North East History

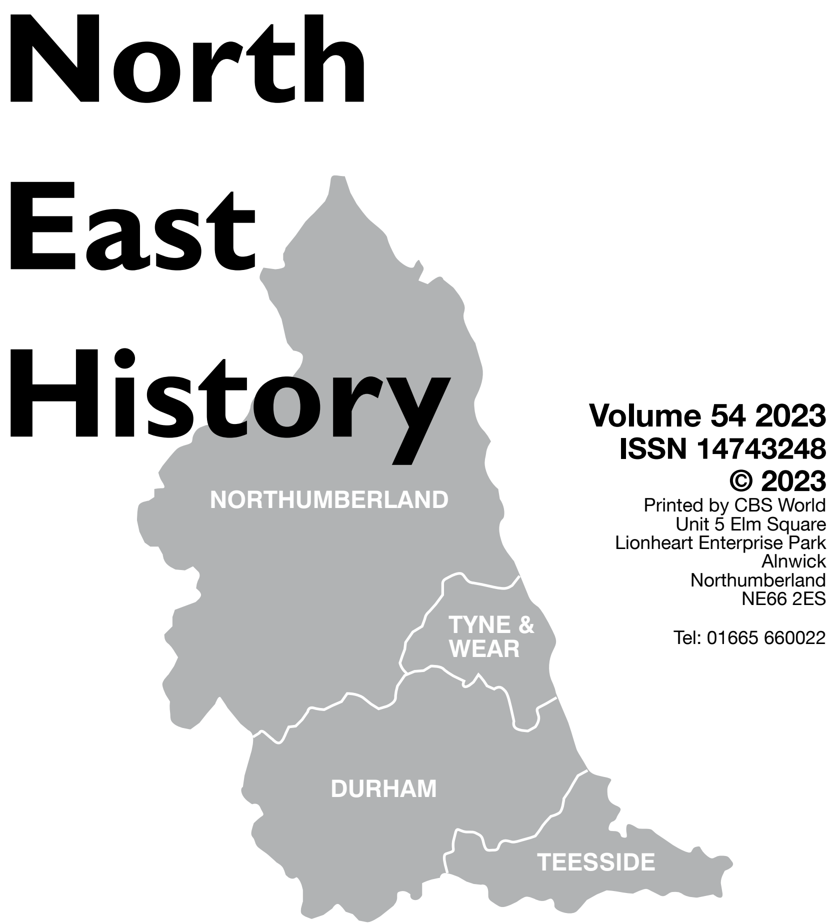
Volume 54 2023

Journal of the North East Labour History Society

Fraternal Greetings to the North East Labour History Society from The Durham Miners Association.
We look forward to welcoming you at the Durham Miners Gala on the 13th July 2024.
DURHAM MINERS ASSOCIATION
Alan Mardghum
Secretary
Stephen Guy
Chair

north east history

North East History



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A note from the Editorial Board

We are all aware of how tough the financial climate is at the moment. The steep rise in costs that affects every aspect of life made the production of last year's journal a tightrun thing. We had to reduce the size of the journal as a result. This year, we have again had to place some fine material on hold to keep costs down. We would like to take this opportunity to appeal for sponsorship for next year's edition to help get things on an even footing. From the first issue in 1967 right up to date, it has been clear that this, the oldest regional labour history society in Britain, has promoted the study of working people lives, helping us all to take pride in our heritage, to educate our children in their past and to foster an appreciation of that past as a tool for action.

Sadly, we have lost a number of members of NELHS this year. We carry an appreciation of Sam Lee in this edition but heard the news of the death of Willie Thompson too late to make the press. A committed activist, campaigner and educator, we intend to carry a full commemoration piece next year. Meanwhile, there is a very moving tribute to him on the website of the Society for the Study of Labour History: https://sslh.org.uk/2023/07/03/willie-thompson-1939-2023/

There are some unexpected and fascinating glimpses of North East history in this year's journal.

In Raggamuffins and The Sons of Liberty, Sue Ward explores the early struggle for enfranchisement in two contrasting Northern towns.

Mike Greatbatch investigates the high cost of death in Newcastle in the first half of the 19th century, focussing on the struggles of the poorest in what was then the town to bury their loved ones with dignity. The story is in some ways painfully reminiscent of the last few years.

The opening First Tuesday talk of 2023 ran into technical difficulties and had to be curtailed. Andy McSmith has kindly given us a transcript of his talk which focusses on some of the links between the North East and

radical Russia over the last century or so.

Our relationship with the rest of the world is also the topic picked up by Damien Shiels and David Gleeson as they consider the role played by our region in the American Civil War.

Stuart Barlow and Lucy Jameson bring us back to home, respectively telling the stories of Shield's early socialists and of the struggle against pneumoconiosis in local mining communities.

Finally, a word of encouragement to anyone thinking about a labour history research project. This journal only works because of the contributions of people right across our region. We encourage the use of endnotes to help people identify the sources used by our writers and to encourage others to explore the rich seam of archival material available to us all. We have a set of guidelines that will help you put your own material together. So please do get in touch if you have a story to share, be it a local study or a personal history that illustrates the importance of working people, their lives, conflicts and achievements.

We would like to express our appreciation to three members of the editorial board who stepped down this year. Patrick Candon did a great job as editor, Sue Ward's skills at sub-editing were enormously valuable and Bill Haylock's experience and enthusiasm helped the commissioning process zip along.

The Editorial Board has worked long and hard to get this year's Journal to this stage – everyone deserves high praise for their dedication and sticking power! The members are

Don Watson
Win Stokes
John Stirling
John Charlton
Steve Grinter
Brian Bennison
Rosie Serdiville (editor)

Notes on Contributors

Lucy Jameson is an incoming Social and Economic History PhD student at Durham University, examining disabled expertise and the British Post Office. She is currently studying for a Masters in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine at the University of Manchester, funded by the Wellcome Trust'. She won the Sid Chaplin Labour History Trophy in 2022 with her article on pneumoconiosis which appears in this journal.

Sue Ward has a history degree (from a very long time ago), and subsequently worked as a journalist, researcher and trainer for trade unions and others. She co-ordinated a project transcribing the poll books for the Newcastle election of 1774, for Newcastle Antiquaries, and analysed the material extensively in 'A Decade of Newcastle Parliamentary Elections, 1774–1784' in an article in 2017 in Archaeologia Aeliana (Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne). She sub-edited North East History for some years, finishing with the 2022 edition.

Mike Greatbatch worked for thirteen years in the Lower Ouseburn area of Newcastle and the history of this area continues to be his main research interest.

Stuart Barlow, a retired architect, developed an interest in the hidden history of North Shields, and its people, after moving there nine years ago. This led to his published article Squatting in Tynemouth in 1946 (North East History Journal, 2021) and his talk on the North Shield's born Chartist Robert Lowery at North Shield's Old Low Light Heritage Centre, where he is a volunteer and a Trustee. The inspiration for his current article came after spotting reports of Socialist League meetings in

North and South Shields while doing the research for his article on the architect Philip Webb and the Socialist League (The Journal of William Morris Studies, 2021).

John Griffiths is a Newcastle-based historian and adult education lecturer. In 2020 he was awarded his PhD for his thesis 'Mr Newcastle: the Career of T Dan Smith'

David T. Gleeson is Professor of American History at Northumbria University and author of the The Green and the Gray: The Irish in the Confederate States of America. He is principal investigator of the Arts and Humanities Council research project AH/W002744/1, "Civil War Bluejackets: Race, Class and Ethnicity in the US Navy."

Damian J. Shiels is a Post-doctoral Research Assistant at Northumbria University and the author of The Forgotten Irish: Irish Emigrant Experiences in America . He is the historical researcher for the Civil War Bluejackets Project.

Andy McSmith is a freelance English journalist. He worked at The Independent newspaper from April 2007 to April 2016, having previously been political correspondent on the same paper, and political editor of the Independent on Sunday having previously been chief political correspondent of The Daily Telegraph and The Observer. In 1993 he was sacked by the Daily Mirror and Labour Party MPs raised his dismissal in a motion in the House of Commons.

He is the author of eight books: biographies of longtime Conservative politician Kenneth Clarke and former Labour leader John Smith, a collection of short biographies called Faces of Labour: The Inside Story (1996), No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s, Fear and the Muse Kept Watch (2015) and Strange People I Have Known (2023)

Gianfranco Rosolia is a Literature graduate from the University of Cambridge and has an MBA from Bayes Business School. Clean Air is his first book. Born and raised in the North East of England, he currently lives in Austin, Texas with his partner Michelle.

Peter Sagar is a teacher, writer and historian who has written on a wide variety of subjects related to the history of Northeast England. He is particularly interested in stories relating to how people in the region worked together to improve their lives and how they helped others to do likewise.

Stuart Howard was a member of the organising collective and strand moderator (The Pen and the People) for the History Workshop which took place in Newcastle in 1987.

John Charlton was born in Newcastle. He worked as a high school teacher on Tyneside and West Yorkshire, then at Leeds Poly and Leeds University. He is a lifelong political activist and optimist. His most recent works include Making Middle England: the History of an English Family and A Distant World: Growing up on Tyneside in the Nineteen Fifties (reviewed in this issue).

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.

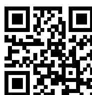
We aim to reflect all communities and groupings in the North East and would encourage contributions from those who live and work in them, those who research them and those who write about them. We want to hear from individuals, community organisations, local history societies, students and teachers and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

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 - 53 (2005 - 2022) can be viewed online at our website: nelh.net/the-societys-journal/previous-issues. There is also a searchable index of articles and reports.



Raggamuffins and Sons of Liberty; The 1774 General Election in Morpeth and Newcastle upon Tyne.

Sue Ward

Contests for Parliamentary seats were rare in late eighteenth-century Parliamentary elections. The peak was in 774, when 88 contests took place.[1] Locally, there were three contests each in Morpeth (1761, 1768, and 1774), and in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1774, 1777, and 1780). This article considers the battles in these two places in 1774, when there were in fact contests in all the seats in the county. The two constituencies were very different. Newcastle was a large 'open' borough in which the 'raggamuffin party' challenged the ruling oligarchy of businessmen; Morpeth a small 'pocket' borough in which the 'Sons of Liberty' refused to stay in the pocket of the lord. In neither constituency were the challenges successful, but both were precursors of change to come. Both were linked to the case of controversial MP John Wilkes, explained below. This is credited in the magisterial *History of Parliament* with converting discontent into an organised political movement of urban radicalism. This, the authors say, was a lower-middle-class movement, appealing to smaller merchants, shopkeepers, and professional men. It was not revolutionary – in fact, they suggest it was conservative in its beginnings – but it wanted to reform abuses and restore what was seen as the original and purer form of the constitution.

Namier and Brooke, the authors, have been criticised for focusing only on the electors themselves – a fairly small group – and the hard statistics.[2] By contrast, Newcastle University's recent Eighteenth Century

Political Participation and Electoral Culture (ECPPEC) project, within which Newcastle is a case study, argues that '[m]en and women, rich and poor, voters and non-voters, all participated – as consumers, but also as active makers of these unique cultural and political experiences'.[3] Here we consider how this participation played itself out in the two constituencies.

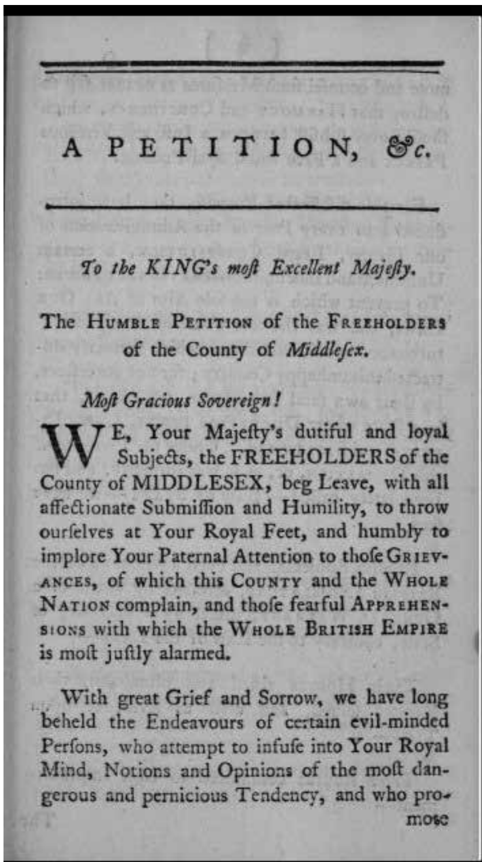
Background; the national picture

In the later eighteenth century, Britain was on the whole prosperous, though very unequal. A succession of bad harvests between 1760 and 1780, after good ones in earlier decades, led to much discontent.[4] The country had been embroiled in a series of land and sea wars, the most recent being the Seven Years' War (1756-63). To pay for them Britain had become the most heavily taxed country in Europe, with 80% of tax revenue paying for either a current war or the interest on debts from previous ones.[5]

In the kaleidoscope of changes of government over this time, the power of political 'parties' was reducing, though the terms Whig and Tory remained in common use.[6] Taking their place was a broad division between Court and Country. The 'Court' consisted of ministers, courtiers and other reliable supporters of the ministry currently in power. The 'Country' was all those MPs, not just from county seats, who while not a formal opposition, were generally suspicious of the ministry. Between them lay smaller groups and factions, currently out of power and wanting to be 'in'. The system was a patchwork of 'interests', groupings of MPs built up through personal and family loyalties, patronage, bribery, and on occasion intimidation. Any aristocrat who aspired to higher social status needed an 'interest', even if only of a few MPs, while for a provincial businessman, Parliament was an exclusive club that provided access to fixers, contracts, and help with solving local issues through legislation.

Parliamentary elections were required at least every seven years, though they could be called earlier. The distribution of seats, and the selection of voters, were matters of history, and largely unchanged for centuries. Cornish constituencies sent 44 MPs to Parliament, Northumberland 8.

The qualification for becoming a voter in most boroughs came through being admitted as a 'freeman', but how this came about varied enormously, and many of those freemen's votes were openly bought and sold. However, expensive election contests were avoided wherever possible, with the local factions reaching an 'accommodation' so that only two people ever stood for the two seats.



A PETITION, &c.

To the KING's moſt Excellent Majeſty.

The HUMBLE PETITION of the FREEHOLDERS of the County of *Middleſex.*

Moſt Gracious Sovereign!

WE, Your Majeſty's dutiful and loyal Subjects, the FREEHOLDERS of the County of MIDDLESEX, beg Leave, with all affectionate Submiſſion and Humility, to throw ourſelves at Your Royal Feet, and humbly to implore Your Paternal Attention to thoſe GRIEVANCES, of which this COUNTY and the WHOLE NATION complain, and thoſe fearful APPREHENSIONS with which the WHOLE BRITISH EMPIRE is moſt juſtly alarmed.

With great Grief and Sorrow, we have long beheld the Endeavours of certain evil-minded Perſons, who attempt to infuſe into Your Royal Mind, Notions and Opinions of the moſt dangerous and pernicious Tendency, and who pro-
mote

The first page of the Middlesex Petition of 1769, image from Archive.org (public domain)]

John Wilkes

John Wilkes (1725-97) was the eighteenth century's most famous – or notorious – radical politician before the outbreak of the French Revolution. He had been found guilty of seditious libel in 1764, for an issue of his monthly journal *The North Briton* in which he had campaigned against Government arbitrary actions and corruption. He then fled to France, but returned in 1768 and was imprisoned. Despite this, he was elected as MP for Middlesex in the 1768 General Election. He was expelled by the House of Commons, re-elected by Middlesex, re-expelled and so on, four times in all. Nearly 1600 freeholders from Middlesex (out of around 3,000) signed a petition presented to the King in May 1769. It was not a set of demands so much as a cry of pain and anger at the 'endeavours of certain evil minded persons' who had 'introduced into every part of the Administration of our happy, legal constitution, a certain unlimited and discretionary power'. The final paragraphs might be summed up as 'we love you, Your Majesty, but please Sort This Out'.[7]

The Wilkite Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights called for nationwide petitioning of Parliament, and this met a response in many towns including Newcastle. Over the next few years, the discontent hardened into a set of specific demands, to which MPs and Parliamentary candidates were asked to pledge their support.

Newcastle

Newcastle in the 1770s had somewhere between 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants. We do not know the number of freemen, the only ones with the vote. However, turnout at elections generally is estimated to have been around 90%, so the total may have been somewhere around 2,500. Only around 60% of those voting were from Newcastle and its close environs, though many of the rest came from within a day or so's travel.[8]

Newcastle had three weekly newspapers, and their printing presses were busy producing pamphlets, handbills, posters and ballad sheets, many of which have survived in local archives.[9] The vote at the election

itself was public, and recorded in the Poll Book published later. This has been digitised and transcribed, and is available on the ECPPEC website (ecppec.ncl.ac.uk)

A tight little oligarchy of businessmen dominated both the Corporation and Parliamentary seats. The mayor and aldermen in theory shared power with the Common Council and the Guild of Freemen. These were men who had been admitted to membership of one of the incorporated companies to whom this privilege applied. They qualified by being sons of freemen, by finishing an apprenticeship with a freeman, or by marriage, and then being sworn in by the mayor or aldermen.

Effectively, the mayor and aldermen controlled all the power. The only companies which really counted were the Hostmen – who controlled the coal trade – the Merchant Adventurers, the small group of Goldsmiths, and to some extent the Mariners. Some companies, particularly the Keelmen whose boats brought coal down the Tyne, were excluded altogether from power.[10] Newcastle had no contested elections between 1741 and 1774, three in the next six years, and then no more until 1820. Of its MPs, Sir Walter Blackett was an alderman from 1729, mayor five times including 1771; the older Matthew White Ridley was mayor four times, as was his son Sir Matthew, including 1774. (The son was a Sir when his father was not, because he had inherited the baronetcy of his maternal uncle in 1763).[11] The Blackett family ran a lead-mining and smelting business in Hexhamshire and Allendale, employing up to a thousand people.[12] The Ridleys had major coal-mining interests.

The Newcastle burgesses – the ordinary freemen as opposed to the 'magistrates' – took up the call for nationwide petitioning in the spring of 1769. In April, Thomas White, a glazier, asked permission to use the Guildhall for a meeting about the issue and to instruct the town's representatives. He was turned down, but the meeting went ahead anyway. The local weekly newspapers all gave the case extensive coverage, with the *Newcastle Chronicle* printing the Middlesex petition as a supplement to its issue of 10 June 1769.

The 'magistrates' refused to sign the statement, but it was sent to the MPs, Sir Walter Blackett and Matthew Ridley anyway. In reply, the MPs stressed their 'freedom of judging' as 'independent and uninfluenced representatives of Newcastle's freemen'.[13]

Two petitions from freemen and freeholders were presented by Sir Francis Blake Delaval, and his brother Thomas Delaval. Wilkes' release from prison in 1770 was met with wild celebrations. Delaval, chaired a meeting in which a remonstrance to the crown was read out and signed by the stewards of twenty-three incorporated companies and a committee of freeholders.

A direct link to the London Wilkites was George Grieve (also spelt Greive), an attorney from an Alnwick family,

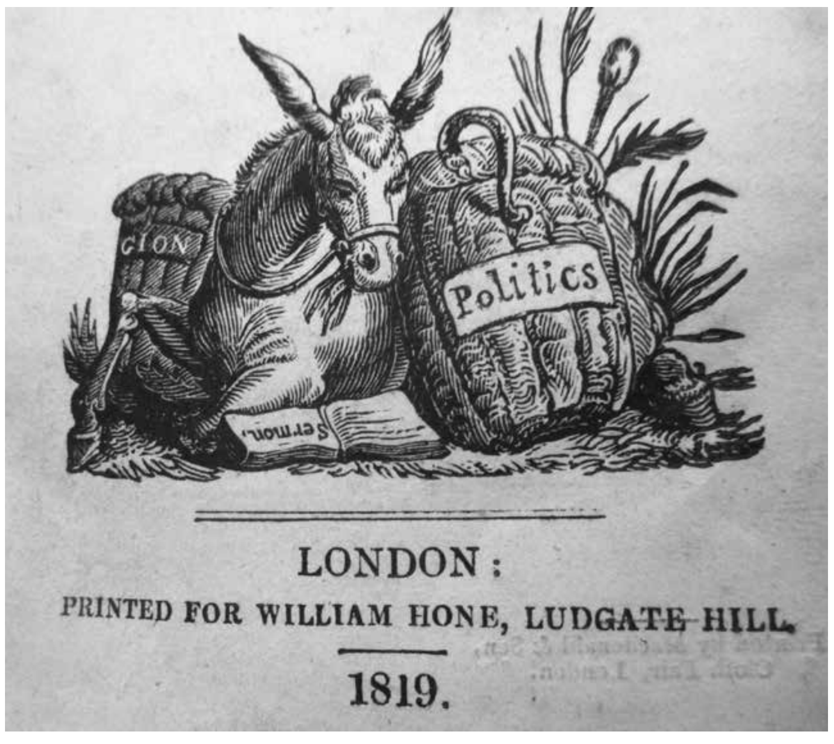
> 'a member of the Bill of Rights Society and a dining companion of Wilkes, a drafter of the Society's program and 'patriot' candidate for sheriff of London, his association with Newcastle began in mid-1770. For the next ten years he had a hand in almost every activity of the local opposition'.[14]

There was also Thomas Spence, later labelled 'the radical' for his activities in London after the outbreak of the French Revolution, and the Reverend James Murray, a Presbyterian Minister at a chapel in High Bridge Street. In 1768 he had published *Sermons to Asses,* with a radical message;

> We lose our liberty by not asserting it properly. It serves no purpose to cry out against the government, and the prime minister, when we are ourselves to blame (pp 78-9)

> It is not disloyalty to your King, nor in any way injurious to the constitution and laws of your country, to give instructions to the candidates you chuse for your members of parliament, and take their obligations that they will follow these

instructions.... - Members of Parliament are your servants, and the servants of their country; it is but reasonable that they be made accountable for their conduct (pp 87-88)[15]



The frontispiece of the 1819 edition of James Murray's Sermons to Asses, image courtesy Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne]

Around this group were collected a number of activist freemen, mocked by the elite as 'raggamuffins', a term they took up for themselves. Their committee, chaired by mariner Thomas Maude, liaised with the elected stewards of the artisan companies.

Many of the radicals were young men, with George Greive aged only 25, and were battling against much older men.[16] They had the support of Thomas Slack, the editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle.* They could consistently persuade a thousand people or more to vote with them or to sign their petitions. Sixteen political clubs were formed in Newcastle between 1769-84, plus other debating societies. The Constitutional Club, founded in 1772 under the chairmanship of George Greive, provided the organising ability while Murray, Spence and others provided the propaganda.[17]

The radical burgesses considered they were being blocked at almost every turn by the Magistrates among whom they included the MPs who refused to take their petitions to Parliament or the Crown or to accept instructions. In fact the position was not so clear-cut. Blackett and Ridley had voted with the Opposition over Wilkes at the beginning of the controversy. However in November 1770 Blackett stood up in the House of Commons and repudiated his previous votes, saying that he now thought that Wilkes was 'incapacitated, constitutionally incapacitated, from sitting in this House during this Parliament'.[18]

The Wilkes issue merged into agitation about the local question of the Town Moor, the area of common land to the north of the borough boundary that had historically been used for grazing by the freemen and freemen's widows. A committee of freemen had been set up to negotiate with the Mayor and Aldermen, but before it had resolved anything, Sir Walter Blackett as Mayor and his colleagues decided to enclose and let the whole Moor to a Durham farmer. The freemen tore down the fences, were taken to court, were defended by leading Wilkesite lawyer Sergeant Glynn, and won their case in August 1773 to much celebration.[19]

Their victory meant that in 1774 Parliament passed an Act regulating the control of the Moor. As Murray narrated, 'by this accommodation the exclusive right of the burgesses and widows to the Town-Moor and Leases is to be confirmed to them by act of Parliament for ever… the late lease is declared invalid, and totally given up'.[20]

The 1774 Election

The General Election of October 1774 was held earlier than the law required, but had been well-heralded, allowing much time for preparation. The Burgesses' party decided to challenge the Magistrates. They inserted a *Chronicle* advertisement on 2 July 1774, calling together the company stewards to a meeting to nominate candidates;

> Their Motive for this Solicitation arises from the repeated Oppressions the Burgesses in general have received from the Members and ruling Part of the Corporation, endeavouring not only to wrest the Town-Moor, &c, out of their Hands, but in other influences of their parliamentary Conduct, and which must eventually cease by separating their Members from the Magistracy.

Old Matthew Ridley was being replaced by his son, the baronet (up till then MP for Morpeth), so Blackett was their real target. He was very much a grandee, but his arrogation of power was souring his reputation. A derisive 'epitaph' for his popularity, 'which departed this transitory world' on the day the Town Moor Act was passed, was published in the short-lived *Freemen's Magazine*.[21]

The burgesses' candidates were very respectable, though accused of being 'strangers'. Constantine Phipps, a naval officer from East Anglia who had been an Arctic explorer, gave up his seat in Lincoln to stand in the burgesses' interest. The other candidate was Thomas Delaval from Seaton Delaval, who was running much of the family business and had helped present petitions for the burgesses. As one commentator had it (*Chronicle, 3* September 1774), 'the raggamuffin party puffs their cause with such vigour, as promises fair, that RIGHT will not be overcome the next election by MIGHT'.

