathetic feature article, headed, 'Squatters Life Not an Easy One.' The writer, Pauline Wake, began,

> "Throughout Tyneside the squatters' invasion is carried out with the help of veterans of both world wars using tactics which do not appear in their Training Manual but, are nevertheless effective, as ex-Private Smith sits, sometimes for the first evening for several years, at his own fireside…but, many problems face the invaders of 1946. At Longbenton, the former gun site houses fifty squatter families. (They have) …no sanitation, water has to be carried from a central point, washing has to be done in a basin; candles instead of electric light or gas, dinners have to be adjusted, as only one pan can be placed on the stove at a time."

The writer speaks of their organisation, with a women's welfare committee and a men's group looking after general repairs. An *Evening Chronicle* editorial demanded, "if you can't build houses you must take over those that are empty."[34]

Dougie Malloch, a young CP activist at the time, remembers what might have been the first Tyneside squat at the anti-aircraft battery on the old Coast Road, near Rising Sun Colliery. "I saw people going up the hill pushing big wheelbarrows to settle in the Nissan huts. I went up there and saw a proper village. Children were playing round and a hawker was selling vegetables. These people had petitioned the Council for use of these disused properties, had been refused and, just took the law into their own hands. They were supported by Councillor Herbie Bell of Wallsend and Dan Smith, both on the ultra left."[35]

Newcastle City Councillors were nervous. It was reported at the Housing Committee that nineteen families had occupied the former gun battery at Wavertree Gardens, less than a mile from the Wallsend squat and, at a relinquished ARP facility at Kenton Hall.[36] Though the minutes are silent on squatters' organisation, someone organised petitioning. Dougie Malloch saw the hands of the CP and the Trotskyists, people who had been active in the unemployed workers' movements before the

war were still around. They used their skills and connections to help the squatters. They tapped into the authorities' guilt in failing to build a land fit for heroes."[37]

At each of the Autumn and Winter Housing Committees 'progress" was reported. A Ministry of Health circular advising councils to deny facilities to those squatting in municipal property was noted on September 19th. On the 13th Jarrow MP, Ellen Wilkinson, gave a speech in which she said, "We cannot be faced with anarchy of this kind. It is the negation of everything the Labour Party stands for."[39] Nevertheless, the government accommodated to the militancy by encouraging modest requisitioning in the cities, freeing up military bases and airfields for use and highlighting the quality of temporary accommodation (prefabs).[40]

Government and local authority attention shifted from abuse to regularising squatters' actions. Newcastle Housing Committee sent the Direct Labour Department to make huts suitable for habitation, and, by December the Committee could report that all the squatters had been turned into tenants by their acceptance of a decision to levy rents. This seems to have ended the Newcastle squatting problem, though not of course its housing one.

Unfortunately 1947 turned out to be the peak of Newcastle's first post war housing programme. The number of start-ups fell to 2,530 in 1948, 1,344 in 1949 and 1,664 in 1950. The 1947 figure was not reached again until 1953 when the City felt the effect of the Tory Government's big push on housing under Harold MacMillan. By the end of the local Labour Party's term in office in 1950, the impetus had been lost due to a combination of national and local factors. Locally Labour's difficulties were subjected to continual shortages of supplies which had run on though 1946 and 1947 exacerbated by the savagely hard winter of 1947, where snow and ice were followed by serious flooding which brought further damage to the housing stock, as well as severely disrupting the economy.[41]

The City Council was pre-occupied by the housing problem but it was just one problem faced by the Labour administration. Indeed

housing supply could be aggravated by other developments. The national government feared the possible impact of unemployment flowing from demobilisation of a very large military force and the transition from a war footing. The former problem was ameliorated to some extent by the delaying of demobilisation of a chunk of the army and air force, allegedly from fear of Russian incursions into India but, also by the 'management' of the Indian independence movement and the extensive policing of the colonial empire.

The problem of youth employment was taken care of by the continuation of conscription of most 18 year olds into peace time, via the National Service Act. Yet, unemployment remained a serious problem, stimulating economic growth, always the sought after solution. The government played a part by allocating the much expanded Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance to a large site on Benton Park Road which was expected to create over 6,000 new jobs. Sadly for the local Labour Party it was to lose control of the City in 1949, just before the economy was starting its great post war upturn. It struggled through the bleak post war days, with good intentions and with some promising policies, especially for working class housing. But, it was vulnerable to losing seats, given the long term effect of the City's social geography. Then there was the open hostility of the local Kemsley press. On the latter point, the press was more dangerous when the party was in office, as it could selectively target policy outcomes. So, the City Labour Party was to go down to defeat electorally with the national party, at the start of the 1950s. It would have to wait almost a decade before a new and aggressive leadership emerged to hold the Tory council to account.

1 Before 1835, c2000 electors, 1836, 4353, 1853, 7983, 1880, 33,349, 1900, 40,000.

2 A consequence of the Married Women's Property Act of 1870.

3 'Rates' were the local tax levied on buildings or land, abolished after many centuries and replaced by the community charge (Poll Tax) in 1990 and then Council Tax.

4 James Smith, 1875-1940, councillor 1911-1931, Alderman, 1931-32. Family

papers, held by the author, to be deposited at TWA, when possible.

5 Alderman David Adams, 1870-1943, councillor (Labour Representation Committee then ILP) from 1902, MP Newcastle West, 1922-24 and Consett, 1935-43. A selection of his papers are lodged at TWW. Personal Papers/184.

6 John Charlton, 1931: *Labour's defeat and North East England, North East History*, Vol 51, 2020, pp 13-26.

7 Frances (Frank) Russell was in charge of Air Raid Precautions, though admittedly, he was a retired police superintendent from the city police, as well as a Labour Party member.

8 Kemsley owned the *Newcastle Journal*, the *Evening Chronicle*, the *Sunday Sun* and the *Weekly News*, the four main local papers and, nationally, *The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Sketch* and *The Sunday Graphic*.

9 R B McCallum & Alison Readman, The British General Election of 1945, Oxford, OUP, 1947.

10 The Labour Party had withdrawn from the war-time coalition on the 23rd of May. Churchill reconstructed his government in the interim and campaigned as the National Government.

11 Newcastle Journal (NJ) 3rd July, 1945.

12 Grace Coleman, 1892-1971, taught at Cambridge, Ruskin College, London University and for the WEA. Tynemouth was her fourth Parliamentary contest. See, Annie Lockwood, *Grace Coleman and Margaret Bondfield*, North Tyneside Fabians, 1995.

13 Len Edmundson, personal interview with the author, November 2002. See, *NEH*, Vol 38, 2007 for appreciation.

14 *NJ*, 27th July, 1945.

15 *Newcastle upon Tyne Enquiry*, Cmnd 6522, 1944.

16 Tom Larkin was living in Whitley Bay during the war, presumably a safer spot than his pre-war address in Elswick. Embleton supplied him with sandbags and respiratory equipment to protect his garden shelter and petrol, above what was necessary to carry out his duties. Car ownership for a railway worker was still a little unusual.

17 Newcastle East Constituency was represented until 1945 by the popular Liberal Party member, Sir Robert Aske (1872-1954).

18 The Progressive Party was the Tory-Liberal alliance formed in the 1930s to keep Labour out of office. In an interview with the author in 1998, Ted Short said it was, "demonstrating the English genius for naming something the opposite of what is meant."

19 *Newcastle City Labour Party Ledger*, 1919-1947, 608/1258/3, TWA.

20 Thomas Larkin, 1869-1954, was born in Ireland, was a member of the Irish Labour Party and the Irish Defence League. Working in Newcastle from the 1890s he was on the Board of Guardians for 25 years from 1902 and a Labour Councillor/ Alderman 1928-52.

21 *Newcastle City Council Proceedings (NCCP)*, 1944-45, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1945, Local Studies, Newcastle City Library. One measure of prominence is the number of times members spoke in debates during the year: Bob Scott, 270, James Clydesdale, 237, Tom McCutcheon, 128, Thomas Horton, 72, James Pearson, 70, John Chapman, 63, Francis Russell, 64, and Frances Taylor, 56. All eight were retired people.

22 In addition to Larkin, there were two other significant figures. Martin Connolly (1874-1945). An official of the Boilermakers Union, he had been MP for Newcastle East, 1924-29 and, active in émigré Irish politics. Walter Hudson, 1852-1935, had been MP for Newcastle, 1906-1911, and was candidate for Newcastle East in 1918. President of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants from 1891-99 and President of the Irish TUC in 1913. He was a City Councillor till his death.

23 No less than eight members of the Labour Group had been made JPs during the war. Before the war, and indeed afterwards in the 1950s, the LP repeatedly complained of political discrimination in selection of magistrates.

24 Report, *Evening Chronicle*, 19th November, 1946.

25 Elizabeth, 'Bessie' Braddock was a loud and very expressive Liverpool councillor and Labour MP for thirty years, often in the newspapers for belligerent attacks on Tory politicians.

26 op cit. Len Edmondson interview.

27 Extrapolated from David Byrne, *Working class owner occupation & social differentiation*' Bill Lancaster, ed., *Working Class Housing on Tyneside, 1850-1939,* Whitley Bay, 1994, p 98.

28 Report of City Council meeting, Evening Chronicle, 1st September, 1945.

29 Read out at the Housing Management Sub-Committee, 5 September, 1946, TWA MD/106/9

30 Kenneth Morgan, *Labour in Power* 1945-51, Oxford, 1984, pp 100-126.

31 *Newcastle City Council*, 1945-46, p 957.

32 Don Watson, *Squatting in Britain 1945-1955*, Merlin Press, 2016 and James Hinton, *'Self help and socialism,'* History Workshop, 25, 1988, pp 100-126.

33 Ibid. Hinton, p 117.

34 There were similar comments in the *Chronicle, Journal* and, *Weekly News*, almost daily, through August and September, 1946.

35 Dougie Malloch, personal interview, January, 2003. Smith had been recently expelled from the ILP and was probably working with Herbie Bell and the Revolutionary Communist Party, having just tried to join the Labour Party.

36 *EC*, Editorial, 17th September, 1946.

37 Op cit., Malloch.

38 *Ministry of Health Circular,* 174/46.

39 *NJ*, 13th September, 1946.

40 Author's personal information. One such was the living accommodation at Tranwell airfield near Morpeth. My uncle and family lived there for 18 months, 1946-48

while awaiting the building of their council house in Morpeth.

41 Alex J Robertson, *The Bleak Mid-Winter 1947*, Manchester, 1987, Chapter 6. Newcastle escaped the spring floods but the Housing Programme suffered from the shortages produced by the national situation.

1956 - A Year Remembered

Archie Potts

Introduction

The first of January 1956 found Britain emerging from a period of post-war austerity. Rationing had ended in 1954 and life was improving for many people although the affluent society lay ahead. In spite of six years of war followed by six years of Labour government, the cultural scene in Britain had changed little since the 1930s. The content of BBC programmes remained much the same. The Goon Show was regarded as a daring innovation. The West End stage was dominated by Binkie Beaumont's productions, which provided middlebrow entertainment for the middle-class audiences who patronised London's theatres. Such experimental theatre as existed was largely located in parts of Scotland and Northern England, where small drama groups attempted something different from the general trend. The Old Vic, located near Waterloo Station, concentrated on classical plays. The productions were first class but it offered little in the way of contemporary drama. British films had improved in quality over the war years and Ealing studios produced some outstanding comedies on contemporary themes, but it was war films that dominated Britain's post-war cinema screens. The British monarchy reached new heights of adulation in the wake of Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953. The British Empire still existed and Britain was widely regarded as a 'great power' if no longer a superpower to match the USA and USSR.

Joseph Stalin had died in March 1953 and Nikita Khrushchev held the post of First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

(CPSU) as the world entered a new year. He did not possess the total dictatorial powers wielded by Stalin - and never acquired them - but he had established himself as the leading figure in a more collective Soviet leadership. He presided over an apparently strong and stable Soviet Union with the East European satellites firmly under its control. Indeed the international communist movement accepted, without question, the vanguard role played by the Soviet Union in its affairs.

As people clinked their glasses toasting 'A Happy New Year' few foresaw that 1956 would turn out to be a year of momentous events that would usher in a period of far reaching change.[1]

Suez

The Suez crisis of 1956 had its roots in the imperialist policies being pursued by British governments in the late Victorian age.[2] These had given the British Government a 44 per cent share in the ownership of the Suez Canal Company, the body responsible for operating the Canal. To protect this asset the British stationed troops in Egypt. With the growing importance of oil the British Government came to regard the Suez Canal as a matter of strategic importance. In July 1956 President Nasser of Egypt informed a cheering crowd in Alexandria that he had nationalised the Suez Canal. Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister, was a complex and highly-strung man, and he regarded Nasser's action not only as a hostile act of state but as a personal affront and he was determined, in his own words, 'to destroy Nasser'.[3]

The general public at the time - and indeed several members of his Cabinet - did not know that Eden had made a secret agreement with the governments of France and Israel. At this time France was engaged in fighting a colonial war against Algerian rebels who were receiving support from Nasser's Egypt. The French were keen to hit back at Nasser. The Israelis were concerned at Nasser's recent purchase of modern weapons from the Soviet bloc and they were, as always, mindful of their own security. The plan was that Israeli forces would invade the Sinai desert and advance on

the Suez Canal. Britain and France would call for a ceasefire, which they knew would be ignored, and they would then intervene to protect the Canal. The plan was implemented: the Israelis launched their attack on 29 October 1956. As anticipated, the call for a ceasefire was ignored and the Israelis pressed on. The RAF began bombing Egyptian military targets from its Cyprus airfields on 31 October. On 5 November British and French paratroops dropped on Port Said, followed by a seaborne invasion.

In military terms the British and French attack on Egypt was a success; it had achieved the military objective of defeating Egyptian forces, and British troops were poised to re-occupy the Canal Zone as planned, when the order came to halt operations.

Defeat was due to economic factors linked to diplomatic ineptitude. Britain had not informed the American Government of its intentions and Eisenhower, campaigning for his second term as President of the USA, believed he had been double-crossed by his European allies. Once safely re-elected he ordered an 'attack' on sterling in world money markets. The result was that Britain's gold and dollar reserves began to run out and the country faced bankruptcy. Eisenhower played hardball and made financial support for the pound conditional on an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of all troops from Egypt. Britain was forced to accept these terms and the French, although they were far from pleased at Britain's climb down in the face of American pressure, followed suit.

Student activities

At the time I followed these events in the newspapers and on television, I was also an avid reader of the *New Statesman and Tribune*, and was strongly influenced by what I read in those weeklies. Personal circumstances, however, determined that I should be drawn more closely into the Suez Crisis as a fringe player.

In October 1956, I became a full-time student at Ruskin College and was in residence there when reports of the British and French attack came in. At the news Ruskin's student body sprang into action. Two halls in

the centre of Oxford were booked in which to hold protest meetings, and a protest demonstration with placards marched through the centre of the city. The demonstration was met by a group of undergraduates who attempted to disrupt the march. One of their placards displayed the words 'Shoot the Wogs' - racism was nastier and more openly expressed than it is today. There were some scuffles, but burly miners and lorry drivers in Ruskin's ranks were more than a match for the undergraduates and the demonstration continued as planned.

A coach was also booked to transport a party of Ruskin students to the House of Commons to carry out a lobby of MPs. I was one of the group. The coach dropped us off a few streets away from the Houses of Parliament and we advanced in a procession carrying our placards. An American television camera crew was on hand and its producer asked us to repeat our march so that the cameraman could get a better shot of us. We were happy to oblige and I suppose the film was put in the can, flown across the Atlantic and shown on American television.

When we arrived at the House of Commons we were ushered into a committee room and addressed by the Labour MP, Fenner Brockway. The group then split up to meet our local MPs in the lobby of the House of Commons. After this we made our way back to the coach and returned to Ruskin College.

A few days later it was reported that the Labour Party was organising a 'Law Not War' rally for Sunday 4 November, to be held in Trafalgar Square. The Ruskin student body decided to attend and booked a coach to take a group down. The main speaker was to be Aneurin Bevan, arguably the finest public speaker of his day. Thirty thousand people attended the rally and Bevan was in top form.

Two days later Anthony Eden announced the acceptance of a ceasefire bringing the Suez crisis effectively to an end. But the Suez affair was soon overshadowed by another momentous event that was to engage Ruskin students in further political activity, when on 4 November 1956 Soviet forces invaded Hungary.

Hungary

Nikita Khrushchev was a man of humble origins who had received little formal education. However he was respected for his drive and ability to get things done, linked with a high level of political acumen. These qualities had carried him to the leadership of the CPSU. He was a sincere communist and he had no desire to dismantle the state created by Stalin. However he was intent on reforming it in order to improve the lives of Soviet citizens.

Khrushchev also saw the desirability of reaching an accommodation with the West if this could be achieved without weakening the position of the Soviet Union, and he was shrewd enough to see that the friendship of Third World countries was worth cultivating. Having consolidated his position in the Soviet leadership, on 25 February 1956 he chose the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Union held in Moscow to make a dramatic move.

In a closed session of the Congress he delivered a four-hour speech denouncing Stalin's abuse of power during his years of rule, and exposing Stalin's crimes and dictatorial methods. The audience of activists was stunned by this criticism of a man who, like the Caesars of Rome, had been elevated to the status of a god. Khrushchev announced that prison sentences imposed under Stalin's rule were being reviewed and those found to have been convicted on 'unsound evidence' would be released.[4]

Details of the speech leaked from the Congress and in its wake a few cracks began to appear in the Soviet monolith. In Poland there were food riots in Poznan. These were suppressed by the police but the unrest spread to other parts of the country. There was growing support for the return to power of Wladyslaw Gomulka, a Polish communist leader who had been purged for advocating a 'Polish road to socialism'. He was not the choice of Khrushchev, but the Soviet leadership accepted the change to avoid bloodshed. Gomulka promised to keep Poland in the Soviet bloc and in return he would be allowed to control the country's domestic problems. It was a pragmatic solution that narrowly avoided armed conflict between Soviet and Polish forces.

There was growing unrest in neighbouring Hungary.[5] On 23 October 1956 students in Budapest demonstrated support for Poland and called for the return to power of Imre Nagy, who had served a short spell as Hungarian Prime Minister 1953-55 when he had implemented some liberal reforms. After Nagy's fall from office, Matyas Rakosi had returned to power and restored Stalin-style rule to Hungary. He was replaced by Ermo Gero in July 1956, a leader in the same mould who was insensitive to the growing demand for change. The student demonstrators decided to march on the National Television offices in the centre of Budapest. The building was guarded by security police (the AVH) who opened fire on the students. The enraged students stormed the building and seized police weapons. They were now armed. Another demonstration of workers and other members of the general public pulled down the giant statue of Stalin that stood in the centre of Budapest. There were incidents of AVH men being lynched by angry crowds.

The students were now joined by workers as the revolt gathered force, especially when units of the Hungarian army began to join the rebels. There were several forced labour camps in Hungary, and these were taken over and the people released. An armed group of insurgents broke into the headquarters of the security police where they found purpose-built torture chambers, interrogation rooms, and isolation cells plus some prisoners held in solitary confinement who had been reported dead.[6] The well-stocked AVH armoury provided the rebels with more weapons and ammunition. Some Soviet garrison troops opened fire on the armed rebels but were ordered to stop by their officers. The Soviet leadership in Moscow was undecided what to do. Gero was replaced by Nagy as Prime Minister but when he announced that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact Khrushchev came to a decision. On 4 November 1956 a powerful Soviet force crossed the border into Hungary with orders to crush the uprising. It took two weeks of fighting to defeat the rebels with mopping up operations continuing for several weeks. Janos Kadar was appointed the new Prime Minister at the head of a restored communist government.

More student activities

The news that Soviet forces were fighting Hungarian students and workers in the streets of Budapest did not have quite the same impact on the student body at Ruskin as had the invasion of Suez. British troops were involved in Suez on the orders of the British Government, and the facts of the situation appeared clearer than events in Hungary. Furthermore Ruskin students had devoted a lot of time and energy campaigning against the Suez invasion and some undoubtedly felt that there should be a return to neglected studies. Perhaps a touch of 'protest fatigue' had set in. However a meeting of the Ruskin student body was convened to discuss the situation. As I remember it, there was a lack of support for the Soviet invasion and a resolution was passed to this effect. There was quite a lot of activity taking place in the University's political clubs and Ruskin students were free to join in those activities if they wished to do so.

Three students in my year at Ruskin were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and I got to know them quite well. One of them subscribed to The Reasoner, the dissident communist journal edited by John Saville and Edward Thompson, and his copy was widely circulated among students at the college. None of the three left the Communist Party but they felt unable to defend Rakosi's regime and Soviet military intervention in Hungary. On the whole they kept their heads down. They informed me that the Oxford University Communist Club had organised an open meeting to be held at Balliol College with Phil Piratin, former Communist MP for Mile End, as the speaker and I was welcome to attend the meeting with them. It is my guess that the meeting at Balliol had been facilitated by Christopher Hill, the Marxist historian and a longstanding member of the Communist Party, who was a Fellow of Balliol College. The college had a liberal-minded reputation as I remember it, Peter Sedgwick was the most vociferous in criticising the CPGB leadership. Shortly after this meeting he resigned from the Communist Party and helped to found the *Universities and Left Review* and became a prominent figure in the New Left. Piratin faced a hostile audience composed of Communist

Club members and visitors such as myself. After several attempts to make himself heard, Piratin gave up and returned to London.

Another group of students from Balliol College revived a theatrical device used by the Unity Theatre in the 1930s. This was a 'Living Newspaper' devoted in this case to the Hungarian tragedy and performed in a church hall hired for the occasion. A narrator stood on the side of the stage holding a clipboard of newspaper cuttings and he acted as a link man to a series of scenes. The Hungarian dictator Matyos Rakosi was as bald as a billiard ball in real life and he was played by a student wearing a pink skin wig. His successor, Ermo Gero, a former Comintern agent, appeared in one scene puffing on a cigarette held in long cigarette-holder, as he interrogated a prisoner suspected of being a Titoist. Rakosi and Gero were the villains of the piece. Performances were raw - and could not be otherwise given the length of time allowed for rehearsal - but it was an interesting piece of topical theatre.

A meeting on Hungary, seething with passion, was organised by the Oxford University Labour Club and held at the Friends' Meeting House in Oxford. The visiting speaker was Peter Fryer, a former *Daily Worker* correspondent in Hungary who felt a strong personal involvement in the events unfolding in that country.