The Burgesses' candidates put a notice in the *Chronicle* of 15 October, 1774, stating that they had agreed to a Wilkesite four-point 'Test' presented by the burgesses;

> I. To exert himself to bring about triennial or shorter Parliaments
> II. To procure a new Place and Pensions Bill, to reduce the number of Placemen and Pensions in the House of Commons
> III. A MORE equal Representation of the People. And
> IV. To get rescinded that resolution of the House of Commons (that vital Stab to the Constitution) which seated Colonel Lutterell a Member for *Middlesex*, instead of *John Wilkes*, Esqr, the legally elected Member.[22]

A fuller ten-point manifesto was printed in the first issue of the *Freeman's Magazine*. The town was awash with handbills, leaflets, and printed election songs and poems for several months, incorporating personal attacks as well as arguments about principles. Many were reprinted in the newspapers, along with long letters from correspondents on both sides. Murray issued *The Contest*, advertised as '[A]n account of the Matters in Dispute between the Magistrates and Burgesses. With an examination of the Merits and Conduct of the four Candidates in the present contested Election for the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne'.[23] (*Chronicle*, 15 Oct 1774). Much of this material was issued free, and would have been available in the clubs and societies, and also in the Guild Companies' own meeting halls.

The magistrates' party played it tough. One election song describes Sir Walter riding into the town with 'five score' (a hundred) horsemen behind him.[24] The magistrates flooded the poll with 'out-voters' from Northumberland and further afield, claiming to be freemen, and there were long legal arguments about the status of the lists provided. But, Murray asserts;

> Yet the burgesses would have stemmed this united torrent with ease and success, had they not been crushed by their out-lying brethren … and the accidental intervening of a

> guild, at which their opponents took the advantage of making no less than SIX HUNDRED and FIFTEEN, either legal or illegal voters in about eighteen days; out of which scarce TWO HUNDRED were made such for their candidates: every one of whose titles were as clear as the sun, or they never would have been admitted.[25]

While many were admitted in the formal Guild meeting (of members of all the companies meeting together) on 10 October, others were admitted in a private house where one of the candidates, Sir Matthew Ridley, was sitting as mayor with members of the Common Council in permanent session.

By around midday on 17 October, Phipps and Delaval gave up, to Murray's disappointment. The Magistrates continued their activities, and 'ransacked every place, and brought voters from the most distant parts, and polled every man that they had ready: and … gave out that they would convince opposition, their strength was incomparably superior, and prevent future attempts, by shewing the greatness of the present disparity'.

Murray surmised that they wanted to ensure that they had enough genuine voters in reserve to keep their majority even if many others were challenged in the courts. He was certain there was illegality, the magistrates having 'polled a great number of suspected minors – known paupers – and new voters'.

Blackett and Ridley won heavily, with a 2-1 majority. Members of the elite companies voted solidly for Blackett and Ridley; the artisan and maritime companies were much more split.[26] The outvoters and new freemen affected only the size of the magistrates' victories, not the result. A higher proportion of the burgesses' supporters did come from within the borough and just outside it (within the boundaries of modern Newcastle), but probably not enough to have affected the result. Knox found that 65% of the new 1774 freemen voted Blackett/ Ridley, compared to 58% of those made in 1770-73.[27]

To cover later events briefly, despite defeat the agitation continued over the next few years, particularly over the government's attempted coercion of the American colonies. On 14 February 1777 Sir Walter Blackett died, and a writ was immediately issued for a by-election on 27 February. In the time available, the Burgesses had trouble finding a candidate, and had to accept the offer of Andrew Stoney Bowes, who had married the heiress of the major estate of Gibside in County Durham.[28] Though a most unpleasant character, he lost to Sir John Trevelyan, Blackett's nephew and heir, by only 95 votes. He persuaded the Burgesses that they had a duty to put him up again in the 1780 election, where he did win one seat. He then did very little in Parliament for the next 4 years, and withdrew at the last minute in 1784 when it was apparent he would lose. There were then no more contested elections in Newcastle until 1820. The Ridleys continued with their monopoly of one seat. Coal-owner Charles Brandling, who had taken the other seat in 1784, was succeeded by his son in 1802.

Morpeth

Morpeth was a tenth the size of Newcastle, and even at the peak of the struggle had only a tenth the number of freemen. There was no local newspaper or printer in the town, so there are no handbills or pamphlets, and Morpeth news is only mentioned occasionally in the Newcastle newspapers. However, an invaluable collection of electoral correspondence between 1766 and 1776 was published by the Surtees Society in 2017.[29] Most of it is between Presbyterian clergyman Robert Trotter, and two lawyers practising in London, John Spottiswoode and Francis Eyre. Surtees' volume was edited by the late Joseph Fewster, who had written his doctoral thesis on Morpeth's administration and elections as far back as 1960.[30] Many other documents are in Carlisle, at Cumbria Archives, reflecting the involvement of the Earls of Carlisle.[31] The dispute over the 1774 election went to a House of Commons Committee in 1775, and there were very full reports of the evidence in the local papers at the time.

Though small, with perhaps 3,000 inhabitants, Morpeth was not isolated. It was on the Great North Road where that bridged the River Wansbeck, and had an increasingly important cattle market, meaning there were plenty of pubs. Meetings of the freeholders from this part of Northumberland would take place in its Town Hall at election times. In 1767 the 'British Coffee House' was established in a pub in the Market Place, thanks to Trotter, so Morpeth people could read the Newcastle and London papers.

Morpeth was a 'borough by prescription', meaning that it had no formal charter. The Lordship of the Manor was held by the Howard family, Earls of Carlisle in 1661. The rules for the administration of the manorial borough had been laid down in 1523. There were seven craft and trade 'companies', of which originally the most important was the Tanners. The companies could nominate a limited number of their members, who were called 'Brothers', as freemen each year in batches of 24, six from the Tanners and 3 each from the other companies. Before they could vote in Parliamentary elections, these nominees had to be 'sworn and admitted to that status at the lord of the manor's court leet'.[32] ('Court leets' were convened by manorial lords to deal with minor offences, to regulate trading standards, and to deal with some administrative matters within the manor's boundaries.)[33]

Over time, the borough's elements of self-government had been squeezed and eroded by the Lords of the Manor and their stewards. For the Earl, Morpeth's role as a source of two Parliamentary seats was more important than its economic well-being. Even uncontested elections could be expensive, so keeping down the numbers of freemen was a priority. In 1747 the Corporation signed a secret agreement that the companies would be barred from holding an election for freemen without his consent and that no-one they elected could be admitted without his approval.

By this stage, the Tanners' trade had declined, but they still depended on the Carlisle landholdings for the oak bark they needed for their processes, and so could be relied on to do the Carlisles' bidding. Freemen from all the

other companies, could also share in the bribes and other perquisites, but more and more Brothers were finding themselves blocked from moving up, with effects on their ability to trade. By the time of the 1761 General Election, there were only 49 Freemen, many of them elderly, and the Earl was a minor, with his affairs being looked after by Robert Ord, Lord Chief Baron of the Scottish Exchequer. There was sufficient discontent for the Freemen to elect the Scottish Lord Gairlies by a single vote over Ord's son.

At the concluſion of the poll, the numbers upon the Bailiffs books were as follow, viz.

For Mr Delme	——	119
Mr Byron	——	108
Mr Eyre	——	99
Mr Bigge	——	80

As ſoon as the Bailiffs had declared theſe numbers, a perſon in the Court ſhouted out at the window, to a number of perſons collected together in the market place, *A falſe return, a falſe return.* This ſeemed to be a ſignal for a general attack. Immediately they all ruſhed into the hall with the utmoſt violence, and a moſt terrible riot and confuſion enſued. Mr Delme and Mr Byron eſcaped to their lodgings with great difficulty, and not without hurt. The Bailiffs, and Mr Lavie, agent to Lord Carliſle, were left confined in the hall with this company of deſperate ruffians, who vowed in the moſt ſolemn manner, and with the bittereſt execrations, that not one of them ſhould go out alive till they had returned Mr Eyre for a member. In this very dangerous ſituation, they ſaw no poſſible means of ſaving their lives but by an immediate compliance with whatever was required of them; and Mr Eyre was accordingly, by their command, returned a member.

The ferocity of the mob, upon this occaſion, may eaſily be ſuppoſed to have been to the laſt degree dreadful, when it is known, that, previous to the Election, many of them in cool blood threatened Mr Lavie, both by letter and in perſon, that he never ſhould go alive from Morpeth.

A REAL BYESTANDER.

'The 1774 Morpeth election riot as described in the Newcastle Courant, 22 October 1774 (page 4)]

Ord and his agents responded swiftly, by calling four Brothers – two of whom had purchased the rights of others - to take the oath as Freemen at the next court leet, just two days after the election. Not surprisingly, there was a disturbance, and the court was adjourned. Several of those involved were prosecuted in the London courts on a charge of riot, suffering considerable hardship and in one case being held in jail in Newcastle for several months. They were found guilty but Lord Carlisle's stepfather paid the heavy fines imposed. The prosecution embittered relations between supporters and opponents of the Carlisle family for a generation.[34] Garlies turned out to be little help to the Morpeth people's cause but Trotter,

> who regarded the Carlisles' domination as bondage and slavery, set about reviving the spirit of liberty that had been almost extinguished in the Borough. He was assisted by William Crawford, a wine merchant, who had handled much of the financial side of Garlies' campaign and now, known as the 'General' assumed a similar role for the 'Friends of Liberty'.[35]

By 1764 the dissidents were ready to ask for a legal opinion from leading barrister John Dunning, and raised the money for a trial early in 1766, on the question of whether two excluded Brothers should be admitted as Freemen. Rather than fight the case and have a finding against them, the Carlisles submitted. By this stage, the next General Election was already in people's minds. 'We are determined if possible to shake off our oppressor's yoke, and chuse two representatives in opposition to the Carlisle junto', Crawford told his London friend John Spottiswoode. In his turn, Spottiswoode told his wealthy lawyer friend Francis Eyre about the Morpeth issue, and Eyre himself volunteered to stand.[36]

Eyre was an attorney acting for merchants of wealth and influence in cases relating to trade and plantation affairs, . During the Seven Years' War he was joint-owner of at least three privateering ships, with at least one very

valuable prize coming his way. He saw no contradiction in campaigning for 'liberty' at home and profiting from slavery; part of his fortune went in purchasing a substantial estate in Jamaica.

Eyre had the wealth, and the staying power, but he was not a particularly good candidate. As he himself said, 'I am always lazy when I have a letter to answer'. He was often slow to pay bills, and had no local base in Northumberland, though he did try several times to purchase an estate.

The run-up to the 1768 general election was a messy saga of court actions to force the admission of freemen excluded by the Carlisle interest (with the court costs paid by Eyre), negotiations, and compromises in which the Carlisle appointees acted in bad faith. As the election approached, Eyre found himself without a running mate, while Sir Matthew White Ridley of nearby Blagdon, the son of Newcastle MP Matthew White Ridley, was drafted in as his opponent. On polling day, Ridley was able to bring in a 'formidable mob of pitmen' who committed 'many irregularities'.[37] Eyre appeared to have beaten Ridley thanks to the 'mandamus men', the freemen who had been previously excluded, but their votes were then struck off because of irregularities in the admission process, and the returning officer declared Ridley and his running mate Beckford returned. Eyre petitioned Parliament to have this overturned, but lost the case.[38]

Eyre determined to stick it out, and in November 1769 he drafted a petition for his supporters to sign, linking Morpeth and Middlesex, and begging the king to redress their complaints 'among the many great grievances complained of by others your Majesty's loyal and affectionate subjects'.[39] Somewhat watered down by Trotter, this gathered nearly 300 signatures among the burgesses, not a bad total in so small a town.

Over the next few years, enthusiasm for their liberties among the burgesses continued. Thanks to the legal actions, the Earl or his steward could not prevent freemen being admitted once the companies had elected them, and their numbers more than doubled before the next election. The Tanners, however, ran out of candidates in 1772, and the question of whether the other companies could validly elect their 18, without the

Tanners' six in each batch, became highly important. The Earl brought in Germain Lavie, a French silk mercer, as his financial manager in 1772. Lavie used an election for a master of the Grammar School – usually a minor matter of a poorly-paid post in a faltering institution - as a dry run for the coming election. He was alleged to have spent at least £1,500 of the Earl's money, paying £20 or £30 for a single vote. He won over enough freemen to win the vote, and was vindictive towards the losing party, evicting them and offering new tenancies on conditions 'that the souls of the honest abhorred'.[40]

As in Newcastle, the calling of the General Election in October 1774 meant much pressure on both sides to find candidates. The Earl put in his brother-in-law Peter Delmé and cousin William Byron, who were pelted with stones when they arrived, while death threats were made to Lavie (along with many unpleasant comments about his Franco-Jewish ethnicity). Eyre managed at a very late stage to persuade a local landowner, Thomas Bigge of Benton, to join him.

On polling day itself, 13 October, Eyre made what supporters described as a spirited speech and his opponents an 'inflammatory' one. Returning officer Andrew Fenwick, a loyal retainer of the Earl, refused to accept the votes of the 'eighteeners' – those admitted as freemen in the batches where no Tanners were put forward – and listed them separately. At the close of poll, Fenwick declared Byron and Delme elected, and 'a terrible battle ensued', according to the *Newcastle Chronicle*, while 'A Real Byestander' in the more conservative *Courant* claimed that 'this company of desperate ruffians… vowed in the most solemn manner, and with the bitterest execrations, that not one of them should go out alive till they had returned Mr Eyre for a member'.[41]

Eyre was declared elected, along with Delmé. Byron petitioned against him in the House of Commons, and won his case in January 1775. Eyre appealed, but Parliament was then prorogued and by the time sittings resumed, the Earl of Carlisle's friends had organised to ensure that they were entitled to attend the committee. Faced with certain defeat, Eyre withdrew.

The aftermath can be covered briefly. Immediately after the election, the Earl began court proceedings against 82 'eighteeners', to remove their freeman status. The case went in his favour, but Eyre got leave from a higher court for a new trial, which never seems to have happened. The verdict and the activities of the Carlisle agents blocked further elections, so that the numbers of freemen declined to earlier levels. 14 of the rioters were indicted at the Northumberland Quarter Sessions in April 1775, and bound over for a later trial, but nothing further is known about this.[42]

In mid 1775, Byron died suddenly. Trotter discouraged Eyre from wasting his time and money by standing again. The Carlisles' candidate, Gilbert Elliot, was elected unopposed, and there were no more contested elections until 1802. Eyre himself became MP for Great Grimsby in 1780, but had lost most of his fortune and estates by the time of his death in 1797.

Conclusion

Different as the two stories of the elections in Newcastle upon Tyne and Morpeth are, they have common factors. They show the urge among ordinary people for independence from the curbs being imposed by the ruling elite, but also what formidable obstacles those challenging the oligarchy and looking for reform were up against, and how far local issues and national ones were intertwined. The burgesses put up a good fight, but their efforts were defeated by 'interest', dubious electoral practices, and in Morpeth by bribery and intimidation as well. The Newcastle radicals did make gains in their years of agitation, but for Morpeth what they gained at the beginning was lost later on.

Major Parliamentary reform had to wait nearly sixty years.

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Clerical Exactions from the Poor
William Parker, Ballast Hills, and Affordable Burials for the Working Poor, 1800-1857

Mike Greatbatch

In December 1853, the chartist William Parker wrote an open letter to the editors of the *Newcastle Guardian* in which he condemned the crippling cost of Anglican burial fees demanded from those least able to afford them. He cited as an example a burial at Saint Ann's Church a fortnight before, when a mother and her 14-days old twin infants were buried in the same coffin, for which service her grieving husband was charged £1 5s. This event produced one of William Parker's most memorable turns of phrase; in condemning the lack of Christian charity shown to the bereaved family he stated:

> `if such eagerness is shown by those whose master told them to "Feed my lambs", such men as me may be pardoned for thinking that they read the command thus - "Fleece my lambs" '.

In September, in response to the deaths from cholera of almost two thousand inhabitants in less than a month, Newcastle's civic and ecclesiastical leadership had closed the town's four parish churchyards

for unconsecrated burials and permanently closed the burial ground at Ballast Hills. The latter was the one place where, for over two centuries, the working poor could bury their loved ones free from the imposition of clerical fees. Estimates of the numbers buried at Ballast Hills vary and only by reference to surviving registers between 1792 and 1853 can we be confident of the annual totals. What these registers illustrate is that burials at Ballast Hills were overwhelmingly from working class families. The chief attraction was the minimal cost of burials – just 3s 6d - out of which one shilling paid the sexton to dig the grave and attend the interment, and sixpence was paid to Newcastle Corporation (as owners of the freehold) by way of the Poor Rate. There was no obligation to pay for a minister.[1]

The permanent closure of Ballast Hills burial ground in September 1853 created a dilemma for the working poor as it effectively forced them to pay the fees required for burial at Saint Ann's or at the privately owned cemeteries at Westgate Hill and Jesmond. To resolve this dilemma, Parker called on the civic authorities to provide new places of interment affordable by all, otherwise `how is it possible for the poor to bury their dead – where can they get the means?'.[2]

William Parker

By the 1850s William Parker was living as a 61-year old Chelsea pensioner on Lime Street in the Ouseburn district of Newcastle. Born in Wandsworth, Surrey, Parker came to Tyneside following his discharge from the Army in September 1820 and during the next three decades he built a reputation for his advocacy of working people and their free-born rights in English law.

When he became a chartist in the 1830s it was to campaign for the national petition for franchise reform, placing faith in the rule of law and the sovereignty of Parliament. As a representative of the Newcastle unemployed in the 1840s, Parker carried out a survey to provide quantifiable evidence to the Mayor and other civic leaders of the more than 3,800 unemployed and their dependents in desperate need of relief.

And in January 1848, Parker wrote a lengthy petition to Parliament on behalf of nine north-eastern districts of Chelsea Pensioners, demanding redress of arrears in pension payments.[3]

Thus it was that in December 1853, William Parker began his open letter to the *Newcastle Guardian* by reminding readers that `the British people are a people of law; and it is perfectly clear that no right is more clearly recognized by the law than is the right of every parishioner to a place of interment, in a ground belonging to the parish, for his dead'.

The inequalities and iniquities associated with the death and bereavement of working people had long been an issue to which Parker directed his intellect and moral outrage. At a meeting of Ouseburn Chartists in October 1841 he cited the case of Charlotte Smith, `an unfortunate young woman, after trying every means to get a living, as a last resource fled to prostitution', as an example of the iniquity of Warburton's Anatomy Bill. This Bill had been passed by Parliament in 1832 to address public disquiet occasioned by a spate of thefts of corpses from burial grounds for use in medical schools. The Bill allowed the use of any corpse if left unclaimed for 48-hours from the time of death. This ruling inevitably impacted disproportionately on those without a permanent address, be they itinerant labour, vagrants, or simply anyone unable to pay rent for lodgings, and such persons were almost always working class and living in poverty.

In the case of Charlotte Smith, poor health resulted in her admittance to the Newcastle Infirmary and then the Fever Hospital, and from both institutions she was subsequently discharged `house-less, penny-less, and uncured'. Finally arriving at the Poor House, she died on 13 October, and as her corpse was being taken for burial an attempt was made to take her to the Surgeons' Hall. This was prevented by the intervention of a crowd of onlookers who insisted that she be taken to All Saints churchyard, shouting loudly that `if they starved people to death they should not cut them up afterwards'. For Parker, this event illustrated how working people could make the laws work better, by demonstrating their opposition to bad laws and demanding the authorities enact reform.[4]

In his letter of September 1853, Parker conjoined the *principle* of every citizens' lawful right to a parish burial with the *reality* of `the heavy burthens thereby entailed upon the poor, at a time when they are the least able to bear them'. His awareness of the crippling costs of a consecrated burial was not just based on the experience of his fellow workers in 1853, for Parker had himself had to face the dilemma of financing the burial of his wife, Isabella, in 1836.

William Parker and Isabella Potts had married at St Mary's Church, Gateshead on 23 July 1821. The couple had three daughters, Mary and Isabella (both born 1824 or 1825) and Sarah (born 1826 or 1827). The cause of Isabella Parker's death is unknown but she was buried at the Ballast Hills on 26 April 1836. Her age was recorded in the burial register as 51-years.[5]

Burial Costs

Savings schemes for funeral costs were actively encouraged amongst the working poor by Newcastle's ruling elite through the operation of the Friendly Society Act of 1793. This Act encouraged the registration of benevolent societies and savings clubs with the local magistrates, and provided some protection of funds in the event of default. For the members of these societies, an overriding concern was to become self-supporting and, in particular, free from the opprobrium of dependency on poor relief and the scrutiny of the parish overseers.[6]

The rules of some of these societies have survived and two from the Ouseburn area serve to illustrate the challenges facing working people when saving for a funeral for themselves or a loved one. The Ouseburn Good Intent Society began on 8 January 1811 and held its regular meetings at the New Hawk Inn just east of Ouseburn Bridge. In addition to sick benefits, the Society offered a saving scheme that paid members the sum of £4 for his and his widow's funeral, including 6s deducted for ale or liquor. The funeral of a child under thirteen years of age was supported by a payment of £1 10s, but only if such child was born in wedlock or

baptized, the exception being for infants that died within fifteen minutes of birth.[7]

A short distance from the New Hawk Inn was Joseph Coxon's Sun Inn, where a Benevolent Society of Women held their meetings from 5 June 1809 onwards. This Society appears to have been operated by women on behalf of women, with the specific purpose of providing funds for funeral expenses and mournings. As such, its funds aimed to cover the costs of funeral expenses of £6 for herself and her husband (`but only for one husband'), and 30s for the funeral of any of `her lawfully-begotten children, if baptized, and under twenty years of age'. Once again, money was deducted to cover the cost of ale (6s, or 3s for a child's funeral) and to pay for the services of the stewardesses and a clerk (1s each) on the occasion of an adult's funeral.[8]

The rules governing both Societies reflects the influence of the established church and the desire of their members to save sufficient funds to pay for a Christian funeral that included coffin, interment, and the services of a vicar or curate. The alternative was burial in unconsecrated ground, which all parish churchyards provided for, but this was widely seen as a pauper burial, associated with dependency on the poor relief.

Records of burials from the Infirmary in the 1840s provide evidence of the cost of these burials as they include receipts for payments for burials at Saint Ann's Church and Ballast Hills. For example, on 5 August 1845, the Infirmary paid for a mariner named William Jackson to be buried at Ballast Hills in a grave 4ft deep at the standard cost of 3s 6d. On 27 August 1847, the clerk at Saint Ann's issued a receipt to the Infirmary for 3s for the interment of Thomas Wood, who had died aged 74-years. Similar receipts for the years 1847-49 confirm that a pauper grave at Saint Ann's cost 3s but most of the receipts also record the additional cost of bearers (2s) and a cart to convey the corpse to the churchyard (also 2s), resulting in a total cost of 7s. When Whinstone Miles was interred at Saint Ann's on 9 July 1849 the total cost was 9s but as no details are included it is not clear what this additional 2s paid for.[9]

So, whilst it was possible to be buried in an Anglican churchyard for less than the fee at Ballast Hills, if the clergy insisted on the presence of bearers then the total cost was greater than at Ballast Hills. However, the most injurious cost was to a person's reputation, for burial in unconsecrated ground adjacent to burials in consecrated ground inevitably attracted the odious association of pauperism. The advantage of the burial ground at Ballast Hills was that *all* burials cost the same – the standard 3s 6d – and only incurred additional costs if the grave was desired to be dug deeper than the standard four feet depth.

Burials at Ballast Hills Burial Ground

As a chartist, William Parker had organized and led open-air meetings at the Ballast Hills, on the east side of the Ouseburn, and it was there, on 30 October 1838, that he declared his support for the national petition and his firm belief that laws are all the better for allowing working men the opportunity to help make them through elected representatives at Parliament. He famously declared that: `They were told to obey the laws. So they would upon one condition, and that was that they should have a share in making them'.[10]

Ballast had been dumped east of the lower Ouseburn since the 1600s and by the 1850s this extensive area of wasteland was largely built upon by factories and workers' dwellings. An area had been set aside for burials possibly as early as the mid-1600s, when Huguenot refugees from France were brought to Newcastle to begin the manufacture of glass. A perfectly preserved skeleton dating from one of these early burials was discovered in a yard belonging to the glassworks of Sir Matthew White Ridley in 1845.[11] Thus began the tradition of dissenters choosing Ballast Hills as a place of interment independent of the Anglican churchyards in Newcastle town. Some of these Huguenot refugees later became Quakers and they were soon joined by Presbyterians from Scotland.

Many of these early dissenters were tradesmen and success in business and trade meant that some became leading figures associated with the

operation of the burial ground. When a committee of trustees petitioned the Common Council to secure permission to enclose the burial ground in 1785, this included John Kidd, a prominent Newcastle flax merchant, and William Davison, a weaver based in Ouseburn.[12]

By the 1830s some dissenter families were well integrated into Newcastle's ruling elite. These included Anthony Clapham (merchant and soap manufacturer), James Losh (barrister), and George Fife Angas (merchant), all of whom were Trustees of Ballast Hills and founder shareholders in the purchase of land and the laying-out of a new dissenter cemetery at Westgate Hill in 1828.[13] The rules for this privately owned cemetery reflect the growing concern of the dissenter community for respectable burials in family graves or vaults (minimum cost £5) with interment fees of five shillings for a child (under 10-years) and 7s 6d for anyone older.[14].

The abandonment of Ballast Hills by Newcastle's leading dissenter families in the 1820s reflects their growing desire to secure the same standard of interment traditionally enjoyed by their Anglican neighbours, and increasing concern and distaste at the overcrowded nature of their existing burial ground.[15] For example, it was claimed that in the years 1819 to 1824 more burials were carried out at Ballast Hills than in all the parochial churchyards in Newcastle combined. Evidence from the yearly published Bills of Mortality certainly appear to substantiate this claim, suggesting that apart from 1821, Ballast Hills accounted for over 50% of all recorded burials in Newcastle during these years.

When Isabella Parker was buried at Ballast Hills on 26 April 1836, she was one of three persons buried that day, and one of a total of 776 burials recorded in the register in that year. The Bills of Mortality for 1836 suggests that Ballast Hills accounted for at least 44% of the total number of burials in Newcastle that year.[16]

Prior to the adoption of burial registers at Ballast Hills this burial ground was often not included in the annually published Bills of Mortality, and if it was, then the number of burials was estimated. For example, in 1765 and 1767 the burials at Ballast Hills were \`reckoned at 300',

in 1783 they were `reckoned above 200', and in 1789 it was `supposed those interred there in the course of the year amount to near 600'.[17] Only with the adoption of registers by the trustees sometime after 1785 do we begin to get an accurate record of both the numbers and the economic circumstance of those buried.

The early registry of burials appears to have been simply a record of the numbers, from which Newcastle Corporation could calculate their assessment (the 6d per burial) towards the Poor Rate. The first volume shows evidence of rough handling and poor storage, and the earliest surviving records cover the period 2 July 1792 to 30 April 1801. The register was compiled by the caretaker and grave-digger George Atkins, and his rather unsophisticated spelling makes for difficult reading. Some records were inserted as loose pieces of paper, some are crossed-out, and the entries for February and March 1801 are missing. Nevertheless, George Atkins' records generally improve in layout and appearance over the years and by 1800 we are finally able to identify people's trade and place of abode.[18]

The first time that Atkins consistently recorded the trade and abode of the families whose loved ones were buried at Ballast Hills is 17 January 1800, and his record for that month is presented in Table 1. An extract from his original handwritten record in the burial register is provided for comparison in Figure 1

Although limited to just thirty entries, the record for January 1800 is typical of those throughout 1800 and 1801, in terms of both trade

Table 1: Burials at Ballast Hills, 17-31 January 1800			
Date	**Trade**	**Abode**	**Age**
17	cordwainer	Ouseburn	7
18	keelman	Sandgate	26
18	-	Pipewellgate	2
19	woman	Keelman's Hospital	56 *
19	glassman	Ballast Hills	68
19	labourer	Close	25 *
19	mariner	Sandgate	70 *
19	labourer	Pandon Bank	67
20	rat catcher	Sandgate	3
21	labourer	Fenwick Entry	60 *
21	brewer	Close	1
22	widow	Pilgrim Street	72 *
22	mariner	Topshom	18 **
30	-	Ouseburn	2 *
22	collier	Ouseburn	- *
23	keelman	Head Of The Side	75
25	joiner	Wall Knowles	72
25	tailor	Heaton	10 months
26	widow	Sandgate, Swirle	60 *
26	labourer	Peter's Entry	-
26	spinster	Peter's Entry	85 *
27	glass maker	High Glass Houses	70
27	-	Sandgate	35 *
28	cooper	St Nicholas Church	25
28	widow	Newcastle	72 *
28	-	Byker Hill	60 *
29	seaman	Quayside	60
29	labourer	Byker Bar	67
31	labourer	Back Of The Wall	57
31	waterman	Keelman's Hospital	38
31	-	High Bridge	60 *
* indicates female burials; if married then their husband's trade was recorded. If a child was buried then the father's trade was recorded.			
** Topshom was a port on the River Exe in Devon, known for its shipbuilding.			
Source: Ballast Hills Burial Register, 1792 - 1801. TWAM CE/BA/33/1			

and abode. The greatest number of those buried in these years were members of working class families from Sandgate and Byker, the two most industrialised districts in the Newcastle area at that time.

Figure 1. Extract from the Ballast Hills Burial Register, 17 – 25 January 1800. (TWAM CE/BA/33/1)

If this proletarian nature was true for the first surviving register of burials, it is equally true of the entries recorded in the last surviving register, which covers the period November 1847 to September 1853.[19] By this time both the layout and the handwriting had become far more standardized, reflecting the influence of Newcastle Corporation in regulating burials and their enumeration following the relocation of dissenter burials to Westgate Hill Cemetery in the 1820s.

The final burial at Ballast Hills took place on 18 September 1853, and an analysis of the 1,080 burials during the preceding twelve months confirms that Ballast Hills continued to be the primary location for the interment of the working poor.

Analysis of the occupations recorded in the final twelve months of burials at Ballast Hills is notable for the huge number that were recorded as belonging to families whose trade was that of a `labourer', being 339 or 31%

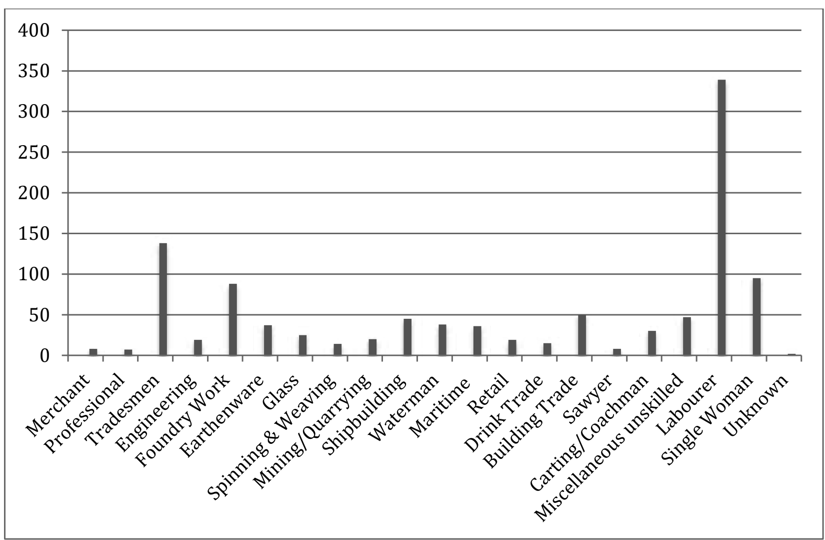

Figure 2. Occupations recorded in the Burial Register for Ballast Hills between 19 September 1852 and 18 September 1853.

Source: Ballast Hills Burial Register, 1847 - 1853. TWAM CE/BA/33/11

Professional = surgeon, agent, teacher, clerk, auctioneer, and Custom House Officers
Maritime = mariners, pilots, boatmen, and Royal Navy
Miscellaneous = pavior, match maker, cork cutter, porter, gardener, tanner, skinner, cook, hawkers, husbandmen, and a soldier

of the total. However, almost all the occupations recorded involved laboring work, including those calling themselves potters, tanners, brick makers, glass makers, and certainly most if not all of those employed in foundry work. This is also true for those engaged in maritime trades, for whilst this category included four master mariners and a pilot, the majority were recorded simply as mariners (29 in total), reflecting Sandgate's close association with shipping.

The only exceptions to this proletarian character were those burials for family members from merchant/broker and office-based professional occupations like agents and customs officials.

Family members belonging to tradesmen represented the second largest group of burials (138), including some skilled craftsmen such as clock makers, cabinet makers, millwrights, painters and guilders, a sadler, and a coach maker. But even if we include the joiners, carpenters, masons and bricklayers employed in the building trade, overall tradesmen accounted for no more than 17.5% of the total. This suggests that over 80% of the 1,080 burials at Ballast Hills during the twelve months before the burial ground was permanently closed were from families of the working poor – factory workers, river workers, shipbuilders, foundry workers, and of course, labourers.

One other group that stands out is the 95 who were recorded in the register as `single woman'. Some of these were unmarried women who had died but the majority were mothers of infant children who had perished, including those recorded as `a still born child'. Of the 1,080 burials at Ballast Hills in the twelve months prior to 18 September 1853, no less than 450 were infants (less than two years old) and 185 were children aged two to twelve years; these 635 burials represented a staggering 59% of all burials during that twelve month period.

Cholera Morbus, 1853

Cholera returned to Newcastle in September 1853, and its impact was both fearful and, for some observers, predictable. Despite the lessons learned in the last cholera epidemic of 1831-32, Newcastle's municipal leaders had failed to enforce the various bylaws designed to remove the most over-crowded lodging-houses, courts and entries that characterized much of the Sandgate waterfront.

In an emotionally charged public meeting held at the Lecture Room in Nelson Street on 11 October 1853, members of Newcastle's medical profession roundly condemned the corporation for its failure to remove

overcrowded places like Craig's Entry near Pandon, or provide clean water, despite the creation of the Whittle Dean Water Company (1845) to supply rain water from reservoirs near Harlow Hill.[20]

The purpose of the meeting at Nelson Street was to canvass opinion and gain support for a public inquiry into the causes of the recent excessive mortality and the measures needed to prevent future epidemics. Those who had suffered the most were Newcastle's working class, and the Lecture Room was packed with their representatives, including `a laboring man' called William Parker.

As a leading member of the Newcastle Working Men's Association, Parker almost certainly participated in the detailed investigation into overcrowding and poor sanitation carried out in 1847 in partnership with Dr Robinson, founder of the town's Sanitary Association in 1846. Robinson published the findings in a detailed report that called on the Corporation to carry out improvements to prevent future epidemics. When Parker stood to support Robinson's proposed petition to the Home Secretary requesting a public inquiry, he informed those present that:

> `their object in forwarding such a memorial ….was to show the utter incapacity of the authorities of Newcastle to be entrusted with the health of the people (cheers)'.

Parker also drew attention to another failure of their civic leaders, namely their closure of those places of interment that working people depended upon:

> `another right secured by the common law of this realm was, that each parish shall find a place of burial for its parishioners; but it was a fact that there was not a public place of burial in this town. The cemeteries were private property, and the companies could close their gates against the poor tomorrow'.[21]

Conclusion

Being situated in Newcastle's most industrialised and densely populated district it was perhaps inevitable that Ballast Hills should become the workers' burial ground. Close proximity meant that the carriage costs required to convey a corpse to All Saints or Saint Ann's churchyards were avoided, with family or neighbours close at hand to assist in bearing a coffin to the place of interment.

However, the main attraction of the Ballast Hills burial ground was its affordability. The standard burial fee of just 3s 6d ensured that working people could financially afford to bury their loved ones free from the stigma associated with a pauper grave in the town's parochial churchyards.

When cholera exploded in Newcastle in September 1853, the Corporation's closure of Ballast Hills together with the cessation of unconsecrated burials anywhere in the town was both a knee-jerk reaction to a crisis they seemingly could not control, and a reflection of the civic leaders' prejudice towards those who suffered most from the epidemic – Newcastle's working poor.

The subsequent Report (1854) of the inquiry into the causes of the epidemic found that in All Saints Parish west of the Ouseburn the cholera claimed the lives of 56 persons from tradesmen families and 362 from labourers families; east of the Ouseburn the figures were just 6 for tradesmen and 170 for labourers. In Newcastle as a whole, the 1,174 persons from labouring families that perished as a result of the cholera in 1853 represented 77% of the total deaths attributed to the epidemic in the town.[22]

When William Parker submitted his letter to the *Newcastle Guardian* in December 1853, he was well aware of the dilemma faced by working families caused by the closure of the burial ground at Ballast Hills. On the day that it closed, 18 September 1853, no less than seventeen burials took place. These included three infants and two children, whose parents were a hawker, a baker, a maltman, a tobacconist, and a shoemaker. Burials on 18 September 1853 also included two labourers and the wives of another

two labourers, the most numerous of the occupations recorded that final day of interment at Ballast Hills.

William Parker's repeated demand for what he called `places of interment of a more reasonable character' was not fully resolved until the replacement of the old parochial churchyards by new spacious municipal cemeteries like the one for All Saints Parish at Jesmond that opened its gates for burials in March 1857. The burial fee for a grave 5 feet deep was 4s with an additional fee of 3s 6d for the services of the clergy.[23]

William Parker died on 5 May 1858, aged 70-years. Unfortunately the new All Saints Cemetery took many months to become fully available for interment, and so the man who had consistently and publicly demanded the new facility was actually buried in the old, privately owned, Jesmond Cemetery, in an unmarked grave in unconsecrated ground, on 6 May 1858.[24]

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for the support and assistance provided by staff at Tyne and Wear Archives, and for permission to reproduce the image from the first burial register found in Figure 1.

Notes:

1 `Rules and Regulations of the Ballast Hills Burial Ground', undated but probably 1831. Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM), CE/BA/34/1-2. The fee prior to 1831 was just 1s 6d for all burials; after 1831 this fee only applied to the interment of a still-born child.

2 Both quotations from William Parker, `Clerical Exactions from the Poor', *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 24 December 1853, p. 8.

3 An overview of Parker's life can be found on the website of the North East Labour History Society at https://nelh.net/radical-lives/william-parker-1790-1858/

4 All quotations are from the report in `Chartist Intelligence', *Northern Star*, 23 October 1841, p. 14.

5 Register of the Ballast Hills Burial Ground, July 1831 – February 1838. TWAM, CE/BA/33/9.

6 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1980), pp. 459-465.

7 Rules, Laws, & Regulations of the Ouseburn Good Intent Society (Newcastle: Mackenzie and Dent, 1817). Local tracts volume 279. Newcastle Literary and

Philosophical Society Library.

8 `Rules, Orders, and Regulations of the Benevolent Society of Women' (Newcastle: Mackenzie and Dent, 1825) in Friendly Societies of Women, Newcastle City Library Local Tracts, L334.7.

9 Register of Burials in the Infirmary, 1822 – 1849. TWAM HO.RVI/122. The receipts for burials at Saint Ann's and Ballast Hills are attached to pages at the back of the register.

10 `Meeting at Ouseburn'. *Northern Liberator*, 03 November 1838, p. 4. For additional details of Parker's chartist life see Mike Greatbatch, ` Politics in the Piggery: Chartism in Ouseburn, 1838-1848', *North East History*, 44, 2013, pp. 33-59.

11 *Newcastle Courant*, 17 October 1845, p. 4.

12 `Burial Ground at Ballast Hills', 4 April 1785. Transcription of original in Common Council Order Book 1766-1785, TWAM 589/15, pp. 438-439. Note that Davison is sometimes recorded as Davidson.

13 Declaration of the Trusts of the Westgate Hill General Cemetery, 1832. Newcastle City Library Local Tracts, LO42. Dy39.

14 `Charges for Interments, Purchased Graves, Vaults etc', in Address Delivered at the First Interment in the Westgate Hill General Cemetery, 18 October 1829. As above, LO42. Dy39.

15 Sue King, `A Cemetery for Newcastle's Dissenters'; *North East History*, 44, 2013, pp. 77-80.

16 `Bills of Mortality for 1836'. *Newcastle Journal*, 7 January 1837, p. 3. This source records the number of burials at Ballast Hills as 795, or 45% of the Newcastle total.

17 `Bills of Mortality'. *Newcastle Courant* 11 January 1766 and 9 January 1768, *Newcastle Courant* 3 January 1784, and *Newcastle Advertiser* 9 January 1790.

18 Ballast Hills Burial Register, 1792 - 1801. TWAM CE/BA/33/1.

19 Ballast Hills Burial Register, 1847 - 1853. TWAM CE/BA/33/11.

20 Robert Rennison, *Water to Tyneside*, (Gateshead: Newcastle & Gateshead Water Company, 1979).

21 `Cholera and its Causes', *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 15 October 1853, p. 3.

22 `Record of Important Events' in the Proceedings of the Council of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1853-54, p. xxxvi.

23 `The New Cemetery Regulations. All Saints Board Meeting'. *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 3 January 1857, p. 3.

24 Burial Register of the Newcastle General Cemetery 1855-1869, CE.JE/1/3 East (unconsecrated). I am grateful to Daniel and Erin Parker for drawing my attention to this record.

Five Russians in the North East of England

Andy McSmith

Back in January 2023, NELHS scheduled Andy McSmith to deliver the opening First Tuesday talk of this year. Fate (and technology) were not on our side and we had to abandon the exercise. However, Andy kindly agreed allowed us to record his talk (which will be going on our YouTube channel in the near future). Here is a transcript: it gives a flavour of what was an unexpected and fascinating era in North East politics.

Rosie Serdiville

Introduction

I'm a journalist speaking to you from London. I lived on Tyneside from 1977 – 1984, which was when I became interested in Russians with a Tyneside connection. There are five who are particularly interesting whom I will focus on in this talk.

Anyone listening probably knows that in the second half of the 19th century, the *Daily Chronicle* was one of the great radical newspapers of those days, up there with the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Manchester Guardian*. It was run by a remarkable guy named Joseph Cowan. His father was a liberal MP and a supporter of Gladstone. Joseph Cowan Junior had numerous differences with Gladstone, one of which was over their respective attitudes to Russia.

When Russia and Turkey went to war in 1877, Gladstone considered it to be in the British interest that the Russians should win, and the Turks should be humiliated. He ran a campaign which got a lot of pick up all

round the country about Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria ie Muslims ill-treating Christians. In this, he would have found a lot of support among the middle class of Tyneside. Ten per cent of Newcastle's coal exports went to Russia, and Russian ships were built on the Tyne so we can assume that there was a lot of pro-Russian sentiment among those who owned the means of production in the region. But Cowan did not share it. He thought that this was hypocritical, particularly because of the appalling treatment of Poles and Jews in the Russian Empire.

Kropotkin

Cowan was contacted by a Russian exile living in London – Prince Kropotkin - who was, as you will realise, an aristocrat. He was also an anarchist, which was unusual for a Russian aristocrat. What was even more unusual was that he had escaped from jail. He was held in the Peter and Paul fortress, but as he was awaiting trial (he had been there for two years) he became ill. The authorities did not want him to die and moved him to a military hospital where he was under heavy guard, but his friends sprang him.

He could not live in Switzerland or France because the Russian government pursued him everywhere he went, so he settled in Britain. On 12th October 1881, the *Daily Chronicle* ran a sensational story that there was a Russian hit squad in Europe wanting to kill Russian dissidents. (As if such a thing would happen these days!) Prince Kropotkin was one of their targets

Also in that day's *Daily Chronicle* was an article by Kropotkin about the situation in Russia, the first in a series of five that Kropotkin wrote over about seven months.

When I looked up this article in the archives I was interested to see if there was any reader reaction the following day. There was, but it was a bit disappointing because it was all about how to spell Kropotkin. Originally the *Chronicle* spelt him 'Krap' and put an 'e' on the end. But then they agreed that he wasn't crap and he should not have an e on the end so they then reverted to the spelling most of us know.

Kropotkin's first visited the North East in July 1882, when he spoke at the Durham Miners Gala and then in Newcastle, where he gave a talk in the lecture room in Nelson Street. He was very appreciative. He complained that before then he was going round speaking to 40 grey haired Chartists, if he was lucky. Suddenly in Newcastle he was getting a mass audience. "It is in Newcastle that the Russian revolutionary has for the first time found the means of disclosing in an English daily paper the true state of Russia and it is again in Newcastle that have for the first time had the honour of addressing a large audience," he wrote.

The Cowan connection did not last long because he had a terrible accident: he was mobbed during an election campaign and nearly died, so withdrew from politics. But that was not the end of the connection between Tyneside and Russian revolutionaries. There was a remarkable character named Robert Spence Watson who lived in Bensham. He was, among other things, Chairman of the National Liberal Association. He was very involved with Russian exiles. At one point in the early 20th century, the British Ambassador in St Petersburg warned the government that every time the Russian police saw a letter with a Gateshead post mark, they opened it, because they assumed this was Robert Spence Watson doing something nefarious.

He also ran the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society, and arranged for Kropotkin to come back to Newcastle, to speak at the Tyne Theatre in 1886. There were 4,000 people in the audience. Well, what else do you do on a Sunday evening on Tyneside in the 1880's?

Stepnyak

Spence Watson was so pleased with the Kropotkin talk, he thought we must get another Russian up here. There was only one other Russian exile in London articulate enough to talk to a large audience, a man called Stepnyak, who had written an interesting book about Russian revolutionaries. He was invited to come, but did not like the idea at all. He told Edward Pease, a founder of the Fabians, that being in Newcastle 'would be like being

buried under mountains of coal, unseen and practically unheard from your friends'. That's what he thought of Tyneside.

However, he was persuaded to come, and gave a talk which got a tremendous write-up in the local papers.

People were impressed by how moderate Stepnyak's demands were. He wanted what they called manhood suffrage - he did not go so far as to say that women should be allowed to vote, which would have been controversial in England at the time - independence for ethnic communities, nationalization of land, abolition of standing armies. This pleased everybody because the Russian revolutionaries had a reputation for violence, stemming from the assassination of the Tsar in 1881. Actually, there was less revolutionary violence in Russia in the 19th century than you might think, unlike the 20th century, when the violence was horrendous.

Political assassinations, for example, were quite rare. The first time that a group of revolutionaries conspired to kill somebody and actually pulled it off was in August 1878. The victim was the Chief of Police, a General Mezentsov, who was walking along a street in St Petersburg, when two guys walked up to him, one of them took out a knife and stabbed him to death while the other pointed a gun at his bodyguard to make sure he did not intervene. There was a third waiting in a coach with horses so they could get away. The killer, whose name was Sergey Kravchinsky, was never caught. But, as I say these things were quite rare.

So, they were very pleased with Stepnyak, though they had no idea who he actually was. The *Shields Daily Gazette* reported that his name was not disclosed even to his friends. Actually, Kropotkin knew who he was, and so did certain other Russians in London, but no-one else in England knew his real identity. The *Newcastle Courant* noted that "it was the editor's intention to give his readers some idea of the personal appearance of this Russian revolutionary, but Stepnyak, for obvious reasons, has no wish to make himself recognizable from a portrait here or abroad and has taken the precaution of destroying the photographs of himself which were known to exist".

So that went well, until at some point - I can't remember the exact date - the Russian government finally worked out who Stepnyak was, and it became widely known that Stepnyak was the man I just mentioned, Sergey Kravchinsky. who had stabbed to death the Russian Chief of Police.

There must have been a rather patchy period in his relationship with Spence Watson, who was a Quaker and a pacifist, and certainly did not believe in revolutionary violence, but they carried on co-operating in spreading information on conditions in Russia. There was a very good friend of Stepnyak, a man called Felix Volkhovsky, who came to Newcastle twice in 1891 and 1892 and gave talks. Stepnyak was invited back in 1894.

Stepnyak was run over by a train in London: he was crossing a railway line without looking where he was going. His funeral was an enormous event with William Morris as the main speaker – it was reported in *The Times*. So he got over whatever notoriety accrued to him from being a guy who had killed a man.

That's Russian number two.

Henry Fischer

I'm a bit tempted now to take a diversion, in fact I think I will, and talk about the 1905 Revolution in Russia. There was a lot of gun-running going on. A German firm was producing weapons, but the revolutionaries there found it rather difficult to get weapons across the border. One channel was to smuggle them to Tyneside, where there were sailors coming in and out, including a lot of Latvian sailors, who loathed the Russians, who smuggled guns on their return voyage.

We might never have known anything about this operation except that in 1907, a man named William Hutchinson, who lived in Sunderland, went to the police and said that he was worried because his son, Robert, had turned up at the house with a load of wooden boxes. When Dad looked in the boxes, he discovered they were full of guns. The police called in young Robert Hutchinson who said he had got these guns from a man named Donald Currie. Currie was eventually taken into court and fined

for possession of illegal weapons. He said that he had got the guns 'from a German gentleman named Thomas Denvers', but there was no Thomas Denvers living anywhere on Tyneside. However, the police searched him, and found a postal order sent by a Mr G Stromer from 113 Hampstead Road, Benwell. G Stromer also probably never existed under that name.

At 113 Hampstead Road, the police found the person who might or might not have been the 'German gentleman' that David Currie referred to. His name was Henry Fischer, who was a supporter of the revolutionaries. The Evening Chronicle reported on the 6th May 1907, that Fischer had spoken to the Newcastle Socialist Institute about Russia. I'll come back to Fischer in a little while.

Russian number three.

Bukharin

If asked who were the four most important figures in the early history of the Bolshevik revolution nearly everybody would agree on the first three – Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky - and I suspect that most people who know the history would say the next one has to be Nikolai Bukharin. He is the only other one of those early leaders of whom anyone has thought it worth writing a full-length English language biography, and is supposed to be the model for the main character in Arthur Koestler's novel, *Darkness at Noon*.

And - not too many people know this - he does have a Newcastle link, but this is what we would call in journalism a 'one fact story' - a story that only has one small fact, and the rest is embellishment. I hope that you won't notice that what I'm giving you is a one fact story.

During the First World War, Bukharin was in Switzerland with Lenin. They agreed that it would be better if he were in Scandinavia, closer to the Russian border, and better able to get in touch with Bolsheviks there. He could not travel through Germany so took the long way round through France and England. In London, a worker named Shlyapnikov had been asked to greet him and help him get across London. He wrote in his memoirs that when he turned up at the station, which I suppose would

have been Waterloo, although he had never seen Bukharin before, he had no trouble spotting him, this twenty something Russian wandering around looking lost.

He got Bukharin on a train to Newcastle, but on arrival, Bukharin got nicked. We don't know for quite how long, but he spent a while in a prison cell in Newcastle, while the police tried to work out what he was up to. They don't seem to have worked out that he had a false passport and was travelling under the rather odd name of Moshe Dolgolevsky. They let him go. The reason we know this is because in the '20's Bukharin. was asked to write an account of his life for an encyclopaedia, and mentioned this arrest in Newcastle.

When I was living up in the North East, I went to the archives of what was then the Tyne & Wear County Council and said I was interested in a famous Russian who was arrested in Newcastle. The archivist immediately said, "Oh, Bukharin". He said that there was a file on the arrest, but because Tyne & Wear County Council was about to be abolished, it had gone to the National Archives. I wish that I had had the sense to ask for a title, or a reference number, because I have searched through the National Archives online, but cannot find this file, if it exists. That is very frustrating.