In September 1949 Laszlo Rajk, a former high-ranking member of the Hungarian Government, had been tried for treason in Budapest and confessed to plotting with Tito to overthrow the Communist regime in Hungary. Peter Fryer had covered the trial for the *Daily Worker*. In April 1956 Harry Pollitt issued a statement;

> We, in the Executive Committee of the British Communist Party, were misled by evidence that is now stated to have been fabricated, and we withdraw our attacks on Tito and Yugoslavia, including the statement made by myself at the London membership meeting in 1948, and James Klugmann's book From *Trotsky to Tito*.[7]

Meanwhile, skeletons continued to fall out of Hungarian closets. In July Rakosi, at this time Prime Minister of Hungary, announced that Rajk had been framed by the security police and was innocent of the charges made against him. By popular demand Rajk's body was exhumed and 300,000 people attended the re-burial ceremony in Budapest. Peter Fryer covered the funeral for the *Daily Worker*. He deeply regretted the part he had played in the Rajk affair, and observed the growing hostility to the Rakosi regime and witnessed AVH and Soviet troops firing into Hungarian crowds. He reported what he had seen to the editor of the *Daily Worker* and was recalled to London. His reports were not published. Peter Fryer then resigned from the staff of the *Daily Worker*. However he refused to be silent and spoke out at a series of meetings across the country. When I heard him speak at the Oxford meeting he came over as a convincing witness to events in Hungary. Peter Fryer went on to publish a book describing his experiences.[8]

Theatre

My first term at Ruskin had been packed with incident and excitement but the year 1956 was not finished with me yet. At the end of the term I decided to travel home via London where I thought I would break my journey and see a play that had provoked a lot of controversy. The play had been written by a down-at-heel actor called John Osborne and it had had its premiere at the Royal Court Theatre in May 1956. The play was, of course, *Look Back in Anger* and I was fortunate to see it during its first season with the original cast.

The play had a mixed reception. Some drama critics hated it but Kenneth Tynan in the *Observer* and Harold Hobson in the *Sunday Times* gave it rave reviews. I must say I enjoyed Osborne's play and recognised that he was attempting something different from mainstream drama of the time, but I did not foresee the impact the play would have on British theatre. We now know it was the beginning of what came to be called 'kitchen sink drama', a form that was to influence British theatre over the following decades.

The American playwright Arthur Miller was in London in the summer of 1956 accompanying his wife, Marilyn Monroe, who was making a film in Britain. The film was *The Prince and the Showgirl*, and it was to be directed by Laurence Olivier who also starred in it. Miller and Olivier got on quite well together and Olivier suggested they have an evening at the theatre. Miller opted to see *Look Back in Anger*. Marilyn cried off because she was feeling tired after the day's shooting, so Miller and Olivier went by themselves. Olivier had seen Osborne's play and was not impressed by it but he was prepared to see it again. After the first act Miller observed 'God, Larry, you're wrong, this is great stuff'.[9]

Miller later wrote, 'I loved the play's roughness and self-indulgence, its flinging high in the air so many pomposities of Britishness, its unbridled irritation with life, and its verbal energy....The writing reminded me of Clifford Odets in his youth'.[10] This was high praise coming from one of America's leading playwrights.

After the final curtain George Devine, Director of the Royal Court Theatre, invited the two men to have a drink in the bar where he would introduce them to John Osborne. Miller told Osborne how much he had enjoyed his play.

Laurence Olivier at this point in his career was looking for a fresh challenge. He had conquered classical drama and screen acting, and he was seeking something new. He asked Osborne: 'Do you suppose you could write something for me?' Osborne said he could. Indeed he had a rough draft on the stocks. He was very fond of the music halls and was working on a new play in which the central figure was a seedy music hall comedian who was playing to half-empty theatres in rundown seaside resorts. The character was Archie Rice and the play *The Entertainer*. The play symbolised Harold Macmillan's post-Suez Britain, a country that had known better days. The play had its premiere in April 1957. Laurence Olivier gave one of his finest performances as Archie Rice and the success of the play confirmed John Osborne as a talented playwright with something to say about contemporary Britain. Where John Osborne led a host of

new playwrights, drawn from all parts of the country, were to follow. The younger generation had found its voice

Retrospect

Looking back on 1956 over sixty years later there is little doubt that it marked a turning point in British history. As one historian put it

> 'Few historians dispute that, if there is such a thing as a historical watershed, the Suez crisis was such a moment. In the aftermath of the crisis, no one could doubt that Britain's days as a great international power had passed'.[11]

In January 1957, Anthony Eden resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Harold Macmillan who made it his business to patch things up with the Americans. He succeeded to some extent but Britain's position was clearly one of subordination to the USA. He also accelerated the decolonisation of Britain's remaining African territories and applied (unsuccessfully) for membership of the European Economic Community. National service in the forces was phased out - the last national serviceman was discharged in 1963 - as Britain adopted a policy of nuclear deterrence. Many imperial garrisons were brought home and several famous regiments were disbanded in defence cuts,

American behaviour over Suez disenchanted French policy-makers, and France teamed up with five neighbouring countries to form the Common Market in 1957. France and West Germany drew closer together and the Franco-German axis shaped the new European trading bloc. When Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973 it was as a supplicant. The Suez failure had cast a long shadow over British foreign policy.

If the outcome of the Suez operations was to expose Britain's pretensions to great power status so the events of 1956 destroyed what remained of what Arthur Koestler called, 'the Soviet myth'.[12] This was the view that the Soviet Union was morally superior to capitalist states. Few people

continued to believe that the Soviet Union was a workers' paradise, but it still held a special place in the hearts of many people on the left in politics. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and Stalin's Five Year Plans had created a socialist economy that had performed well during the Second World War and was still intact. However, after the revelations of 1956, it was no longer possible to deny the existence of torture chambers, gulags, secret police, show trials, purges, tight state censorship and the survival of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. These criticisms could no longer be dismissed as 'capitalist propaganda'.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union's role in the Second World War and the victory over Nazi Germany had transformed the Soviet Union into a superpower. Stalin had always put the interests of the Soviet state before the interests of foreign revolutionary movements. This was justified by the need to protect 'the bastion' at all costs. It was the duty of every communist to defend the country where communism had been established. However, after 1945 there was an abundance of evidence that the victorious Soviet Union had succumbed to great power chauvinism. This was not confined to Stalin's inner circle, but had permeated other parts of the Soviet state apparatus. Many Soviet bureaucrats, army officers and police personnel posted as advisers to the People's Democracies displayed an arrogant attitude towards their native subordinates. The Yugoslavs experienced it and it played a part in Tito's rupture with the Soviet Union in 1948.[13] 13 What had happened to proletarian internationalism and the great fraternity of communist parties? The fact was that there was not much left of it: the interests of the Soviet Union came first and it pursued a great power policy that reflected its own interests.

Khrushchev's secret speech, the reversal of policy over Tito's Yugoslavia, the unrest in Poland, and Soviet military intervention in Hungary had a devastating impact on the CPGB membership. In the words of Christopher Hill: 'We have been living in a world of illusions. This is why the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Union and Hungary came as such a shock. We had not been prepared for this event by our leaders. We have lived in a smug

world of our own invention'.[14]

The CPGB lost a third of its membership but even for many who remained in the Party after Hungary it was never the same again. The CPGB rebuilt its membership base and it was far from being finished as a political force but the passionate feeling of total dedication to the Soviet Union was no longer present after 1956. As Kate Hudson, a long serving member of the CPGB recalled:

> Until the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989, no single year in the history of the international communist movement had such a powerful negative impact on the movement itself, and on its standing in the world as 1956.[15]

John Osborne made the breakthrough in British drama and change followed. But there were other signs in 1956 that cultural change was on its way. In music the skiffle craze came to Britain from the USA and Lonnie Donegan's British version of *Rock Island Line* entered the charts in January, followed in May by Elvis Presley's recording of *Heartbreak Hotel*: this being the first of his many discs in the British hit parade. In September the film *Rock Around the Clock*, featuring Bill Haley and the Comets, was released in British cinemas and teenagers flocked to see it. The film was no epic but its music excited young audiences. There were reports of screaming teenagers dancing in the aisles, and the ripping up of cinema seats. There was growing evidence of changing tastes in popular music - especially among the young. The dominance of crooners, ballad singers, dance bands and light stringed orchestras was coming to an end to be replaced by the beat of rock and roll bands and pop groups. A revolution in popular music was underway that accompanied the political and cultural changes of the year.[16] A growing number of teenagers began to tune in to Radio Luxembourg's popular music programme in preference to those offered by the BBC. The popular song of the late 1950s that caught the move of the times was Lionel Bart's 'Fings Ain't Wot They Used To Be' - and they were never to be the same again.

Summing up

Since my teenage years I have been passionately interested in economics and politics. I was very conscious that I was highly privileged to be accepted as a Ruskin student in September 1956 in order to study these on a full-time basis. The tuition was very good, and Ruskin students were allowed access to Oxford University lectures. I always made a special effort to attend A.J.P. Taylor's early morning lectures on history. He was a wonderful lecturer and spoke without notes.

An important feature of a Ruskin education was the opportunity to hear those who were invited to address the student body. I remember hearing Hugh Gaitskell speak on the aftermath of Suez; Richard Hoggart discuss his book *The Uses of Literacy*; John Strachey presented his book Contemporary Capitalism; and Tony Crosland spoke on the *Future of Socialism*. George Woodcock gave a weekly lecture on British trade unionism. After a successful first year at the college I was given a second year to complete my course, followed by the Award of a State Scholarship to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oriel College.

After graduation I needed a job and applied for a vacancy at the TUC but my application was unsuccessful. Then, quite by chance, I noticed an advert for an assistant lecturer in economics and economic history at the North Oxfordshire Technical College. I applied and got the post. I worked for several years in further education and moved on to the Newcastle Polytechnic in 1968 where I spent the next twenty-five years of my working life. Ruskin not only gave me a great education, it proved to be the path to a lifelong career.

1 Two general histories which cover cultural as well as social, economic and political events have proved useful. They are: Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it so Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Abacus, 2006) and Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London, Pan Macmillan, 2008). Two books that cover Britain's place in the world are: Eric Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991 (London, Abacus, 1995) and Tony Judt, Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945 (London, Vintage, 2010)

2 The Suez Affair has been well covered in many books but perhaps the best single

volume remains Keith Kyle, Suez, (London: St. Martin's Press, 1991, rev. ed. 2013)

3 Quoted in Anthony Nutting, *No End of a Lesson* (London: Constable, 1967) p. 32.

4 William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

5 The Hungarian Uprising has been the subject of many books. A useful account is George Mikes, *The Hungarian Revolution* (London: Deutsch, 1957).

6 The headquarters of the Hungarian security police (the AVH) were at 60 Andrassy Road in Budapest, an apartment block built in 1880. In 1944 the building housed the police of Hungary's Fascist regime. The Communist security police took it over in 1945 and converted it into a maze of tunnels, cells and torture chambers. After 1956 it was used as government offices. In 2002 it was restored to what it had been under the AVH and opened as the Museum of Terror. The museum is a tourist attraction. I visited it in 2010 and found it an interesting but grim experience.

7 *World News and Views*, 21 April 1956.

8 Peter Fryer, *Hungarian* Tragedy (London: Dobson, 1956).

9 Francis Becket, *Olivier* (London: Haus Publishing 2005) p. 95.

10 Arthur Miller, *Timebends - A Life* (London: Methuen 1983) p. 416.

11 Sandbrook p. 39.

12 See the essays 'Anatomy of a Myth', 'Soviet Myth and Reality' and 'The End of an Illusion' in Arthur Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissar* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945) pp.121-226.

13 See Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (London: Penguin 1963). Djilas was a Partisan leader who had three meetings with Stalin. He was a shrewd observer of the Soviet scene.

14 Quoted in Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profiie*, (London: A and C Black, 1975) p. 80.

15 Quoted in *The Communist Party in 1956*, Our History Pamphlet 88 (Socialist History, 1993) p. 1. Also see Margot Heinemann, '1956 and the Communist Party', in Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds), *Socialist Register* vol 13 (1976) pp. 43-57, and Alison Macleod, *The Death of Uncle Joe* (Rendlesham: Merlin Press, 1997).

16 Marr pp. 267-274.

The Rise and Fall of Trade Union Education 1976 - 2021

Steve Grinter

The history of trade union education in the last half-century is one of innovation and overall success in raising the level of skills and understanding among many thousands of lay representatives. Its gradual erosion and demise at the behest of hostile governments, however, underline the importance of trade unions not becoming reliant upon donor funds for their core activities, of which union education should always be a top priority.

In the late 1960s, I worked at Gatwick Airport and became a shop steward. I was made redundant, so trained as a teacher. In 1976, on leaving college, I was employed by the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) as the staff member responsible for trade union education in the Northern Region. Perhaps the main reason I got the job was that the starting salary of £45 per week was even lower than that of a newly-qualified teacher, so very few others applied and those who did lacked appropriate qualifications and experience. I recall thinking how privileged I was to be paid at all for work I found exciting and I thought worthwhile. Mine was a new post, and at the time only three other TGWU regions had made similar appointments.[1] The union had a National Education Officer whose responsibilities included organising an annual residential education programme at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, and administering a programme of home study correspondence courses.

Jack Jones was TGWU General Secretary, and he was a champion of trade union education, especially for shop stewards. The TGWU was the largest UK trade union with a membership of more than two million, about 16% of the total number of unionised workers in the UK.[2] I recall making a number of funding requests to TGWU HQ for educational activities which were additional to my quite generous allocated budget. On each occasion, not only were my requests approved but I was invited to bid for more. One of my successful requests was for several thousands of pounds for an Easter residential programme at the teacher-training college in Ponteland, similar to the national programme held at Cirencester. This was organised with the help of the Workers' Education Association (WEA), and the first one ran for a week, starting in April 1978.[3] It involved more than a hundred union reps from around the Northern Region. Courses included health and safety, skills for branch officers, pensions, collective bargaining and many others.[4]

Until the 1970s, trade union education in the UK was a somewhat sporadic and diverse affair involving a wide range of providers. Many of the larger unions organised their own programmes for their members and officers. Typically, these courses were residential and were organised centrally and delivered either regionally or nationally. Several unions, including the EETPU, NUT, POEU and GMWU. had their own residential training centres.[5] The TGWU opened a purpose-built national education centre in Eastbourne in 1977, and provided hotel and convalescent facilities in the same complex, primarily for TGWU members and their families.[6] Several residential adult education colleges also provided trade union education; including Fircroft College, Northern College, Coleg Harlech and of course Ruskin College in Oxford.

By the early 1980s the Trades Union Congress (TUC) was becoming a significant organiser of union education. Traditionally, the TUC itself had provided briefings and other training for senior lay reps and full-time union officers. There was a TUC Training College on the first floor of Congress House. In 1984 this became the TUC National Education

Centre, and was relocated into the former Hornsey College of Art (famous for hosting the first student sit-in of the 1960s) in Crouch End, North London. Here the TUC provided an expanded programme of residential courses for trade union officers and senior reps, as well as briefings for trade union tutors.

New rights to paid time off for trade union lay reps were introduced by the Wilson and then Callaghan Labour Governments in the 1970s. This meant that there was a growing army of shop stewards and safety reps thirsty for trade union education. Most individual trade unions lacked the capacity to meet this growing demand and increasingly turned to the TUC for help. They formed a 'Course Development Unit' (CDU) within the Education Department under the leadership of Doug Gowan. Early members of the CDU included Gavin Poynter, Paul Simpson, Ruth Elliot, Andy Fairclough, Alan Grant, and Richard Ross; these were later joined by Liz Rees (nee Sullivan) Rosy Nicola, Kim Burridge and Sean Bamford among others.[7] In each region there was also a TUC Regional Education Officer (REO), whose employment actually preceded the appointment of full-time TUC Regional Secretaries.[8] The CDU proved to be a dynamic and innovative team developing a range of curricula and learning materials for use on TUC courses. Trade union tutors overwhelmingly welcomed both the new learning materials and the student-centred active learning methods for which they were designed. Doug Miller who taught at Newcastle Polytechnic said recently;

> I remember attending my first briefing on educational methods and it was like a religious conversion which totally changed my own approach to teaching at the poly. The new methods did however give rise to a bitter debate in the North West where some tutors challenged for want of a better expression the experiential approach to learning in favour of directed input. There were of course politics and personalities involved which clouded the debate.[9]

TUC policy was that shop stewards should, at a minimum, be given paid time off to attend a TUC Introductory Course for Trade Union Reps, of at least ten days' duration, and similarly that union-appointed Safety Reps should also be granted a minimum of ten days' paid time off to attend a TUC Introductory Course for Safety Reps. In practice, these courses were normally held on a day- release basis, one day per week for ten weeks. In order to deliver these courses, the TUC Education Service developed partnerships with public education providers, most of which were Further Education (FE) Colleges but included a number of Polytechnics and WEA districts.[10] Most of the college partners were in the FE rather than the higher education (HE) sector, due to the fact that the courses did not have academic pre-entry requirements nor were participants required to be formally assessed at the end of the course. The system of formula funding and grading of TUC courses has changed over the years, but in the 1980s the TUC ten-day courses were Burnham Grade 4, under the national system operating in further and higher education at that time. This grading made the courses quite lucrative, particularly for Further Education colleges, and allowed FE college tutors to progress up the college lecturers' pay scale by annual increments from the junior lecturer pay scale to senior lecturer, this incremental progress up the scale would normally be restricted at the top of the Lecturer Grade 1 pay scale for lecturers teaching courses which carried lower Burnham Grades. The TUC Education Service undertook most of the recruitment to the courses, paid course fees for attendees, provided the core learning materials and gave briefings to course tutors. In return for all this, only tutors who had attended the appropriate TUC briefings were allowed to teach on TUC courses. Importantly this gave the TUC control over who did or did not teach on their courses, and it certainly stopped college managements from - for instance -allocating business studies lecturers who were short on teaching hours to TUC courses. As a result of this partnership the TUC was able to encourage colleges to establish trade union studies units comprising specialist TUC course tutors together with appropriate teaching resources such as dedicated teaching rooms and

support. In the Northern Region, Centres for Trade Union Education were established at Newcastle College and at Stockton and Billingham Technical College.[11] Other providers of TUC courses in the North included Carlisle College, Longlands College (Middlesbrough), Newcastle Polytechnic, Northumberland College at Ashington, and the WEA (at various venues including Sunderland and Workington).

The resources established as a result of this partnership were a very powerful and effective arm of the trade union movement, not only for provision of education but also for campaigning. One example of a successful campaign was over the issue of trade union political funds. In the mid- 1980s the Conservative Government, as part of its general attack on trade unions and especially on the link between trade unions and the Labour Party, attempted to restrict the ability of trade unions to use their funds for political purposes. The TUC Education Service, in consultation with affiliates, developed learning materials, conducted tutor briefings and assisted unions with their respective campaigns including the provision of one-day campaign briefings for members and reps, to defend their rights to continue to operate political funds. One by one in the mid-1980s, trade unions held the ballots required under the Tory legislation and at the end of the campaign every single trade union ballot had been won to secure the political funds, in fact at least one trade union actually voted to establish a fund where it had not had one before. This was one Tory anti-union policy which backfired, when sadly so many others had succeeded.

The use of public funds and public resources has been a major factor in increasing the capacity of unions to provide union education. In the late 1970s, Government funds were first awarded to the TUC in the form of an annual grant. The value of this grant and the rules attached varied over the years, but essentially the grant had to be spent on course fees for courses provided by public education bodies. Initially, all the funds were spent on fees for the TUC-approved ten-day courses described above. The TUC distributed the public funds via their Regional Education Officers who were responsible for co-ordinating and delivering their respective

course programmes. In the early 1980s, the arrangements for spending the Government grant became more flexible, with a proportion being shared with TUC affiliates to be spent on their own courses, The TUC was also able to provide a more flexible course programme, including short courses for specific sectors and even for reps from an individual workplace such as a hospital or chemical factory.

In retrospect, it is surprising that the TUC and individual trade unions' acceptance of Government funds for trade union education was not generally regarded as controversial, especially since the notoriously anti-trade union Conservative Government was in power from 1979 until 1997. While there were a few critical voices, not a single national trade union opposed the acceptance and use of the funds. The TUC Education Service used public funds to build a powerful partnership with public education bodies, but we can now see that they made a serious error in becoming reliant on those public funds, at a time when those funds were awarded at the political whim of a hostile government. A number of individual unions made a similar mistake in depending too much on external funds to provide education services for their membership.

The use of public funds was not limited to the annual Government grant used to pay course fees. Importantly, the fees did not cover the full economic cost of the courses. So there was a further state subsidy, of perhaps three times that level generated via the formula funding scheme mentioned earlier. Employers also contributed very significantly in the form of paid time off. Some trade union course provision was funded separately from the Government grant, such as the political fund campaign and anti-privatisation workshops; this was probably because it was considered that they might put the Government grant in jeopardy. The TUC did not expect the Government grant to continue for very long, if at all, following the election of the Thatcher Government in 1979. However, the longer the grant continued the more dependent on it the TUC Education Service became. Staff salaries were not funded by the grant, but almost all of the fees for the course programme were.

Under the Blair Government, the funding system for public education moved strongly in the direction of vocational skills and qualifications. In order to maintain access to public education resources for trade union education, the TUC felt compelled to secure validation for its TU Education programme via the NVQ system. In this way, the emphasis which had traditionally been upon collective learning and union-building shifted towards individual qualifications such as literacy, numeracy and IT.

In 2017, Government funds for trade union education were cut.[13] Almost at once the TUC's programme all but disappeared. The Government decision was clearly vindictive, and a result of a political judgement on how best to damage the trade union movement.

In October 2020, the Conservative Government suddenly announced that it was cutting off funding for the Union Learning Scheme, even though this was an innovative and by all measures highly successful and low-cost scheme to promote training and retraining. The scheme involved training 'union learning representatives' to become champions of training for their fellow workers. In the North East there was a particularly successful Union Learn project called 'Bridges to Learning', a partnership between Unison, the Open University and the WEA. At the time of writing (April 2021) staff employed by this project are serving out their notices of redundancy. The Government faced widespread opposition from unions and employers for this decision which has come at a time when the project is needed more than ever.[14]

1 The author was appointed in September 1976 as Regional Education, Information and Research Assistant in TGWU Region 8 based in Newcastle upon Tyne. There were similar posts at that time in Region 2 (Southern), Region 5 (Midlands) and in Wales.

2 Based upon membership returns submitted annually by individual trade unions to the Certification Office, trade union membership within the UK peaked in 1979 at approximately 13.2 million.

3 Tom Ellison, the WEA Industrial Studies Tutor Organiser, was able to provide around ten tutors for this event.

4 The TGWU Northern Region Easter residential programme was held annually at Ponteland until 1979. After the closure of the teacher training college, it was transferred

to Hatfield College Durham, where it continued for several years organised by my successor Tom Nesbit.

5 Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (now part of Unite); National Union of Teachers (now part of NEU), Post Office Engineering Union, General and Municipal Workers' Union (now GMB).

6 The first Manager of the TGWU Hotel in Eastbourne was Alan Simpson, who until then had been TGWU District Secretary based in Carlisle.

7 Alan Grant was promoted to Head of the TUC Education Department in 1984 succeeding Roy Jackson who became TUC Assistant General Secretary. Alan had played a leading role in the project leading to the establishment of the TUC National Education Centre.

8 Coincidentally the first TUC full-time Regional Secretary was Bob Howard in the Northern Region in the early 1980s. Hitherto, the role had been held by a senior full time official from an affiliated union.

9 The debate Doug Miller refers to here was sparked by an article in the Journal of the Society of Industrial Tutors in the mid 1980's. The tutor was John McIllroy, an industrial tutor based in the North West. McIllroy argued that the education methods promoted by the CDU undermined the role of the professional tutor in delivering learning.

10 A polytechnic was a tertiary education teaching institution offering higher diplomas, undergraduate degree and postgraduate education (masters and PhDs), governed and administered at the national level by the Council for National Academic Awards. After the passage of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 they became independent universities which meant they could award their own degrees. In Newcastle, Northumbria University began its life as Newcastle Polytechnic.

11 The TU Ed Centre in Newcastle College in the 1980s comprised 3 full-time tutors namely Aubrey Crowe, Christine Byrne and Ron Tailor and others were involved part time such as Chris Green and Aubrey Smith

12 The author was employed in 1984 as TUC Regional Education Officer initially for London and the South East and later transferred back to Newcastle as TUC REO for the Northern Region.

13 See https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Congress_2016_General_Council_Report_Digital.pdf [accessed 28 April 2021], Section 4.4, p. 60. At the time, the TUC did not launch a public campaign of opposition. Presumably they tried behind the scenes to lobby politicians and officials as they had in the past, but clearly this did not work with the Conservative Government this time.

14 See https://www.tuc.org.uk/campaigns/dont-let-government-cut-union-learning; https://www.bridgestolearning.org.uk/

What I Did In My Poly Days: Newcastle Polytechnic and Trade Union Education

John Stirling

What follows is a personal chronicle of thirty years of engagement with trade union education, centred in Newcastle upon Tyne between 1979-2009. As the Queen has said in another context: 'some recollections may vary', and this is not meant to be a definitive account, but rather the view from an institution that might well be considered an 'outlier' of trade union education[1]. Nevertheless, the subject area is more than personal reminiscence as I will seek to locate my account within the broader context of an activity which touched many lives but is largely unrecorded. John McIlroy, Keith Forrester and John Halford have written generally on trade union education and the TUC programme[2] and John Fisher has written a book on the history of education within the Transport and General Workers Union,[3] but local activity has been neglected although there are significant stories to tell.

Such stories raise broader debates about the nature and fate of the education of adults in general and working-class adults in particular; questions of the significance of 'education' in trade union actions and campaigns; how trade union education responded to societal questions about gender and race and the changing nature of employment and the workplace. Much of this is beyond my scope here but the Polytechnic story touches on many of these issues. My own story in Newcastle begins at the peak of trade union membership in the UK and traverses a terrain

of declining numbers and shifting frontiers in terms of organisation and power. I left London with little teaching experience, having only taught for, a short period, on a part time trade union programme at the then Regents Street Polytechnic. I arrived at what was Newcastle Polytechnic in 1979 in the dog days of Jim Callaghan's Labour administration and on the eve of Thatcherism[4]. A system of Trade union education was already in place.

Trade Union Education

Trade union education is not simply 'a TUC activity', to use Halford's term, although that is an important part of this story. It has a much longer history which I don't have the space to discuss here, and it certainly did not begin with the legislation and the funding of the 1970s, however important a part of the story that became. Neither is trade union education 'training'. I make this point at the outset to establish my own view that the oft made distinction between training (viewed as the acquisition of skills) and education (viewed as the acquisition of knowledge) is an iniquitous one and often reflects a damaging class divide. Plumbing requires knowledge and surgery requires skills even if society fails to acknowledge this straightforwardly and rewards occupations (and particularly those jobs largely undertaken by women) differentially. Thus, for example, in a trade union course on negotiating; there are skills to be acquired but, equally, knowledge to be gained about power structures at work and in society more generally.

The physical location of TUC education programmes in Colleges of Further Education (education 'Centres' as defined by the TUC) seemed to underline such a distinction. However, it was certainly a pragmatic as much as an ideological decision, as it was where the overwhelming bulk of state funding went, and it also made Newcastle Polytechnic an 'outlier'. Newcastle College was the main provider in the City and there was a Regional network of other FE colleges providing shop stewards courses. Courses for full time officers of unions were rarely provided although

individual unions may have operated induction programmes.[5]

This is not to say that TUC programmes or the education of trade unionists only resided in the FE colleges. Some university extra-mural departments had longstanding links with trade unions; there were colleges with trade union programmes, most notably, Ruskin College but also Coleg Harlech, Fircroft College and, later, Northern College; the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) provided courses nationally, as it did in the Region and even the BBC was a course provider with TV programmes and accompanying booklets . In addition, the Society of Industrial Tutors (SIT) produced a range of books with a focus on such issues as collective bargaining and analysing company accounts.

With government funding deriving from the Health & Safety at Work Act and the Employment Protection Act, this was a fertile period for trade union education, and I had arrived at a peak: 1n 1975/6 17,451 students had attended TUC courses and in four years this had risen to 43,856.[7] Successive Tory government restrictions on paid time off work reduced these figures but at that time a range of institutions and organisations became engaged with trade union education. So why, or indeed why not, the local Polytechnic?

Newcastle Polytechnic

Largely thanks to Terry MacDermott, a small part of the 'behavioural/ social science' field of the institution's subject base had established links with local trade unions and the TUC (Terry had been a WEA tutor and trade union activist in his own right). David Bright, who moved on to Durham University, was also involved in this early period. The Polytechnics generally still received some of their funding via local authorities; had a wider basis of taught subject matter and different student recruitment patterns than the established universities.

Terry recruited Jenny Beale as one of the first women trade union tutors in the country and got the 'stamp of approval' through attendance at TUC briefings - usually held at the TUC College at Crouch End in

North London. Tutors were not allowed to teach on TUC courses before they had attended a briefing and showed that they had understood 'the method'. That is, the TUC's approach to 'student-centred' learning. The TUC College was also, therefore, in a position to inhibit Colleges from placing 'any old tutor' with space on their timetable from teaching on their programmes.

There was an early demarcation line drawn, in that the Polytechnic never taught health and safety courses, which were the province of Newcastle College. Furthermore, Polytechnic staff in the growing area of industrial relations which encompassed the trade union work, also found themselves teaching into undergraduate programmes in business, and into management programmes such as the Diploma in Management Studies and the Institute of Personnel and Development alongside 'outreach' on liberal studies elements of technology-based courses.

However, they were not employed by the Polytechnic's business school which gave them a degree of independence. This still raised tensions as the TUC preferred to have 'their' tutors solely engaged on 'their' programmes and in many cases in FE this was possible. However, state funding meant that tutors were employed by institutions and not the TUC and they made demands too. One aspect of the Polytechnic's particular status in this respect was that Terry encouraged staff to join the British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA) and the Society of Industrial Tutors (SIT) both of which brought us into contact with academics who were also sympathetic to trade unions whilst not necessarily working directly with their members. The SIT also attracted FE tutors and was a forum for ideas and exchanges, particularly at its Manchester meetings.

In this environment of expansion, staffing grew steadily. Terry had also established at an early stage an Industrial Relations Diploma that was open to trade unionists and managers. The author joined the Polytechnic in1979 to share an office with Al Rainnie an SWP activist and PhD student. Doug Miller transferred across the Institution from the Department of Modern Languages; Janet Hannah was appointed as another PhD student

(studying worker co-operatives[8]) along with Ewan Knox and, later, Dave Wray and Ian Fitzgerald, a researcher on European Works Councils[9]. All of these, at one stage or another and including the students and researchers, were engaged with the trade union education programmes, although not all overlapped in terms of their employment dates.

The TUC courses were the staple part of the Polytechnic's provision in the early period, with courses for shop stewards from a mixture of workplaces, but much focussed on highly unionised workers in engineering, chemicals, and shipbuilding. This core programme consisted of a ten-day course with participants attending once a week with paid time off from their employers. There were also short courses, weekend and residential programmes that were often provided by individual unions, which were also able to bid for state funding. The Polytechnic tutors participated in large parts of these programme including courses such as Statutory Sick Pay; New Technology and the various courses that were run to counter the employment legislation that was being introduced by successive Thatcher governments and ministers such as Jim Prior and Norman Tebbit. These political courses did not, of course receive State funding[10].

We developed a close working relationship with the Inland Revenue Staff Federation - a TUC affiliated trade union. I hesitate to speculate about the union's choice of educational location for its courses but, nevertheless, their facility time agreement and left-wing leadership locally, allowed us to develop an innovative range of programmes with a steady stream of activists. A further series of short courses were developed with the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE, later part of UNISON) which included one weekend school addressed by Tony Blair before he became leader of the Labour Party. Guest speakers and union full time officers were not uncommon features of weekend and residential programmes.

The Polytechnic staff also became engaged with the various shifts in union strategies. For example, towards organising and away from partnerships, which another PhD student had studied and critiqued

in the shipbuilding industry.[11] There was further involvement in TUC schools programmes, Community Union developments and Union Learning Representative programmes.[12] A further initiative came with the foundation of the Critical Labour Studies group, initially with Leeds University. This aimed to bring together academic researchers with union activists and led to an annual conference and, eventually, to provide a setting for Ruskin students to present their dissertations and research.

These were not the only relationship that emerged as the major unions appointed their own Regional Education Officers alongside the TUC's appointees. The author had secured a secondment to the Transport and General Workers in the early years of his job and the union had appointed Tom Nesbit as its education officer. At first, this led to tutors from the Polytechnic being engaged in residential TGWU programmes at St Hilde and St Bede College in Durham locally and at Cirencester and then Stoke Rochford nationally. Regionally, TGWU education officer, Tom Nesbit, was keen to develop a local variant of a national union initiative to develop Certificate courses that went beyond the restricted framework of the TUC's own[13]. This led to the production of teaching materials and the validation of the first specifically trade union programme run independently of the TUC at the Poly in 1985. It was validated through the Polytechnic's procedures and spawned another Certificate programme open to members of any union and then a Diploma programme.

The Next Steps

Trade union education never fitted comfortably in the Polytechnic's profile and there was often a feeling amongst colleagues that we survived through Institutional neglect and the income the courses generated. However, 1992 saw the point at which Polytechnics could transform themselves into Universities and a different direction was required to maintain any trade union activity at all. The date did not bring a sudden change as there were already national and local pressures on our delivery of the TUC programme and the independent, Polytechnic validated provision, had

become more significant. Moreover, staff were now consistently involved in developing teaching materials both for their own programmes and for other trade union organisations.

Alongside this, staff engaged in such work were developing expertise in two areas: research and the international aspect of trade unionism with the two eventually becoming linked. In the Regional context we published reports on, among other things, equal opportunities in education; BAME workers and unions; Union Learning Representatives and organising in supply chains[14]. Our engagement with BUIRA in particular, also meant that some of this activity was linked to academic conference papers and journal publications. This had the benefit of bringing us into contact with individuals in other institutions who were doing cutting-edge research on trade unions.

This activity had a broader Regional context that had already seen past engagements between local unions and independent researchers such as Hilary Wainwright and Huw Beynon at Durham University with the Shop stewards at Vickers and the NUM. Furthermore, the Trad Union Studies Information Unit was an important organisation both for publishing its own work and building partnerships with both academics and trade unions. Keith Hodgson as the education of NUPE and then UNISON was instrumental in this process. Trade union research groups were a national phenomenon and benefitted from the ability of Labour-led local authorities to make funding available.

The second area was the growth of our international work which also brought us into a relationship with the Commonwealth Trades Union Council. One outcome of this was a project that involved us working with Trade Films (Martin Spence in this case) to produce what I believe was the first set of teaching materials and a video on international issues for use by the TUC. Alongside this was the anti-racism work being carried out by Doug Miller and the education programmes I had begun, via the TUC, in Sierra Leone and The Gambia. This led to workbooks being produced for the trade union centres in both countries and, later, to a British Council

project leading to the establishment of a validated trade union course in Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone[15]. Eventually the Polytechnic was also to agree to what became a seven-year secondment for Doug Miller to the International Textile and Garment Workers global union federation.

The final area of international engagement which continued well beyond the involvement in TUC programmes was the work that was undertaken with what was then the European Trade Union College (ETUCO). The author and Doug Miller had both been at the College's foundation meeting at Ruskin College, and we were soon running programmes in partnership with the Polytechnic's Modern Languages Department. These programmes ran for many years and had a strong trade union dimension taught by us 'non-language specialists'. Participants came from all over Europe to the North East and there was important cross-fertilisation of skills and knowledge as well as an ironic appreciation by participants of courses being taught in a country where trade unionism was in decline. With ETUCO the Polytechnic edited the first comprehensive study of trade union education in Europe[16].

Again, initially through ETUCO but later as a Polytechnic initiative we began education programmes for European Works Councils (EWC) including a longstanding programme with what was then Scottish and Newcastle Brewery. Some of this work led to exchanges between European trade unionists and those in the United States and we delivered with US educators an online course on building international solidarity. With Barbara Tully in the Department of Modern languages we also produced the training materials on EWCs preparing complaints against multinational enterprises for the Trade Union Advisory Committee of the OECD. A further project on employment restructuring in Europe (TRACE) led to more educational engagement and publications.[17]

The Political is Personal

History is not simply the descriptions of movements and classes; the elites and the neglected and I want to shift the focus to a more personal one

as I believe that it has much broader implications, and each of the issues below was much discussed. Before the issues there is a broad question to be raised that returns us to the point I made at the outset about the 'distinction' between education and training. That question is: were the courses political? The answer for me is a very straightforward yes. So called 'skills' training in this context inevitably raises questions about power that are political. However, how individual tutors tackled the politics was a matter for them; no matter how much the TUC or an individual union might have liked to be - they were not in the classroom. I would say that all (or at least the overwhelming majority of tutors) were 'somewhere on the left'. My own transition was to have resigned from the Communist Party. joined Labour and then left the party when Blair abandoned Clause 4. A simple sentence, but a complex set of arguments, debates, and personal feelings.

The first particular issue at least partly relates to my own 'status'. Trade union education was growing rapidly and, consequently, new tutors were being recruited just as fast. A good number of these had activist backgrounds and came from what would be known by many as 'the Ruskin mafia'. Not an exclusive club but somebody who had not arrived as a tutor through that College, or one like it, or was not 'working class' had perhaps, more to do to join it . It was not a 'male only' preserve but close to one and women trade union tutors were few and far between. I had been an activist since leaving school and joining a union - but a white collar one - and, moreover, I was a cockney with a Master's degree from the LSE. What on earth could I know about the real world? For some (by no means all) trade union officials there was a long-standing enmity towards 'academics' which reinforced a detrimental division.

Secondly, there is the question of the work/life balance which all tutors were strong advocates of in the classroom but more often personally 'honoured in the breach'. Whilst core TUC programmes were delivered at the colleges and the Polytechnic during weekdays and working hours much else was delivered in the evenings and at residential weekend schools.

Our Certificate and Diploma Programmes were exclusively evening (6.00 - 9.00 pm) culminating in residential weekends. This meant considerable intrusions on many family lives including participants, tutors and my own. TUC briefings were also held in London requiring overnight stays. Once we became involved in international issues, I might be away for longer periods of time which had serious implications for my wife and young family.

Thirdly, the vexed question of alcohol. Drinking, particularly on residential programmes was a part of the 'culture' and was both inclusive and exclusive at the same time. It was often part of male dominated weekends and there was an expectation (and a willingness I expect) that tutors would join in. There is a positive aspect to a more informal environment than the classroom can bring but not for those who don't want to be involved (or perhaps can't for cultural or religious reasons). The relationship between drink and trade unionism is an unexplored one as it inevitable touches personal issues and raw nerves. It would provide a worthy PhD topic for a brave researcher.

Finally, there is the question of dealing with issues of sexism and racism in the classroom (and beyond). Tutors I knew regularly took polar views ranging from 'stamp on it immediately' to 'ignore it'. I hope and believe that there were many fewer of the latter but many more who tried to work out strategies for dealing with it or trying to use such interventions to generate positive discussions about such issues. I personally have Jenny Beale to thank for making the point that it shouldn't be her dealing with the sexist 'jokes' but that it was (more than) equally my job too. I am equally glad that Doug Miller was particularly active in anti-racism and reminding us of the importance of the issue. I am disappointed that we at the Polytechnic and trade unions more generally failed to engage more widely with women and ethnic minority workers. The story of the (lack of) engagement with LGBT workers has barely started.

Conclusion

What then is given to history from this article? Simply a list of 'and then we did this' and then we all retired ? Perhaps, but then three further things might be suggested. Firstly, history itself can seem a chronological list of dates and times that some would seek to confine to the Kings and Queens of Great Britain and the glories or disgraces of the Empire. This is not even a good chronological list I admit but it does begin to say something of the development of trade union education as a Regional activity and how this North East corner of England made some particular and unexpected links globally.

Secondly, it has also demonstrated the role of a particular institution and a set of staff that were able to create space for trade union education that was rarely repeated elsewhere. I never met another Polytechnic teacher at a TUC briefing nor do I know of another Polytechnic involved to the degree that we were (I would be delighted to be corrected). This tells us something about how agency works in history with individuals taking advantages of opportunities. If we use history to inform current debates then it demonstrates, I believe, how constrained staff in educational institutions now are in pursuing work with working class organisations or developing critical research strategies. Targets, learning outcomes, research exercises and income generation now dominate academic staff agendas. Nobody gets 'ignored' in the way I feel we were.

Thirdly, and hopefully, this prompts others 'who were there' to add their own views and perspectives, different though they will be from my own. Trade union education (the education of trade unionists) is an enormously important part of labour history. Hundreds of thousands (millions?) of trade unionists participated in programmes: some were grateful for a few hours away from work, some had their lives changed and many have forgotten all about it. If this article prompts other accounts from participants, tutors, TUC and union education officers and trade unionists in general then it will have served at least one useful purpose in the writing of working-class history.

1 It would be interesting to have a national picture of other Polytechnics and universities engaged in trade union education. I am not aware of many, but most notable for me was South Bank Polytechnic in London with Paul Philo and Mary Davis whose work eventually moved to North London Polytechnic with Richard Ross and his colleagues. Keith Forrester and Bruce Spencer at Leeds University also had significant engagement.

2 I do not intend to supply a wide variety of references here as their writings are wide ranging and much was published in Journals that are now out of print.

3 John Fisher, *Bread on the Waters; A History of TGWU Education 1922-2000.* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2005).

4 I have written about some of these experiences before in: John Stirling: The North East Experience, *The Industrial Tutor*, 5 (4), 1991, pp 25-33. The series run of the Industrial Tutor, The Journal of the Society of Industrial Tutors, is an invaluable resource waiting to be mined.

5 It is an interesting point that union officials, most commonly elected or appointed from within the union ranks, were not regarded as needing further education although they may have been given new and unaccustomed responsibilities. Larger unions would have appointed specialists in some areas who were not 'officers' but employees.

6 The BBC programmes of the 1970s consisted of television programmes and accompanying booklets. Interestingly, these went beyond what the TUC, with its State-constrained budgets provided offering, for example, Unions and the economy; unions and multinational companies; democracy at work and workers of the world.

7 Quoted from TUC Annual Reports in Doug Miller and John Stirling, Evaluating Trade Union Education, *The Industrial Tutor*, 5(5) 1992 pp 15-26.,

8 Our more general engagement with worker co-operative education is another story but fed into the trade union courses as we worked with unions in this area.

9 Terry MacDermott died in 2020 and there are tributes in the 2020 edition of North East History, Al Rainnie completed his PhD and worked at various UK universities before moving to Australia. Jenny Beale wrote *Getting it Together: Women as trade Unionists*, (London, Pluto Press, 1982), before eventually moving to the Republic of Ireland and opening a renowned garden. Doug Miller went on to work with the International Textile Workers, Janet Hannah worked for the Trade Union International Research Group at Ruskin College before moving on to Nottingham University. Dave Wray retired from Northumbria bur remained active with the NUM and his community in Durham. Ewan Knox and Ian Fitzgerald both continued their careers at Northumbria University.

10 There were courses on other issues too, but most memorable was an occasion when we had a comrade from South Africa speaking on anti-Apartheid and I recall the words of Nkosi Sikelela IAfrika rolling out from a Poly room with tutors and students doing their best to join in.

11 Jo McBride and John Stirling, Partnership and Process in the Maritime Construction industry, *Employee Relations*, Volume 24 (3, 2002, pp. 290-304..

12 Dave Wray was particularly involved in this. See his and my contributions to Steve

Shelly and Moira Calveley, (Eds) *Learning with Trade Unions* (Aldershot, Ashgate 2007).

14 For a discussion of this see John Fisher, op. cit.

Examples include: *Tackling the barriers to Skills and Learning; Black Minority Ethnic Groups Views of Trade Unions*; TUC Supply Chain Project and reports on industrial action for the GMB and Total Quality Management for UNISON Newcastle City Council branch. Dates and publishers as would normally be listed are often difficult to identify and I have omitted them.

15 Barbara Tully, from the Modern languages Department, who had been involved in the ETUCO and EWC work was instrumental in securing the British Council funding and played a major part in the programme development in Sierra Leone.

16 Jeff Bridgford and John Stirling (Eds) *Trade Union Education in Europe*, (Brussels, European Trades Union College, 2000).

17 Again, there is a range of teaching materials as well as reports such as: European Works Councils: Building the *Regional Dimension* for the TUC and *Trade Unions Anticipating Change in Europe: A Handbook on Restructuring* for ETUCO.

18 One mark of admission (and a subject for a different article) was to be active in the lecturer's union NATHE which became a part of UCU. I was a branch representative and then Branch Chair for a number of years.

19 Those involved in this story who I still know, continued their engagement in trade union education after their formal retirement I continued working on industrial relations programmes at Newcastle University and on trade union programmes at Ruskin College and for the General Federation of Trade Unions.

'Let justice prevail though the heavens fall'; Thompsons, the Miners' Strike of 1984, and me

Janet Allan

This article describes my memorable experiences as a newly-qualified solicitor with the law firm Thompsons, in their Newcastle office at the time of the miners strike in 1984/85. I was born and brought up in Thornaby-on-Tees and my move to Thompsons represented a sort of North East homecoming for me after working for Clarke, Willmott and Clarke, a Bristol firm.

Thompsons were the solicitors initially to the Durham Colliery Mechanics Association and later also to the Durham NUM.[1] We were dealing with all the local arrests on the picket lines and I had the privilege of representing two clients arrested at Orgreave and one at Mansfield. Looking back, it was a life-defining experience, seen at that time through a glass darkly.