Anyway, Bukharin was Russian number three. Number four was …

Yevgeny Zamyatin

If you walk along Sanderson Road in Jesmond, on the wall of number 19 Sanderson Road you will see a plaque which tells you that the famous Russian writer lived in that house from 1916 to 1917. He was there because he was an engineer, and there was an icebreaker being built for the Russians on Tyneside.

Zamyatin had been a Bolshevik, just briefly during the 1905 revolution. When he went back to Russia in 1917, he did not like what he saw. From being a Bolshevik, he became quite anti-Bolshevik. He wrote what is now a famous novel called We, which he completed in 1920. The date is quite significant - I'll tell you why in a minute. It was not published in Russia

because Zamyatin was not approved of, but a copy went abroad and a very anti Bolshevik publishing house in Czechoslovakia, as was, published it without Zamyatin's permission. This meant that a bunch of Stalinist critics went for Zamyatin, accusing him of being in league with counter revolutionaries abroad. Instead of doing the thing he was supposed to do and apologise, he stuck to his guns and said he didn't tell these people they could publish his work, and he was not going to renounce his novel. He was just digging himself into more trouble. He then said he wanted to leave the country and, unusually, they let him go, and he died in poverty, forgotten, in Paris.

However, there was a Russian called Gleb Struve living abroad who made it his life's work to read every work of fiction published in the Soviet Union and do a comprehensive critique of them all. George Orwell read what Gleb Struve had written about this novel, We, and was so interested that he decided to try to get hold of it. He couldn't find it in English anywhere, but he did find a French translation. Orwell's French was good enough to read it.

It was one of the very first dystopian novels. It imagined a world in which everybody's thoughts were controlled; they had no names, they had numbers; they lived in apartments where the walls were made of glass so that everybody could see what they were doing all the time. They were allowed a bit of privacy for what they called 'the sex hour' when they could draw the curtains, have a quickie, and then draw the curtains back again, but they were not allowed to form lasting or loving relationships. The hero tries to rediscover his humanity and gets killed for it.

Orwell was so intrigued by this that he said that Aldous Huxley must have read it because it was so similar to *Brave New World*. Orwell openly admitted that he had nicked quite a lot of the ideas to write *1984*.

When he wrote about Zamyatin, he did say an interesting thing, which was that - contrary to what everybody thought - this could not have been a satire aimed at the Bolsheviks because as I said, *We* was written in 1920. From 1917 to 1920 there was civil war in Russia. People were not worried about invasions of privacy, they were worried about whether St Petersburg

was going to be overrun, whether they were going to be killed by the Bolshevik police, or, if St Petersburg fell to the Whites, would they be killed by the Whites; or if they were not killed, would they starve to death because there would be nothing to eat; or if they did not starve to death, would they die of cold in the winter because there was no firewood? And, if they survived all that, would they die from the Spanish flu which killed more people than the First World War?

Orwell concluded that We can't be a satire on Russia. It is obviously a satire on British life. And the only place in Britain that Zamyatin lived was in Sanderson Road in Jesmond, where he must have had his suspicions that everybody was watching him through twitching lace curtains, because he was a Russian, and that had a woman entered 19 Sanderson Road whilst he was there, all Jesmond would have known about it in no time. So, that great novel, *1984* takes some of its inspiration from life in Jesmond in 1916.

That is Russian number four.

Number five – Rudolph Abel

Stephen Spielberg made a film in 2015 called, *Bridge of Spies* starring Tom Hanks and Mark Rylance. Hanks was playing an American lawyer who gets involved in very high level diplomacy, in which he is arranging the swap of a Russian spy called Rudolph Abel, played by Rylance, for an American pilot. In the film, he pulls it off really, really successfully.

This is based on a true story. The back story is that in 1957, in Paris, a man turned up at the American Embassy saying that he was a KGB officer wanting to defect. They interrogated him and decided that he was in fact a genuine KGB defector who had been operating in America.

This man - though I'm sure he had many good points - was a drunkard, a thief, a wife-beater and a liar; but he did give the FBI some good information, including telling them where the room was from which spies in New York were operating. They kept watch on that room as a man went in and came out again. They did not catch him, which was a bit of a blunder, but somehow they worked out that he was living under the

name of "Collins", in a hotel in New York. The only thing they had on him was that he was almost certainly an illegal immigrant, so they got the immigration authorities to arrest him. Under arrest, he admitted that he was a KGB officer and gave his name as Rudolph Abel, but refused to say anything else for the whole of the time he was in American hands. He never gave any information away at all.

Donovan, the lawyer who represented him, who was played by Tom Hanks, was quietly quite impressed with this client, who was charged with being involved in selling atomic secrets, which was a capital offence. The Rosenbergs had gone to the chair for it. He was literally on trial for his life and still refused to say anything that was going to help his defence. In fact he did not give any evidence at all at the trial. Donovan put up an argument that it would not be a good idea to execute him because there might come a day when the Russians might hold somebody the Americans wanted to get back, and it might be useful to have this guy in their custody. So, they sentenced him to thirty years in jail, which meant that he was facing the rest of his life in prison. Once he had been sentenced, the FBI went to him again and offered him a good life, a safe house, everything he could ask for, if he would just talk. He wouldn't.

Meanwhile, the Americans had a new aircraft called the U2 which could fly at what was said to be unprecedented heights. They believed the U2 flew so high that no Russian equipment on the ground could touch it, and were sending these aeroplanes over Russia and taking photographs. Then one day the Russians announced that they had shot down an American plane over their territory. The American government immediately said, that was impossible, because none of their planes ever flew over Russia. Then the Russians announced that the pilot was alive and was under arrest, whereupon the American government did a reverse ferret and conceded that actually, yes, this man, Gary Powers, was an American pilot.

And so it came about in 1962, on the Glienicke Bridge that joined Berlin to Potsdam, the Russians stood on the Potsdam side, the Americans on the Berlin side; the Americans had somebody who knew what Gary

Powers looked like, who could say 'that man is Gary Powers' and the Russians had somebody who knew who Rudolph Abel was; and the two of them walked across the bridge. Thus, the Americans got their man back and the Russians got theirs.

If you judge by the film, the whole exchange was a slam dunk victory for the Americans because, as they are standing on the bridge, Donovan asks Abel 'how will we know what sort of reception you are going to get?' - and Abel says, 'Either they will give me a big hug or they will just open the door and tell me to sit in the back of the car'. They open the door and make him sit in the back of the car, suggesting that he is not in favour any more. The film implies that he had formed such a strong relationship with Donovan that his loyalties were divided. This idea that he was a failure as a spy is still pretty much the American view.

There is a book[1] which is regarded as the authoritative volume on Russian spies and it says, that Abel "never came close to rivalling the achievements of his war time predecessor during the eight years he was in illegal residence. He appears never to have identified or recruited a single promising potential agent". In other words, this was someone who just went over there, spent eight years there doing not a hell of a lot, then got caught. That is one way of looking at the Abel story.

But when Abel came back to Russia he was treated as a hero. The Chairman of the KGB met him in person. The Russians all knew perfectly well that he wasn't Rudolph Abel. There was a Rudolph Abel who worked as a KGB agent, but this was not him. The reason he used that name, when he was arrested, was that he wanted to make sure that Moscow knew who it was the Americans had caught, without the Americans knowing. He lived under the name of Rudolph Abel until he died in 1971, when he was given a headstone which also used his false name. His widow objected and eventually persuaded the authorities that he could put a headstone up with his real name.

According to the Russians, his real name was Vilyam Genrikhovich Fischer – or William Fischer, with a father called Henry – which did not

even tell what nationality he was. But then some minor KGB guy defected to the west, and wrote a memoir in Russian, which not many people read, but an English historian reviewed it in the *Times Literary Supplement* and mentioned that, by the way, that this defector said that William Fischer was born in Newcastle. Whereupon a historian who is still around, David Saunders, checked the date of birth on his headstone, and discovered that he was born in Benwell.

One of the reasons he may not have wanted to say anything in the court during his trial, was that somebody might have worked out he had a Geordie accent. And then the British government might have said, 'We want this guy'.

His father was the aforementioned was Henry Fischer, or Heinrich Fischer, who was implicated in gun running in 1907. Henry Fischer's father, was a German who went to work in Russia. Henry got involved in the Marxist movement very early on and is said to have met the young Lenin before he was called Lenin. In 1905, Henry certainly founded the only branch of the Russian Marxist party called the RSDLP ever to exist on Tyneside, with a group of Russian exiles.

William was born in a house in Benwell that has since disappeared, and moved as a small boy to the address I mentioned earlier, at 113 Hampstead Road, in Benwell. I tried to look it up on google earth but could not find it. It's an old Tyneside flat. Somebody bought 111 and 113 and turned them both into one building so there appears to be no number 113 anymore, but actually it's still there.

Then they moved to Whitley Bay. William Fischer probably remembered more about Whitley Bay than Newcastle. He went to school in Monkseaton. The family moved to Russia after the revolution. There was a terrible event very soon after they got back to Russia, when William's older brother was drowned in a swimming accident. His mother was so distraught that she never recovered. She apparently made some remark about 'I wish it hadn't been him' implying that if she had to lose one son, she would have chosen to lose William. Vin Arthey, a former lecturer at what was Newcastle Poly,

who wrote a book about the Fischers, reckons it was the way his mother treated him and the shock of losing his brother which made Bill Fischer into such a hard case. To be interrogated for hours on end, days on end, by the FBI - I don't know that they water boarded him but they probably did not treat him with kid gloves – and to say nothing suggests a very tough guy.

As to whether it was such a coup for the Americans to swap him for Gary Powers, I would make the general observation that when it comes to these swaps, open societies are almost always at a disadvantage because they have to worry about public opinion. A dictatorship only has to worry about what the top brass in military intelligence think. We saw how, not long ago, America swapped a basketball player for a major international gun runner known as Doctor Death, which from a military point of view that was no gain to the Americans, but a big gain for the Russians.

I can recall from my boyhood that American and British public opinion was really worked up about Gary Powers. Kennedy was a new President and was very aware of public opinion. So, the Russians were negotiating from a position of strength. Why then were they so keen to get Fischer back?

Andrew's and Mitrokhin's book is written from the point of view of American intelligence. The authors have very good contacts within the CIA. One is a KGB defector. The American view is that since they never caught an agent who had been recruited by Fischer, then plainly there never were any such agents, because, of course, if there had been, they would have caught them.

Pavel Sudoplatov was a KGB officer who, amazingly, survived right through the communist years and after communism had collapsed, wrote his memoirs. He was directly involved in the decision to send Bill Fischer to America. He says in his memoirs, "Fischer created a new network that encompassed agents and informers in California, and MGB illegal officers in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina posing as immigrants. The informers reported the traffic of military and ammunition from American Pacific ports to the Far East." And so on. In other words, according to the man who

actually sent Fischer there, he recruited a lot of people in several countries. If the Americans never caught them, that is partly because Fischer kept his mouth shut.

Anyway, I don't know if it is a legitimate matter of pride in the North East that one of the most famous 'Russian' spies of all time was a Geordie by birth - but at least the North East need not carry the stigma of having bred an incompetent Russian spy. I think you would say he was a very, very effective Russian spy.

And that's Russian number five.

More reading:

Pavel Sudoplatov, Special tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness – A Soviet Spymaster, Little Brown, 1994, New York. This is available to borrow from Internet Archive at:

https://archive.org/details/specialtasksmemo00sudo/page/n5/mode/2up

1 Andrew, Christopher and Mitrokhin, Vasili, *The KGB in Europe and the West: The Mitrokhin Archive*, (Penguin 2000)

Socialists and Speculators: the Walker Estate as a Battleground of Housing Ideologies 1902-1919

John Griffiths

Although the township of Walker was only incorporated into the city of Newcastle in 1904, its previous independence (including a brief decade as an Urban District) had been little more than nominal, as not only was the district dominated economically and socially by Newcastle upon Tyne, but the corporation of Newcastle also owned the lands and manorial rights of Walker, purchased in 1715 to provide additional land for ballast quays.[1] In the ensuing decades the Walker estate saw the sinking of numerous pits of Walker colliery, Losh's alkali works moved from Scotswood to Walker in 1796, and in 1810 the Walker Iron Works was opened. The district's industrial importance was secured by the inauguration of a number of modern shipyards from the 1840s, including Charles Mitchell's Low Walker Yard in 1852, Wigham Richardson in 1860, and Armstrong's Naval Yard in 1911. The hinterland of the estate remained undeveloped into the twentieth century, a melancholy plain studded with derelict pitheads, but also a tabula rasa on which aspiring developers and housing reformers alike could project their contrasting and conflicting visions of the city's future.

The debate about use of the Walker estate for housing began to take on ideological elements partly as the effects of the so-called Edwardian housing crisis began to become manifest, and as representation of Labour on the council grew from very small beginnings, and became more

confident. Trades Council representatives had been elected to the council in 1883 and 1891, followed in 1892 by the election of (Lib-Lab) Labour representatives Arthur Scott and Arthur Henderson (1863-1935).[2] The later 1890s saw conflicts within the Labour movement between Lib-Lab trade unionists and the new Independent Labour Party (ILP). This, and a resurgent Conservatism, saw workers' representation on the council fall from three (1893) to one (1901). The end of the South African War saw a revival in Labour fortunes; and in 1902 David Adams was elected to the council as a representative of the Labour Representation Committee (from 1906 the Labour Party), of which he was local chairman from 1903 to 1925. Adams was to be the driving force behind housing reform in Newcastle for most of the next two decades, and the issue of housing was "the major focus of the ideological battle with Liberalism" for the LRC on Newcastle council. Adams was an engineer and shipowner of middle class background, and was Labour MP for West Newcastle 1922-23 and for Consett from 1935 until his death in 1943.[3]

Much of the public drama of the ideological conflict over the Walker question in the period 1902-1918 came from Adams' debates with the most intelligent of his conservative opponents on the council, Stephen Easter (1876-1936), founder of the building company which bore his name until recent years. He had wide-ranging construction and property interests on Tyneside (to Adams he was the high priest of speculative builders") and was influential in organisations such as the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, as chairman of the regional Conciliation Board, and as a director of the Newcastle Permanent Building Society.[4]

Throughout the period under consideration the housing crisis was worse in Newcastle than in any other major city in England and Wales by a variety of measures including rent charged and overcrowding, and this had been the case since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1861 an average of 7.8 persons lived in each habitable dwelling, the highest figure in England, and Newcastle had the second highest death rate of a major urban centre. Yet despite a series of Acts of Parliament

granting, little by little, powers to local authorities to demolish and replace slum housing nothing had been done by Newcastle council by the end of the century.[5]

Some limited development took place in the following decade: single room tenements were erected at Albion Row/Walker Road in 1904, and 125 flats were built in 1905-06 at Newton Road/St Lawrence Road, also in the East End of the city.[6] By 1917 455 municipal dwellings had been built; by comparison, Liverpool (an authority which had built England's first modern council homes in 1869) had 2,322 dwellings by 1912, while Sheffield had, like Newcastle, prevaricated and built only 409 homes by 1914, despite its description by Enid Gauldie as being "in the forefront of council housing" and showing "more enthusiasm for housing reform among its voters than almost any other town."[7] However, in Newcastle the shortfall in provision had not been met by voluntary private sector provision, the so-called 'five per cent philanthropy' described by J N Tarn and epitomised by the Peabody Trust estates in London and similar foundations in London and elsewhere.[8] The sole such venture in nineteenth century Newcastle had been the Industrial Dwellings at Garth Heads (1878), followed, decades later, by the Sutton Trust Dwellings, erected in the early years of the Great War at New Mills in Newcastle's West End after proposals by the Trust had been rejected by Gateshead Corporation. Michael Barke and Maureen Calcott have highlighted the lack of concern for housing reform displayed by Newcastle council in the decades prior to 1914 despite the well-recognised deficiencies of provision in the city, concluding that while there was a growing feeling "that something ought to be done, there was little unanimity over the precise form of intervention. Even the fact that the Council itself owned a substantial amount of underdeveloped land in the form of the Walker Estate did not significantly ease the path of municipal intervention."[9]

David Adams' election to the council in 1902 coincided with rising concern about housing standards (sparked in part by shock at the poor physical standards of volunteers for military service in the South African

War), the publication of *The Housing Problem in Newcastle and District* (1902) by Councillor John Whitburn, and letters and petitions to the council urging 'garden city' style development of Walker. Adams himself was a convert to the ideals of the Garden City movement, which arose from the 1898 publication of *Ebenezer Howard's To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (republished as *Garden Cities of To-morrow* in 1902). It is likely that he was also influenced by the Manchester housing reformer T C Horsfall, who advocated the acquisition of land by municipal authorities for housing development, on the German model (and who was nicknamed 'Prussian' Horsfall as a result).[10] Adams' booklet *The Planning and Development of the Walker and Willington Estates* (1908), a collection of articles originally written for the *Northern Echo*, is very much a regurgitation of Howard's idealism, and even more so of the low-density planning theories of Raymond Unwin, enlivened with passages of the purplest prose. Private developers were "the jerry builder and land speculator", their houses "flung together – not built"; while development on the lines suggested by Adams would "recast the old city, and forecast the pleasant days assuredly to come, when city life shall be to all citizens the highest expression of order, beauty, freedom and happiness."[11] Several years later he was to claim ever greater benefits from such a development: "…the barometer of public health would be higher than in any other area of the city. He would confidently guarantee lower sickness and mortality rates, and predict one present-day essential, an increased birth rate… Overcrowding, unhealthy environments, lack of gardens, of beauty, and of amenities, would here be banished. Health, long life, and domestic comfort would be within reach…"[12] As well as garden city planning, a second plank of Adams' policy was the promotion of municipal housing; and, as shall be discussed below in relation to the co-partnership proposals for Walker, when his ideals came into conflict with each other, municipalisation took priority.

At the outset of his council career there is no doubt that Adams had a long furrow to plough; but it may also have been the case that his earnestness was becoming wearisome to fellow councillors:

> MR ADAMS: The Council of Newcastle could do no work which was so important as the housing of the people. What did they find in the city? Enormous numbers of people… living in grossly overcrowded conditions. They had no less than 65,000 of their people living today in a wretchedly overcrowded condition… one room or two rooms, dilapidated and ruinous, and many of them unfit for habitation.
>
> MR COATES: And they enjoy it.[13]

That exchange occurred in a debate over extending leaseholds of Walker land to 999 years, a policy opposed by Adams whose amendment proposed the development of Walker and Willington (the latter owned by the council, but outside Newcastle's boundaries) "upon model lines… by building various typed of improved working-class dwellings, with gardens and open spaces to be enjoyed therewith" and that non-working class dwellings, where permitted, "be leased upon renewable leases, at increased ground rents."[14] This, unchanged, was to be his policy for the next 15 years.

Adams' first major success was in persuading Newcastle council to host the National Housing Reform Council's second North of England Cottage Exhibition at Walker in 1908. The Cottage Exhibition had been inspired by the Letchworth (First Garden City) Exhibition of 1905, showcasing the development of Britain's first Howardian garden city, and the NHRC has subsequently held a cottage exhibition at Firth Park, Sheffield in 1907. Not so much exhibitions in the conventionally accepted sense, they were small estates developed on garden city and housing reform principles, demonstrating various types and sizes of working class 'cottages' (small houses in modern parlance) that could be built at low cost. They would be open for viewing during the exhibition, and subsequently rented or sold. Newcastle granted a 99 year lease of a 16.5 acre site at Walkergate

north of Shields Road. A plan was devised by Messrs Watson and Scott on the best garden city principles (curved streets, no 'wasteful' back lanes, gardens front and rear) and eighty cottages built in semi-detached pairs by a variety of organisations and contractors, including Newcastle council itself – adding twelve dwellings to the municipal housing stock, and the Wallsend Industrial Co-operative Society.[15]

Letchworth, founded by Ebenezer Howard in 1903, had succeeded such paternalistic model settlements as Bournville, Port Sunlight and New Earswick as the New Jerusalem for housing reformers, and most of its housing provision before the 1920s was by Garden City Tenants Ltd, a co-partnership housing society, and, for poorer (prospective) inhabitants, by a philanthropic building company and subsequently by the Howard Cottage Society, the last according to Peter Malpass "a prototype housing association".[16] Co-partnership schemes were closely associated with garden city developments, yet Malpass points out that "housing historians have almost completely ignored them. This is probably because they made little impact after 1918… and they cannot be easily tied into accounts dominated by the growth of council housing."[17] The co-partnership movement originated with the foundation in 1888 of Tenant Co-operators Ltd by a former Co-operative Wholesale Society manager in London, but really gained momentum under the guidance of Henry Vivian (1868-1930), a leading figure in the foundation in 1901 of Ealing Tenants Ltd, developers of the Brentham garden suburb in Middlesex. Co-partnership enterprises gave workers the right to acquire shares and participate in management, while in housing developments, as summarised by William Ashworth, "the co-partnership method was to raise capital both from investors and prospective tenants and to limit interest to 4 per cent or 5 per cent. The tenant members' share of the profits was credited to them in shares, not in cash, and any surplus profits after payment of the maximum interest on capital were paid to the tenants as a dividend on rentals corresponding to the dividend on purchases in in consumers' co-operative societies." By 1914 more than fifty co-partnership 'garden suburb' schemes were being

developed or had been completed (most notably Hampstead Garden suburb, developed by several societies, and where over 1,000 dwellings had been created on co-partnership principles by 1912).[19] By 1914 fourteen societies were affiliated to a federal umbrella organisation, Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd, founded in 1907 and which sought to facilitate new societies "and served the emerging garden suburbs in a wholesale capacity," raising funds and buying materials and Newcastle Council Park, Gretna, Harborne, Liverpool, Stoke on Trent and Hampstead Garden Suburb, and other schemes were under way in Swansea, Blackburn, Cuffley and Gidea Park.[20]

But not in Newcastle. In March 1911, Stephen Easten, chairman of the "notoriously conservative" Estates and Property Committee of the council, presented proposals to lease 300 acres of the Walker Estate, on both sides of Millers Lane (now Fossway) to Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd, for development at a density no greater than 15 houses to the acre (slightly more dwellings than Raymond Unwin's standard of twelve to the acre). The lease would be for 99 years, and the land rent of £30 per acre payable in full only after sixteen years.[21] The terms of the proposed lease sparked opposition from various quarters, but largely amounting to a feeling that the land was being disposed of too cheaply, with side issues of a sentimental regard for the estate and a parochial attitude to perceived outsiders. Thus Councillor Cail: "It was a totally inadequate sum that was proposed at which they were asked to part with their birthright as citizens"; and Alderman Sir H W Newton: "a trumpery offer [from]… an outside alien body, who had no sympathy with them, no local association with them."[22]

Adams went further: "He was an avowed and constant municipaliser, an advocate of municipal housing both in development and ownership. One of the most astonishing things in his experience of the Council was the inconsistencies of many of its members in matters of principle. How many were there… who glories in the great part they had played in converting the private tramway service into the town's property – but who yet devoutly worshipped at the shrine of the private speculator in the land

and houses of the people! Here was town's land ripe for development by the town, which these municipalisers proposed to hand over in perpetuity to a private company for private profits."[23]

He continued, arguing that the scheme "was not… for better housing the working classes… but for adequately housing the better paid only… He would admit the superiority of Co-partnership over the speculative builder, but in its immediate and prospective effects it was far behind municipal enterprise. Municipal tenure, exemplified by the "semi-detached and beautiful cottages" on the exhibition estate, gave "the acme of beauty and comforts, of model living conditions, the healthful and profitable recreation of gardening, all at rentals as low as or lower than were charged by private owners for evil and congested flats in the city."[24]

Voices in favour of the scheme stressed that it was at last a practical proposal for the development of land hitherto idle. "We have had deputations and the propagation of theories; but here is a live scheme for your approval" said Easten, introducing the motion; "The estate has been practically dead; and we are trying to throw some life into it" and the aspirations of Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd to create mixed communities with housing for different income groups was stressed, but to no avail.[25] The proposal was returned to committee for further consideration, but even after amendment failed to be carried after a tied council vote 26-26 on 14 June 1911.[26] The Co-partnership scheme was dead.