Thompsons - the firm

I started work at the Thompsons office in September 1983. It was then based in Eagle Star House, Fenkle Street, Newcastle upon Tyne. My abiding first impression of the office was one piled high with files and cigarette smoke, full of chain-smoking leather jacket clad idealists. The firm was unique in that it had a long and famous history of representing solely trade union members, having been founded by William Henry "Harry" Thompson, uncle of the acclaimed and controversial historian, A. J. P.Taylor, whose book *The origins of the second world war* was first published in 1961. Harry had qualified as a solicitor in 1909.

In line with his political views, Harry Thompson was a conscientious objector during the First World War. He was imprisoned for two terms of 6 months and then one of two years, latterly in Wakefield prison. On release from prison in April 1919, he set up his own law firm in London in September 1919. He acted for and became a trusted confidant of James Ramsay MacDonald who was to become Labour's first Prime Minister. During the General Strike in 1926, Thompsons worked to support both miners and other workers. Harry was a founder member of the National Council for Civil Liberties in 1934, and chairman from 1939. By the time of his death in 1947, his firm had grown to be the leading firm to the trade union movement and was seen as the largest personal injury and employment rights firm in the UK.

In 1983 Thompsons were engaged in litigating industrial deafness cases on behalf of the Association of Boilermakers,Blacksmiths,Shipwrights and Structural Workers (ASBSBSW later to become part of the GMB) and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW).

Out of some eight thousand cases, the Newcastle office were pursuing three of the six test cases selected to be heard before Mr Justice Mustill. His judgement set the date of guilty knowledge (i.e when hearing protection should have been provided) as at 1963 and apportioned damages by reference to length of exposure to dangerous noise levels without adequate hearing protection. We argued unsuccessfully against apportionment as being too imprecise.

The detailed judgement led directly to the negotiation of a national compensation scheme for industrial deafness cases with the employer's liability insurer, Iron Trades insurance company, who provided cover for most shipyards and heavy industry. It was the first of such schemes in the UK legal system to deal with mass industrial disease claims.

I was recruited for an assistant solicitor role in personal injury litigation. There was no criminal team in the office at that time. Employment-related criminal cases such as theft were dealt with on an ad hoc basis.

The 1984 strike

The 1984 miners' strike followed successful and nationally supported strikes over pay in 1972 and 1974.

The 1984 strike, by contrast, was not about pay but over proposed closures of pits. With no national ballot and Nottingham region never supporting the strike, it became a bitter and divisive struggle both internally within the union and with the then Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher.

The announcement by the NCB chairman Ian MacGregor of proposed closures was carefully timed for March 1984, the beginning of Spring and therefore deliberately coinciding with the fall in demand for coal for domestic heating. The planned closure of 20 pits put at risk the jobs of about 20,000 NUM members. Miners at Cortonwood Colliery in Yorkshire, the first earmarked for closure, walked out on 5 March.

The barricade built across the pit gates at Easington Colliery.

The key dates

- 12 March 1984, Arthur Scargill, then President of the NUM called on union members to join a national strike against pit closures but no industrial ballot was held.
- 14 March 1984, Nottingham police drafted in 8,000 police officers.
- In April food kitchens opened in every coalfield.
- 14 May 1984, 87 arrests were made following a rally at Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.
- 29 May 1984, 2,000 police escorted coke lorries through picket lines at the British Steel coking plant at Orgreave near Rotherham, Yorkshire.
- 30 May, 31 May and 18 June 1984, 82, 19 and 93 arrests respectively were made at Orgreave. The 18 June event became known as the 'battle of Orgreave '.
- 10 October 1984, the NUM was fined £200,000
- 28 October 1984, High Court orders sequestration of NUM funds.
- 3 March 1985, NUM ends strike.

Thompsons' Sheffield office already represented NUM Yorkshire. The Newcastle office was instructed initially by Bill Etherington, then General Secretary of the Durham Mechanics, to represent his union members arrested on local north- east picket lines.

Statistics on arrest, compiled March 1985	
Individual arrests in England and Wales	9,808
Number of charges	10,372
Cases heard in court	5,653

The relevant legislation for arrests made on the picket line was section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936 (originally enacted, in a historic ironic twist, to

control extremist political movements in the 1930s such as the British Union of Fascists), and/or obstructing a police officer under the Police Act 1964.

The in-house system adopted within our Newcastle office in those pre-mobile phone days involved a phone call alert from the Durham Mechanics' office with details of planned pickets. Subsequently, if and when arrests were made, a second call came through and a team of us would then head out, squashed into one or two cars, to the relevant police station. We made it a point of principle to file an official police complaint on the spot, if we were denied prompt access to our clients. Information was usually scant as to how many arrests had been made and the identity of those in custody.

We took with us what became known within Thompsons' folklore as "Pic Pacs", bundles of A4 brown envelopes containing a legal aid green form application for initial advice and representation, a biro, a short questionnaire and a packet of cigarettes. The aim was to procure release as speedily as possible, and obtain a signature to the green form application to cover initial advice and representation.

At the earliest possible date, we then individually interviewed those arrested plus any relevant witnesses at the Durham Mechanics' union office in The Avenue, Durham under the watchful eye of Bill Etherington and his two indefatigable assistants, Anne Suddick and Janet Leadbitter. Anne, in particular, assisted in organising picketing and coordinated support groups, and was even then something of a legend. She organised fundraisers and ran workshops to assemble and distribute food parcels. Famously, she secured a donation of $20,000 for the support groups from Bruce Springsteen when he was touring the region. Both Anne and Janet were unfailingly kind and supportive, supplying endless cups of coffee and generally looking after us. There was no formal appointment system. The men turned up and queued down the stairs and sometimes out onto the street. Each client was seen in turn and statements obtained as to the circumstances of the arrest, and consideration was given to whether a not guilty plea was arguable. Circumstances were often confused, involving several pushes on the picket line over a short period of time. Statements were also taken from witnesses.

Financial details were noted in readiness for any fine, and reassurance provided together with advice on the Magistrates' Court procedure. For many it was their first experience of the criminal law and they were anxious, in particular, about the prospect of a criminal record. Written notes were made which then had to be dictated up on return to the office, usually covering at least 20 if not more individual statements.

For more serious offences, for example with a risk of a custodial sentence, we instructed barristers from Vera Baird's Collingwood Chambers in Newcastle but as solicitors we handled the normal run of the mill section 5 arrests from the local picket lines in the local Magistrates' Courts. A deal was often on offer for our clients to accept a bind over to keep the peace resulting, importantly in no criminal record. This was usually offered where the Crown Prosecution Service recognised the evidence was weak and a conviction unlikely.

The first hearing to be faced by our clients would be when the question of bail was considered and it became standard for widespread curfews and conditions to be imposed by some Magistrates' Courts, deliberately designed to keep striking miners away from potential local picket lines. The political make-up of the bench influenced the type and stringency of bail conditions levied. Sunderland and Ashington were regarded as more sympathetic benches compared with, say, Sedgefield.

The Orgreave cases

The headline arrests however were those made at Mansfield and Orgreave. With these, our clients faced resurrected medieval charges of both riot and unlawful assembly, both carrying the potential penalty not only significant fines but also of lengthy prison sentences. The arrests followed the now-iconic scenes of charging police horses and paramilitary police tactics.

When it became known that we had three Durham Mechanic clients facing these serious charges, our managing partner Geoff Shears asked me to take the cases on, as the newest solicitor and therefore the person with the smallest established civil caseload, and consequently arguably the most

time to invest in the cases. He recommended firstly that I telephone a barrister friend of his in London. Helena Kennedy for general advice as to how to approach the cases. It was a long, detailed and helpful conversation.

The lead barrister for the Defence was Michael Mansfield QC, instructed by Gareth Pierce of Birnbergs. Both of them had a wealth of experience in similar high- profile political cases such as the Birmingham 6.

Gareth Pierce had mobilised teams on the days of the mass arrests to obtain copies of the hundreds of press photographs taken and these became vital and cogent evidence with which to construct a time line in order to challenge the police evidence and timings. It was patently clear that the police had anticipated making significant numbers of arrests at Orgreave. The plant turned coal into coke for use in steel production and the picketing was an attempt to stop deliveries of coke from the plant. On 18 June, it was suggested the police were intending a battle to defeat the pickets. Huge numbers of baton-wielding police officers with dogs and mounted police charges provoked a day of unparalleled violence.

A group meeting of all barristers and solicitors was organised to discuss Defence tactics, and in particular to agree that photographs for the greater good could be pooled and used. It was against all usual legal convention and ethics to take group decisions in criminal cases, and indeed certain barristers were reported to the Bar Council for attending the meeting itself.

When the arresting officers' statements at Orgreave were eventually disclosed to us in the Defence team, it became apparent that a large part of all the statements had been pre-typed in a standard format regarding the circumstances leading up the arrests, and that only a few key paragraphs differed. This, together with the objective photographic evidence obtained from press bystanders at the time allowed the validity of the police evidence to become vulnerable under prolonged and brilliant forensic cross examination at the eventual trial. The trial of the first 15 selected from the 90 cases from Orgreave collapsed after an initial 16 weeks.

We had deliberately taken the decision to keep our two clients out of the first group and therefore they missed out on the public vindication

experienced by those first 15 who sat and witnessed it in court, and in particular Michael Mansfield's starring role.

The remaining groups of Defendant clients simply received a short, brief letter from the Crown Prosecution Service, after the success of the Defence team at the first trial, confirming that, after due consideration, no evidence would now be offered and all charges were in effect dropped.

These were both massive and historic legal victories for each of the individual defendants involved. The CPS having reviewed matters after the collapse of the Orgreave cases, the Mansfield cases followed a similar pattern. Once again a letter confirmed all charges would be dropped.

The hard-won triumph, crucially, post-dated the end of the actual strike itself. The trial of the first group of Orgreave defendants did not start until July 1985. Those arrested had lived with the stress and pressure of the charges, the criminal procedure machinations and, most importantly, the risk of an unlimited prison sentence if found guilty, for many, many anxious months.

Other legal challenges during the strike itself were not so successful. Thompsons applied for a judicial review of the politicised and stringent bail conditions imposed but the higher court upheld the conditions imposed by the magistrates. They confirmed the wide discretion of magistrates, who were said to be entitled to use their own knowledge of local events and conditions.

An appeal from Mansfield magistrates to the Divisional Court, involved a group of miners on the M1 attempting to push their way through a police cordon. This also failed on grounds that a breach of the peace was a real possibility, imminent, immediate and not remote. It was not necessary to show from words or deeds that a breach was intended.

In the worst of times for both the local and national mining communities, the Women against Pit Closures movement was a beacon of light of community strength and feminist emancipation.

Easington Colliery kitchen where up to 600 people were fed from a single stove.

Nationally, there was not universal support for the strike from the trade union movement. In the North East, in contrast, political support was strong and as NUM funds declined, both trade union colleagues and the largely sympathetic public assisted with bucket collections. Holiday camps were organised for the children of striking miners with local union assistance. Despite such support, many miners were forced back to work through financial hardship in the face of bitter opposition from family and friends.

The wonderful photographs of Keith Pattison, who moved into Easington in July 1984 to chronicle daily life in a typical North East pit village during the strike provide an enduring and beautiful but poignant record of how daily life played out. He has spoken, in interviews, of witnessing a 'real sense of history in front of the lens'. Many thanks to him for his kind permission to reproduce them here.

Bill Stobbs, then chair of Easington Lodge, on the picket line at Easington Colliery

Was defeat inevitable, given the organised stockpiling of coal, and the lack of universal solidarity within the NUM and other unions for the national strike? The mining unions faced an unprecendented mobilisation of the state in terms of military style policing and judicial attacks on funding. The 160 UK deep mines that existed in 1984 had been reduced to three by 2014. NUM membership decreased from 187,000 in 1984 to 5,000 in 2002.

Did the failure of mass picketing at Orgreave 'our Waterloo', described by Kim Howells, then research officer for the NUM, as "disastrous", contribute to the decline of the power of trade unions and increased exploitative employment practices?

When Nissan opened in Washington in 1985, a no-strike deal was signed with one union only. The Wapping dispute involving London print workers in 1986 followed on closely from the miners' strike.

More recently, in the 2019 general election, Redcar, Darlington, Stockton South, Bishop Auckland, Durham North West, Sedgefield and Blythe Valley returned Conservative candidates. These were communities built on steel and mining. Both Bishop Auckland and Sedgefield had been held by Labour since they were created in 1935.

For the North East, the demise of the coal mining industry echoed the demise of the shipbuilding and steel industries, and with it the loss of opportunity of employment within a dominant multi-skilled workforce. No significant replacement for these historic traditional industries has yet been identified or provided by government investment. Once an economic powerhouse, this region continues to struggle to overcome both poverty and high unemployment, underpinning the ongoing North/South divide.

The pit heads of Easington, Hordon and Blackhall.

1 The DCMA was a trade union founded in 1879 representing mechanics working in coal mines in the County Durham area. In 1944 the union became part of Group Number 1 of the NUM.

2 'In August 1984, photographer Keith Pattison was commissioned by Sunderland's Artists' Agency to photograph the strike in Easington Colliery for a month. He remained there on and off until it ended in March 1985, photographing from behind the lines', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_miners%27_strike_(1984%E2%80%9385) [accessed 12 May 2021].

Scotswood: from green fields to green fields in a hundred years

Judith Green

Overview

Scotswood is situated about five miles west of Newcastle city centre, bounded on the south by the Tyne. Its story can be seen as a case study of the development and de-development of working class communities which bear the costs of industrial change. By the early 20th century Scotswood had become an important industrial location, and it was subsequently transformed from a predominantly rural area into a built-up suburb of Newcastle. A century later, most of the local jobs had been lost, much of the housing and accompanying community facilities had also gone, and Scotswood had acquired an unwelcome reputation as one of Britain's dangerous places on the margins of civilised society. This account seeks to include the role of local residents as active participants in shaping the area. Examples of efforts by the community to improve their area and resist damaging changes serve to illustrate the resilience and collective spirit of local residents in the face of often overwhelming odds. [1]

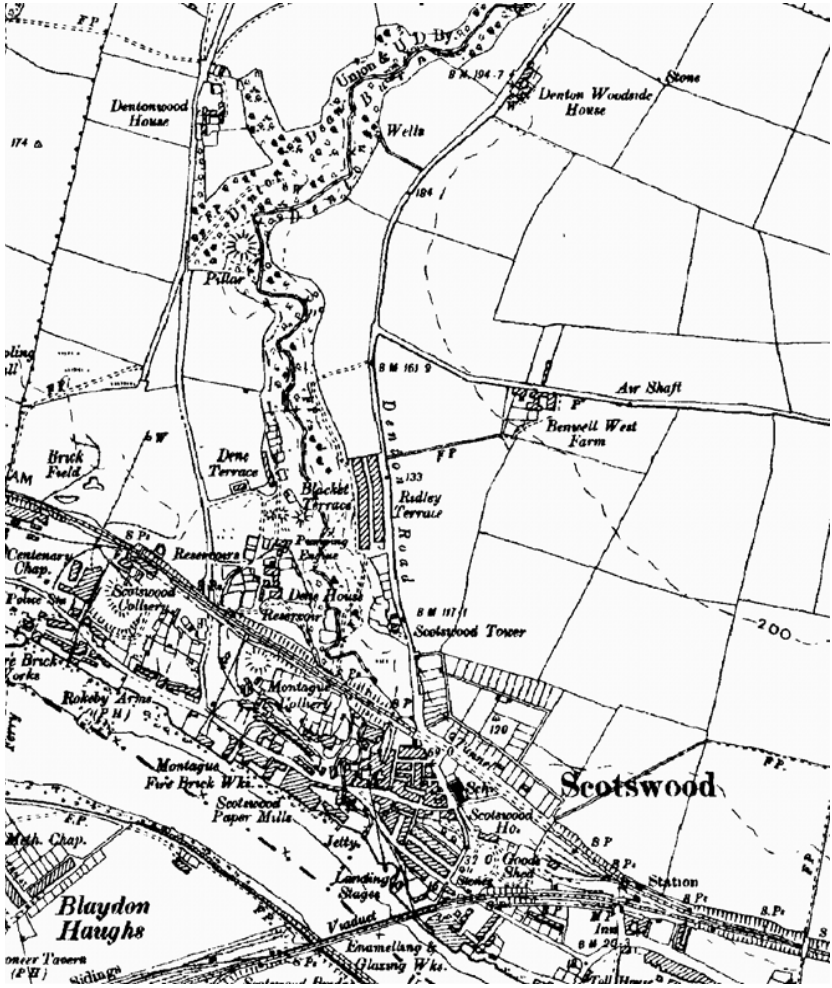
The early history of Scotswood

The name of Scotswood evokes an image of rural tranquillity, but in fact it embodies contested relationships and disputes about the use and control of the area. In 1367 Richard Scot, a rich Newcastle merchant, obtained a licence to enclose a 200 acre wood for a deer park which became known as

Scot's Wood. This was resisted by Scot's neighbours. People broke into the park to cut down trees, dig coal, carry off cattle and deer, steal corn and hay, and take herons from their nests. Scot also blocked other local mine owners from transporting coal across his land.[2]

By the beginning of the 19th century, the small village of Scotswood was one of a string of riverside settlements dependent on fishing, coalmining and a variety of industries, and surrounded by green fields. It was not until 1904 that the village was incorporated into Newcastle. Before then it occupied the westernmost part of Benwell Township in the County of Northumberland. Most of the area was farmland, owned by the Ord family of Fenham. The river provided a ready transport route, and there were coal staithes nearby from which coal and other materials could be loaded onto boats for shipping downriver. The largest of the manufacturing enterprises on Scotswood riverside was a paper mill. There was also a copperas works, a firebrick works and an 'artificial manure' works. Clustered around them were cramped and meanly built terraced cottages occupied by the families who worked in the mines and industries. There were also some grand houses, as this semi-rural area was a desirable place to live, at a safe distance from the noise, smells and disease of the town.[3]

In the early years of the 19th century there were no paved roads connecting the village to the outside world, and the river was crossed by a ferry. Communications improved in 1831 when the first Scotswood Bridge opened. Within a decade, the Newcastle to Carlisle railway line reached Scotswood, and a second bridge was built in 1839 to carry the railway across the Tyne. In 1844 a station was built on the east side of the village, and in 1871 a loop was added connecting Scotswood by rail to Wylam via Lemington and Newburn.



The 1898-99 Ordnance Survey map shows Scotswood as comprising little more than a dozen streets mainly clustered together near the river. The village had started to expand by the addition of several new streets, but this was minor in comparison with developments further to the east, where large numbers of terraced streets were being built rapidly on the steep slopes above the river at Benwell. © Ordnance Survey and www.old-maps.co.uk.

Industrial development

In 1899 Armstrong Whitworth set up a factory to manufacture armaments on the riverside at Scotswood. The company already occupied a 50 acre site at Elswick. Originally established in 1847 to make hydraulic cranes, it had soon diversified and, within a few decades, became one of the most important armaments manufacturers in the world, producing fully equipped warships as well as guns and other weapons. As employment increased rapidly to meet the needs of production, the mainly rural area of Elswick filled with rows of terraced houses, its population growing from 3,500 to 59,000 within 50 years. The new Scotswood factory soon became a major employer. By 1913 the combined workforce involved in munitions work at the two factories had already reached more than 20,000, and it was about to increase dramatically as a result of the First World War. This created huge demand for housing locally. As a crisis measure, about 400 prefabricated homes were erected in 1916 just above the Scotswood works. Known as Munitions Cottages, these continued to house families until the 1930s. At the end of the war, production and employment at the factory fell. The Second World War prompted another boom, but they never again reached their previous peak.

Armstrong Whitworth was not the only new factory to open in Scotswood around the turn of the century. In 1903 the firm of Adamsez took over an ailing fireclay works and established a sanitaryware works on an older industrial site near the river. The business developed steadily and profitably for many decades. It was something of an institution locally - a small firm where the jobs were hard, pay low and conditions primitive, but where workers felt they could develop unique skills and use them in a friendly working environment.[4]

Meanwhile, coalmining continued to be an important local employer. The Montagu Colliery employed over one thousand men at its two pits, one of which was the Low Montagu Pit immediately to the west of the village of Scotswood. There were several other coalmines nearby, such as the Charlotte Pit in Benwell, the Delaval Pit and the Percy Pit to the west

of Lemington. The Low Montagu Pit is still remembered locally as the site of a disaster in 1925 which took the lives of 38 men and boys when the pit flooded with water from the abandoned Paradise Pit. More than half of the victims lived in Scotswood, and the rest in the neighbouring communities of Bell's Close, Delaval and Benwell. The mining unions and others had been campaigning for decades for changes in legislation to require mine operators to inspect plans of old mines relevant to their own workings. As so often, it took a major disaster to force a change in the law to protect mineworkers.

Housing development

Even before the influx of munition workers, the working class communities along the west end riverside faced a housing crisis. There were high levels of insanitary and overcrowded homes, as successive reports from Medical Officers of Health documented in dispiriting detail. Due to the lack of alternative homes, the council was unable to close even those dwellings failing to meet the most basic public health standards. The key factor was the shortage of available land, which was being hoarded by the owners of the large estates in anticipation of its rising value as the population of Newcastle grew. The situation was exacerbated by the clearance of older housing in the town and along Scotswood Road in order to make way for commercial and industrial development. Even where new housing was being built, it was rarely the poorest families who benefited.

IIn the interwar period, farmland north of the village in Scotswood was sold by the Blackett-Ord Estate. This became a major source of land for the newly expanding tenures of council housing and owner-occupation. The interwar years saw council house building in Scotswood on a large scale. Ferguson's Lane Estate, one of Newcastle's biggest council estates with 1,347 homes, was built on the north side of Armstrong Road. To the south, the Scotswood Estate was built, partly using the site of the old Munitions Cottages. The quality of life for the new residents of these housing schemes was greatly improved thanks to new spacious accommodation with indoor

plumbing, and gardens. The community was also provided with facilities such as schools, a library and a swimming pool.

Much of the old private housing on the riverside was cleared during this period. Meanwhile, to the north of the council estates, housing was developed for owner-occupation, creating the new private estates of Denton Burn. As a result of all this housebuilding activity the area between the original villages of Scotswood to the south and Denton Burn on the West Road was almost completely filled by the start of the Second World War. To the east, the land between the village and neighbouring Delaval was also occupied by new housing. Scotswood was now part of a continuous urban area stretching westwards to the city boundary at Denton Dene.

De-industrialisation

The decline of industry in Newcastle's west end was first extensively documented by Benwell Community Development Project (CDP) in the 1970s as part of a broader analysis of the causes of deprivation in particular localities.[6] An area which had been developed for manufacturing industry during the second phase of the Industrial Revolution had begun to experience decline since the end of the First World War. The Second World War prompted another surge in production and employment, but this was an ephemeral episode in a general pattern of stagnation and decline. The postwar years saw a succession of job losses and closures across the area. There was increasing concentration of ownership and control in the hands of fewer and bigger companies until, by the 1970s, most of West Newcastle's industry was owned by multinational companies engaged in restructuring production. This was true of the biggest local employers, the two Armstrong factories (now called Vickers following a merger), which closed in the 1970s after years of declining employment.

Today the Hadrian's Wall National Path runs along the riverside where Vickers Elswick works once stood. There are numerous interpretation boards describing its history. The element of the story missing is the struggles of the workforce over the years to improve working conditions and to protect

jobs and secure the area's future. The 1970s were characterised by intense debates at national level about industrial policy, focusing in particular on how much control central government and a company's workforce should have over private sector decisions about investment. The West Newcastle Vickers factories both had strong shop stewards committees which were engaged in these debates. They played a key role in developing links with workers in other Tyneside engineering factories,[7] and also sought to build links with local communities, in order to create a working class power base to resist changes which would disadvantage the area. When the closure of Vickers Scotswood works was announced, a 'Save Scotswood' Campaign Committee was formed, with support from the other Vickers factories in the North East and from community groups in Scotswood and elsewhere. The usual marches, lobbies and other tactics were underpinned by a progressive strategy which went beyond defending the status quo and connected with ideas of an alternative industrial strategy at the national level. Influenced by the example of the workers at Lucas Aerospace who had produced their own plan for their company's future, prioritising production to meet real needs rather than profits, a similar plan was developed for Vickers. This proposed a range of new socially useful products based on the skills and experience of the existing workforce. Vickers management proved intransigent, and the closure went ahead in 1979.

The demise of Vickers in the west end was a huge blow to the local economy, but this was part of a succession of factory closures along the riverside. In Scotswood, Adamsez closed in 1975. To the west, Spencer's steelworks which once employed about 2,000 people and gave Newburn the nickname of 'New Sheffield', closed in the 1960s. To the east, the large Elswick Leatherworks closed in 1971. By the end of the century, manufacturing industry, which had dominated the riverside land and local employment, had almost completely disappeared from the west end. Coalmining had also come to an end, with the last pits in Scotswood and Benwell closing in the 1930s. This pattern was repeated across Tyneside with a loss of jobs on an epic scale.

Poverty and Community

In the mid-1960s, the UK rediscovered poverty, denting the widespread belief that this had been eradicated by the establishment of the Welfare State. This prompted a series of policy initiatives, including the Community Development Project (CDP), a national programme aimed at identifying the causes of what were seen as anomalous 'pockets of deprivation' and developing measures to tackle these.[8] When Newcastle was invited to host a CDP, Scotswood was on the initial list of candidates.

At this time, Scotswood was a relatively poor but thriving working class community, the majority of whose residents were council tenants. Its position in the hierarchy of Newcastle's council estates reflected historical differences. The first area in the west end to be developed for council housing was Pendower, built between 1922-1931 to relatively high standards under generous legislation. Its early tenants were generally drawn from the better-off sections of the working class and even from the middle class, and rents were beyond the reach of poorer families. By the end of the 1920s policy had shifted towards a concentration on clearing slums and rehousing the poorest families. This entailed lowering standards and raising densities, leading to differentiation of estates in terms of quality of provision and socio-economic status of residents. A survey of Newcastle Council's tenants in 1932 found that 21% of Pendower residents were in nonmanual jobs compared with 3% in Ferguson's Lane. Another legacy from the interwar years was the differential allocation policies. On Pendower large families were rare, and relatively low population density persisted well into the postwar period. By contrast the slum clearance estates, such as Scotswood and Ferguson's Lane, had higher population densities to start with as well as being built to less generous space standards. Subsequent management and allocation policies tended to reinforce the original distinctions between estates, as did the timing of improvement programmes. By the time the Scotswood estates were improved in the 1970s, newer council estates to the north and west of the area offered more attractive options.

It is not surprising that life for many Scotswood residents was difficult during the postwar decades. The area had proportionally more people in lower paid and less secure jobs. The threat of unemployment and the experience of poverty both in and out of work were therefore regular features of life even before the recession of the 1980s. The concentration of high-density family housing on the estates created pressure on the physical fabric and environment, and the number of large families and lone-parent families meant a higher incidence of family poverty. Scotswood residents were more likely to suffer ill-health because of the connection between poverty and health, as well as the proximity of polluting industries along the riverside.

It would be wrong to paint a blanket picture of deprivation and stress. Many people had never been out of work in their lives; many children had never experienced poverty or deprivation. Memories of life in Scotswood vary considerably. Many remember it as a safe, happy, friendly place with a strong sense of community, while others recall it as rough, and many felt that the name of Scotswood carried a stigma. What is clear is that, despite being officially labelled as 'deprived', it was still a relatively stable area with strong traditions of community action, belying any idea that Scotswood residents were all inadequate or victims.

Scotswood Tenants Association (STA) was set up at the beginning of the 1970s by local residents in order to press for improvements in Scotswood. By all accounts it was a stroppy organisation, dominated by strong, vocal women. It adopted a straight campaigning style, and would have no truck with the council's early efforts to set up tenant liaison committees, preferring to preserve its autonomy. STA took up a range of issues, notably ongoing concerns about housing repairs and improvements, as well as other problems that arose from time to time such as road safety, rat infestations, and the need for facilities for children. The association became involved in providing services directly, acquiring premises on the lower estate where it ran activities including a lunch club, toddler group and welfare rights sessions. It was also instrumental in bringing in more

resources such as an adventure playground, and regularly got involved in wider campaigns about benefits, fuel poverty and other issues.

As STA's efforts tended to be focused on the lower part of Scotswood, a new tenants association was formed to represent Ferguson's Lane Estate and campaign around housing issues there. By 1979 it was established in its own premises. As is common with tenants associations, both organisations became immersed in the practical tasks of managing a building and running activities, and their community action and campaigning role diminished. STA ceased operating in the 1980s and its Tenants Hut closed, but Ferguson's Lane TA continued to function as a community association for several decades.

When STA first began, there were no community workers and no community projects in Scotswood. This had changed by the end of the 1970s. Under pressure from STA, the Scotswood Community Project (SCP) was established in 1978 with two community workers, managed through an 'employ and second' relationship with the local authority, and premises in a former council house in the heart of the area. SCP had a realistic perspective on its aims and limitations:

> The project recognise that it can do little to change the root causes of problems which affect Scotswood. On the other hand we feel that it is necessary for local people to have as much control of services and resources as possible in their locality.[9]

SCP's focus on encouraging, supporting and bringing together local grassroots organisations was a key factor in creating the conditions for a strong community response to the area's growing problems.

The Wild West

By the end of the 1970s, the impact of economic change was already being felt in Scotswood. Unemployment was rising, especially among young

people. The situation worsened dramatically in the depths of the recession, with 43,000 jobs lost across Tyneside between 1978-81. By 1991, Newcastle had the fourth highest male unemployment rate of all 36 English Metropolitan Districts. The poorer areas of the city were disproportionally affected, with the Scotswood ward experiencing an unemployment rate twice the city average at 28% for all residents of working age and 35% for men. Localised unemployment rates were even higher, with 44% of male residents of working age unemployed on the Ferguson's Lane Estate and 56% on the Lower Scotswood estate. Shockingly, 61% of children in Ferguson's Lane and 77% of those in Lower Scotswood lived in households where no-one was earning.

When a Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher took power in 1979, it set about cutting public spending, including support for the worst-off. Inequalities also grew because of the increasing gap between the lowest and highest wage earners. Communities like Scotswood were at the sharp end of these changes. Not only were more people dependent on State benefits but those in employment tended to have jobs in low paid sectors where wages were falling relative to other jobs.

To some extent, the problems were masked by the plethora of new initiatives and projects which sprang up in Scotswood during the 1980s, mainly funded by central government's Inner City Partnership (ICP) programme and Manpower Services Commission (MSC). These were often a result of the community activity of the 1970s which had drawn attention to unmet needs and offered an organisational basis for local provision. Among these welcome new facilities were a sports centre, children's playhouse, community business project, and adult education project, funded by ICP, and various employment and training schemes with MSC funding. In practice the short-term nature of the funding brought its own problems. The council had also invested generously in community facilities in Scotswood in this period, but it was under increasing financial pressure from a hostile central government and was unable to pick up the tab when the 'funny money' dried up. One by one most of the new

projects closed down. This experience had an impact on the morale and energy of local people who had devoted an enormous amount of voluntary effort and time to campaigning for and sustaining community provision.

As conditions in Scotswood worsened through the 1980s, it was anger and desperation that rekindled the spirit of community action. By the mid-1980s, widespread unemployment and poverty had led to serious problems on quite a new scale in Scotswood. The most visible sign was a growing problem of void properties and high turnover on both council estates. The council made strenuous efforts to market these less popular areas. Unfortunately one side-effect of this was to compound the already considerable social stress by, for example, placing vulnerable people with mental health problems or families with children at risk in difficult situations without adequate support. Similar problems developed in the private sector, notably in the remaining Victorian terraces. The downturn in the housing market nationally, exacerbated by the growing unpopularity of the west end, led to a big drop in house prices. Many owners found that their properties, despite being in excellent condition, could only be sold for pitifully low prices, if at all.

The most distressing symptom of decline was the mounting incidence of crime and disorder. In Scotswood, break-ins, arson, joy-riding and serious vandalism had become everyday occurrences, and crime had become a major source of fear and division within the community. Whilst appearing from the outside to be anarchic, much of the crime and disorder was in reality highly organised. It was often connected with elements of the criminal economy, especially the drugs trade and benefits fraud, which had become a significant local employer in place of the declining official economy. For many residents the worst aspects were the harassment often associated with these activities, and the stigmatisation of the community fuelled by the tendency of the local press to publicise the situation in lurid terms such as 'The Wild West'. The police appeared helpless to respond adequately and often seemed to share the outside world's view of Scotswood as a place outside normal civilisation whose residents were

collectively responsible for the criminal activities. In September 1991, the situation erupted into three nights of rioting across the west end. Scenes of arson, looting and joy-riding confirmed the street gangs' power over the area, and Scotswood achieved an unwelcome national notoriety. But after the TV cameras and the riot police had gone away, the residents were once more left to get on with their lives under intolerable conditions. Many families fled the area during this period, seeking a safer place to live. However, many chose to stay because this was their home, and a movement developed to stay and fight for a better life in Scotswood.

A Strategy for Scotswood

In 1989, a group of community activists approached the City Council to press for urgent action, arguing that Scotswood had reached a crisis point and that only a comprehensive intervention, simultaneously tackling problems on a number of fronts, could hope to achieve significant improvements. They felt that the council's efforts in the past had been misdirected, poorly coordinated and wasteful. Local people should take a leading role in deciding priorities and determining how and where money should be spent in Scotswood because they experienced the consequences of that action. This proposal was timely. A major debate was taking place nationally about the direction of urban policy, and in particular about the appropriate role of local communities at the very local level where concentrations of deprivation were perceived to occur. When the council proposed creating a formal structure to enable them to organise their response to the community's demands, the Scotswood group were initially suspicious. However, given the severity of the situation, they decided that they had no choice but to accept the offer. Scotswood's problems were so great and so multi-faceted that a single-issue campaign would have been doomed to failure, whereas a more strategic approach offered the possibility of tackling the multiple and interrelated issues in a coordinated way. A commitment was made to abandon the traditional confrontational role in favour of a new formalised relationship. To avoid being drawn

into the process on the council's terms, the group moved swiftly to draw up a structure that reflected local priorities. In the process, the residents claimed the name of Scotswood Area Strategy (SAS) for themselves, making explicit their intention to be in the forefront of the process. The agreed structure, with its steering groups and sub-committees, had the appearance of a formal bureaucratic structure with which council officers could feel comfortable. The reality was, of course, never so comfortable. The local group channelled their anger through a range of tactics, and there was recurrent conflict as they tried to hold the council and other organisations to some measure of accountability.

For a significant period, considerable local authority resources and time were devoted to the Strategy, and it brought significant financial resources into the area as well as minor changes in policy and practice. Although this represented a step forward in terms of greater accountability to the local community, there was no avoiding the reality of the inherent power imbalance. The community did not have the power to control key decisions affecting their area, but at least they could ensure that decisions were openly debated. There was also a continuing commitment to engage local residents more widely in order to ensure that the plans for the area reflected local needs and priorities.

One area where the aims of the Strategy and the City Council coincided was that of gaining major funding from central government. SAS was widely credited with having won £37.5 million for the west end through Newcastle's successful City Challenge bid by demonstrating active community involvement. At a time when the government was very keen on the concept of "active citizenship" as a solution to social problems, ministers were impressed by the SAS activists who appeared to be a model example of this. The role played by SAS was arguably a decisive factor in counter-balancing the government's negative view of Newcastle's Labour-controlled council whom they blamed for the recent riots.

Happily for the Strategy, the plans they had already drawn up fitted well with the requirements of the City Challenge programme, enabling a

number of practical projects to be funded.[10] In particular, SAS achieved their aim of acquiring a base in the heart of Scotswood from which services and projects could be delivered for the local community. The Scotswood Support Centre was established in a previously derelict building which had housed a Co-op store.

The glib language of central government regeneration policies tends to overlook the factors that undermine area-based solutions. It is difficult to see how any strategy for Scotswood could have succeeded in solving the area's problems in the face of high unemployment, the longterm decline of manufacturing industry, growing inequalities and attacks on public services. One obvious area where local regeneration conflicted with wider policies was the impact of cuts in local authority services caused by reductions in central government funding. These led to the closure of the swimming pool and a local school in Scotswood at a time when the community was being promised that their needs would be prioritised.

Despite the years of intensive effort, the community activists of SAS did not succeed in solving the problems of Scotswood and enabling long-term stability. However, they did manage to improve the quality of life for many residents, and in so doing they arguably prevented the social disintegration of the area.

Growth and Rise

In 2000 Newcastle City Council developed a new strategy for the 'urban renaissance' of the city, called *Going for Growth*.[11] In advance of the public launch, details were leaked to the press, and hundreds of west end residents discovered that their homes were to be demolished. The strategy was intended to bring comprehensive improvements in transport, education and other aspects of life across the area, but it was the housing proposals which prompted the strongest reaction in the west end. The plan was led by the council's relatively new chief executive who viewed the West Newcastle riverside as a potential vacant site ripe for development rather than as a series of communities. Scotswood and neighbouring West Benwell were

the focus of a plan to remove most of the existing housing in order to build a new 'urban village' with up to 3,000 new houses and high quality local services. The reaction took the planners by surprise as they thought they were offering the communities an exciting prospect for the future of their areas. The mutual incomprehension was encapsulated in the comment by a resident at a meeting in the Civic Centre:

> You tell us you're going to knock our houses down, and you wonder why we are angry!

The underlying assumption of the policy was that the problems of areas such as Scotswood required a radical solution, in contrast to earlier piecemeal interventions which were seen as having failed. However it under-estimated the strength of people's attachment to the neighbourhoods they called home. Many of these communities had a history of strong resident organisation, and were not prepared to accept what was on offer without a fight. After several years of campaigning and negotiation, several west end neighbourhoods were removed altogether from the list of those to be cleared, and the demolition plans were reduced in scale. In Scotswood intensive discussions took place, involving representatives of different parts of the affected area, resulting in an agreement that combined total or partial demolition of some streets while others were saved.[12] This was a protracted and painful process in which individuals had not only to decide what was best for their local community as a whole but often make personal sacrifices. Community representatives were welcomed and encouraged to be involved in the detailed planning process. They were even taken abroad to see first-hand an example of an 'Expo' similar to the international exhibition of styles of urban living planned for Scotswood - a plan which was later quietly shelved. However, once the contracts were signed for the new housing development, they found themselves excluded from the decision-making process.

The *Going for Growth* period was traumatic and divisive for the west end. Conflicts of interest and viewpoint between neighbourhoods, organisations and individuals left scars that have barely healed today. Moreover the area became a pawn in wider discussions about local and national policy, in which the particular interests of the west end communities were marginalised. People from more affluent parts of the city seized the opportunity to bash the council, while outside commentators alleged malicious intentions such as ethnic cleansing.

Within a few years the face of Scotswood changed dramatically. Viewed from south of the river, the scene was of acres of mud. The whole of the Lower Scotswood Estate had gone, together with the Low Delaval Estate immediately to the east. Much of Ferguson's Lane Estate to the north had been cleared, and part of the land was allocated as a site for an academy, originally intended to be additional to the existing Westgate Community College, but actually replacing it. Other parts of the site remained empty and were grassed over. Some of the private housing in the Armstrong Road area was cleared, including several of the old Victorian streets. As people were moved out of the area, the consequent reduction in population had a knock-on effect on local services such as shops and bus services. The expensively refurbished Scotswood Support Centre for which SAS had fought so hard was demolished in 2011 in the interests of the new regeneration plans, following a bitterly fought campaign and public inquiry. The fact that this centre had originally been viewed as a flagship project within the redevelopment of Scotswood was forgotten. By this time SAS had become a significant service-delivery organisation, employing over 30 people and providing services across the west end as well as in Scotswood, while remaining 100% locally managed. It eventually closed completely in 2019.

Today the scene is changing again. Demolition is still ongoing in some places, including the former shopping area and health centre on Armstrong Road, but the main activity is new build. A major housing development is underway in the south of the area under the control of a public-private

sector partnership pledged to "provide a new identity and neighbourhood for Scotswood".[13] Called 'The Rise', the development occupies the slopes above the riverside, previously home to council housing. The story of Scotswood is entering a new stage, and its future is an open question.

Whitfield Road, pictured here c1908, was one of last streets of traditional terraced housing built in Scotswood.
© West Newcastle Picture History Collection.

The Rise, pictured in 2021. Many of the new homes are already occupied. Building began in 2013 at the Benwell end of the site, despite early promises that the first phase would be in Scotswood to compensate for the loss of homes there. The remaining Victorian terraces of Scotswood Village can be seen in the background.

Notes

1 This article is largely based on primary sources, notably interviews, documents and notes accrued over more than 50 years as well as reports and papers written by the author. Most of these are not publicly accessible and are therefore not cited here. Key published sources are:
- The reports about West Newcastle produced by CDP in the 1970s, notably: CDP, *Costs of Industrial Change* (London: CDP IIU, 1977).
- The publications of St James' Heritage & Environment Group, especially St James' Heritage & Environment Group with Mike Greatbatch, *Benwell and Scotswood in the early 20th century* (Newcastle upon Tyne: St James' Heritage & Environment Group, 2019).

These can be obtained via www.stjamesheritage.com or by emailing stjamesbenwell@gmail.com.

2 Madeleine Hope Dodds, *A history of Northumberland* (Newcastle upon Tyne: A. Reid & Co; London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1930).

3 Mike Greatbatch, *Benwell's Big Houses* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle Community Heritage Project, 2011).

4 Benwell Community Project, *Adamsez: the story of a factory closure* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Benwell Community Project, 1980).

5 MOH Reports are held at the Tyne and Wear Archives.

6 Benwell Community Project, *Permanent Unemployment* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Benwell Community Project. 1978

7 John Stirling, 'That Was Then and This is Now: Trade Unions and Plant Closures', *North East History*, Vol 48 (2017), 167-177.

8 CDP, *Gilding the Ghetto* (London: CDP IIU, 1977).

9 SCP *Annual Report*, 1982.

10 Newcastle City Council, *New Challenge New Vision, Newcastle: The West End - A Partnership in Community Regeneration, The Action Plan 1992-1997* (1992).

11 Newcastle City Council, *Newcastle Going for Growth: West End Regeneration Plan* (2001). Other relevant documents can be viewed on https://neregenarchive.online/home/nera-archives/newcastle-upon-tyne.

12 Knowledge Inclusion Project, *What's Changing in the West End?* (Newcastle upon Tyne: West End Community Development Consortium, 2003).

13 New Tyne West Development Company - www.therise.info/new-tyne-west-development-company, accessed 22 June 2021.

North East Labour History Society

Report and Appreciation

Nigel Todd 1947-2021

John Charlton

Nigel, with his daughter Selina, on an anti-austerity march in Manchester, 4th October 2015. Photograph courtesy Peter Brabban.

The death of Nigel Todd in March 2021 created shockwaves across the progressive communities of the North East and further afield. When we list his spheres of interest and activity, it is hard to imagine one person finding time and energy to participate so widely and so fully. There was his forty-year stint as a City of Newcastle Labour Councillor, his work

with the WEA, the Co-op Education movement, the Open University (OU), the Greening Wingrove Community initiative, anti-racist and anti-fascist activity, Anti-Apartheid, Palestine Solidarity, CND and the North East Labour History Society. He wrote four books of local history and numerous articles for historical journals. Additionally, he was always ready to give lectures and talks and write a stream of letters to the press. He certainly made an impression by his serial presence in large meetings, committee rooms and street demonstrations. He was the essence of reliability. In a sense, this massive list of activities only tells part of the story of what made him beloved across the Tyneside left. He was the least sectarian of activists, in a movement not known for amiable discourse between different political tendencies. Yet he was no soft touch, bending in the breeze of shifting opinion, for personal gain or popularity. On the contrary he was remarkably firm and consistent in his views, while usually expressing his opinions with a warm smile.

Nigel was born in Dartford, Kent, in 1947. He was an only child, raised by grandparents in Welling, South London. One side of his family was from Ireland, Catholic in origin, but lapsed in practice. The Irish question was discussed at home, and as an adult United Ireland became part of his political make up. Like the majority of children of his generation, he had failed the 11+ examination, the most vicious part of the Butler Education Act of 1944. That sense of rejection contributed both to his belief in comprehensive education and his lifetime involvement in adult education. While still at school, he joined the recently revived Labour Party Young Socialists. As a twelve-year-old, he had been moved by the images of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa, but his engagement with the Labour Movement had begun even earlier, when he took his grandfather's weekly engineering union dues to the Labour Party hall where the AEU branch met.

Nigel left Welling Secondary School at 15, briefly taking jobs in routine packing of clothing for Viyella International and as an office boy to a firm of solicitors in Central London, before spotting an advert in the *New*

Statesman for a junior clerical post at the Workers' Education Association in Tavistock Square, London. He was appointed, aged seventeen, starting nearly sixty years of deep involvement with the WEA. It is an understatement to say that Nigel loved the idea of adult education. He was to devote a large part of his time to it organisationally and theoretically, through the WEA, the Co-operative education movement and the Open University. In pursuit of more formal and structured education he applied to Ruskin College, Oxford which he entered as one of its younger students in 1967 to study, history, sociology and politics. He really relished all that Ruskin had to give intellectually, politically and socially.[1] It was an exciting time to attend college. He was active in student sit-ins, and local and national demonstrations against the Vietnam War. He chucked eggs at Enoch Powell, the purveyor of racist filth, on a visit to the Oxford Union. He met Ruth Hirst at Ruskin, and they went on to have one daughter, Selina, born in 1975. She was named after a suffragette, Selina Martin. This was more than token as, both in political action and in his books, Nigel was very alert to the role of women and supportive of feminism and women's rights, especially the Greenham Common Peace camp in the 1980s.