Not only was the future development of Walker affected in terms of housing type and the physical environment, but it could be argued that the failure also reduced the likelihood of co-partnership housing to have a viable future. By 1914 7,000 co-partnership homes had been built, compared with 11,000 homes built by local authorities between 1909 and 1915, and 200,000 by private developers in the same period. Had even 200 acres of the 300 sought in Walker been developed at the densities indicated (allowing space for roads, recreation grounds etc|), the 3,000 dwellings provided would have been a significant addition to the co-partnership, a powerful advertisement for co-partnership developments

and possibly a stimulus to further schemes elsewhere (Gaskell noted that "The co-partnership movement sought to promote through its estates an example which it hoped would influence a wider audience.).[27] Certainly, co-partnership developments were still thought of as an important strand in housing provision in 1914. Mark Swenarton cites a letter from the President of the Board of Agriculture (which was actively pursuing improvements to rural housing): "Far and away the most valuable housing experiments and undertakings have been done by these societies... Neither private owners nor corporations nor district councils nor the Crown have combined so completely efficient design with economy of construction."[28]

The counter-argument, with benefit of hindsight, is that the extreme housing need after the First World War was such that it could only be met by state intervention and municipal provision, while the lower middle classes who were the main beneficiaries from the co-partnership movement were increasingly to be catered for by the provision of cheap mortgages and the construction of low-cost suburban freehold homes. Adams' own position, despite his avowed municipalism, remains puzzling, and Ian Hunter comments that his opposition caused 'misgivings' in Newcastle council's small Labour group.[29] It may well have been Adams' single-mindedness; but, as a highly-interested party in the housing debate, it is surely unlikely that he was unaware of tensions within the co-partnership movement, between local societies and Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd, and within the societies themselves, where power gravitated to a declining number of members with voting shares (often acquired by commercial investors) and tenants who were non-voting holders of loan stock. Beatrice Webb had described co-partnership as economically flawed, and this view was shared by G B Shaw, who nevertheless invested in several societies, perhaps, as Aileen Reid suggests, to "provide a possible bulwark against the predatory capitalists."[30]

The failure of the co-partnership proposals and the absence of any imminent private sector interest in the estate – a result now not just of the peculiar nature of the leases on offer, but of a national decline in housing construction – opened the way for Adams and his allies to pursue

a renewed campaign for municipal development. By 1912 much of east Newcastle, including Walker, was designated an area for town planning under the Housing and Town Planning Act 1909.[31] Also in 1912, the council designated 80 acres of the Walker estate as a 'housing area', with a competition as to the best way of laying out the land.[32] Adams had seconded the proposal, even though it left the question of private or municipal provision undecided, and despite a campaign of letters and resolutions from the Labour Party, Independent Labour Party and trades union branches calling for municipalisation.[33]

The subsequent debate in council provided a summary of attitudes towards the housing crisis. Alderman Fitzgerald opposed the plans as doing nothing for the housing of the poor, that "slum dwellers… were people who could not afford to live anywhere else except in slum property" and that it was the council's duty to replace slum housing "but not at Walker… They must live in the neighbourhood in which they lived at present."[34] Cllr Cruddis urged that the council "ought to try at least to make the properties they had pay their way, before they attempted to build any more… when there was no demand for it", adding that central grants-in-aid ought to be provided to municipalities for this purpose; while Adams apparently saw a 'trickle-up' effect as likely: "With Walker intelligently developed, there would be a gradual raising of the housing status of different sections of the workers as a higher type of home became available. Thus, and thus only, would the burden of slums, high renting and overcrowding be loosed from the backs of our industrial workers."[35] Easten's view was that he "had never known such a bald [sic]scheme be presented to the Council… What was this wonderful thing the Corporation was expected to do? Were the houses going to be built more cheaply by the municipality than by private builders, and, if so, how?" He doubted whether the council had received more than two per cent returns on its buildings; the plan was not, to quote Easten's frequently-used standard of approval, "of a business-like nature."[36]

Progress was slow but by October 1914 the council's Housing Committee had approved plans by the Wallsend architects Cratney & Kaye – who had

designed many of the houses on the Model Cottage Exhibition estate – for 16.5 acres, comprising 402 dwellings to be built for the council. 320 of these were flats in semi-detached blocks, and 82 self-contained semi-detached houses, at weekly rentals from 4s for the smallest two-roomed flats to 7s 3d for a house (the report was resubmitted in November with slightly increased rents)[37] It is notable that the housing densities were, at more than 24 dwellings per acre, considerably higher than those adopted in 'best' town planning practice, and double the 'twelve to an acre' rule of thumb to be adopted by the Ministry of Health for postwar construction (and used in the Model Cottage Exhibition estate). But although Cllr Cruddis had been won over ("this was the best scheme ever presented to the Council… He thought the time was over when private enterprise would remedy [overcrowding]"), others were less sure, some questioning the financial viability of the scheme in terms of rentals, others, the nature of the site. The plans were sent back to the Housing Committee.[38]

In revived and expanded form they were re-presented to the council in March 1915.[39] This time 688 homes were proposed on a 28.5 acre site west of Walker Park, the smallest flat types enlarged and the proposed rents adjusted upwards, 5s for the smallest flat and 9s for a house. This time, private enterprise organised itself to object, with letters and resolutions from the Newcastle Ratepayers' Association and the Property Owners' Association.[40] The debate on the report, on 14 April 1915, brought recognition of the growing wartime housing crisis in the city. "There was a house famine in the city; and they could not encourage the private builder, because they could not get power to grant long leases."[41]

Newcastle's overcrowding problem had increased in severity since the turn of the century. According to the 1911 census 81,141 people lived in overcrowded conditions, 31.6% of the population, a rise from 25% in 1901; and Board of Trade figures showed that Newcastle rents for workers' housing were the highest of any city outside London.[42] The effects of poor housing on public health were brought to the fore by the reports of the council's Medical Officers of Health (Henry Armstrong until 1912,

succeeded by Harold Kerr), and by the publication in 1914 of a booklet by Gladstone Walker, clerk to the local poor law union, drawing attention to corelations between overcrowding, mortality and disease rates.[43] In common with other parts of the country, housing construction was plummeting as a result of a combination of factors including increasing rate demands, industrial cyclical factors and attractive alternative destinations for investment; and, perhaps, Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' of 1909 made small-scale investment in housing to let – the main source of working class housing – an increasingly undesirable option. In 1907 654 houses were built in Newcastle; in 1914, 102. In November 1912 there were 1,363 empty houses in the city; in November 1914, 278 (and in May 1915 just 198).[44] The advent of war made matters worse. Rearmament brought huge numbers of new workers into the city, and the energetic new Medical Officer of Health (MOH), Harold Kerr, in his Annual Report for 1914 drew attention to the "appalling scarcity" of housing, with just 198 empty houses by May 1915, of which scarcely any were in the working class riverside wards. He found rents rising sharply and house-seekers offering premiums of up to £5 in evening newspaper advertisements. Shortages meant that insanitary property could not be closed, "any shelter, unless altogether impossibly bad, being better than none. And with the exception of two small Corporation schemes in City Road and St Lawrence, for a total of 167 tenants, houses are not being built."[45]

The Government was soon to intervene in the housing market by imposing rent controls in 1915, a measure in part a response to fears of unrest (of which there had been manifestations in Glasgow), and, according to Laurence Orbach, an indication of the extent to which Government "had abandoned faith in market forces by the end of 1915"; it also effectively ended any realistic prospect of private sector building for working class tenants in the immediate future. Yet Newcastle, alongside other munitions areas such as Gretna, Woolwich, Barrow and Coventry, needed homes for munitions workers, and if the market could not provide, the state should have to.[46] Across the country, a variety of approaches was

sponsored by the Ministry of Munitions, invigorated under the leadership of Lloyd George. The Well Hall Estate near Woolwich (1915) provided innovative, high-quality but expensive housing on a 'picturesque' estate. At Gretna, a whole new town was built, combining permanent facilities and some permanent housing with prefabricated houses and hostels, in a stripped-down classical idiom, employed also at Dormanstown near Redcar by Dorman, Long & Co with a 25% public grant.[47] But more than these 'model' schemes were required. On 4 October 1915 the Ministry of Munitions informed the Treasury of terms under which it would provide grants to municipalities of up to 30% of building costs of selected estates, to cover rising costs over pre-war building rates. Such an offer was now made to Newcastle, to apply to the revised Walker scheme of 688 flats and houses, and offering 20% of costs of the buildings providing the scheme was completed by 31 March 1916 and housing priority given to Elswick munitions workers. It was debated by the council on 27 October 1915. Adams, who had taken part in negotiations with the Ministry and the Local Government Board, (LGB), warned that the government would act itself if the council hesitated, and called for unanimity in approving the scheme.[48] He was to be disappointed. Among the opponents was Easten, who saw inconsistency between government calls for public frugality yet readiness to grant £27,000 "to one of the wealthiest cities in the community". More presciently, he warned that "he did not believe that any contractor at the present time would finish the houses in anything like twelve months… it was an absolute impossibility"; not least because most of the brickworks had closed and there was not the labour to reopen them. Cllr Barker raised the wider significance of the proposals and took issue with Easten's protests of extravagance: "It was because the Government recognised the extreme urgency of the matter… he felt they were under a moral obligation to the Government and to the country to press the scheme on as quickly as they could… they must do everything in their power… to supply the brave lads fighting in the trenches and on the ships with munitions of war. ("Hear, hear")". Cllr James Smith, an increasingly important figure on

the Housing Committee, supported this view, drawing attention to the unprecedented nature of the subsidy and arguing that "such a scheme was essential not merely in a local sense; it was essential in a national sense." It was approved by 39 votes to 15.[49]

Easten's gloomy predictions proved to be accurate. The chosen contractor, S F Davidson, expressed unwillingness to complete the scheme in the eight months specified in his tender, and the housing committee rapidly put together a revised proposal in which the scheme was scaled down to 336 dwellings and divided into four segments, each to be undertaken by a different contractor (of whom Davidson was one).[50] The debate on the revised proposals was the most rancorous yet.[51] Easten reaffirmed his opposition on 'business' grounds, cast doubt on the timetable, and brought up the failed co-partnership scheme for good measure, only to be rebuked by Adams in stinging terms. "This was not the time for Councillor Easten or any other member… to air his prejudices, or preach reaction. Personal feelings and considerations must be suppressed for the sake of the national interest." He went on: "Any member who voted against the scheme today would be acting in a grossly unpatriotic manner. ("No, no.")… If they rejected it, they would… stand condemned as traitors to the country in a day of need."[52] The Ministry of Munitions, however, refused to budge on its required date for completion, despite appeals, or on the demand by contractors for a 2% increase in tender prices. The contractors demurred at the conditions; the offer expired; and the scheme collapsed.[53] The Official History of the Ministry recorded that the failure was because of the council's "inability to keep to [the] time-table and partly to the increase in the cost of labour and materials"; a similar scheme had failed in Dartford, though in Lanarkshire, Coventry, Sheffield and Dudley supported schemes went ahead.[54] In Newcastle, the Ministry took matters into its own hands, acquired land in Scotswood and there in 1916 built an estate of 410 "semi-permanent" prefabricated cottages, the 'Munitions Cottages'. They were occupied by July 1916, when the Bishop of Newcastle paid a visit.[55] "The severe winter tested these thoroughly, and

though they are by no means perfect, on the whole they have proved very satisfactory" recorded Dr Kerr, the MOH.[56]

A period of lassitude followed the collapse of the Walker scheme (postponed rather than abandoned, according to Adams in February 1916), punctuated only by bickering over the architects' fees.[57] But late in 1916 Easten's Estates and Property Committee took the initiative with a proposal to seek powers from the LGB to sell freehold sites on 30 acres of the Walker estate.[58] By the time the issue was debated in council Adams and the labour group had organised a campaign against the proposals which, Easten felt, implied partiality on his part for the interests of private builders – "a mean and despicable way of conducting public business."[59] Despite Easten's assurances that the land would be laid out on town planning lines, Adams persisted in his avowal that the proposal was "one of the most dangerous ever submitted to the Council"; his colleague, James Smith, mentioned "a round dozen of members" connected with local building societies who were determined to ignore public opinion regarding Walker.[60] The debate lasted from January to April 1917. Supporters of sale pointed out that the asset had wasted for two hundred years, clung to by the council "like a miser hoarding his gold"; opponents raised again the benefits of municipal development.[61] The sale was approved by a 29-16 vote.[62]

But a new factor was intruding. James Smith, in a concise summary of the causes of the housing crisis, commented "the lack of development was not local, it was national… The Government had recognised it and had promised a modifying Act."[63] The council had received a circular from the LGB dated 27 July 1917, requesting information on housing needs in the city, and drawing on the expertise of Dr Kerr. A housing need of 3,000 was identified for immediate provision, with 450 more annually.[64] By May 1918 the Housing Committee was proposing an unprecedentedly large scheme in Walker, covering "as a first step" 116 acres, which at the density of twelve houses per acre proposed by the LGB would provide 1,392 homes.[65] A further LGB circular on 14 November 1918 referred to the "Extreme

urgency" of the housing question stated that housing schemes should be submitted to the Board at the earliest possible date, and "every endeavour made to push on with their preparation" By January 1919 design parameters were being prepared for Walker and a search for other sites "of a more rustic character than at Walker" was set in motion. A housing architect for Walker was appointed in May 1919 and an overall plan selected in June. In July, negotiations for the purchase of the Pendower estate, the Fenham Nurseries estate, Gowland and North Elswick estate, the Montague estate adjacent to Kenton Road, and land at Heaton for housing purposes were authorised.[66] In a process of bewildering rapidity after decades of stagnation, Newcastle's municipal housing programme was under way.

The LCG Circular of July 1917 had been the first active step in a process culminating in the 1919 Housing & Town Planning Act, the 'Addison Act'. That measure, which for the first time compelled local authorities to assess and make provision for housing need, and which led to the construction of 214,000 homes nationally, was only achieved after in-fighting between the conservative LGB and the more radical Dr Christopher Addison, a close ally of Lloyd George, and successively Minister of Munitions, of Reconstruction, President of the LGB, and the first Minister of Health. Lloyd George's second Reconstruction Committee, established in February 1917, had from the start "set its heart on devising a huge housing programme for the working classes", and its impetus carried over into Addison's work at the Ministry of Reconstruction.[67] The LGB had wished to make use of pre-war legislation, with temporary subsidies; its President from June 1917 to October 1918, W Hayes Fisher, believed that local authorities could do what was required and that "it would be a great mistake for Government to take this serious responsibility upon themselves unless there is no alternative."[68] Addison was sceptical of this and of the LGB's ability to oversee a large-scale programme, and was able to have responsibility for housing provision removed from the LGB and transferred to his brainchild, the Ministry of Health, created in 1919.[69] How far the failure of local authorities to cope with the challenges thrown

up by wartime housing needs influenced Addison's views is open to question; but as Under Secretary at the Ministry of Munitions in 1915 he had been closely associated with housing issues and he was Minister of Munitions at the time of the collapse of the Newcastle scheme.[70]

The reasons for government intervention in housing have been much debated by historians. Swenarton saw it as an ad hoc response to fears of Bolshevism and of unrest amongst demobilised servicemen following years of what he described as "drift of policy", and that "the new houses built by the state… would provide visible proof of the irrelevance of revolution."[71] Martin Daunton, by contrast, stressed the need to overcome housing shortages before rent controls could be removed as an impetus of intervention, and cites also, while agreeing only partially with, the arguments of David Englander for the role of working class pressure, particularly through tenant activism and rent strikes.[72] Such pressure as was exerted in Newcastle was more subtle, through the press and by letters, petitions and deputations to the council. Yet it contributed to a significant shifting of opinion within the council, and for Ian Hunter the acceptance of a housing scheme by the early years of the war, "for one of Tyneside's smallest Labour groups, only nine out of a full council of 76, this was a major achievement."[73]

Furthermore, the Labour group was in the vanguard of postwar municipal housing development in Newcastle, with James Smith chairman of the Housing Committee. The interwar period did not see Newcastle (and NE England generally) shake off its record for being the worst-housed region in England, but the city's performance was far from discreditable, and by the mid 1920s it was the second most successful of the thirteen Tyneside local authorities in meeting the housing shortfall identified in 1919, both absolutely and in terms of municipal provision. This, perhaps, was Adams' legacy, though the driving force behind the new schemes – at Pendower and other locations, as well as Walker – was James Smith. Stephen Easten, the arch-opponent of municipal housing, was in 1920 appointed Director of Production at the Housing Department of Dr Addison's Ministry of Health.[74]

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57 The Corporation eventually settled with Edward Cratney for £750 (*Proceedings* 2 April 1919 p493). Cratney died shortly afterwards, in December 1916, aged just 34.

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Northeastern England and America's Bloodiest War

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The American Civil War (1861-65) was a conflict that had a major global impact.[1] Though the United States had not yet achieved the industrial dominance it reached at the end of the nineteenth century, it had a growing economic importance by mid-century. Its population in 1860, 32 million, was about 9 million more than Britain's. Its export of commodities, particularly cotton, played a major role in the booming textile industries of the European industrial revolution.[2] The sheer scale of the war, almost three million men enlisted in the armed forces of the Union and Confederate governments would also have an effect outside the US. Additionally, from an ideological perspective, the war became, for many, a proxy for the larger conflict of the nineteenth century, between the forces of 'conservative' reaction uncomfortable with the economic changes brought by industrialization and those 'liberal' ones who embraced those changes.[3]

Scholars who examine the effects of the Civil War on Great Britain have understandably focused on the diplomatic issues around the conflict as well as the economic devastation the war caused to the textile districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire.[4] A Confederate attempt to use an export embargo on cotton to pressurize foreign governments into recognition of their new government allied with a Federal naval blockade of Confederate

ports meant a major falloff in cotton coming from the US to Britain. As a result, many textile mill workers in the Northwest faced unemployment and abject poverty.[5] The Northeast did not suffer the problems of the "cotton famine." On the contrary, the Civil War's influence was most readily felt in the economic opportunities it provided for the region's industry, especially shipbuilding and arms manufacturing. While it was the nascent Confederate States of America that benefitted most from the Northeast's industrial capacity, it was the United States of America that took advantage of one of the area's other exports—manpower. This flesh and bone contribution provided the most lasting local legacy of the conflict, inspiring commemorative gatherings that continued down to World War Two. Drawing on research undertaken as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded Civil War Bluejackets Project at Northumbria University, this essay examines some of the region's links to America's great civil strife, with a particular emphasis on the region's industrialists and workers in the war on the waters. These links would have an influence on the region well beyond the end of the conflict's end in 1865.[6]

Northeastern Industry: Breaking the Union Blockade

The Confederate guns that opened the Civil War in Charleston Harbor on April 12, 1861, had barely cooled by the time the United States implemented their primary naval strategy of the war—the blockade of Confederate ports. Initiated in April 1861 and kept in place until war's end, the blockade, which once enforced had international recognition, sought to shut down Confederate trade. By restricting the South's capacity to export commodities such as cotton and import necessities such as arms and ammunition, the North hoped to fatally impair the Confederacy's ability to wage war.[7] In response, the Confederacy looked abroad—and particularly towards Britain—in an effort to counter this naval stranglehold. Although Britain as a nation was officially neutral, the Confederacy was quick to exploit the potential presented by private British industrial enterprise. In the early years of the war, one of the most

lucrative opportunities came in the construction, outfitting and operation of "blockade runners," lightning quick vessels designed to sneak past the Union blockade in order to carry supplies in and out of the Confederacy. Although a high-risk operation, given that capture meant the loss of a vessel and its cargo, one successful run through the blockade was often enough to shower profits on its financiers.[8]

It is little surprise then that the Northeast's shipyards were engaged to construct these specialised runners, with companies in Sunderland and Stockton particularly profiting. As the war progressed, it was not uncommon for captured blockade runners to be subsequently commissioned into the US Navy. These poachers turned gamekeepers were then employed in strengthening the blockade they had been trying to undermine. This was precisely the fate of a number of Northeast built blockade runners, such as USS *Bermuda*, constructed by Pearse & Lockwood in Stockton, USS *Stettin*, laid down by Pile & Co in Sunderland, and USS *Aries*, built by the Laing shipyard, also in Sunderland.[9] Indeed, in a strange quirk of fate, it was USS *Stettin* that ran down the *Aries* off the South Carolina coast in March 1863—a case of one Sunderland-built vessel capturing another in a war being fought on the other side of the Atlantic.[10]

It was also the pressures of the US naval blockade that most influenced wartime interactions with another great bulwark of northeastern industry, Lord Armstrong's famed Elswick Ordnance Works. In 1863 the Newcastle-based company had determined to find markets for their guns abroad, as they sought new revenue streams following the British Government's cancellation of its Elswick contract.[11] The Confederacy, eager to be among the factory's new clients, turned to Elswick for the guns it so desperately needed to counter the Union's naval threat. Their need became ever more urgent as combined US land and sea power gradually captured or closed almost all the major Confederate ports. During the latter part of 1864 and the beginning of 1865, attentions focused on the attack and defence of Wilmington. Located on North Carolina's Cape Fear River, by the close of 1864 it was the Confederacy's most significant surviving operational

port.[12] The key to its defence was its fortifications constructed close to the mouth of the river, particularly the work known as Fort Fisher. The Confederacy viewed armaments developed at Elswick as a potentially game-changing element of their defence of Wilmington—if they could arrive on time. In October 1864 the Confederacy's primary agent in Britain, James D. Bulloch, negotiated closely with the Elswick works. By that time he was having two small steamers fitted out to help defend the port, and he wanted to arm them with Elswick guns.[13] He also wanted to supplement the batteries at locations like Fort Fisher with Armstrong's weapons. At the end of that month Bulloch wrote to the Confederacy's Secretary of the Navy, Stephen Mallory, to inform him of the result of a visit to the Newcastle factory. He had made the trip to see how orders he had already placed were progressing, and to explore the potential of making more. On arrival he learned that a 150-pounder shunt gun for the Confederacy was ready for shipment. Bulloch expressed his confidence that it would "assuredly demolish the United States monitors with their series of thin plates." He went on to expound the virtues of doing business with Elswick:

> The ordnance department of the Elswick Works seems to me to be perfect in its organization. The nicety and care with which everything appertaining to the gun is finished and applied, the simple yet accurate mode of sighting, the contrivances for loading, restraining the recoil, and keeping the quoin in place; the beautiful gradations of fuses, so delicate as to explode at a water graze or requiring considerable penetration into wood to loosen the plunger; the formidable character of the shells, especially the segment shells, and the nice mode of attaching the "buttons"—all these forcibly strike the visitor and afford evidence that not only a master mind directs this great establishment, but that the subordinate departments are governed and controlled by clever men.[14]

Clearly impressed, Bulloch hoped to continue the Confederacy's relationship with Elswick. The end of the war put a halt to those designs, but before it did, some of the factory's output did have time to see action. US forces successfully stormed Fort Fisher on 15 January 1865, an action that effectively closed Wilmington to shipping. On examining the defences, they were surprised to encounter the distinctive silhouette of a 150-pounder Armstrong gun among the Confederate works. The discovery caused no little controversy in the northern press, although even then, the design impressed. One Union sailor involved in the capture of Fort Fisher remarked of the Newcastle made gun: "The work on them is beautiful…How they have got into the hands of the rebels have made people talk. They are splendid pieces and beautifully made."[15] In February, the New York Times gleefully reported the apparent response the US Navy Department sent to Lord Armstrong, following a communication from him suggesting they begin manufacture of his guns: "Capt. Wise, of the Ordinance Bureau, has written a caustic reply, in which he tells Sir William that the Armstrong guns captured at Fort Fisher afford us the means of testing their supposed efficiency."[16]

Northeastern Manpower: Tightening the Union's Grip

The Confederacy's need to outsource much of its industrial requirements meant that British industry and business played a prominent role in testing the strength of Union strategic efforts to blockade the South. Britain, including the northeast, also made significant contributions to the United States war effort in terms of manpower. In the Northeast, as was the case with the industrial output, much of this contribution had a maritime aspect. The outbreak of war in 1861 and the strategic plan the Union implemented necessitated a massive and rapid increase in US military capacity. On the water, a Navy that began operations in 1861 with just 7,600 sailors had seen more than 118,000 men clad in the famous "bluejacket" by war's end.[17] One of the ways in which the US Navy met this hugely increased demand was to seek out the services of experienced

seamen, men who were already plying their trade on the world's oceans and rivers. A number of them were from Northeast England, and they began signing up almost as soon as the Civil War began. Take, for example, 22-year-old North Shields native William Jones. A "mariner" by occupation, he agreed to sign on in Philadelphia as an Ordinary Seaman on the very day that Confederate guns opened the war, 12 April 1861.[18]

Jones was among the first of a large cohort of British merchant seamen who joined the wartime US Navy due to a combination of circumstance and opportunity. For many, it was a decision made when they found themselves in an American port at a time when enlistment conditions were particularly favourable. However, this was not the case for everyone. South Shields native Benjamin Edger had already made his home in America by 1861. He had emigrated there with his parents and siblings aged just seven in 1847. Edger's father was a sailor and rigger, and the family maintained close ties to the water in their new home of Philadelphia. At the time of his August 1861 enlistment, Benjamin was among many immigrants earning a living through fishing and oyster-catching in Delaware Bay and the Chesapeake, a life that would have been familiar to many fishermen back in South Shields. Large numbers of these Philadelphia fishermen—including Benjamin—found themselves assigned to the crews of US gunboats fighting on the Mississippi River. He came face-to-face with the dangers of wartime naval service as an Ordinary Seaman aboard USS Carondelet during the pivotal assault on Fort Donelson, Tennessee, in February 1862, one of the most famous riverine engagements of the war. Benjamin later recalled that while he was working as the "handspiksman of forward gun No.2 the gun bursted, and a piece of a splinter handspike struck… [me] on the top of the head, causing a giddiness similar to a fit." He would survive the incident, returning to civilian life and continuing his connection with the water. Twenty years later, Benjamin would blame this incident for impacting his ability to work at his then trade, as a boat pilot.[19]

While some seamen from England's Northeast had committed their long-term future to the US, there is little doubt that financial inducements

were sufficient to draw many working-class European men with little prior connection to America into naval service. Sunderland native Thomas Elliot was unquestionably among that cohort. Thomas enlisted as an Ordinary Seaman in New York on 28 December 1864, receiving the handsome bounty of $100 in return. At the time he was likely around 16-years-old, though he claimed to be 20. He later told the story of how he came to enlist. As a boy he had run away from his Sunderland home, joining a ship bound for Shanghai. On their return voyage his vessel anchored at New York. While there runners from a naval boarding house approached him, encouraging him to enlist. Thomas and several other members of the crew were sufficiently tempted, and promptly jumped ship. He claimed later that this began his career as a "bounty-jumper," the name given to men who enlisted in one location, claimed the bounty on offer, only to desert and repeat the process at another location. Thomas stated he achieved this in New York because the guards on his receiving ship let him go. He apparently 'jumped' again in Boston and Philadelphia before finally seeing some service. Like many of these international sailors, Thomas Elliot's brief career as a US sailor was just an exclamation point in a life spent as a merchant sailor on the world's seas, which he returned to at war's end. He appears to have had no further interaction with America.[20]

Elliot eventually made his home in his native Sunderland. He was not the only former US sailor to return home. Another who made his way back to the Northeast was George Bell—a man who had a significantly more impressive wartime record than that of his compatriot. Born in Sunderland in 1839, George was another of the professional northeastern sailors who found themselves in America just when the navy needed experienced men most. He enlisted in New York in May 1861, where, despite his origins, his birthplace was recorded as Brooklyn. At this point in the war, it was still technically illegal to recruit foreigners into the US Navy, and this sleight of hand was likely a recruiter's attempt to hide the real numbers of foreign-born men being enlisted.[21] A highly competent seaman, George quickly proved his worth. Assigned to the frigate USS

Santee where he was designated Captain of the Afterguard, November 1861 found him off Galveston, Texas. There, his commander determined to launch a raid to burn two Confederate vessels in the harbour. The Sunderland native was the man selected to pilot the first of two launches rowing in for the attack. In short order Bell's launch became involved in a desperate struggle for control of the Rebel schooner *Royal Yacht*, an action in which George excelled himself. His officer later recalling how "my brave pilot Bell, as he stood on the gunwale swinging the grapnel, was struck by a ball, threw up his hands, and fell into my arms."[22] The bullet that struck George Bell ploughed into his throat before lodging in the back of his neck, a near fatal injury that caused permanent damage both to the clarity of his speech and his ability to eat.[23] Nevertheless, after his recovery he returned to service, even re-enlisting in 1864. That year also brought a ceremony aboard USS *Brooklyn* at Hampton Roads, Virginia, where he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his 1861 actions. America's highest decoration for gallantry, his citation recorded why his superiors had felt him worthy of the honour. He 'evinced more coolness…than was ever before witnessed by his commanding officer" and "although severely wounded in the encounter, he displayed extraordinary courage under the most painful and trying circumstances.'[24]

Despite his service to the United States, George Bell—and his medal—returned to England in 1866, where he married and took up residence in Newcastle. As the years passed and age took its toll, the old sailor eventually decided to go in search of a US military pension. In spite of his wartime heroics, the circumstances of his departure from the US Navy hampered his application. The problem arose from the fact that George had never been officially discharged but had simply disappeared from a New York receiving ship in early 1865 (just as Thomas Elliot once had). George explained the discrepancy. He lamented that "being young and reckless" he had gone ashore from the ship on a drinking "spree," where he was promptly "shanghaied on board a sailing vessel at New York, and sailed to the West Indies, where we loaded with sugar and returned to New

York."[25] Given that many professional European sailors seem to have been quick to move on from United States service as the war drew to a close, this could be viewed as an effort to explain retrospectively what had been a freely made decision. Conversely, he may have been telling the truth. He had certainly grown attached to his adoptive country during his wartime service, as evidenced by the permanent reminders he had inked on his body. Along with an anchor and his initials "GB," his wartime tattoos include the New York coat of arms and the British and American flags, reminders of the two countries and the state that had the most influence on his life and identity.[26]

Whatever the real circumstances behind his departure from the Navy in 1865, Bell's persistence was ultimately rewarded with a pension, duly delivered to him at regular intervals in Newcastle. As the years went by, the former American sailor became a well-known figure in the region, particularly as the number of surviving American Civil War veterans grew thin. The local circle that George could draw upon was made clear just prior to the First World War, when he sought an increase in his pension. Among those who provided written submission in his support were groups such as the Northumberland Veterans Association, of which he was a member, and Johnston Wallace, the Lord Mayor of Newcastle. George Bell passed away in September 1917, a year that marked an important milestone in the relationship between the Northeast and its small band of American Civil War veterans. Among the large group of mourners in attendance as the Medal of Honor recipient was laid to rest in Elswick Cemetery was the local American Vice Consul.[27] The previous April had witnessed the US entry to the war on the Allied side. As a new era of friendship and cooperation dawned between Britain and the US, the region's American Civil War veterans would prove an ideal vehicle for cementing that bond.

Northeastern Veterans: Building a New Alliance

Even before 1917 the Northeast had witnessed a growth of interest in local American Civil War veterans. In July 1916 George Bell had been

among a number of Civil War veterans and widows invited to the Tyne Theatre for a showing of the famed 1915 American movie *The Birth of a Nation*, a controversial and highly racist depiction of the Civil War and reconstruction which glorifies the activities of the Ku Klux Klan.[28] Only weeks after American entry into the war, the theatre eagerly repeated the event, likely keen to showcase one of the major contemporary productions of the nation's new ally. Once again, a special invite was extended to the Civil War veterans. It is apparent that the movie's showing was regarded as uncontentious celebration of the origin of modern America, given that the *Newcastle Daily Journal* reported that the Klan had the 'chivalrous intention of protecting women and children from attacks by Indians and outlaw negroes,' while noting that its ranks contained 'Tynesiders, who were very active and useful members of the klan.'[29] The message was one of enduring links between the US and Britain. The city's celebration of American Independence Day in 1918 also included aged local veterans. Among the many local initiatives organised to mark that occasion was a special tea for US airmen hosted at the Jesmond Dene Banqueting Hall by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle. Included as guests of honour for the event were John Sloan, who had served in the 1st Louisiana Infantry during the Mexican War, and Civil War veteran William Henry Hall, who claimed to have been one of the men who carried Abraham Lincoln's body from Ford's Theater.[30]

Within a few years of the First World War's conclusion the final representatives of the Northeast's contribution to the American Civil War had died. Nevertheless, they continued to be remembered on Tyneside, and serve as symbols of the ties that bound Britain and the US. The success of these remembrance efforts was largely due to the dedication of a Newcastle shopkeeper called George Washington Scott. Born in New York around 1850, Scott had relocated to Newcastle in the late-nineteenth century where he operated a stationery business. In the aftermath of the Great War, Scott, who was by then being described as the "senior member of the American Colony on Tyneside," took on a role in the newly formed

American Overseas Memorial Day Association. Established in 1920 to honour US servicemen buried overseas, Scott determined to use it as an opportunity to remember the local men—those like George Bell and William Henry Hall—who had served in the American Civil War.[31] Coordinating with the local US Consul and the city and county's veteran associations, Scott established an annual pattern through the 1920s and 30s whereby representatives took the time each May to mark the graves of the Northeast's Civil War veterans for US Memorial Day. Typically, the various graves were decorated with miniature American flags and Union Jacks. Wreaths were laid and speeches delivered. These memorial occasions often drew significant crowds. A photograph taken at George Bell's graveside in Elswick Cemetery on Memorial Day 1928 shows not only the American Consul F.W. Doty but also a piper and representatives of the Newcastle Veterans' Association. Newspaper accounts reported that the event was also strongly attended by members of the public.[32] These annual memorials provided constant opportunity during the interwar years to promote and celebrate the relationship between the United States and Britain. Typical was the 1931 Memorial Day visit to the graves of Civil War veterans John Pendergast and Robert Rennoldson in Preston Cemetery, North Shields. There, one of the speakers (in a line up which included Scott) remarked that the "ceremony was a token of the friendship of Britain and America" a reminder that "sacrifices were worthwhile when made for peace and freedom," a sentiment that drew parallels between the American Civil War and First World War.[33] Although Scott had been a driving force behind these annual memorialisations, they continued beyond his death in 1937. It was the Second World War which finally sounded their death knell. Although American Consular staff continued the graveside visits until at least 1942, the exigencies of the global conflict meant the attention of the local civic authorities necessarily lay elsewhere. They were never revived following its conclusion.[34]

Though now all but forgotten, the almost 80-year period between the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 and the beginning of the

Second World War in 1939 brought regular reminders of the Northeast's connections to the great struggle between North and South across the Atlantic Ocean. The region's reputation and expertise in the maritime world was fundamental to the initial development of these links, as the Confederacy looked to the region to supply the hardware to break the Union blockade, while the Union benefitted in turn from the seamanship skills that had been developed by so many men along Northeast coasts and rivers. As these US army and navy veterans aged, new threats were faced and new alliances were forged, their local prominence grew. The elderly soldiers and sailors proved an ideal reminder of US and British links at a time when a new generation of British and American men were fighting side by side on the battlefields of Europe. Even after they had gone to their graves, they continued to provide an opportunity to commemorate these transatlantic links, until eventually a new global war forged new narratives with which to celebrate the British and American partnership and its implications for its regions like the Northeast.

Notes:

1 David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, eds., *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014).

2 L. T. Wyatt, III, *The Industrial Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), p.xiii; Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Population of the United States in 1860; compiled from the original returns (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1864), pp. ix, xxviii. Almost four million of the 32 were enslaved. Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Random House, 2015), p.243.

3 See Don H Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2013) and Peter O'Connor, *American Sectionalism in the British Mind, 1832-1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

4 See, for example, Richard J. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

5 Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pp.14-19, 41-48, 225-29; Rosalind Hall, "A poor cotton weyver: poverty and the cotton famine in Clitheroe," *Social History* 28 (May, 2003), 227-250; D. J. Oddy, "Urban Famine in Nineteenth

Century Britain: The Effect of the Lancashire Cotton Famine on Working-Class Diet and Health, *Economic History Review* 36 (Feb. 1983), pp.68-86.

6 http://civilwarbluejackets.com, accessed, June 7, 2023. The Civil War Bluejackets Project is a major international research project focused on utilising contemporary records to glean new insights into common sailors in the American Civil War. The essay also incorporates research undertaken by the authors into returned American Civil War veterans on Tyneside.

7 Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, pp.39-44.

8 Ibid., pp.192-99.

9 Paul H. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), pp.78, 95, 110.

10 Ibid., p.78.

11 Marshall J. Bastable, *Arms and the State: Sir William Armstrong and the Remaking of British Naval Power, 1854-1914* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.3. The British government's contract cancellation was a result of easing military tensions with France.

12 Robert M. Browning, Jr., *From Cape Charles to Cape Fear: The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron during the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), pp.271-302.

13 James D Bullock to Stephen R Mallory, 24 October 1864, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (hereafter OR), Ser.2, Vol.2, pp.738-740.

14 James D Bullock to Stephen R Mallory, 27 October 1864, *OR*, Ser.2, Vol.2, pp.741-742.

15 *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, February 6, 1865.

16 *New York Times*, 17 February 1865. The article goes on to note that the guns in Fort Fisher carried an inscription indicating they were a present from Sir William Armstrong to Jefferson Davis. While it is apparent from Bullock's correspondence that the Elswick works had completed at least 150-pounder for the Confederate Government, it is unclear if this was one of the two reported pieces defending Wilmington. The marker for the surviving Fort Fisher gun at West Point, New York, notes it was "said to have been a gift from private donors in England to the Confederacy." For images of this marker, see *The Historical Marker Database* entry for the gun available at https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=22310, accessed 8 June 2023.

17 Dennis J. Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998), p.9.

18 U.S. Naval Enlistment Rendezvous, Enlistments at Philadelphia in 1861, Return for Week Ending Saturday 13 April 1861. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) RG 24, www.ancestry.com accessed 25 May 2023. Jones was recorded as just 4 feet 11 inches tall.

19 Naval Enlistment Rendezvous, Enlistments in Philadelphia in 1861, Return for Week Ending Saturday 21 August 1861, NARA, RG 24, www.ancestry.com accessed 25

May 2023; England Select Births and Christenings 1538-1974, www.ancestry.com , accessed 25 May 2023; Case Files of Approved Pension Applications of Civil War and Later Navy Veterans (hereafter Navy Survivor's Certificate), 20940, Benjamin J. Edger, NARA, RG 15, www.fold3.com, accessed 25 May 2023; 1850 U.S. Census, Philadelphia, NARA, 1860. NARA, RG 29, accessed www.ancestry.com 25 May 2023.

20 *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 31 March 1933.

21 U.S. Naval Enlistment Rendezvous, Enlistments at New York in 1861, Return for Week Ending 18 May 1861. NARA. www.ancestry.com 26 May 2023. Navy Survivor's Certificate 35894, George Bell, NARA, RG15, www.fold3.com, accessed 26 May 2023. Ringle, *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, 16. The legal prohibition on recruitment of foreigners was ignored given the Union's manpower needs. The law was not repealed until 1864.

22 James E. Jouett to R.W. Thompson 13 May 1879, reproduced in Mitchell S. Goldberg "A Federal Naval Raid into Galveston Harbor, November 7-8, 1861: What Really Happened," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76 (July 1972), p.64.

23 Navy Survivor's Certificate 25894, George Bell, NARA. The bullet was subsequently surgically removed.

24 R.J. Proft (ed), *United States of America's Congressional Medal of Honor Recipients and their Official Citations*, Fourth Edition, (Columbia Heights MN: Highland House II, 2002), p.797.

25 Navy Survivor's Certificate Number 35894, George Bell, NARA.

26 Ibid.

27 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* 1 October1917. Numbers of military mourners were also in attendance, with the "Last Post" played by a serviceman who had returned wounded from the front.

28 *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 July 1916.

29 Ibid., 25 May 1917.

30 Ibid., 5 July 1918. John Sloan died in 1924 and was buried in Saltwell Cemetery. William Henry Hall died in 1923 and was buried in Harton Cemetery.

31 Census Returns of England and Wales1891 for Westgate, Westgate South, Newcastle on Tyne, The National Archives of the UK: Public Record Office, 1891, www.ancestry.com accessed 26 May 2023; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 29 October 1914; *Sunderland Daily Echo & Shipping Gazette*, 23 February 1933.

32 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* 31 May 1928; *Journal and North Star,* 31 May1928.

33 *Shields Daily News*, 1 June1931.

34 *Shields Daily News,* 31 May 1940, 31 May1941, 1 June 1943. For more on ceremonies in the 1920s and 1930s see Damian Shiels "An Irish Geordie in the American Civil War & Tyneside's Memorial Day Remembrance" at https://irishamericancivilwar.com/2017/11/07/irish-geordie-american-civil-war-tynesides-memorial-day-remembrance/.

Shields' First Socialists

Stuart Barlow

Despite being able to find examples of radical political activity[1] in both North and South Shields from the end of the eighteen century, and through the first fifty years of the nineteenth, it has been said that in both towns by the second half of the century:

> […] new forms of organization were developed by the expanding class of skilled industrial workers which went hand-in-hand with the increasing tendency towards collaborationist politics. Non-conformism, adult education, anti-drinking Temperance Associations and the Cooperative Movement all reflected the aspirations of this skilled working class – self-improvement, self-organisation, independence and sobriety.[2]

This article aims to show how revolutionary socialism briefly disrupted this social conformity during the late 1880s, using material taken from political journals (the Socialist League' Commonweal and Social Democratic Federation's *Justice*), local newspapers (*The Shields Daily News* and *Shields Daily Gazette*), as well as letters and documents held in the *Socialist League (UK) Archives (SL-Archive)*.[3]

Socialism arrives in Shields

During the early 1880s both local newspapers only linked Socialists with events in continental Europe or Russia. But in April 1884 *The Shields Daily News* (SDNews) reported on the debate about the benefits of Socialism

between Henry Meyers Hyndman, the Social Democratic Federation's (SDF) leader, and Liberal MP, and Secularist, Charles Bradlaugh. Then nine months later it reported, rather disparagingly, on William Morris and others leaving the SDF to form the Socialist League (League). Then, during 1885 and 1886, both local newspapers reported on the League's, and SDF's, campaign for the right to hold public open air meetings without police harassment. The *Shields Daily Gazette (SDGazette)* even considered the arrest of London socialists, while disagreeing with their views, to be a public scandal.[4]

William Morris had spoken at Newcastle's Tyne Theatre in 1884 and subsequently a Democratic Federation branch had failed. But after the League was launched, in December 1884, a number of people from the north east contacted it to subscribe to *Commonweal*. None, however, were from either North or South Shields. It appears the first advocate of socialism in either town was the Fabian Annie Besant. Who spoke at a South Shields' Secular Society meeting, in September 1886, held in Thornton's Theatre of Variety on 'Why Workers Should Be Socialists'. The lecture may not have been a success as Besant subsequently told fellow Fabian Edward R Pease, who had recently moved to Newcastle, that he would find socialist propaganda work hard. Despite this warning, Pease successfully launched the Newcastle Socialist Debating Society only a month later, initially recruiting 30 members. While the *Newcastle Chronicle's* report on the launch included Pease's socialist views without criticism, the SDGazette was more dismissive of his views.[5] Because he had previously cooperated with the League in London Pease promoted the Society's launch in *Commonweal* and was willing to have League speakers at the Society so long as they moderated their language, believing:

> any advocacy of revolutionary methods and even violent denunciation of the capitalist would only meet with but little success but would seriously interfere with the success of the small movement which I have started'[6]

The League's first foray into the area, including a meeting in North Shields, came when Bloomsbury member W A Chambers came to Tyneside in December 1886. Chambers reported that a Labour Federation had been formed to campaign for an eight hour working day and the area was 'peculiarly adapted for Socialistic agitation'[7]. Then reports about the Northumbrian Miners' campaign, and subsequent strike, against their wage reduction started appearing in *Commonweal* and the League sent a full time propagandist, H Parker, to the area. Then at the start of 1887 John Lincoln Mahon announced, in *Commonweal*, *'A Provincial Propagandist Tour'* of the north of England during which he wanted to include a meeting in 'Shields'. Mahon was an Edinburgh socialist who had formed the Scottish Land and Labour League with Andreas Scheu, which affiliated to the SDF in 1884, before following Morris into the League. He became one of the League's most effective propagandists, touring the country and creating new branches.[8]

Socialist Activity in Shields

Cambers' meeting in North Shields was held at the Gladstone Hall, near the bottom of Bedford Street, where, he said, he collected sufficient names to form a branch. The secretary of the local Irish Nationalist League, Michael Lydon, agreed to act as the League's branch secretary. The Irish National League, established in 1882 to promote Irish Home Rule, had had a North Shields presence almost from its beginning. Chambers felt the area's strong support for Irish Republicanism, which looked to Gladstone to provide Home Rule, and the influence of the National Secular Society in South Shields would make the League's work challenging. Another challenge was the existing Liberal radical establishment, which was evident at a meeting, in January 1887, protesting against the reduction of Tynemouth Corporation workers' wages, whilst leaving salaries of well-paid officials untouched. The resolution condemning this reduction was proposed by Thomas Thompson, a local Liberal Association and United Temperance Methodist League member.[9] The meeting's Chair, Henry

Sanderson, also warned that:

> A great many objected to the propagation of the principles of the Socialists, [.... and that] he knew of nothing that was more calculated to encourage the spread of Socialistic principles than the recent action of the Town Council in regard to the workmen's wages. (Hear, hear)[10]

This Liberal radical influence was evident again a few months later at a National Labour Federation's (NLF) meeting in North Shields' Oddfellows' Hall on Saville Street, at which, Pease, the Fabian, spoke. The meeting's Chair Leslie Johnson, honorary secretary of the Liberal Association, didn't want their Federation '[to] be confused [....] with other Federations [such as] the Democratic Federation, which were purely socialistic'[11]. He suggested the NLF should raise sufficient 'capital as a means of preventing strikes, and planting labour on a footing with capital'. It is hardly surprising that the *SDGazette* referred to them as 'earnest reformers'[12].

After speaking to Pease's Society and to miners across Northumberland, who 'received Socialism very well indeed, and were anxious to hear more about it'[13], Mahon held a 'very good meeting'[14] in South Shields on Sunday 13 March, at which SDF's John Williams also spoke. This was followed by a large meeting on The New Quay, North Shields, where Williams spoke about 'the sufferings of under-paid toilers and unemployed [.... and advocated] the nationalisation of the land and the taking over by the state of mines, works etc [....] for the benefit of the whole nation'[15], which drew frequent applause. Williams, an unskilled worker before helping to establish the SDF, continued organising meetings for the movement for the next thirty years. Mahon told the League that things were going splendidly in the area and would like to stay longer.[16] At this time it seems the League and SDF, despite their differences nationally, were cooperating in promoting socialism. This may have extended to where each organisation set up branches, as the SDF formed branches in Newcastle, Byker and

Sunderland but there is no evidence they attempted to form one in either North or South Shields. This appears to have been left to the League. While Mahon felt confident about the future of Socialism in the north east, he warned that the divisions between the League and SDF could dampen enthusiasm towards them.[17]

Branches Established

While Chambers had talked up the prospects of a branch in North Shields there is no evidence of a functioning branch existing until May, 1887. This was when a note appeared in *Commonweal* confirming the payment of 'Shields' branch membership subscriptions up to 31 March. This seems to have happened after the League's Alexander Karley Donald, who became one of the leaders of the League's parliamentary faction, and 'a well know labour speaker' called Stevens, spoke at a series of meetings in North and South Shields during May.[18] After one, John Hearne, from North Shields, informed Donald that he intended to revive the branch because since Chambers' visit 'Socialism has been the main topic of discussion'[19] in the town. Hearn was a fifty year old mariner who lived at 111 Bedford Street North Shields with his wife and large family.[20]

These meetings were followed by the League's Wallace and local Liberal Leslie Johnson debating 'Is Socialism Sound' on the New Quay, on Sunday 29 May.[21] The *SDNews* reported both sides received a 'fair and patient hearing'[22] with the League's socialist motion being carried. In contrast the *SDGazette* was rather dismissive, describing the meeting as another example of 'Socialists from the South [who] continue their attacks on the North'[23]. Subsequently the meeting's Chair, the Liberal, Thompson, wrote to the *SDNews* complaining that 'out of a meeting of about 600 people the Socialists had a majority of about 12, though a goodly number did not vote'[24].

The payment of members' subscriptions meant the North Shields branch was represented at the League's third annual conference in May 1887 by Stevens. This was probably the same Stevens who had been assisting

Donald, although he lived in Byker rather than North Shields. Stevens presented the North Shields' Branch Report, written by the secretary John Hearne, which confirmed they had forty members, had been holding regular propaganda meetings and debates, selling literature (presumably *Commonweal*) and were preparing to undertake propaganda work with miners. While North Shields was primarily a fishing and trading port there were a number of mines in and around the town. Unfortunately there is no record of this work actually taking place. The greatest difficulty facing the branch, it appears, was the lack of regular speakers, suggesting local members did not have the confidence or skills to speak in public.[25] The Conference Report shows Stevens proposing and seconding a number of motions, as well as intervening in the discussion on the Strike Committee's report where he:

> called attention [of the Conference] to the visits of members of the League to Northumberland, and to the establishment in the North of the National Labour Federation, which then numbered about 15,000 [members][26]

Stevens also voted against Morris's motion endorsing the League's policy of abstention from Parliamentary action along with Mahon and Donald. Whether Stevens voted out of personal conviction or as instructed by the branch is not known. Had Mahon's support for parliamentaryism and engagement in municipal elections influenced attitudes in North Shields?27 Mahon certainly felt that:

> [t]here has been too much sneering and gibing between Reformers and Revolutionists, and too little useful discussion' and called on Socialists to embrace all Labour movements with the aim of combining them 'into one solid array with a clearly defined aim[28]

After the Conference, *Commonweal* described the branch as Shields *(North and South)* suggesting a single branch covered members in both towns. While John Hearne, the branch secretary, lived in North Shields, on Clive Street, branch meetings were held in South Shields, on Thursday evenings, at the 'General Gordon' public house, close to the St Hilda Colliery and South Shields Public Baths and Wash Houses. It was on the edge of a large area of workers' housing in High Shields, but was demolished in the late 1950s. Meetings continued both at North Shields' New Quay and South Shields' Market Place, but from the beginning of July *Commonweal* asked 'friends' in South Shields to contact J Wood, 105 Bath Street, suggesting South Shields had started to operate as a separate branch. Despite some disappointments, such as Mahon's not turning up for a planned meeting of the North Shields' Irish National League, it was felt that the promotion of socialism was progressing well in both towns.[29]

July saw Donald holding more, what *Commonweal* described as, 'successful meetings' in both North and South Shields selling large quantities of the paper and enrolling new members. There were lively discussions in North Shields with speakers replying to points and objections by the crowd. While in South Shields Donald was supported by an 'advanced local Radical' called Derby. The League seemed to be having an impact within both towns and had arranged for Commonweal to be sold locally from Fosters' hairdressing shop, on Clive Street North Shields, and the Market Place news-stall, on Alfred Street South Shields. Donald also felt that the NLF was 'profiting by the vigorous example of the Socialist [League] party here'[30] and proposed holding meetings with them. During this period even a local pharmaceutical chemist , Walter S Corder from Tyne Street, North Shields, contacted the League for copies of Morris's "Chants for Socialists", "Art and Socialism", "Aims of Art" and "The Woman Question" by Edward Aveling & Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Despite this interest in Morris and socialism Corder later became a gelatine and glue manufacturer who employed household servants.[31]

North of England Socialist Federation

In April 1887 a new socialist grouping was formed in the north-east, the North of England Socialist Federation (NESF). This came about, in Mahon's opinion, as a direct result of the League's agitation within the mining communities. From the middle of June the NESF started to hold meetings in both North and South Shields and *Commonweal* printed contact names for them in both towns. These were J[ohn] Isbister, c/o Foster's hairdresser on Clive Street where *Commonweal* was being sold, and J Wood in South Shields, who was also the League's contact. This suggests some blurring or confusion over the allegiance of the branches in both towns at a time when Mahon was warning the League against setting itself up as a rival to the NESF.[32]

At the end of July, 1887, references to the Shields *(North and South)* branch in *Commonweal* ceased. Subsequently meetings in both towns came under the NESF banner, suggesting the League's members had transferred wholesale to the new organisation. This may have been the reason why *Commonweal* published no reports from either town during August. Isbister wrote, 'on behalf of the North Shields Branch of the North of England Socialist Federation'[33], asking why their reports weren't being printed and to clarify their relationship with the League. He said the branch, which was still sending money for Commonweal sales, had twenty-three members, still wanted League speakers and wanted 'to be properly connected with the Central Socialist League under Mr. Morris'[34], suggesting they still supported the League's revolutionary position. Reports from North and South Shields' re-appeared in Commonweal from the beginning of September. Including one where the crowd listened closely to the Fabian, Pease, and John Comb from Seghill Colliery. Was the use of speakers from the wider socialist movement a demonstration of the branch's inclusiveness or fluidity, or just another example of being unable to get speakers from the League?[35]

In September, Hearne informed the League that Isbister was no longer Secretary of 'the North Shields branch of the Socialist League'[36] and that

he would be dealing with *Commonweal* sales from now on. Hearne's use of the term 'branch of the Socialists League' again suggests fluidity over the branch's identity or a division of loyalties between members. Unfortunately none of the correspondence clarifies the reason for Isbister stepping down. Whether it was due to political difference or just burn out is not clear. Although Isbister did sign this resignation letter 'I remain yours fraternally'[37] suggesting he still believed in the socialist cause. By the end of the month North Shields had arranged a 'business meeting [...] for appointment of secretary and re-organisation'[38], indicating perhaps that there were problems within the branch. Although it has not been possible to definitively find John Isbister in the Census at the addresses given in his letters, one candidate in the 1881 Census was a twenty-nine year old shipwright.[39]

At the end of September, *Commonweal* reported on, what it described as, one of North Shields most successful Sunday morning meetings, when MacDonald spoke about "Workers and their Representatives". In October Stevens received warm applause when he attacked 'Liberal Hack Labour Representatives' and MacDonald spoke about 'Socialism, Its Progress and Principles' at the North Shields branch meeting. *Commonweal* was now printing a full list of NESF branches, along with details of their secretaries. J T Harrison was shown as the North Shields branch secretary and F Dick, 139 Marsden Street West, the South Shields secretary. Harrison was a house carpenter living at 24 Queen Street with his wife and children. It seems any confusion over whether the North and South Shields branches were part of the NESF or the Socialist League had been resolved.[40]

Problems Surface

Despite the previous optimism Harrison wrote to the League in November apologising for outstanding *Commonweal* payments. Apparently the branch was very short of cash and had been passing their unsold copies to a South Shields' news vendor for disposal. Harrison also reported that there had been 'an awckward [sic] severance of some of members but we

are recovering '[41]. Whether this concerned differences between those who supported parliamentary action and those who supported Morris's anti-parliamentary stance was not made clear. Harrison also said it had been decided to shut down branch activities over the winter, because of the economic conditions in the town, but he hoped that:

> in the spring we will be able to commence again in better and continuous order by having speakers regularly [….] The feeling towards us seems temperate and that it is possible that with better employment we will add to our numbers I hope[42]

Despite these problems the NESF organised the final lecture of Christian Socialist, Reverend John Glass's tour of the north east at North Shields' Oddfellows Hall, on Friday 11 November. *Commonweal* reported Glass received a friendly reception and that North Shields seemed 'a promising place for our work. … [and that] members of this branch are distinctly enthusiastic, but complain about a want of speakers'[43]. It thought the branches' fortunes could be revived following a protracted period of propaganda work. Despite this optimism no further meetings were held in either North or South Shields and the NESF Branch List appeared in *Commonweal* for the last time on 7 January 1888. This signalled the end of the League's active involvement in the towns, and the north east in general. It would be another three years before the League again held meetings in Newcastle after an anarchist-communist group had been formed. By this time Morris had left the League and the anarchist faction had taken control.[44]

What happened next?