From Ruskin, Nigel went to Lancaster University in 1970. His closely researched MPhil thesis on the early Lancaster and Barrow-in-Furness labour movements was a very sound basis for an academic career at an opportune moment for left-wing intellectuals, but this was not to be his choice. Adult education was his passion. The WEA had placed him on the road but his first job after university was at the Co-operative College at Loughborough. When an opening came on Tyneside to organise co-operative education, he grasped it with relish. It turned out that his journey to the north was complete.

In the mid-1970s Nigel began to put down his roots in the North East labour and socialist movement. Putting down roots is an apt description for his work, his geographical field being the west end of Newcastle, though he had one stab at national politics in 1983, a bad year for Labour, when

he stood for the Newcastle North Constituency. He was defeated, but even then he put his community-oriented mark on the campaign. The LP ran an extraordinary campaign involving hundreds of activists. That story is related in vivid detail in his article last year for this journal.[2] He had been elected to the City Council in 1980 and represented west end wards, for over forty years. His attachment to policy formation and execution varied over time. He was rarely in accord with the leadership team. A local leadership, always on the Labour right, was too conservative for his radical drive. There were several moments of frustration for a figure of his ability and clarity, especially when the Blairite revolution in the party was taking place in the 1990s. He disapproved of the switch to cabinet government with its exclusiveness, secrecy and officer-determined policy. He opposed the move initially but for a time participated, and became a strong advocate of elected mayors, writing a pamphlet, *The Democratic City*. He presented his ideas on elected mayors to a House of Commons Select Committee in 2000. He had little taste for factionalism, and in the new century he largely left it behind to continue his own distinctive bottom-up approach to community politics.

The wards he represented were the most ethnically diverse in the city. In a sense, he grew politically himself, as the communities grew numerically and, developed their own roots on Tyneside. He encouraged young Asians to participate and take up elected roles. He stood shoulder to shoulder in building anti-racist organisation. He was always prominent in resisting incursions by the far right at both ward and city level. His book, *In Excited Times: The People Against the Blackshirts,* is a very sharp and readable account of the first British Nazi movement of the 1930s and the popular movement which confronted and destroyed it.[3] Meticulously researched, it serves as a warning for the present: be vigilant, defeat the far right when they are small and exposed.

In parallel, in the past two decades Nigel was involved in the climate change debate. The Greening Wingrove Campaign was a practical project, essentially at street level, attempting both to widen awareness of the

growing climate crisis and to do something about it. In a decade it has had a real and obvious effect on the local environment, in developing urban tree planting, car free spaces, back lane gardens and community litter patrols in which he regularly participated. Greening Wingrove has become a model for local councils across Britain.

Nigel was certainly committed to small-scale community causes but he never allowed them to divert attention from his strong internationalism. Always active in the Palestinian cause, he led a City Council delegation to the West Bank in 2014, and another to Bangladesh in support of the Rohinga refugees in 2017. People will recall his regular speeches at the Monument in Newcastle on a range of international as well as domestic issues. He was a quiet, authoritative, and persuasive speaker not given to histrionics.

He published fascinating and sometimes exotic articles on ideological superstructure in Gramsci and Mao Tse Tung, the limitations of democracy in Cuba, 1890s Engineering workers strikes in Barrow in Furness, the emergence of a Black presence on Tyneside in the 19th Century, Owenite educational activity in Wallsend in the 1860s and women's activity in a south London Labour Party after World War Two. In his first book, *Roses and Revolutionists*, he discovered and imagined, the largely forgotten William Morrisite commune of the 1890s, in Clousden Hill, Forest Hall.[4] Somewhat lyrical in style, researching and writing it after the bruising 1983 electoral defeat may have provided a temporary retreat from day to day politics.

Published in 1991, after years of research, he broke new ground in his biography of the Newcastle radical Joseph Cowen in *The Militant Democracy*.[5] He explained that Cowen's towering reputation in his lifetime, a man at the centre of every possible radical cause, had been discarded by historians and political activists as he did not fit acceptable stereotypes. He was neither the local Liberal establishment politician made good, like Joseph Chamberlain of Birmingham, nor the militant precursor of the rising labour movement. A man of many parts, Cowen was an advocate of

universal suffrage, including women, of Irish independence, of progressive European nationalism, of co-operation and universal education. And he was elected to Parliament by a Newcastle electorate well aware of his radical positions. It is probably not an accident that Nigel Todd was attracted to this radical, militant, principled man of independent mind. Modesty would probably prevent Nigel from acknowledging the parallel, though he might have chuckled.

1 'Blitheringly Fantabulous. Ruskin College 1967-69', *North East History* 47 (2016), 143-150.
2 'Back in '83: A General Election Revisited', *North East History* 51 (2020), 29-46.
3 *In Excited Times: The People Against the Blackshirts* (Whitley Bay: Bewick Press, 1995).
4 *Roses and Revolutionists: the Story of the Clousden Hill Free Communist and Co-operative Colony* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2015, 2nd edn).
5 *The Militant Democracy* (Whitley Bay: Bewick Press, 1991).

Archie Potts 1932-2021; an Appreciation

Brian Bennison

Today's thriving North East Labour History Society (NELHS) owes its existence to the pioneering work of Archie Potts fifty-five years ago. In 1966, along with Joe Clarke, a colleague in Rutherford College's General Studies department, he set about contacting potential members for a North East Group for the Study of Labour History. A steering committee was formed in September of that year, and the rest is labour history.

Archie was born in Sunderland into a Labour-supporting family. Although his father was a staunch member of the Boilermakers' Union, his parents were never members of the Labour Party but Archie remembered them as highly-politicised. For over three decades from the 1930s his uncle would come to the Potts' home every Sunday morning for a couple of hours of conversation dominated by current affairs. In the 1945 election campaign Archie was taken to Labour meetings in the Co-operative Hall and to hear Manny Shinwell at Roker Park.

Archie had what he called 'a peripatetic childhood' which took in five different primary schools, including a year at one in Bedford after his unemployed father had found a job in a brickworks. The family moved back to Sunderland in 1938, when the shipyards re-opened and his father could work again as a riveter. Evacuation meant Archie also spent time at village schools in Durham and Yorkshire. Back in Sunderland in 1941 he failed the examination for Bede Grammar School but was offered a place at Monkwearmouth Central School.

Leaving school without any formal qualifications, Archie became a railway clerk and went to night classes to study accounts and something called railway administration. He joined the Labour League of Youth in 1949. For his National Service, Archie spent three years in the Royal Air Force Police at a base near Hamburg, from where he was occasionally called upon to raid brothels. He used the educational facilities provided by the RAF and gained the equivalent of seven 'O' levels. His time in Germany sparked an interest in that country's history and culture, and in later years the advent of budget flights prompted Archie to take trips to explore Berlin.

On his return to the railways Archie took a familiar route within the labour movement. He became involved with the Labour Party and his trade union, and attended Workers Education Association (WEA) classes and weekend schools. At the age of twenty-four, he took the path taken by many a serious and inquisitive activist of his generation and went to Ruskin College. He entered Ruskin in 1956, a year of some significance for him

both personally and politically. It is the subject of his last contribution to North East History (see his article *1956: a year remembered* in this issue). Archie spoke fondly of his time at Ruskin, not only about his exposure to the academic world but about extra-curricula experiences, such as the film club's screening of The *Battleship Potemkin* and *Metropolis* and a student trip in 1957 to Czechoslovakia.

As he came to the end of his course at Ruskin, Archie thought about becoming a WEA tutor and was advised by the college principal to go on to university and obtain a degree. So it was that in 1960 he graduated with an honours degree in PPE from Oriel College, Oxford. Afterwards, Archie took an assistant lectureship at North Oxfordshire Technical College, then moved on up through the ranks to York Technical College and in 1965 to Rutherford College of Technology. He regarded the Rutherford post as a lucky break, as the college became part of the expanding Newcastle Polytechnic within a few years. He stayed at the Poly until retirement in 1988.

The relaxed atmosphere of the Poly in the late 1960s afforded Archie and the Society's founders both the time and the facilities to recruit members and set up meetings and talks. The first half-dozen editions of the Society's *Bulletin* were printed using an old Gestetner in a staff room. Cranking the handle of a duplicating machine was probably the height of Archie's engagement with what we now call information technology.

It was in those optimistic, ground-breaking days at the Poly that Archie embarked upon a career of research and writing on labour and social history. He went on to produce profiles for the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, and contributed numerous articles to the NELHS *Bulletin*, now *North East History*. He published articles on a variety of topics in, for instance, the *Durham University Journal* and *Socialist History*. In 1975 he co-authored a centennial history of the Northumberland Colliery Mechanics Association for the Northumberland NUM. In the late 1970s, he was awarded funds to recruit a research assistant, Elaine Jones, and in 1982 the Library Association published their *Bibliography of Northern*

Labour History. He also edited *Shipbuilders and Engineers* (1987), one of four collections of essays produced by the NELHS.

Aware of the need to create greater publishing opportunities for researchers and historians, Archie joined Ray and Mabel Challinor in the establishment of the Bewick Press. Among its titles was Maureen Callcott's book on the diaries of Ruth Dodds. The Bewick Press was also the medium through which Archie displayed his expertise in an unlikely area of the region's social history. This quietly spoken, scholarly man had a passion for boxing and wrestling, and wrote *Jack Casey: the Sunderland Assassin* (1991), *The Wearside Champions* (1993) and *Jack London: The Forgotten Champion* (1997). One fruitful piece of research that gave Archie particular pleasure came in his *Headlocks and Handbags: Wrestling at St James's Hall* (2005) where he was able to reveal the identity of, and interview, the 'Blue Mask'.

I got to know Archie in 1974 when I joined the Poly and discovered that behind the mild-mannered exterior was a determined man who stuck unfalteringly to the ideals and principles he had adopted as a young man. He hankered for a chance to improve working people's lives and promote the cause of equality and social justice through elected office. This he achieved when he won the Blakelaw seat for Labour at a Tyne and Wear County Council by-election in 1979. A few weeks later he was standing as Labour and Cooperative candidate in the parliamentary constituency of Westmoreland. He picked up 6497 votes in a seat where the Conservatives traditionally collected almost 60 per cent of the vote and Labour came third. Archie, however, was in his element in municipal politics and served as Chairman of Tyne and Wear County Council in 1984. The position came with a chain of office and an official vehicle and driver. Teaching colleagues making their way to work were sometimes startled to find a chauffeur-driven car pull alongside and offer them a lift.

Of all of Archie's publications, the most important was *Zilliacus: A Life for Peace and Socialism* (2002), which dealt with the intriguing life of Konni Zilliacus, one-time MP for Gateshead. It was, said Tony Benn, 'a brilliant biography of a brilliant man' and the book's launch at Gateshead

library acted as a shot in the arm for the NELHS. One amusing by-product of Archie's preparatory work on Zilliacus was a name check amongst some very illustrious company in the Guardian. When Zilliacus's widow Jan died in 1999, her brief obituary told of her meeting and dining with Charlie Chaplin, Marshall Tito, Rudolph Valentino, Joseph Stalin, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, and added that she was working with Archie Potts on a biography of her husband.

When *Zilliacus* appeared Archie was in the middle of a fifteen-year stint as Vice President of the NELHS. Over the years he filled many other roles: Joint Secretary, Programme Convenor, Vice Chair, Chair and from 2011-2021 President. For the *Bulletin* he acted as Editor, Reviews Editor and Archives Editor. But this bald recitation does not do justice to Archie's service to the NELHS and to his fellow members. He was always willing to offer help and encouragement. Joan Allen, who worked alongside him in the NELHS and is now Chair of the Society for the Study of Labour History, paid tribute to 'a genial, modest and gentle man…ever quick to recognise the efforts of others, generous with his time. He epitomised the collective endeavour of the Society'.

Archie had to overcome setbacks in his life with the early, sudden deaths of his wife and son, but he soldiered on, beavering away at his research and writing to the end. To go to his flat during the last decade was like visiting a diligent, octogenarian student. Indifferent to his surroundings or creature comforts, he was content amongst his books and seemingly random piles of papers and multi-recycled envelopes from which he always managed to retrieve what he wanted. It was enough for him to have somewhere where he could read and write, and writing meant pen or pencil on lined paper.

Archie was a life-long researcher whose modus operandi was stubbornly old-school. He had little time for technology, although when I once asked him what he missed most about the Poly he said, after some thought, that it was 'access to a photocopier'. When I tentatively suggested we go to Gosforth library and I show him how to search the internet, he winced. I knew that raising the possibility of a laptop would have been pointless,

since I had never been able to persuade him to acquire an answerphone.

Even in his late 80s Archie remained bang up-to-date with political and social developments both at home and abroad. He was equally well-informed about another of his enthusiasms; the day-to-day travails of Sunderland Football Club. After discussions with him about labour history or political issues, Archie would always say 'Now to more important matters', which was the prelude to a lengthy debate about the fortunes of the region's football teams. A chance meeting outside Sainsbury's could lead to an hour's worth of chat about football.

Archie Potts was a throwback, and none the worse for that. He was born into the deprivation of the 1930s and became politically aware in the heady days of 1945. He stayed true to his roots. He was guided by old ideas about the power of democracy and the potency of mutuality and co-operation. Archie lived a full life on his own terms; a life which in many of its aspects was itself a little part of labour history.

Professor A.W. (Bill) Purdue 1941-2020

Tony Barrow

Many of those connected with the history and heritage of North East England were saddened by news of the sudden and unexpected death of Bill Purdue at his home in Allendale on 17 November 2020. He was 79. Bill was pre-eminent amongst a handful of academic historians responsible for raising the profile of regional history through the range and quality of his published research.

Born in North Shields on 29 January 1941, eldest son of a Tynemouth policeman, he studied history at Kings College, London and, after graduation, spent three years as an instructor officer in the Royal Navy. He returned to the North East to take up a lectureship at the College of Commerce in Newcastle which became part of Newcastle Polytechnic in 1969. He was awarded an M.Litt. in 1974 for a dissertation which explored the rise of the Labour Party in the North East 1900-1906, a subject which became the focus of Bill's earliest published works. A study of George Lansbury and the Middlesbrough Election 1906 was followed by one of Arthur Henderson's election at Barnard Castle in 1903. Others included articles on Jarrow Politics 1885-1914 and on the Liberal and Labour Parties in North East politics before the First World War.

Bill joined the Open University in 1974 where he taught for most of his career. His collaboration with other notable historians such as Arthur Marwick, John Golby, Clive Emsley and Antony Lentin on the preparation of OU course materials drew his interests towards broader historical themes and periods. His contributions to courses concerned with the character and institutions of British society included a series of studies of Popular Culture with John Golby. In addition to his many contributions to *Total War and Social Change: Europe 1914-1955 (1999), The Second World War* (2011), was a masterly written monograph of the debate about the origins and character of that war. He later published *The First World War (2014)* as a companion volume He also collaborated with James Chapman on *The Peoples War?* (2004) In 2007 he joined forces with Professor Norman McCord on the second edition of *British History 1815-1914*. Bill retired from the O.U. as Reader in History in 2006 and was Visiting Professor at Northumbria University.

Although Bill worked at the OU for over 30 years he remained connected to his Northumbrian roots. Affable and engaging, he was a popular resident of Allendale and recognised by many for his distinctive dress sense, usually brightly coloured corduroy trousers, suit jacket and occasionally a cravat. His humour, generosity of spirit and countryman

persona will live long in memories. Bill represented South Tynedale as a County Councillor from 1989 - 2009 and regularly demonstrated his commitment to rural issues and the preservation of the countryside. He was often invited to speak to conferences, student groups and local history societies, and his prodigious output of monographs, essays and academic articles demonstrated the ways in which regional history can contribute to an understanding of broader national themes, with contributions particularly to *Northern History* journal. He did much to promote the OU through his support for NEHI (North East England Historical Institute).

Bill's published work spanned the political and social spectrum from the rise of the Labour Party through the Monarchy and the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, to the making of the Northumberland landscape. He took a special interest in old Northumberland landed families such as the Carrs, Ellisons, and Blacketts. He was also active in urban studies, publishing *Newcastle: the biography* (2011). Detailed studies of the Newcastle Custom House (with Richard Pears) were published in 2017 and 2018.

In 2016, perhaps in the context of the Brexit referendum, Bill returned to broader international themes. His T*he Transformative Impact of World War Two - Europaische Geschichte Online* was published on 18 April 2016 (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/purduea-2016-en), a summary of economic, cultural and geo-political developments in Europe since 1945. It is an exemplar of historical scholarship and a testimony to Bill's skills as a historian. He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Marie Conte-Helm, daughter Jessica and a comprehensive archive of books, academic articles and reviews to be quarried by historians for years to come.

A fuller version of this notice, with the bibliography compiled by Richard Pears, has been included in the biographical directory maintained by Newcastle Antiquaries, and can be accessed at http://www.newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk/clearsight/documents/uploaded/Biogs_version_current_2021_02_05.pdf

Remembering Bob Fryer, 1944-2020

Keith Hodgson

The death of Bob Fryer in December 2020 was a huge loss to the trade union movement as well as the world of adult education. He had an enormous influence on the development and modernisation of trade unions, particularly the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and UNISON, as well as becoming a towering figure in the world of lifelong learning and working-class education.

Bob was a life-long friend of NUPE, at all levels of the union. While he was a great personal friend and mentor to Alan Fisher, Bernard Dix, Rodney Bickerstaffe and Tom Sawyer, anyone who saw him engage with members of the union would witness his ability to connect with people. Many of us were proud to call him a friend and spend time in his company.

I first became aware of Bob through his academic work at Warwick University where he was a senior lecturer specialising in trade union organisational behaviour under Professor Hugh Clegg. While there he was asked by the NUPE National Executive to lead a small team of researchers to look at the structure and operation of NUPE. This report, *Organisation and Change in NUPE*, became known as the 'Warwick Report' and was published in August 1974.[1] It proved to be a towering achievement and was to radically reform the union, creating a whole new brand of union stewards with much more democratic branch, district and divisional structures. But perhaps the most exciting change was the creation of five

reserved seats on the National Executive for women members. At that time unions were almost universally male preserves and NUPE was no exception. This simple revolutionary change broke the glass ceiling, and effectively led the way for other unions and the Labour Party to adopt similar rules. Partly as a result of these reforms, NUPE grew remarkably rapidly during that decade. It also led in early 1981 to the appointment of regional education officers and also regional women's officers.

Bob was a great friend to the North East and was tremendously knowledgeable. I have a particularly vivid memory of a two day NUPE officer strategy discussion in one of the colleges of Durham University in 1998. Bob led the first day with a slide of just 5 bullet points, which he used to generate reflection and discussion with warmth and humour throughout the whole day. He had a unique ability to get the most out of people and encourage them to think creatively.

It was no surprise that when the possibility of merger to create a much larger public service union was mooted NUPE turned to Bob to be a key academic advisor. By this time Bob was the principal at Northern College in Barnsley and well regarded across the trade union movement.

The intention to create a large public service union bringing together NUPE, the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO) and the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) was never going to be an easy task and Bob's intelligence, detailed knowledge, collective respect and warmth made a crucial difference in holding the ring and establishing common ground in the negotiations. It was on 1 July 1993 that UNISON came into existence. He was one of the few people ever to be given a lifetime membership of NUPE and, despite never having been an official or a member; he arguably has had the most influence in shaping the course of public service unionism over the last 50 years.

He was similarly effective and influential in adult learning. In 1983 he took charge of Northern College, a residential college providing opportunities for working class students and trade union members. While

there he met David Blunkett, the leader of Sheffield Council at the time, and had a considerable influence on his thinking. So much so that, in the Labour Government of 1997, when Blunkett, as an MP, was given the education brief, he asked Bob to lead on Lifelong Learning. It was directly from this link that Union Learning Reps, the Union Learning Fund and Individual Learning Accounts came to define the early years of that government.

In 2001 he was appointed by Alan Milburn, then Secretary of State for Health, as Head of the newly created NHS University which was designed to create a similar model to the Open University in order to enable many of the NHS employees to access professional development and learning opportunities. It was in this capacity that he accepted my invitation to officially launch Bridges to Learning (B2L) in the UNISON offices in Newcastle on 4 April 2003. B2L was a ground breaking partnership with the Workers' Educational Association, UNISON and the Open University (OU), using the Union Learning Fund to support union learning representatives in public services, such as local hospitals, and to develop progression routes into adult learning. His willingness to launch B2L was a great coup and brought many NHS managers involved in learning to the event. His warmth and humour was particularly engaging and he really celebrated the union learning representatives who spoke. Following the success of this launch, for the next 20 years B2L provided real opportunities to thousands of workers, who had missed out on learning at school, in order to get back into learning and to develop. Sadly the same could not be said for the NHS University. Bob was acutely aware of the setting up of the OU under Harold Wilson's government 35 years previously, and the attempt by the established university sector to bring it down. It had required considerable defending by Wilson's Cabinet to ensure the OU survived. Bob knew a similar attack would be made on the idea of the NHS University but, sadly, the Blair government failed to stand up to those same vested interests, and what could have been a major achievement was quietly killed off. Bob continued as a Chief Learning

Advisor to the Department for Health, championing the cause of widening participation. He went on to play a leading role in the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and in the Moser Report on Adult Basic Skills.[2] He produced many books and articles, including a history of NUPE with Steve Williams, but I particularly treasure my copy of his book *Promises of Freedom - Citizenship, Belonging and Lifelong Learning* for the comments he wrote inside when he signed it at the Lit and Phil.[3]

I last saw Bob in April 2018 at the Rodney Bickerstaffe Memorial Event in London when I was with my daughter. He was warm and charming to her and gently teased me in his inimitable style. No wonder he was loved by so many.

1 R. H. Fryer et al, *Organisation and Change in NUPE,* University of Warwick Research Report delivered to the National Executive of NUPE, August 1974.

2 *Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start*, Report of the Working Group chaired by Sir Claus Moser (London: HMSO, I999).

3 Stephen Williams and R. H. Fryer, *Leadership and Democracy - the History of the National Union of Public Employees, Vol 2 1928-1993*, (London: Laurence and Wishart, 2011); R. H. Fryer, *Promises of Freedom: Citizenship, Belonging and Lifelong Learning* (Leicester: NIACE, 2010).

The Common Room: our collections online and in person

Jennifer Hillyard

The Common Room, formerly known to many people as The Mining Institute, is reopening following a two-year refurbishment. The Grade II* listed building has stood on Westgate Road close to Newcastle's Central Station since 1870. It has been fully renovated and made accessible

throughout, largely funded by awards from The National Lottery Heritage Fund of £5,650,000 and additional support from other funders.