The demise of the League in North and South Shields, in January 1888, coincided with, and can surely not be unrelated to, Mahon's decision to re-join the SDF because he felt the League had not supported his work

in the provinces sufficiently. The NESF branches also seemed to have transferred on bloc to the SDF's North of England District at this time. Within a month of Mahon joining the SDF he had held meetings in both South Shields and North Shields, including one on 'Socialism and Home Rule' clearly directed at their Irish population. While initial meetings were reported as being successful no contact details for either the North or South Shields' branches were published in *Justice*. From the beginning of July both branches were omitted altogether, suggesting neither town ever had fully functioning SDF branches during this period. This failure was highlighted in the Secretary's Annual Report, that year, which admitted that the SDF's progress in the north east had not been up to expectations.[45]

It would be another four or five years before socialists returned to either town. This time it was the reformist Fabian Society who set up a branch in South Shields in 1892, followed a few months later by the Independent Labour Party (ILP). It seems the Newcastle Labour Party, formed in March 1889, never established a branch in either North or South Shields. It appears interest in socialism was still present as David Clark's *History of the South Shields Labour Party* describes how, after only being formed a few days, the ILP branch attracted over 4000 people to a meeting in South Shields' Market Place and soon had almost 100 paid-up members. The development of the ILP and the eventual founding of the Labour Party in South Shields are covered in Clark's book.[46]

The situation in North Shields was more confusing. In August 1895 *The Labour Leader*, edited by Kier Hardy, claimed the 'North Shields National Socialist Society' had decided to become an ILP branch. Whether this 'Society' was a group of old League or NESF members is not explained. In September *The Labour Leader* reported North Shields was one of the ILP's North-Eastern Federation branches. In October the SDNews had also reported on a North Shields ILP branch meeting, but carried no further reports of local ILP activity until 1903. Similarly, The Labour Leader carried no further reports of a North Shields ILP branch until October and November 1903. It is clear that this was a new branch and not a

continuation of the one formed eight years earlier. Names of the branch officials were published and it was reported weekly branch meetings were being held at the Free Gardiners Hall on Prudhoe Street.[47]

Justice continued to carry occasional news of events and socialist sympathisers in the area during the 1890s, suggesting the presence of some SDF members or sympathisers. There was even a proposal, in 1899 by T W Graham Thompson of Whitley [Bay], to establish a SDF branch in North Shields, which came to nothing. Then in 1904 Joseph Rogers successfully established a SDF branch in South Shields, after speaking in both South Shields and North Shields, and became its first secretary.[48] Justice reported Rogers held a number of 'good meetings', with audiences asking him to return, and while this optimism might appear similar to that previously shown by *Commonweal*, this time the South Shields SDF branch survived and remained active for many years. In the following year they held a meeting, in what *Justice* described as 'this northern stronghold of reaction'[49], to support the 1905 Russian Revolution. A member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, with the nom de plume N Marxson, spoke at this meeting.

The branch also continued to hold meetings in North Shields. One of which, Justice claimed, was the largest meeting ever held by the SDF in the town attracting about 350 people. The veteran socialist John Williams even returned, in 1910, to speak at a large meeting in North Shields. Yet the SDF weren't able to establish a separate branch in North Shields. Meanwhile the South Shields branch started to put forward SDF candidates in local municipal elections. Initially they performed badly but eventually James Dunlop, who had joined the SDF from the ILP, was elected as a councillor for the Tyne Dock Ward in 1906. Dunlop remained a SDF councillor right up to the start of World War I. Although after the 1913 elections Justice reported that the branch hadn't been able to canvas or provide transport for voters, suggesting the branch was struggling for members and funds.[50]

Conclusion

This article has tried to show that the often perceived view of North and South Shields being dominated by collaborationist political action during the second half of the 19th Century is not wholly correct. At the very birth of modern socialism its revolutionary form came to both towns and briefly seemed to have had an impact. A striking feature of this initial period is the fluidity between socialist organisations. Locally it seems the League and SDF avoided the differences experienced nationally and actively cooperated with each other in promoting socialism in the towns. This is evident by the fact that the SDF provided speakers for League meetings and both organisations avoided setting up separate braches in the same area. Even when the whole of the North and South Shield League branches joined the NESF they still wanted to be connected to the League and wanted their speakers for meetings.

The presence of League, and subsequently NESF, branches in both North and South Shields was all too brief. The end of League activity coincided with the split emerging in the League between those for and against fighting elections and Mahon's decision to join the SDF at the beginning of 1888. The failure of the SDF to re-activate the old League branches may have been due to the economic downturn in the towns, suggested in correspondence, and the inevitable burn-out of a limited number of members from trying to organise meetings, collect subs and selling *Commonweal*. Despite this failure this period of socialist activity may have laid the foundation for the later development of reformist socialist organisations, leading eventually to the growth of the Labour Party in both North and South Shields. Indeed the spark of revolutionary socialism did not die out entirely either, as the re-emergence of the SDF in South Shields testifies, although attempts in North Shields were less successful.

Notes:

[1] Examples can be seen in:
'The Greenlanders at Shields 1760-1830: A Labour Elite' by Tony Barrow, *North East Labour History Bulletin*, No.24 1990, pp.4-11: Peter Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle* (Consett, Sagittarius Press Ltd, 1975), p.30: John Charlton, *The Wind from Peterloo, 1819 – Newcastle's great reform demonstration*, (London, History & Social Action Publications, 2018), p.8: *The Northern Liberator*, 'Great Public Demonstration, June 28 – Order of Procession', 23 June 1838, p.1 and 'Tremendous Popular Demonstration in Newcastle', 30 June 1838, p.4, available on line [paywall] The British Newspaper Archive - https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/ (afterwards BNA) [last accessed on 16 February 2023]

[2] North Tyneside Community Development Project, *North Shields: Working Class Politics and Housing 1900-1977*, (Nottingham: The Russell Press Ltd, 1978), p8.

[3] Commonweal is available at the University of Michigan Digital General Collection at https://quod.lib.umich.edu/g/genpub?cginame=text-idx;id=navbarbrowselink;key =title;page=browse;value=co [all references from Commonweal last accessed on 16 February 2023]
Newcastle Chronicle, Justice, The Shields Daily News and *Shields Daily Gazette* are available on line [paywall] at the *BNA*. [all references from these newspapers last accessed on 16 February 2023]
Documents from the *Socialist League (UK) Archives (SL-Archives)* are available on line at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, at - https://search.iisg. amsterdam/Record/ARCH01344 [all references from *SL-Archives* last accessed on 16 February 2023]

[4] *Shields Daily News (SDNews)*, 'Opening of German Parliament', 13 February 1880, p.3; 'The Russian Nihilist Trial', 24 May 1880, p.4; 'Serious Charge Against a German', 17 May 1882; 'Messrs Bradlaugh and Hyndman on Socialism', 18 April 1884, p.3; 'Socialists Squabbling', 17 January 1885, p.2; 'The London Socialists and the Police', 29 September 1885 p.4: *Shields Daily Gazette (SDGazette)* 'Our London Letter', 15 September 1885, pp.2-3: E P Thompson, *William Morris Romantic to Revolutionary*, (London: Merlin Press, 1976), pp.393-403.

[5] *Newcastle Chronicle* (henceforth *Chronicle*) 'Art and Labour: Lecture by Mr. William Morris', 22 November 1884, p.8; 'English Socialism, The Fabian Society, The Movement in the North', 14 October 1886, p.5 and 'Socialism in Newcastle', 15 October 1886, p.7: Letters from 'Pease Edward R, London, Newcastle-on-Tyne to to Sparling and to Secr. Socialist League 1885-1886', p.10, document 2428, [*SL-ArchivesDoc2428*]; letters from 'Grant, W.W., Newcastle-on-Tyne to (Mahon) secr. Socialist League 1885' and to 'Man. Co, 1885', documents 1584-1585; letters from Holtijer, Geo. Edw., Tarrow-on-Tyne [sic] to Mahon 1885' and to '(Morris?) 1885', documents 1742-1743; letters from 'Daniels, H.H., Gateshead to (Man.Com.) 1885' and to 'Sparling 1886', pp.4-5, documents 1196-1197. All *SL-Archives: SDNews*, 'Secularism', 17 September 1886 p.1 and 18 September 1886.

Edward R Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, (London, A C Fifield, 1916), p.59: *SDGazette*, 'A Small Beginning in Socialism', 15 October 1886, p.3: *Commonweal*, 'Socialism in Newcastle, 30 October 1886, p.248

6 *SL-ArchivesDoc2428*, p.10. Pease position is set out on pp.9-14.

7 *Commonweal*, 'A Visit to the Tyneside', 18 December 1886, pp.297-298 Bloomsbury [branch] List of members. [Feb.1886], p.2, document 525a, *SL-Archives*.

8 *Commonweal*, 'The Labour Struggle', 12 February 1887, p.55 and 26 February 1887, p.70; 'A Provincial Propagandist Tour', 12 February 1887, p.55: 'Report of the Third Annual Conference of the Socialist League. May 29, 1887', pp.4, 8-9, document 20a, *SL-Archives [SL-ArchivesDoc20a]*: Thompson (1976), pp. 350-52 and 359.

9 *Commonweal*, 'A Visit to the Tyneside', 18 December 1886, pp.297-298 *SDNews*, 'New Irish National League' 16 October 1882 p.4, 'Correspondence – Irish Distress' 12 May 1883 p.3 and 14 June 1883 p.3; 'The Tynemouth Corporation Workmen's Wages', 27 January 1887, p.3;'The United Temperance Methodist League', 6 January 1886 p.3 and 'Election News', 29 June 1886 p.3.

10 *SDGazette*, 'Tynemouth Corporation and the Wages Question', 27 January 1887, p.4.

11 *SDNews*, 'National Labour Federation', 11 May 1887 p.3 and 'Election News', 29 June 1886 p.3.

12 *SDGazette*, 'North Side Notes', 28 March 1887, p.3.

13 *Commonweal*, 'Socialist Campaign in the North', 12 March 1887, pp.85.

14 *Commonweal*, 'With the Northumberland Miners', 19 March 1887, p.95.

15 *SDGazette*, 'Socialism in No. Shields', 21 March 1887, p.3.

16 Letters from 'Mahon, J.L., London and other places to Barker and Socialist League 1887-1888', p.18, documents 2137-2144, *SL-Archives*: Florence S Boos, *William Morris's Socialist Diary*, (Nottingham, Five Leaves Publications, 2018), pp175-176.

17 *Justice*, 'Lecture Diary', 2 July 1887, p.4: *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', 9 April 1887, p.120 and 'Northumbrian Notes', 7 May 1887, p.151.

18 *Commonweal*, 'Branch Subscriptions Paid', 28 May 1887, p.176; 'Northumbrian Notes', 14 May 1887, p.159: Boos (2018), pp.131-132.

19 As 'Northumbrian Notes' above.

20 Hearne's occupation taken from 1881 Census entry in 'Northumberland, Tynemouth District 2', p.14.

21 *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', *Commonweal*, 21 May 1887, p.168.

22 *SDNews*, 'Is Socialism Sound?', 21 May 1887 and p.2, 23 May 1887, p.3.

23 *SDGazette*, 'North-Side Notes', 23 May 1887, p.3.

24 *SDNews*, 'Correspondence: Is Socialism Sound?', 24 may 1887, p.3.

25 Socialist League Third Annual Conference1887: 'Minutes, notes of', p.2, document 19; 'Reports of London and Provincial Branches - North Shields by J Hearne, document 26 and letter from 'Stevens, J.H., Newcastle to Socialist League 1887', p.3, document 2860, all *SL-Archives*.

26 *SL-ArchivesDoc20a*, p.10.

[27] As above, p.13: Thompson (1976), pp.451 and 509.
[28] *Commonweal*, 'A Labour Policy', 27 August 1887, p.273-274
[29] *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', 28 May 1887 p.176, 18 June 1887 p.200, 23 July 1887 p.240, 30 July 1887 p.248 and 'Reports', 2 July 1887 p.215; 'North England Socialist Federation', 11 June 1887, p.192: *SDNews*, 'North Shields Branch of the Irish National league', 4 June 1887, p.2 and 7 June 1887, p.4.
South Shields Pubs, the Definitive List by Les Snaith Facebook page at [last accessed on13 May 2023]:
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1893488350813434&set=oa.1435385653323285&locale=en_GB
[30] *Commonweal*, 'Reports', 16 July 1887, p.232 and 'North of England Socialist Federation' 30 July 1887, p.248.
[31] *Commonweal*, 'Reports' and 'Agents for 'Commonweal' in the North of England',2 July 1887, pp.215 and 216, and 'Reports' 23 July 1887, p.240
'Kelly's Directory of North Shields and Tynemouth' (London, Kelly & Co., 1886), p.142: Letter from 'Corder, Walter S., North Shields to Socialist League 1887', document 1121 *SL-Archives*. Corder's occupation taken from 1901 and 1911 Census entries in 'Northumberland, Preston Tynemouth District 17', p.72 and 'Northumberland, Preston Tynemouth District 22', p.349.
[32] *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', 28 May 1887, p.176, "Lecture Diary' and 'North of England Socialist Federation: Meetings', 18 June 1887, p.200, 23 July 1887, p.240 and 30 July 1887, p.248 and quote from 'The North of England Socialist Federation', 25 June 1887, p.205: Letters from 'Mahon, J.L., London and other places to Council Socialist League 1885-1887', p.22, documents 2147-2148, *SL-Archives*.
[33] Letters from 'Isbuster [sic] John North Shields to unknown 1887', pp.2-3, document 1822, *SL-Archives*.
[34] As Above, p.4.
[35] *Commonweal*, 'Reports', vol.03 no.86, 3 September 1887, p.287
[36] Letters from 'Hearn [sic], John, North Shields to (Morris) Edit. Com. 1887', document 1681, *SL-Archives*.
[37] Letter from 'Isbuster [sic] John North Shields to Barker, 1887', document 1821, *SL-Archives*.
[38] *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation', *Commonweal*, 24 September 1887, p.312.
[39] John Isbister's occupation taken from 1881 Census entry in 'Northumberland, Tynemouth District 6', p.24.
[40] *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation' and 'North of England Socialist Federation – Branches and Secretaries', 1 October p.320 1887, 8 October 1887 p.328, 15 October p.336 1887: Harrison's occupation taken from 1881 Census entry in 'Northumberland, Tynemouth District 6', p.93.
[41] Letter from 'Harrison, J.J.[sic], North Shields to Barker 1887', p.3, document 1660, *SL-Archives*.

[42] As Above, p.2.

[43] *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation', 19 November 1887, p.376 and 5 November 1887, p.360.

[44] *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation – Branches and Secretaries', 7 January, p.8; 'The Labour Struggle' 26 June 1888 p.198 and 15 March 1890 p.86, 'The Northumberland and Durham Miners' 29 June 1889 p.206, 'Newcastle' January 1891 p.3 and 'Notices – Provinces' 5 December 1891 p.160.

[45] Yvonne Kapp, *Eleanor Marx: Volume II – The Crowded Years 1884-1898*, (London, Virago, 1979), p.264: *Justice*, 'Lecture Diary', 4 February 1888 p.7 and 11 February 1887 p.7, 'Meetings & Addresses – The Provinces' 18 February pp.6-7, and 'Branch Notices – North of England District' 17 March p.7 and 7 July p.7, and ' Secretary's Report' 11 August 1888 p.5 all during 1888.

[46] David Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth – The History of the South Shields Labour Party*, (Tyne & Wear, Bewick Press, 1992), pp.7-8, 14-25 and 30;
Chronicle, 'Newcastle Labour Party', 5 February 1889, p.5, 11 March 1889 p.5 and 11 May 1889 p.5: *SDGazette*, 'The Fabian Society in South Shields', 26 May 1892 p.3, 'News in a Nutshell', 12 August 1892 p.3, 'Local & District News', 23 November 1892 p.3 and 'An Independent Labour Party in South Shields' 1 September 1892 p.3.

[47] North Tyneside CDP (1978), pp.8-9: *The Labour Leader*, 'North East Federation', 10 August 1895, p.8, 'The Movement' 26 September 1903,p.7 and 3 October p.7: *SDNews*, 'Local News', 19 October 1895 p.2 and 24 September 1903 p.3.

[48] *Justice*, 26 February 1898 p.3; 'SDF Notes', 4 March 1899 p.1, 23 April 1904 p.5, 14 May 1904 p.4, 30 July 1904 p.5; The Movement', 13 August 1904 p.3; 'Special Notices' 17 September 1904 p.8.

[49] *Justice*, 'State Maintenance', 3 September 1904 p.8.

[50] *Justice*, 'The Movement', 25 March 1905 p.8, 23 September 1905 p.7, 21 October 1905 p.6, 8 November 1913 and 1 January 1914 p.7; 'South Shields', 5 November 1904 p.5 and 11 November 1905 p.6, 'Echos of the Fight – South Shields', 17 November 1906 p.3, 'Municipal Elections – South Shields', 9 November 1907 p.3 and 12 November 1910 p.2; 'The Lock-Out' 15 October 1910 p.7: *SDGazette*, 'South Shield Notes', 23 October 1901 p.2 and 'Municipal Elections', 2 November 1903 p.3: Clarke (1992), p.26:

Pneumoconiosis and Social Class in Twentieth-Century County Durham Mining Communities

Lucy Jameson

'By sweat and toil through those forgotten days,
Though faced by set-backs still they kept their ways
On to the end until they prove at length
"Union is strength"' – anon.[1]

This essay will examine the intersections between class and disability by featuring County Durham mining communities as the case study. Due to the plethora of disabilities caused by work within the mining industry, the essay will focus chiefly on Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis (CWP), a long-latency disease caused by the inhalation of dust particles from the mines.[2] The essay will argue that the perception of CWP differed among miners and mining communities compared to medico-legal authorities and coal owners; and that this was commonly due to social class. The essay is not suggesting that social class was the *total* reason for the different approaches to pneumoconiosis, but that it contributed considerably to the contrasting approaches to disability in mining communities.

Reflecting on the complexities of investigating diseases that cause disability, this essay will not investigate pneumoconiosis from a pathological approach, but instead place disability at the core to delve deeper into the lived experience of miners. Catherine Kudlick asserts the importance that disability holds in historical narratives of disease, identifying that disability

encourages the individual to reconsider and reflect upon concepts such as 'social values, sexuality, and the complex relationship between the biological and social worlds'.[3]

An important point to note is how the essay will approach class. It is typically accepted that miners in the industry were working-class, as the mining industry has been a dominant focus of working-class histories over time, whereas capitalist businesses, coal owners and doctors are more typically associated with middle and upper classes. As previously stated, the County Durham mining communities are the primary focus of the essay. However, wider contextual references and other coalfields will be referred to where appropriate. Other coalfields inevitably play into the history of the Durham coalfield and will be discussed where necessary. Additionally, each section will follow a chronological pattern for purposes of clarity. The essay will be split into two thematic sections: recognising, compensating, and diagnosing pneumoconiosis, and pneumoconiosis within the community and family.

Recognising, Diagnosing and Compensating Pneumoconiosis

The complexities behind obtaining official recognition of CWP, as well as the difficulties associated with diagnosing and measuring the severity of the disease, highlight the influence that social class held in the differing approaches taken to the condition. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the severe impact of coal dust upon miners' health was masked by the actions of physicians and coal owners, who often refuted the impact that the vast quantities of coal dust were having on the health of miners. The reason for their resistance was largely due to their own stubbornness and class prejudices. Formal recognition of CWP arose from the tireless campaigns and advocacy of unions and laymen across Britain, but especially from miners and unions in the South Wales Coalfield.[4] Following medical recognition of CWP in 1943, the problems of diagnosis and medical intervention were further aggravated by the technologies doctors used to measure the prevalence and progression of the condition in

miners. Applying objective measurements to subjective experiences in an attempt to establish a satisfactory framework for compensation payments meant that some miners had their experiences ignored.

Class prejudice was a longstanding obstacle for working-class disabled miners, especially when miners needed to have their health taken seriously. Among middle- and upper-class individuals, disability within the working-classes was regarded as a quintessential characteristic of the working-class identity, meaning a blasé approach was taken towards disability in working-class people.[5] This continued into the twentieth century, even with disabilities like CWP that were not necessarily 'visible' in the typical sense. Although work by Vicky Long and Victoria Brown focuses upon mental distress in the British coalfields, it illuminates the role that class prejudice played in the way that physicians approached disability in working-class mining communities.[6] Doctors repeatedly attributed the physical symptoms miners experienced to an unwillingness to work; rather than taking the matter seriously.[7]

Further, Long and Brown also note that physicians of higher classes would often view their working-class patients with apathy; whereas patients who had a similar class status to the physicians would be treated far more cordially.[8] Potentially, 'invisible' disabilities such as CWP exacerbated these responses from medical professionals because the condition could not be diagnosed and assessed without invasive medical examinations. Therefore, doctors were likely to dismiss working-class patients and blame it instead on malingering, when in reality they needed extensive medical support.

An ongoing barrier to the medical recognition of pneumoconiosis, particularly between the 1910s and 1930s, was the unwillingness of physicians to revise their beliefs about the harm done by coal dust and accept the mounting medical evidence that suggested it was causing harm to miners' lungs. A key individual who exemplified the defiance of influential medical professionals was J.S. Haldane. Haldane was born into the upper class and was privileged with an extensive social network.[9] He

had originally been a prominent investigator into miners' lung diseases in the late 1910s but concluded that the only real cause of death in older miners was bronchitis.[10] Even more harmfully, he believed that coal dust was not of any significant harm to miners, and that breathing in this dust could shield them from other hazards.[11]

Arthur McIvor and Ronald Johnston posit that these beliefs caused a delay in the adoption and agreement of medical knowledge regarding pneumoconiosis.[12] Haldane also had amicable relations with coal owners, frequently taking their side in debates about mining.[13] For example, he was staunchly against the nationalisation of the industry, and was particularly outspoken about this issue.[14] Collusion between doctors and coal companies was a frequent problem for disabled miners who relied on medical evidence from doctors to secure their compensation from the coal companies.[15] Miners faced a constant uphill battle just to access minimal support. Physicians who had a duty of care frequently failed to uphold this responsibility in favour of self-gain.