For readers of *North East History,* much of the importance of the Mining Institute lay in its library and collections, built up since its early days. These collections include archives, books, journals, maps, photographs, negatives, and physical objects. They cover subjects relating to mining of all kinds and across the globe, plus the related industries such as railways which supported the development of the industrial revolution. There is more of a focus on the engineering and the technology than on people, but details can be teased out from within those records to provide illuminating glimpses into the lives of the people involved.

The original core of the archives are the collections donated by engineers back in the early days of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers (NEIMME) including the Buddle, Watson, Johnson and Forster collections.[1] These include notebooks, diaries, accounts, correspondence and manuscript plans of collieries, above and below ground. More recent NEIMME Presidents such as Paul Younger, Ian Day, Norman Jackson and F W Smith have donated archival collections to keep this tradition alive. They are largely focused on the Great Northern Coalfield but do include items relating to collieries from across the UK. The map collection is focused on the Great Northern Coalfield and northern Pennine Orefield area, with some North Yorkshire and Lancashire sheets as appropriate. It includes both printed and manuscript maps and ranges from the Ordnance Survey publications to geological and underground plans.

The Common Room is now the holder of all the Mining Institute collections, and will continue to develop these collections to support our education programme and to satisfy user requests and enquiries. The books have been returned to the balconies in the first-floor Wood Hall, and users will be able to request titles in advance to be brought down to the Alan Reece Reading Room on the ground floor for their research.

The project has massively improved physical storage conditions, and just as important, allowed us to develop our digitisation programme and online access. Scans have been created gradually for almost a decade. Thanks to the Platten Family Fund an A2 scanner was already available for our volunteers to use, but some key items were just physically too large. The project has allowed us to have the full set of 686 plans in the Watson collection digitised offsite at Woodhorn Museum. Twenty-three were too fragile for the process, but additional matched funding from the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust has enabled the conservation of these as well, thus enabling the full set to be available online.

Our new website includes a collections search tool which will allow users to browse and keyword search all the existing scans online for the first time. An immense amount of work has been taking place during lockdown to create the metadata for this. Our thanks are due to all of the volunteers who have spent many hours wrangling data in spreadsheets to bring it out of a 5000-page PDF and into a searchable database.

The JPGs will be freely available to download for personal use, and you will also be able to request that not-yet digitised items are given priority in the scanning queue or - at a price - scanned immediately. (There will, as readers will understand, of course be some items for which scanning is impossible).

We are continuing to digitise the most frequently accessed journal runs. The NEIMME *Transactions* are already available, and volunteers have been working on a massive project of scanning all 200+ volumes of *The Colliery Guardian* - our most used newspaper which covers 1858-2000s. The word-searchable PDFs are far more accessible than the limited indexing available in the paper volumes.

Digitising the photographic collection, including slides and negatives is another mammoth task being undertaken by our volunteers. It will continue over many years, but it is almost never ending as more photographs are donated. The new online system will allow off-site volunteers to work on tagging the existing scans with useful terms. Those with mining expertise

are being used to identify specific machinery or processes shown on the images. If you would like to volunteer with the collections, either on-site or remotely, please do get in touch!

If you are interested in visiting the collections in person, please visit our website, thecommonroom.org.uk, for the most up to date information, due to the uncertainty of Covid-19.

The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers itself is very much alive and continues as a Royal Chartered body to offer a growing lecture programme and other events. They have retained an office within the building and have use of the lecture theatre for their programme. We hope that other societies will also continue to use the building as a venue for their events, and discounted rates are still available for charities and not for profit organisations.

The building, complete with new bar 5 Quarter, will be open from late July 2021. You can keep up to date by signing up to the Common Room mailing list on social media at:

https://www.facebook.com/TheCommonRoomGN/
https://www.instagram.com/thecommonroomgn/
https://twitter.com/thecommonroomgn

The Common Room of the Great North was established in 2017 to manage the redevelopment and refurbishment of the former Mining Institute building following an award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund of £4.1m towards the initial project costs of £7.1m. Further funding to reflect the project costs due to the pandemic have seen a grant increase of £950,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and £440,00 from other sources. The revised project costs due to Covid-19 now stand at £8.9m of which c£1.2m is left to raise.

1 These collections were housed for many years at the Northumberland Records Office and were prefixed "NRO 3410/" The numbering has been preserved, and documents can still be retrieved using these reference numbers.

2 Please see mininginstitute.org.uk for details of future events.

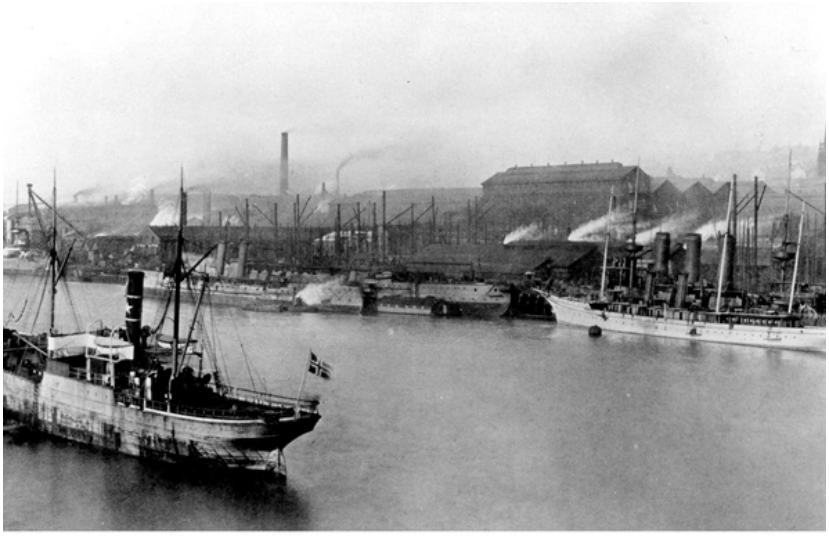
Community heritage and the pandemic

Sue Ward

> "For us the digital divide is real, and if we want to reach the people most in need we have had to spend a lot of extra effort and money. Secondly, our work is about more than heritage. It's also about community and resilience and all those things that everyone talks about in the abstract. And about partnership in the best sense without which we could do only a fraction of what we do". [1]

That comment, from Judith Green, co-ordinator of St James History and Environment Group in Benwell, encapsulates the group's activities during the pandemic, at a time when many local history groups have gone into suspended animation or run the occasional Zoom lecture. Newcastle's western and outer western wards encompass areas that have been prosperous in the past. Large houses and estates have been developed by the local gentry since the seventeenth century onwards. Overlapping in time with this was the growth of heavy industry, including coal-mining and steel works, and of course Armstrong's massive munitions and engineering works. Housing was interspersed with the industry, often put up and controlled by the employer.

Within the last 50 years, most of that has been swept away. Newcomers to the area will barely know it existed. The riverside is dominated by business parks, with office blocks tenanted by call centres. The shops and



Photograph courtesy West Newcastle Picture History Collection

pubs that were crowded along Scotswood Road, with terraced houses behind them, have been replaced by car showrooms and leisure facilities, with tower blocks behind. Most recently, the last remaining section of the workhouse which stood at the core of the General Hospital has been demolished.

What's left is one of the most materially deprived areas in the country. There is a high proportion of elderly residents and people with serious health conditions, and a 'digital divide' between residents and the better-off. This yawned during lockdown, with many unable to turn to Zoom, Netflix and e-mail to keep them connected to the world.

This is the context in which St James Heritage and Environment Group operates. It was founded a dozen years ago, originally to clear and maintain the overgrown graveyard at the historic church of St James Benwell. However, its base is at the Good Neighbours community project on the

Photograph courtesy Judith Green

nearby Pendower Estate. Its niche has been exploration of the history and heritage of West Newcastle, mainly from the last two hundred years but also much earlier. The Roman fort of Condercum and its vicus underlie much of the immediate area, and residents of the Pendower Estate are well-used to digging up shards of Roman pottery in their gardens.

Over its first decade, with piecemeal funding from the City Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and several charitable trusts, the Group have published a number of booklets about West Newcastle's history, making use of the massive archives held by the West Newcastle Picture History Group. They have also organised meetings and guided walks around the area, and - most innovatively - run a series of projects linking craft and history. *The Woolly West* involved participants knitting models of tanks and terraced streets, while *Never Felt So Good* did much the same in felt. The lockdown in March 2020 killed off a further project with elderly people and school

pupils creating images in pottery. Three films that were in the making about the Tyne riverside and its history, one with writer Michael Chaplin as its presenter, did survive and were finalised in difficult conditions.

With the pandemic, the Group went up a gear rather than put on the brakes, looking for ways to help people feel involved and connected, as well as amused. Weekly e-mail newsletters have included puzzles and short factsheets about different aspects of the area's history. In parallel to this, the newsletter material has been regularly collected into printed booklets. A flow of Heritage Guides and walk trail guides for the west and outer west of Newcastle has included a special Pendower edition, focusing on the traces of the Romans and distributed across the area. New history booklets include one with oral history from people living in the West End of the city during World War II, as children or as adults. To bridge the digital divide, all these booklets have been distributed by post, and by community groups and other organisations. The films, and recordings of a number of talks, have all been distributed on DVDs. All are free, though many people give donations towards them, and the previous funders have continued their generosity.

Sue Ward

A full list of all the group's printed publications, films, and DVDs is on their website, at https://stjamesheritage.com/publications-and-resources/. The website also give details of how to join, and future activities.

[1] 'Puzzling through the Pandemic', Talk to the Connected Communities Heritage Network Symposium, 10 Feb 2021.

North West History Journal - the Journal of the North West Labour History Society No.45, 2020 -21

Win Stokes

With access to research facilities curtailed by the limitations imposed by the pandemic our companion organisation faced similar uncertainties to our own in producing this last year's Journal

That it has done so to such a high standard is a tribute to all concerned. What follows is not a conventional review but rather an indication of content for the benefit of potential readers.

With 'Black lives matter' high on the agenda and the toppling of slave trader Colston's statue occupying the front pages in June last year it was appropriate that a considerable number of column inches should be devoted to race related issues. However it came as something of a surprise to discover that the statue was the work of the Irish born Manchester based and largely forgotten monumental sculptor John Cassidy. Two reprinted articles from the 2007 issue of the Journal which commemorated the bicentenary of the British abolition of the slave trade follow a short reminder that during the Toxteth riots of 1981 in Liverpool a statue of William Huskisson was dislodged from its plinth because of his complicity in measures to prevent the amelioration of conditions on the plantations.

The rest of the content picks up on the aftermath of the commemoration of Peterloo in 2019, an interesting article looks at the use of Alexandra Park for political protest meetings particularly those related to women's suffrage between 1870 and 1919, and two further pieces cover significant Lancashire strikes, the Garston bobbin workers' dispute of 1912 with its implications for the unionisation of unskilled labour and the 1970 Pilkington's strike, the latter re-evaluated for its 50th anniversary.

Apart from the usual round up of book reviews there is only one other item to mention - an account of discovering the connection between two pacifists from 'Red' Nelson in the 1920s and the dedication of a German left wing author's play about Nottinghamshire Luddites. Now if that was, as it may have been, a space filler resulting from Covid limitations, it was well worth putting in. Something completely different. Thanks.

Chris Killip, Photographer 1946 - 2020

Peter Brabban

The death of Chris Killip, in October 2020, brought to an end the career of one of Britain's best post-war photographers. Killip was born in Douglas, Isle of Man. He left school at 16 to work as a trainee hotel manager, while also working as a beach photographer. In 1964, aged 18, he moved to London where he worked as an assistant to the advertising photographer Adrian Flowers. Killip soon went freelance. In 1969, Killip ended his commercial work to concentrate on his own photography and in 1975 he won a two-year fellowship from Northern Arts to photograph the northeast of England. He moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to pursue this work, to which *Creative Camera* magazine devoted its entire May 1977 issue.

In 1977, Killip became co-founder, exhibition curator, and adviser at the Side Gallery, Newcastle. He worked as its first director for 18 months. He produced a body of work from his photographs in the North East of England, published in 1988 as *In Flagrante* with a text by Berger and Sylvia Grant. These black and white images, 'portraits of Tyneside's working-class communities amongst the signifiers of the region's declining industrial landscape', mostly made on 4×5 film, are now recognised as among the most important visual records of living in 1980s Britain. The writer and photographer Gerry Badger has described the photographs as "taken from a point of view that opposed everything [Thatcher] stood

for", and the book as "about community", "a dark, pessimistic journey". Sean O'Hagan of the Guardian described *In Flagrante* as one of the most important photography books of the 1980s, on account of the impactful and resonant nature of the photographs. Killip thrived on the political conflict of the 1980s. His work is confrontational, at times dark, and always challenging.

For the remainder of the 1980s he worked on a number of projects. In 1991 he moved to the USA as a visiting lecturer at Harvard University. He was made a tenured Professor in 1994, and remained Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies until 2017.

He died from lung cancer in October 2020. Any labour historian of the North East should spend some time viewing *In Flagrante* before diving into the history of the region in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a key document.

One of Chris Killip's most iconic photographs appears on the front cover of this Journal, courtesy Chris Killip Photography Trust. Also thanks to the Guardian obituary by Sean O'Hagan, 16 Oct 2020

North East Labour History Society

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

Reviews

Dave Harker, ***The Northern Minstrels From Richard Whirlepipyn to James Allan*** (Wisecrack Publications, 2020), pp. 270, no ISBN. Price £30, available from the author.

Of all Dave Harker's impeccably researched, detailed and discursive books on the vernacular song, poetry and music of the North East, this must have been the most challenging. In the period under study, 1290-1800, direct source material even for formal musical settings is scant. A picture of the unofficial, 'underground' musical culture of the region has to be drawn largely by inference from the wider social contexts of legislation, literacy, customs and payments in which Harker specialises. Critics have sometimes questioned the sheer diversity of the information the author brings from his thorough and wide-ranging archive-trawling, but here that eclectic approach is essential.

Alongside discussions of early instruments and constraints on performance and dissemination, he builds a picture of the climate in which musicians plied their trade. This includes the years of religious upheavals under the Tudors when anyone found guilty of printing 'heynous, sedicious and schlanderous Writinges, Rimes, Ballades, Letters, Papers and Bookes' could be pilloried and have their ears cut off.

A pattern emerges of the permitted, licensed, musical culture of minstrels, church musicians and Town Waits, as against the 'vagrants and sturdy beggars' who fell outside these approved occupations and guilds. Against this backdrop, the North East was variously an ecclesiastical centre, a debateable border territory and an engine of trade and industry. There was clearly space for itinerant, unofficial musicians; the impressively-named Richard Whirlepipyn played on both sides of the border in the thirteenth century, without taking the livery of any particular nobleman or church leader, By the eighteenth century, we see a greater diversity in publication,

and the emergence of vernacular singers, genteel mediators and parodists, whose music and lyrics portrayed the lives of ordinary people in the region. Charles Avison and the Dukes' pipers existed alongside ballad sellers and street fiddlers such as Blind Ralph of Alnwick. Harker provides details of leading collectors and publishers, and also quotes from Edward Chicken who portrayed 'the COLLIERS, and their WIVES, [living] drunken, honest, working lives'. He points to the popularity of Elsie [Ailcie] Marley, which coincided with the 1765 pitmen's strike, to show that the miners of County Durham could be struggling for better conditions within the same social context that produced light-hearted songs about pub landladies. We track the publication of different versions of songs such as Chevy Chase through ballad sheets to supposedly authoritative collections.

Harker also explores what we know of the instrumentalists. The lives of the piping Allans, Wull and his infamously lawless son Jamie, are among the most (if dubiously) documented, by a series of fanciful 'biographies". However, there are records of hundreds others, many in the briefest detail, perhaps due to encounters with the penal system. Thanks to Harker, individuals are named and rescued, however fleetingly, from the 'enormous condescension of posterity'.

Finally, Harker describes the Town Waits gradually dying out in the early the nineteenth century, and illustrates the varying degrees and qualities of commemoration for the region's pre-1800 musicians. Unsurprisingly, several blue plaques commemorate Charles Avison, while his lowlier counterparts have little or no such official recognition.

Publication of this book coincided with that of *Music in North-East England 1500-1800*, edited by Carter, Gibson and Southey (Boydell Press, 2020), a collection of essays mainly on art music, but also covering the minstrels of Beverley, and songs published by Shield and Marshall. Inevitably, there is an overlap in the sources, but the two books provide rich and contrasting perspectives on this fascinating theme.

Jude Murphy

Michael Taylor, ***The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery*** (Bodley Head, 2020), ISBN 978-1-847-92571-8, £20.

Michael Taylor's superbly researched and written book is a narrative of the final decade of slavery in the British Empire. The 1807 Act, ending the slave trade in the British Empire, had left nearly 700,000 enslaved men, women and children throughout the Caribbean in the same terrible conditions as they and their forebears had been since the first African arrived in those islands in the 17th Century. Meanwhile the plantation shareholders continued to amass vast fortunes.

Taylor lays bare the cynical, heartless self interest of the British Establishment in resisting abolition for fifty years, from the first agitation till their cause became untenable in the mid 1830s. The final passage of the Abolition Bill in 1833 resulted from the mounting rebellion of the enslaved, and the growing understanding that the utmost brutal violence could not hold the line indefinitely. Even then, free labour was to be a myth. The enslaved would be tied to the same land by four years' compulsory apprenticeship followed by a tenuous share cropping system. In the unkindest cut of all, the slave owners were granted £20 million by Parliament as compensation for the loss of their property, their human chattels. This loot certainly enabled some of the great landowning families of north east England to build and maintain their fortunes.

The author demonstrates, in colourful and sometimes painful detail, the ruthless determination of the planter class, who even threatened to leave the empire to join the USA if abolition was pursued. He then takes us to planters' friends, the West India Interest at home: cabinet ministers, MPs, land-owners, merchants, bankers, ship owners, military men, owners of newspapers, magazines and their writers. Taylor gives many of them their names, their appearance, their personalities, and fragments of their speeches in strong portraits. He also introduces the leading abolitionists pitted against this powerful force in an uneven contest, relating their courage, their

determination, their disappointments and their ultimate victory. There are also illuminating descriptions of plantation life and the various rebellions. We see close up the planter-class's violent attacks upon free church ministers, in one case leading to a trumped up trial and a hanging. We see too the merciless treatment of dissenting slaves: multiple public whippings to death, hangings in gibbets, burnings and decapitations. The author's mission is to dispel some myths of the imperial past. He writes,

> the Abolition Act was neither the inevitable bequest of sweeping anti-slavery sentiment and the triumphant march of British 'justice', nor was it a simple coda to the better-known campaign against the slave trade. In reality, the passage of the Act had relied upon several factors: the political collapse of the Tories which led to Reform and the return of a sympathetic House of Commons; the persistent pressure applied by the Anti-Slavery societies; and the violent slave resistance that finally convinced the British public of the immoral, unsustainable nature of slavery. Until those factors combined in the early 1830s, defending slavery was a tenable, popular position for British conservatives, imperialists, economists, and more besides. Until 1833, slavery had been an essential part of British national life, as much as the Church of England, the monarchy, or the liberties granted by the Glorious Revolution. When we remember it otherwise, we promulgate a self-serving and misleading version of British history. (p. 274)

There have been hundreds of volumes telling the story of colonial slavery. This is the first to illuminate in such detail the machinations of the interest resisting the abolition of this ghastly system. It is very highly recommended.

John Charlton

Ruth Cohen, ***Margaret Llewelyn Davies: With Women for a New World*** (Merlin Press 2020, ISBN978-0-85036-759-1, 241 pp. £17.99

Margaret Llewelyn Davies, as a principled co-operator, socialist, feminist, peace campaigner, trade unionist, internationalist and radical reformer was clearly way ahead of her time. She was General Secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) from 1889 to 1921, and in this long-overdue new biography Ruth Cohen shows how the reforms fought for by the WCG in the early years of the 20th century, were to have a major impact on women's lives.

Margaret was described by G. D. H. Cole, historian of the Co-operative movement, as the greatest woman to have been involved in the movement. The WCG, launched in 1883, was the first organisation specifically for working-class women. It grew from 1,800 members in 51 branches in 1889, to 51,000 members in 1,077 branches in 1921. Margaret gave so much to building it, taking women out of their homes into the local Guilds where they learned organisational skills and how to campaign for reforms that would greatly improve their lives, yet she is rarely recognised outside the Co-operative movement.

Born in 1863 into a middle-class family of Christian Socialists, Margaret was the only girl in a family of seven. She was greatly influenced by her father, an Anglican clergyman. Being well-connected with radical Victorian movements and personalities, the family were engaged in advanced social and religious thought, and she grew up with a strong sense of social commitment and responsibiity. It was a feminist household and she was given an excellent education compared to other young women of her time and class. She attended Girton College, Cambridge established to give women access to academic study.

Under her leadership, the Guilds deepened their involvement in the movement and campaigned for changes which would alleviate poverty and improve women's lives. They used the experience of the membership to produce well-received reports. For example, Margaret's influence can be

seen in the first minute book of the West Pelton WCG, which shows that in this small County Durham village, the women - mainly miners' wives - were networking with the wider Labour and Co-operative Movement. They discussed combatting war, International Co-operation, Indian people's right to self-government, maternity and welfare concerns as well as Co-operative trading issues.

I first became interested in this remarkable woman while researching the Sunderland Poor Store (*North East History* 2012, vol. 43) for the NELH Popular Politics Project. Margaret was convinced that co-operation could bring some security to the poorest in the community and persuaded a sympathetic Sunderland Society to help her set up the store in the Coronation Street area of the town in 1902. More than just a store, it had a 'settlement' attached offering advice, a savings bank, educational and social opportunities to the Community. She and her resident Co-operative social workers learned at first hand about the grinding poverty and the issues that needed to be addressed.

In this very readable and well-researched book, Ruth Cohen explains how effectively their campaigns were organised, and I share her obvious admiration of this pioneering woman. She worked alongside her lifelong friend and colleague Lillian Harris and was supported by the trade unionist Margaret Bondfield. The Guilds had to fight opposition from within the Co-op movement, in particular those who were against their 1910 campaign to reform the divorce laws. They wanted to make divorce more accessible to working-class women and include 'mutual consent' in the grounds for divorce. These aims were eventually achieved in 1969.

In 1908, they campaigned for equal pay for equal work in Co-op stores, believing that they should put their own house in order, so that the movement could act as a beacon for other workers. As well as promoting women's Trade Union membership, they campaigned in 1907 for a minimum wage for all CWS workers, which was achieved in 1912. A minimum wage across all industries was not achieved until 1998. Their campaigns for family allowances and birth control eventually became a reality, but they had to

wait until 1945 for the election of a Labour government for the former. Birth control was not available on the NHS until 1961.

Kath Connolly

Margaretta Jolly, ***Sisterhood and After. An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968 - present*** (Oxford University Press, 2019), 352pp. ISBN 978-0-19065-884-7. £22.99

Between 2010 and 2013, the British Library conducted an oral history project, 'Sisterhood and After', recording the life histories of sixty women involved in the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in the 1970s and 1980s. Those in-depth interviews with prominent campaigners, political and intellectual 'legends', as well as less well-known figures, form the heart of this rich and dynamic history. Jolly (the project director) has adopted a thematic approach, weaving together individual testimonies to illustrate the movement's formation, development and diversification within a wider context of social and political change. The complex roots of the WLM are addressed by considering a range of 'origin stories'. For example, was the 1970 conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, where the first four demands of the WLM were formulated, the moment when a national WLM first crystallised? Those attending were almost exclusively white, educated, middle-class women; not only working-class, but black and Asian women (whose first national conference was the 1979 Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent conference held in Brixton) were unintentionally excluded.

In Chapter Two, Jolly contends that oral history techniques are a 'heavenly match, a natural partnership' for exploring the creation, development and legacies of a movement whose mantra was 'the personal is political'. What is remembered is important, but so is how it is recalled, and the researchers used 'deep listening' techniques to identify tensions as well as the remembered joys.

The question of why the interviewees, growing up in the 1940s to 1960s, became feminist activists when most women did not is explored in Chapter Three. The campaigns of the 'core' WLM era (the 1970s) are addressed in the following chapter. This covers well-known activities including the disruption of the Miss World competition in 1970, but also other very different stories. For example, Women's Aid in Northern Ireland operated in a political space dominated by the power struggle between Unionists and Nationalists.

The disparate elements in Chapter Five sit rather uneasily together under the heading, 'Guilty Pleasures? Feminism and Everyday Life in the 1980s'. They include experimental domestic arrangements, the 'municipal feminism' of the Greater London Council's Women's Committee under Valerie Wise's leadership, Women Against Pit Closures and the dilemma of feminist shopping in an era of increasing consumerism.

Relationships with men - whether partners, allies or abusers - are explored in Chapter Six. Jolly also touches on 'the explosion of the transsexual and transgendered liberation movement in the 2000s, [which is] revolutionising gender identities, relationships and philosophies, with obvious challenges to earlier feminist premises.' The chapter finishes with lengthy extracts from separate interviews with historian Catherine Hall, historian, active in the WLM from the 1970s, and her husband, the left-wing intellectual Stuart Hall, charting the transformation of their long relationship by and through the WLM.

In the final chapter, Jolly reaffirms the great variety of feminist life stories which were collected by the project. Many spoke of personal transformation, the power of collective action (mainly through the example of the Greenham Women's Peace Camp), and the place of faith in feminists' lives.

However, the memories of the thousands of provincial and/or 'ordinary' feminists who identified with the movement remain largely unexplored, including those of the women's groups in our own region, who organised the national WLM conference in Ponteland, Northumberland in April 1976. Against this must be balanced the sheer ambition and scope of this

study, embracing a range of campaigns and issues over half a century, as well as addressing the issues of inclusion and exclusion, especially of race, class and sexuality. It will appeal to the general as well as the academic reader. It is also a powerful endorsement of oral history, with a concluding call for the reader to 'put down this book and listen. Listen to the speeches and the stories, the inner voices, laughter, tears, tones, and sighs, the prickling air nearby. Then act.'[1]

Liz O'Donnell

[1] The website, https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood, includes clips from interviews, but to listen to any in their entirety it is necessary to visit the British Library.

Anne Scargill and Betty Cook with Ian Clayton, ***Anne and Betty: united by the struggle,*** (Route Publishing, 2020) ISBN: 978-1-901927-81-8, 256 pp., hardback, £20.

I agreed to review this book with some trepidation. I have met and admired both the women whose stories it tells. It is so rare to see a book where defiant working-class women are able to recount their own story and their political activism. Much of what they have written resonated with me, and brought to the fore many conflicting emotions I had not anticipated.

Betty Cook and Anne Scargill were born a generation before me, but in reading their stories I was flooded with memories of the lives of many women I knew, who were brought up in similar mining communities. For women, there are real contradictions: it is possible both to love the heritage and closeness of your community but struggle with the constraints imposed by it. During the 1984 miners' strike and beyond these contradictions were very evident in both Betty's and Anne's lives.

Although Betty and Anne share a mining background and both had troubled relationships with their mothers - and their partners - their lives

differ radically. The book provides a rich social history of a time before contraception, and the social changes that brought about greater freedoms for women. These were freedoms that were denied to Betty and Anne. Interestingly, both women worked while their children were young, something unusual in mining communities at that time. It was in the workplace that Betty first began her trade union and community activism.

Both women are frank and open in describing their lives, not an easy task when you still live in a closely knit former mining community. Betty, in particular, holds nothing back, not least in dealing with her abusive marriage and subsequent divorce (at which point I cheered her to the rafters) and also in the tragic and devastating loss of two sons, one to ill health, another to a mining accident. It is impossible not to be moved by her story, her inner strength and endurance. Yet she is also able to share in the joy and satisfaction of forging a new life, freed from past constraints.

Anne's account is more circumspect, particularly around her married life. This is hardly surprising, given she was married to Arthur Scargill. Her ongoing sense of loyalty to her ex-husband and his legacy is evident. However, at times the sparseness of the language tells the bigger story, for example in describing the wedding of their only child to which 'Arthur was invited but chose not to attend'.

Anne Scargill certainly did not have an easy time being married to the man who rose to be the most high-profile union leader in the country. It is clear she was uncomfortable with many aspects of this role, but there was obvious delight at some of the experiences that followed, such as foreign travel and friendships with the most unlikely of people (for example Harry Belafonte). Anne expresses genuine hurt when the marriage ends.

It was the 1984 miners' strike which brought Anne and Betty together. Their sense of shared values and commitment to the strike, alongside a sense of humour, helped forge a friendship which lasted decades. They hold nothing back when describing the tensions within the emerging support groups (not least with union men). Betty provides a vivid description of the frequent cultural clashes with younger women, who often had a radically

differing outlook. Neither Anne nor Betty were political novices, and it was inevitable that they would play a leading role locally - and ultimately nationally - in the strike. Anne was the more maverick of the two women. Her commitment to direct action both during the miners' strike and beyond led her at times to upset others. For example, during the vigil at Parkside colliery Anne, without consultation, separately organised a sit-in protest below ground. She thought actions spoke louder than words.

Alongside Betty, Anne continues to support the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign. They travel around the country actively supporting causes and communities that are close to their hearts. Like many other strong mining women, they are the beating heart of their families and communities. For them, caring for others is as natural as breathing. It is clear from this book that their activism, sense of humour and joy in life has not dimmed with the passing years.

Mary Stratford

Les Turnbull, ***Hidden Treasures*** (NEIMME in association with Stephenson Locomotive Society, 2021), 88pp. ISBN 978-0-9931151-6-5, and ***The First Tanfield Railway*** (NEIMME in conjunction with the Stephenson Locomotive Society and the Tanfield Railway, 2021), 84pp. ISBN 978-0-9931151-7-2. Each £10.00 paperback, available from NEIMME via www.thecommonroom.org.uk.

These new titles from Les Turnbull are published as part of the `Early Railway Collection' charting the history of waggonways and steam-operated railways in our region. *Hidden Treasures* was published in May to celebrate the bicentenary of the opening of Hetton Lyons Colliery in 1822 and the completion between the colliery and the Wear of the first entirely new railway to be designed by George Stephenson. Stephenson's work on this project coincided with his appointment as engineer for the proposed

Stockton and Darlington Railway, and when the Prussian Mining Ministry sent engineers to tour Britain, they judged these two schemes to be the finest in existence.

Possibly of greater significance was the achievement of the 'sinkers', in particular William Coulson, at Hetton Lyons. They managed to bore through the thick layer of magnesian limestone that overlies the coal seams in East Durham. This magnesian plateau had frustrated previous efforts to access the rich coal seam below, the hidden treasures of the book's title. *Hidden Treasures* provides a detailed account of the colliery and its transport system, both underground and over ground, and an assessment of the colliery's legacy in terms of Stephenson, Coulson, and the coalfield. At Hetton, Stephenson opted to use wagons with iron wheels that ran on iron rails, drawn by a combination of travelling engines, horses, and inclined planes, the latter including self-acting inclines on which descending loaded wagons raised empty wagons. The author uses a series of archive drawings to illustrate how these worked as the waggonway descended to the coal depot and staithes at the mouth of the River Wear. He also documents the number of men required to operate these inclines (and their rates of pay). The staithman, in charge of loading the keels and regulating the traffic, earned £3 per week in 1823, making him the best paid worker on the railway.

The First Tanfield Railway has been published to mark the tercentenary of the Tanfield Railway. The author begins by using examples from both sides of the Tyne to illustrate various aspects of early waggonways, before he moves on to an account of the one at Tanfield from the 1720s. He explains the economics of these early railways as well as their operation, and includes a useful description of how wayleaves (rights of way) , or the lack of them, influenced the route and cost of these ventures. He gives details of the workforce associated with these transport systems, including rates of pay in the 1790s and early 1800s. One example is the cost of 22 men and 12 horses required to operate an iron waggonway at Heaton in September 1820.

Each book has an introduction and six chapters. For some reason the

chapter headings are typeset at the same font size (12 pt) as the numerous figure titles and chapter sub-headings. However, the author's writing style is very fluid and easy to follow, and the way he interprets original archive images as part of the main text helps to integrate the economic, the spatial, and the human history as one narrative account. There are footnotes, highlighting a number of primary and secondary sources, but there is no bibliography or index.

As with similar titles in the series, these two books are illustrated throughout. The detail available in the illustrations, in the A4 format used, is definitely one of the reasons that anyone with an interest in our region's industrial heritage should not hesitate to acquire them. In recent years NEIMME has invested substantially in digitising of their collections, and these books demonstrate how much this project has illuminated their map and plan collection in particular.

Mike Greatbatch

Selina Todd, ***Snakes and Ladders. The Great British Social Mobility Myth*** (Vintage 2021) 438pp. ISBN 978-1-784-74081-8, hb £25

'Local Girl Does Good'. Selina Todd, a pupil from a comprehensive school in Newcastle upon Tyne, defies the odds and goes on to become Professor of Modern History at Oxford University. This is the sort of alluring human interest story that warms our hearts and make us feel proud to live in a country that rewards hard work and talent. Except, as this book shows, when you examine the history of social mobility in Britain over the past century or more, Selina's own individual success at ladder-climbing (to use the hackneyed metaphor) is the exception rather than the rule.

In this very readable book, Selina Todd draws upon a mass of individual testimonies, integrating these accounts with an array of statistical evidence to illustrate her thesis that Britain, far from being a country that accelerates

talented youngsters from humble origins up the ladder into the top jobs, actually does the reverse. Historically, for women, particularly working class women, there was a double whammy. As the author shows, throughout the last century overt discriminatory hurdles were placed in the way of women, particularly the 'marriage bar'. Additionally, when occupations previously carried out by men were redefined as 'women's work', it usually resulted in lowered status with the inevitable reduction in salary. Immigrants too had to try and ignore the unabashed racism of the 'No Blacks, No Irish' signs, endure poor housing conditions and accept low status jobs, often well below their skills and qualifications.

None of this will be news to many of us who recognise the preposterousness of seeing Britain as a meritocracy. What is strange is that it remains such an enduring narrative. The established middle classes and the upper class have generally managed to ensure that their offspring are protected from the indignity of sliding down the ladder and have employed a subtle array of social closure techniques to keep the rest of us out.

Nonetheless, from the middle of the twentieth century, following the growth of the welfare state and the expansion of non-manual labour, there clearly was some evidence of relative social mobility in Britain amongst a 'Golden Generation'. Many individuals of this generation took advantage of the increased provision of education, which led to significant movement up and down the intermediate rungs of the ladder. This, however, was a brief period. The emergence of neoliberalism in the 1980s and the subsequent deregulation of capital led to the state withdrawing from its redistributive commitments. As a result, Britain's class structure polarised again and the rungs on the ladder started to fracture and give way.

Just when real social mobility in Britain was in serious decline, the 'social mobility industry' and politicians from the main political parties came charging - like the cavalry - to its rescue. From Thatcher to Major, from Blair to Brown and from Cameron to May, the story was the same. Britain, they said, was no longer an old fashioned class-ridden society, it was now a modern meritocracy. As Selina Todd states, 'the talk was of expanding

opportunity rather than equality'. This narrative was reinforced by an army of think tanks, charities, lobby groups, businesses and organisations that supported the view that it was only lack of ambition that stopped people getting to the top. They promoted diversity training for managers and in the professions but offered little criticism of private schools and elite institutions like the Russell Group of universities, and failed to challenge the working patterns and hierarchies that ensured most people stayed at the bottom of the ladder.

In the final chapter, Selina Todd declares that social mobility has failed, but that this should not be lamented. Exhorting small groups of individuals to improve their life chances to the detriment of the rest will not create a fairer society. She suggests that a more realistic metaphor would be a 'greasy pole', at the top of which sits a tiny group of wealthy and powerful people and far below is everyone else. The popularity of the enduring British dream, that anyone can climb the ladder, acts to suppress a scarier nightmare: the fear of sliding down the pole into poverty.

Patrick Candon

Mike Greatbatch and Richard Pears ***Saint Ann's - Church and Parish 1768-2018,*** (Friends of St Ann's Newcastle upon Tyne, 2021) 80pp pbk price £10

St Ann's Church, over its 250-year history, was at the centre of an ever growing and changing district of Newcastle whose story warrants much more than these 69 pages.

Yet for the first 74 years of its existence St Ann's was merely a Chapel of Ease within the larger parish of All Saints, and did not become a parish church until the twentieth century. As a commemoration of the anniversary of the church's consecration, it is fitting that the first section of the booklet should focus on the building itself and the school and burial ground

attached to it. The school, a Corporation sponsored institution, enjoyed the distinction in the 1780s of employing the radical Thomas Spence among its tutors. The burial ground provided a much-needed overflow to the overcrowded cemeteries in other parishes during the cholera epidemics of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The second section deals with the period after 1842, when an extra area was attached to St Ann's chapelry, taking its borders to the industrialised bank of the Ouseburn and giving the priest in charge the right to conduct baptisms, marriages, and funerals (and pick up the resulting fees).

The amount of material available for the mid-nineteenth century means that the authors have had to be very selective in their approach. They provide evidence of chronic overcrowding, and noxious processes sited in the midst of cramped insanitary dwellings, alongside a church that must have seemed to the residents more interested in forms of worship than in social issues.

The last decades of the century brought a new influx of population, as what became known as Tyneside flats were built on the site of a former brickyard in the area known as the Battlefield. This seems to have given the church a new identity. The final decade of the century also brought a new incumbent, a High Church Anglican with a social mission. The Rev. Bernard East remained in post for 36 years of gradual industrial decline. East's story is in many ways one of heroic efforts to alleviate some of the worst effects of pre-First World War economic change and it brings together the two strands of a narrative that often threaten to diverge.

Despite its slim size, this is a scholarly book produced for a very worthy cause. It is not just a church guide. Hopefully, anyone who buys and reads it will be inspired to look further into the history of this part of Newcastle. What emerges is a series of issues that are worthy of further study within the wider remit of Labour History. Maybe among the Friends of St Ann's there are those who could tackle them.

Win Stokes

Tom Kelly, ***This Small Patch: Poems*** (Red Squirrel Press, 2020, ISBN: 978-1-910437-91-9) pbk. £10.00

Poet Tom Kelly was born in Jarrow and today lives in Blaydon. In this, his ninth published collection of poems, he returns to his roots. The town of his birth continues to fascinate him with its history and stories, and here he explores the impact they had on this life and that of others growing up in the shadow of these tales.

The collection is divided into two sections. The first, *Gyrwe*, takes its title from the early medieval name for Jarrow, and explores the history of the town. The poems are mostly short and punchy, and are interspersed with explanatory notes on the different events they refer to, such as the gibbeting of William Jobling in 1832, or the 'Jarrow Crusade' of 1936. A personal touch is given by the use of direct quotes from some of those involved with the events - the famous, such as Ellen Wilkinson and J.W. Thompson the mayor of Jarrow at the time of the March, and the not-so-famous, like Tommy Kelly, the author's father. This, combined with frequent use of local dialect, gives the poems a particularly local voice, with figures from the past stepping forward in turn to tell their stories, before dropping back into the shades.

Gyrwe concludes with a section which looks back to *Men of the Tyne*, a photography, film and creative writing project commissioned by The Customs House at South Shields in 2011. In this, Kelly and filmmaker Andy Hagan captured stories of the people who used to work on the river between the 1950s and 1980s, their memories of how things were and the changes they saw over the years. Kelly wrote short stories and poems based on these memories, and later approached musicians Ian Ravenscroft and Ted Cuskin to write and record a series of songs. The trio have since toured the region, showing the film and performing the poetry and songs, and a selection of those lyrics appear here. This is the weakest section of the book - good songs do not necessarily make good poems, and vice versa. However, they still tell powerful tales, and I would encourage the reader to seek out

a recording or even better, to hear them performed live if the opportunity arises.

The final section of the book is *Blaydon: The Blar (Cold) Hill*, and it brings us up to date, as well as further up the river; Blaydon is about 12 miles west of Jarrow. This short section, only ten poems long, is a staccato recital of recent memories mixed up with older ones, as if recalled in a conversation. Although Kelly speaks of his friends and family in poems throughout the collection, this group of poems feels intensely personal, with an immediacy and rawness enhanced by the inclusion of modern-day references. These are Talking about the here and now, and so have an even deeper resonance. As Kelly himself so aptly describes in *Sometimes it's like a dream*, the final poem:

Past and present fall
Between the gaps.

Marie-Therese Mayne

Secretary's Report

The Society's membership now stands at 173 with another 117 people on our mailing list and fourteen mailings were produced during the year.

Due to the pandemic all our meetings have been held on Zoom:

25 August - *The Miners' Strike 1984-85: My role as a newly qualified solicitor with Thompsons*, Janet Allen

8 September - *New Model Island*, Alec Niven (at the Annual General Meeting)

6 October - *Tastes of Honey: The Making of Shelagh Delaney and a Cultural Revolution*, Selina Todd

24 November - *The Excursionists: Who will* fight *for Garibaldi?*, Nigel Todd

8 December - The Annual Christmas Quiz with Peter Brabban

12 January - *Analyzing the Contexts and Causes of the 1910-14 Labour Revolt*, Ralph Darlington

2 February - *John Marshall: Printer*, Librarian and Radical, Paul Gailiunas

6 April - *Sir William Beveridge, The Man, the Report and the Berwick Division*, Mike Fraser

4 May - *Middlesbrough's Steel Magnates and the shaping of the modern town 1880 - 1934*, Tosh Warwick

8 June - *A Complete History of the Teesside Memorial Plaque to the International Brigaders*, Tony Fox

13 July - *Margaret Llewelyn Davies: Co-operative movement activist, feminist, socialist and pacifist*, Ruth Cohen

At its meeting on 28 January, and in line with the motions passed at last year's AGM, the committee agreed to increase the annual subscription from £15 to £20 with that for students and anyone receiving benefits rising from £7.50 to £10. This is the first increase in subscriptions for ten years.

This issue of *North East History* has been produced by the Editorial Board who are Patrick Candon (Editor), Sue Ward, Liz O'Donnell, Win Stokes, Steve Grinter, John Charlton, Peter Brabban, Rosie Serdiville and Mike Greatbatch. The Society wishes to record its thanks for their work in the challenging circumstances of the pandemic.

We are also grateful to Peter Nicklin for his continued work on the Society's website, the links page now connects to around 100 organisations in the UK and beyond and the Popular Politics Project database has been made available again.

Liz O'Donnell has done an outstanding job in promoting the North East Labour History Facebook page which now has over 1,000 followers.

The Sid Chaplin Essay Prize for 2020 was awarded to Hannah Kent, a student at Newcastle University, for her dissertation, "*One Aim, One God, One Destiny"? An Investigation of Black Lives on Tyneside, 1939 -1952.*

With the temporary easing of the coronavirus situation last September, we assisted Professor Robert Gildea in completing his interviews with a wide range of participants in the Miners' Strike of 1984/85.

In May John Charlton contributed to a roundtable discussion on *Radical Histories*, part of the *History Now!* series of public talks organised by Durham University.

We note with great sadness the death of Archie Potts, our President and a founding member of the Society, and also the death of Nigel Todd, a former Vice-Chair of the Society and a frequent speaker at our meetings in recent years. Appreciations of both are included this Journal.

David Connolly

Officers:

President:	Archie Potts (to 11 May 2021)
Vice President:	Maureen Callcott
Chair:	John Creaby
Vice Chair:	Kath Connolly
Treasurer:	Judith McSwaine
Secretary:	David Connolly
Journal Editors:	Patrick Candon, Sue Ward, Liz O'Donnell, Win Stokes, John Charlton, Peter Brabban, Steve Grinter, Rosie Serdiville and Mike Greatbatch

Committee Members:

Brian Bennison (Gosforth)
Peter Brabban (Newcastle)
Patrick Candon (Tynemouth)
John Charlton (Newcastle)
Mike Greatbatch (Newcastle)
Steve Grinter (Wylam)
Peter Nicklin (Newcastle)
Liz O'Donnell (Gosforth)
John Stirling (Morpeth)
Win Stokes (Tynemouth)
Don Watson (North Shields)

How to contact the Society

Email: secretary@nelh.net

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. Organisations that are members of the Society shall carry one vote only at the AGM

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	2008	Ruth Blower
1989	Elaine Knox	2009	Rob Doherty
1990	Sylvia Clark	2010	David Reed
1991	Martin Searles	2011	Deborah Smith
1992	David Ridley	2012	James English
1993	Pauline Lynn	2013	Aidan Harper
1994	Kathleen Smith	2014	Molly Courtice
1996	Reg Brown	2015	Adam Woolley
1997	Angela Goldsmith	2016	Leanne Carr
2000	Robert Hope	2017	Leanne Smith
2004	Craig Turnbull	2018	Joel Wootten
2005	Craig Armstrong	2019	India Gerritsen
2006	Elspeth Gould	2020	Hannah Kent
2007	Candice Brockwell		

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 £100 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: £20 ◯ Students, unwaged: £10 ◯

Institution: £25 ◯

Please add £5 if international postage is required.

3) Payment method:

◯ I have set up a regular annual/monthly payment.

◯ 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 ……

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Cover: Youth on a wall, Jarrow, Tyneside, 1976 by Chris Killip © Chris Killip Photography Trust.

The north east history society holds regular meetings on a wide variety of subjects. A calendar of forthcoming events are updated on its website: www.nelh.net. Back copies of of journal articles from 2005 can be viewed online at: bit.ly/PastJournals. The society welcomes new members.

Journal of the North East Labour History Society

http://nelh.net/