However, Andrew Perchard and Keith Gildart stress that Haldane's poor judgements regarding the recognition of CWP should not discredit his life efforts to try to improve the situation in the mines.[16] Whilst this is a reasonable claim, this does not mean that the damage caused by Haldane's stubborn refusal to accept concrete medical knowledge was any less severe. His actions contributed to the stagnation of medical investigations and suspended effective action against the growing occupational health crisis.[17]

On the other hand, the relentless resistance of coal owners to recognise pneumoconiosis in miners must be addressed. Coal owners did all in their power to avoid paying compensation to miners. Obviously, this was not always the case, but was typically the consensus of many coal companies prior to nationalisation. Linking back to Haldane, Perchard and Gildart note that coal companies regularly used his work to shut down the challenges of unions and miners, which demonstrates why his resistance to accept medical knowledge was so harmful, and also demonstrates the damaging relations between coal companies and doctors.[18]

In the Durham Coalfield, the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) were infuriated by the coal owners, who they believed were intentionally pestering miners and curtailing their compensation.[19] Further, in compensation disputes, the miner was held responsible for providing the burden of proof, and employers in the Durham Coalfield perniciously exploited this. Miners were given a ten-day notice to piece together an opposing medical account to advocate for the continuation of their compensation.[20] In the final several months of 1925, the DMA were faced with a tirade of three hundred of these disputes and were certain that coal owners had purposefully inundated the union and their members to make it as laborious as possible to tackle such an overwhelming number of cases.[21] Undoubtedly, coal owners were focused on maximising their own capital at the expense of their employees' health and wellbeing, proving that approaches to disability were influenced by social class.

Coal owner attitudes towards miners had serious consequences, crushing any potential trust and relationship the miners had with their employers. Significantly, this breakdown in communications was so extreme it even affected the post-nationalisation period. Medical papers produced in the 1950s that investigated the prevalence of pneumoconiosis in the Durham Coalfield demonstrate the effect that the difficult relationship between employer and employee had on the reliability of the 1950s medical investigations. In a response to the 1952 medical procedures, the 1953 report, produced by R.I McCallum, deemed that the breakdown of trust was the cause of the mere 60 per cent turn out to the voluntary lung assessments.[22] Miners were concerned about the confidentiality of their appointments and feared that their job security would be in jeopardy if they were found to have pneumoconiosis.[23]

Work on silicosis and compensation by Mark Bufton and Joseph Melling proves how concerned miners were about losing their jobs. Bufton and Melling describe the apprehension of silica miners who attended medical examinations because they feared they would lose their jobs.[24] Although Bufton and Melling were examining silicosis rather than pneumoconiosis,

the parallels in the experiences of miners between the two fields of work uncovers the severe impact that medical diagnoses could have on miners. Clearly, the elective choice of miners to avoid medical intervention for pneumoconiosis, due to fears of a loss of income, is testament to the grip that social class had upon attitudes towards disability.

Further, the 1950s medical reports produced on the Durham Coalfield can be used to identify the problems associated with preferencing technology and quantifiable measurements over testimony, as well as highlighting the socio-economic impact that both medical investigations and a diagnosis of pneumoconiosis could have on a miner. Difficulties with the methodology in the earlier 1952 medical paper (corrected in a later paper) demonstrate how technologies used to diagnose and measure disease invalidated the lived experiences and symptoms of miners with pneumoconiosis. As a result of the inaccuracies, the 1952 paper estimated that in the eight pits assessed, the prevalence of pneumoconiosis sat at only a minimum of 3 - 6 per cent.[25] The paper went further to explain that progress with mine ventilation had likely made pneumoconiosis a 'rarity for the time being'.[26] However, corrections made in the 1955 paper stated that not all chest films were analysed, only the ones that appeared to be irregular, meaning that an unknown total of early pneumoconiosis cases went completely undetected by the investigating medical authorities.[27] Additionally, the 1955 paper, which investigated four different collieries in the Durham Coalfield to the 1952 paper, estimated that the prevalence of pneumoconiosis was calculated to sit at around an average of 32 per cent, much higher than the previous report had suggested.[28]

Coreen McGuire brought attention to the fact that miners' symptoms could be dismissed due to the way these technologies were applied in order to standardise eligibility for compensation.[29] The consequences of this unreliability can be seen in the 1955 medical report, which stated that the probability of miners leaving the coal face 'because of the appearance of their radiographs rather than because they were disabled' was quite likely.[30] Radiographic evidence of illness arrived before attendant symptoms.

More worryingly, the corrected (though still not wholly representational) results of the 1955 paper concluded that approximately 39 per cent of the faceworkers in the four Durham collieries investigated would be eligible to appeal for compensation, on the basis that they had radiological evidence of pneumoconiosis of Category 2 or above.[31] The results of this later paper therefore bring to light the crushing reality that the seemingly minor errors of the 1952 paper may have drastically impacted pursuits for compensation, by dismissing an unidentified number of miners who had radiological evidence of pneumoconiosis, and cutting off their access to potentially vital financial support. No reference was made to suggest the errors had been rectified. However, even if the errors were corrected, any delays in appealing for compensation would have resulted in significant ramifications for the socio-economic situation of the miners in question.

Exploring the complexities associated with recognising and diagnosing pneumoconiosis, makes it clear how social class affected the responses and approaches made to disability. Middle and upper-class doctors, who frequently held class prejudices and colluded with coal companies, held immense power over miners. The medical evidence they deployed in compensation disputes could be the deciding factors used to grant or refuse miners compensation. Many middle-class physicians believed working-class miners were malingerers, this undoubtedly obstructed some miners' access to financial support. Both miners and their employers considered the financial aspects of a pneumoconiosis diagnosis, but their class differences meant they approached disability from opposite perspectives.

Some miners feared that a diagnosis of pneumoconiosis would cost them their jobs; yet coal companies were primarily concerned about their loss of labour and the requirement to pay miners compensation. As well as this, the influence of social class on approaches to disability can be seen more indirectly through standardised technology and quantified measurements. Radiological evidence could mean miners were told to stop work, even if they did not feel that their condition was hindering them, or on the other hand, radiological evidence could be used to downplay

the severity of symptoms that miners experienced. This, added to the fact doctors prioritised radiological evidence over the testimony of miners, meant miners had very few avenues to challenge these bodies due to the financial implications of receiving medical care.

Family and Home Life

The following section of the essay will highlight how social class influenced approaches to disability, by examining avenues that have until recently been less explored by historians of disability. Therefore, the following section will focus on the lives of miners, their families, and the communities in which they lived, rather than on other organisations and bodies which have been examined previously. Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson acknowledge that due to the considerable role society plays in the lived experiences of disabled people, it is integral that historians of disability explore the spheres in which disabled miners engaged, such as within their local communities and families.[32] Most importantly, by examining these spheres, lived experiences and testimony become the driving force behind disability histories. This means that the voices of disabled people do not go unnoticed as they have in the past, particularly when considering the construction of disability histories where a disease has been the cause of impairment.

Curtis and Thompson propose that by using sociological methods such as the 'family systems theory' and the 'social ecology model', a deeper understanding of the subjective complexities associated with disability can be approached.[33] Additionally, Curtis and Thompson raise the important point that by applying these theoretical structures to explore disability in the family and community, the testimony of working-class lives becomes more visible, as first-hand testimony from working-class voices is particularly scarce.[34] However, Curtis and Thomson advise that historians proceed with care when applying the theory to ensure that generalities are avoided.[35] Despite some of the possible limitations associated with the theory, it undoubtedly has the potential to expand the visibility of working-class lives in County Durham mining communities. Examining

how social class influenced approaches to disability by investigating interactions within families and communities will be hugely beneficial.

The influence social class had on disability becomes very visible when exploring popular culture in working-class mining communities. Disability was very visible within popular culture, as can be seen from known songs such as 'My Father Died a Month Ago', which was sang in the Durham coalfield.[36] Part of the song reads, 'My father died a month ago and left me all his riches, A feather bed and a wooden leg and A pair of leather breeches'.[37] Clearly, reference to the 'wooden leg' attests to the commonality of disability in Durham mining communities. As well as this, the meagre list of personal belongings left to the child of the miner emphasises the financial struggle that many mining families identified with. Songs such as the above gave working-class families a comforting way to relate with one another to such serious struggles, especially when disabilities in the coalfield were often coupled with wage cuts.

Influences of working-class popular culture upon approaches to disability can be seen in the lodge banners from the Durham Miners' Association, which depicted scenes where impairment was used to stress the political messages of the union. Some of the lodge banners depicted disability to highlight the work of the lodges and the Durham Miners' Association within unionism. For example, the Thornley Lodge banner directly attacked the resistance of coal companies to pay out compensation to deceased miners and their families, by showing the morbid picture of a grave, and the writing on the banner, 'COMPENSATION WE DEMAND WHEN LIFE IS SACRIFICED'.[38] Similarly, a Black Prince Lodge banner used impairment to demonstrate the caring nature of their lodge towards their sick miners. The banner's image presented the financial support given to families of sick miners whilst they could not work and detailed a Durham Miners' Association official tending to the unwell miner in bed.[39]

Banners were used regularly in the Durham coalfield, and were a way for the different lodges of the DMA to express their grievances against the coal owners, usually for their obstructive attitude towards compensation

payments. The way disability was used for political means by the union demonstrates how social class influenced the differing approaches to disability. However it is important to stress that disabled miners were not passive agents within political campaigning, and their conditions were not just used for political ends. On the other hand, representation of disability in union activity shows how disability actively helped to shape class identities.

Interestingly, impairment was also represented through artwork produced by miners in the Durham coalfield such as Tom McGuinness. Historians Robert McManners and Gillian Wales noted how the miners in many of McGuinness' underground scenes were 'bent almost skeletal'[40] Evidently, some artists wanted to depict the merciless and brutal nature of minework on the body by illustrating miners' bodies as being permanently contorted from their labour. Contrastingly, Ted Holloway depicted the miners as stocky and athletic, in more optimistic scenes than the bleak and sombre displays by McGuinness. For example, Ted Holloway's piece, 'Setting Timber', defines the Durham miner as a strong and powerful individual, whose body dominates the mine; instead of being defeated by it.[41]

On the other hand, Tom McGuinness' watercolour piece 'backshift', displays an eerie and forlorn landscape with groups of weary miners heading to work.[42] Their malnourished bodies are permanently bent, and their legs are bowed, accentuating the physically taxing properties associated with minework.[43]

These miners are far from the scenes in Ted Holloway's artwork, who presents the working-class, machismo workplace culture that celebrated physical prowess and masculine strength. Although the two artists developed very alternative ways to depict their perspectives of the physical nature of minework in the Durham coalfield, it is clear to see how their contrasting bodies were influenced by their own differing experiences as working-class miners. Ted Holloway reflected on his time in the mines far more fondly than Tom McGuiness, who recalled the cruel and unforgiving years wrought upon the mining community during the inter-war years and the strike of 1926, and inevitably, this has been reflected in their work.[44]

However, whilst there have clearly been references to disability in popular culture, there is a prominent lack of visibility to 'invisible' disabilities such as pneumoconiosis, in these materials. The cause behind this may be related to the fact many artists were painting during the disputes and debates about the severity of coal dust, and therefore its recognition within creative media is somewhat limited. Another factor could also be that miners with pneumoconiosis may not have necessarily regarded themselves as disabled, especially if their experiences were downplayed by doctors, and so there may have been less representation in popular culture for this reason. Further, representing breathlessness is a complex challenge, added to the fact that many mining artists had very few resources available to produce their work to begin with.

Although the artwork of Durham miners does not typically represent disabilities such as pneumoconiosis, mining artwork has since evoked contemporary reflections on disabilities caused by occupational diseases. James (Jimmy) Kays was a County Durham miner who created pieces of art that portrayed the realities of the coal mining industry.[45] Historian Jean Spence outlined that much of Kays' work focused on the monotony of minework, and the class-based struggles that miners experienced.[46] She explained that because of the style of Kays' work, the art he produced did not sit comfortably within the market for mining art, which sought to instil feelings of nostalgia within its audiences.[47] However, Spence praises Kays' art for the personal identity it provided to local communities in the Durham coalfield, who could recognise their everyday experiences mirrored in his work.[48]

Spence also notes a conversation that occurred at an exhibition of Kays' art, in which a woman, after observing the exhibition, told Spence the story of her grandfather who had passed away due to pneumoconiosis.[49] The woman described the contrast in her grandfather's physical condition from when he worked in the mines to just before he died, comparing his body to that of a 'matchstick' just before his death.[50] From the shared story of the woman and her grandfather, it is clear to see how the artwork created by

mining artists such Jimmy Kays influenced approaches to disability. Social class undoubtedly played a role in approaches to pneumoconiosis, and this can be seen from the creations of mining art, coupled with the reactions evoked from audiences when viewing the artworks of Durham miners.

The impact of social class on the differing approaches to disability can also be seen from the broader socio-economic problems that arose in the Durham community, especially throughout the inter-war years. Aspects of living such as wages and housing undoubtedly influenced approaches taken towards pneumoconiosis, because disability affected, but also was affected by, wages and housing. The situation in the Durham coalfield was particularly dire following the First World War, with unemployment skyrocketing during the 1920s.[51] W.R. Garside claims that even for those who were employed, they 'earned barely enough to maintain a family'.[52] This is significant – if miners who were working full-time had to battle to keep their family surviving from their working wages, disabled miners who were forced to take lighter work, or forced away from the pits altogether, would have faced huge financial consequences as they were forced to take a reduced wage. Wages and the fears of permanent unemployment undoubtedly influenced the way that miners approached pneumoconiosis, as concerns about the impact that wage cuts and unemployment would have on the family constantly played on the minds of miners.

As well as this, housing was another aspect of living that shaped the approaches taken to pneumoconiosis. From the period of industrialisation, housing in the north-east were typically given to miners by the companies that they worked for.[53] Whilst this appeared on the surface to be a very accommodating gesture, it presented a plethora of problems for Durham miners and their families. For example, housing in the coalfield was extremely overcrowded and unsanitary. In a census taken in 1911, there were at least five areas in the Durham coalfield that had overcrowding above 30 per cent.[54] Overcrowding remained a consistent problem in County Durham, as the coalfield was discovered to be the area with the largest number of working-class families living in overcrowded conditions in 1936.[55] This

problem persisted until after the Second World War, partly due to the refusal of coal owners to provide funding to build more houses following World War One, as they assumed the industry would be nationalised.[56] The housing situation in the coalfield meant that the availability of housing was scant, meaning miners and their families often had nowhere else to go due to the inflation in house prices beyond those owned by the coal companies. Living in such poverty meant that the conditions were never suitable to care for disabled miners, and potentially these conditions exacerbated their symptoms. Having to navigate such difficult living conditions and anxieties about wages and future employment undeniably affected the approaches taken to pneumoconiosis in the County Durham coalfield.

Finally, working-class culture developed approaches to pneumoconiosis through gender. Within working-class culture in mining communities, masculinity was commonly thought to be expressed through physical strength and grit. In the musical illustration of the Elliot family's mining life, the introduction referred to the Durham miners as 'a tough, hardworking body of men'.[57] In the interview, Reece Elliot, the eldest of the Elliot family, conveyed his awe for the physical capabilities of the Durham miners, claiming that he 'never saw any little Big Hewers in the County of Durham, they were big men, big strong men'.[58] Reece's assertion may have been over exaggerated, but his words are important, because they highlight the attitude many miners in Durham had and clearly, miners were admired for their physical capabilities when working in the pits. Reece's brother, Jack went on to joke that the 'Big Hewer' (whose actual name was Robert, 'Bob' Towers), had no 'marrers' (workmates) in the pits, because no miner could match the rate at which he worked.[59]

Although the two brothers were joking, it is evident that they were impressed by Towers' physical qualities, and that much of their admiration was based around Towers' able-bodiedness. When miners became disabled through accidents or occupational diseases like pneumoconiosis, it was a difficult matter to contend with, because it made many men question their masculinity. With pneumoconiosis in particular, the progressive nature of

the disease meant that it would get worse over time. Miners were often forced to take on lighter work, or leave the pits altogether, and this loss of income and position as breadwinner within the family and community was difficult to grapple with.[60]

Further, Curtis and Thompson asserted that the transition from a predominantly masculine atmosphere to a more 'effeminate' environment exacerbated miners' feelings of emasculation.[61] However, this was not always the case, as mining communities frequently banded together to help sustain the independence of the miner, and ease the pressures placed on their families, often through financial means.[62] In their contemporary investigation into disability in the mining areas of the North-East, Esther Rind and Andy Jones profess that the 'social cohesion' of working-class mining communities 'mitigated' against the unfavourable circumstances many families faced.[63]

Disability did not just affect the individual; it also impacted the whole family unit. While the role women played in the coalfield may have been previously overlooked due to the mining industry being a male-dominated sphere, their roles within both the family and wider community were integral and should be recognised as such. Typical attitudes around work and gendered hierarchies in working-class homes shifted for women as well, as they had to take on an even heavier workload than they had previously to complete tasks around the home that their partners could no longer carry out.[64] Additionally, the demanding role women played within the home as caregivers to their partners often meant that their own health became subservient, as the health of their partner became their focus and priority.[65] One woman living in Easington was forced to have her husband placed in a workhouse, but only when she was diagnosed with cancer.[66] Investigating the impact that working-class gender ideals had on disability emphasises the complex nature of navigating pneumoconiosis.

Evidently, working-class culture, the community and families played a huge part in shaping the way in which pneumoconiosis was approached. Examining County Durham mining communities by applying the

theories of Curtis and Thompson makes it apparent that social class was a significant influence upon approaches to disability from within the spheres of local communities and families. Further, the influences of working-class culture have had a lasting impact, as reflections about the popular culture are still apparent in the present day.

This essay has highlighted that social class was a large influence upon the differing approaches taken to pneumoconiosis in the Durham coalfield. By exploring themes such as compensation, medical diagnosis, and the family and community, it is undeniable that social class impacted the differing approaches to pneumoconiosis when the mining community, compared to coal companies, physicians, and medico-legal bodies. The influence of social class when considering compensation disputes, medical recognition and diagnosis was particularly evident. Many physicians held class prejudices, which shaped their opinions about the existence of pneumoconiosis, as well as shaping the way that they engaged with disabled miners.

Again, coal companies and coal owners viewing Durham miners as merely workers who could be discarded and replaced to save money, represents the class prejudices held against mineworkers. This impacted the rate of response to the coal dust problem and consequently exacerbated the numbers of CWP cases in the Durham coalfield. Unionism within working-class communities shaped the way that disability was considered and identified how disabled bodies could be politicised when miners and unions engaged in conflicts with their employers. As well as this, social class influenced the way in which pneumoconiosis was considered from a gendered perspective, altering gender norms and roles within working-class households, families, and communities. While social class was not the only influencing factor on approaches to pneumoconiosis, it absolutely played an integral role on how disability was experienced and perceived in the Durham coalfield.

Occupational diseases caused by minework continue to have an impact upon the lives of individuals to the present day. Contemporary statistics reported in the Health and Safety Executive report from 2020 stated that

between 2009 and 2019, there were approximately 130 deaths each year predominantly caused by CWP, with around 25 new cases diagnosed annually.[67] Statistics such as these serve to remind us that occupational diseases continue to have an impact upon the lives of mineworkers today, and that these voices should not be overlooked or forgotten in the disability histories of pneumoconiosis.

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The Growth of the Co-operative Movement in North East England

Peter Sagar

Introduction

It has been argued that, "cooperation, the joint working of two or more persons, is as old as human society. Social progress has depended upon it; and modern civilisation could not continue without it".[1] Early modern attempts at cooperation include a mill in Woolwich in London in 1760,[2] a friendly society of weavers at Fenwick in Ayrshire in 1769[3] and Robert Owen's New Lanark, beginning with Owen's first visit to New Lanark in 1798[4] although Holyoake noted that with regards to Owen that, "Mr. Owen was a Paternalist. He believed in the general goodness of humanity and that goodness could guide it; but he had no conviction that it could guide itself".[5]

However, it is generally considered that the first successful retail cooperative, in the UK opened its doors for the first time on Toad Lane, Rochdale on Christmas Eve 1844. This first cooperative took a while to be established, but once it was, the movement gradually spread to surrounding areas in Lancashire and what was then the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The Rochdale Cooperative was based on a number of principles as follows:

1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership
2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control
3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation
4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information
6th Principle: Co-operation among Co-operatives
7th Principle: Concern for Community[6]

It has been argued that, "the significance of the 'Rochdale Principles' is that other societies could imitate. These principles accomplished two objectives. First, they provided the basis for building a sustainable co-operative business which would prove attractive for working-class people to join, offering material rewards as well as important social and educational facilities. Secondly, they also enshrined key co-operative objectives of raising the status of working-class people by providing the means for their own elevation, through education, wider wealth-sharing and an opportunity to run wealth-making enterprises, rather than just being employed by them."[7] This meant that Rochdale provided a great blueprint for similar ventures in the Northeast.

It has been noted that, "little of the great work of creating a national Movement out of the hundreds of scattered societies could have been accomplished without the *Cooperator*"[8] and I will use reports to the *Cooperator* as a major primary source.

As cooperatives grew in number across the country it has been argued that the trend towards proliferation of cooperatives, "was stronger in some areas than others, reflecting a variety of factors (and)… these included the presence of large homogeneous communities of people in the same occupations, for example among miners in the north-east of England…"[9] We shall see how cooperation grew quickly on the Northeast coalfield.

Indeed in the 1860's there was an explosion in cooperative development in Northeast England, which meant that by the end of the 19th century there were more members of cooperatives per head of population in Northumberland and Durham than any other region of Britain. What caused this explosion, how were cooperatives set up and how successful were these cooperatives?

The Influence of the Provident and Industrial Societies Act 1852

Before 1852, cooperatives had operated under the Friendly Societies Act of 1846, but as this could not cover sales of goods it was clear new legislation was needed.[10] The Provident and Industrial Societies Act of 1852 enabled cooperatives to flourish by removing liability for cooperative debts from the individuals who set them up.

Why cooperatives were set up

There were a number of reasons why cooperatives were set up. Some were spiritual, moral and ethical reasons, as mentioned by the Rev. T. Campbell in The Cooperator in 1869.[11] However, cooperatives were not just set up in the Northeast, because of high ideals and a determination to make people better in a moral sense. There were very sensible, practical reasons as well. Indeed, it has been noted that, "prior to the formation of Cooperatives in the North East many shopkeepers enjoyed a monopoly control over their customers. There was little competition between shopkeepers and consequently prices were often exorbitant, while the quality of merchandise was poor. However, as these were the days before the car, residents had little option but to continue shopping in their existing store. They were also tied by credit arrangements. The miners at the North Seaton Colliery were caught in this trap". Consequently the miners set up their own cooperative.[12]

Similarly and even before the Rochdale Cooperative was set up, in Middleston-in-Teesdale in 1841 miners of Lodge Syke Mine talked about unprecedented prices being charged for essential commodities and especially flour and that "the outcome was that they decided on collective actions against the local traders and with the help of their employers, the London Lead Company, formed a Cooperative Corn Association, the following year."[13] There was a desire among working people to have greater economic control over their lives.

How coops were set up

Many of the cooperatives in the Northeast in the 1860's, following Cowen's reading from a book written by George Holyoake, at Blaydon in 1858, were set up after meetings by small groups. This included Newcastle cooperative set up after 11 men met in the George Inn on Pilgrim Street on 28th December 1860. They resolved to collect 6d per week per person to establish the capital to set up a cooperative. Consequently, on 18th February 1861 the Newcastle upon Tyne Mechanics' Industrial Society opened for business in premises adjoining Gardners Arms, Nelson Street with stock of flour, sugar and "other groceries, valued at £17 17s 7 1/2 d".[14]

Meanwhile, up the coast from Tyneside the cooperative spirit was also stirring with the opening of the Blyth Cooperative Society, established in 1864 and initially called Cowpen Quay Central Industrial and Provident Society before it changed its name to Blyth 60 years later in 1924.[15]

As for the south of the region, "most of the Societies in the South Durham area, with the notable exception of Teesdale were established during the 1860's. Four of these societies, within a trading triangle covering Darlington, Barnard Castle, Willington and Bishop Auckland, eventually linked up under the umbrella of the Darlington Co-operative Society." It has also been noted that cooperation arrived in Bishop Auckland in 1860 – Barnard Castle 1862 – Willington 1872 while, "Darlington Co-op started trading in 1868, although there had been three earlier unsuccessful attempts at forming a Society".

The Darlington Cooperative, initially known as the Priestgate Cooperative Industrial and Provident Society opened with premises, "rented from a Mr. Kay in Priestgate, Darlington in April and after alterations, the appointment of a shopman and the purchase of stocks, the first store was opened for business on May 28th 1868. Sales for the period to September 30 were £990 16s 5d on which a trading surplus of £35 18s 8d was made."[16]

Meetings of employees were an important stimulus for a new cooperative on Teesside. Middlesbrough Cooperative Society was established in 1867 when officials of Fox Head and Company (Newport Rolling Mills) suggested to employees the idea of forming a Co-operative Society. Consequently, a meeting was held in the office of the company in March, when it was decided to establish a Co-operative Society to be known as the Newport Rolling Mills Co-operative Society Limited."[17]

Up on the Northumberland part of the coalfield, a cooperative was formed, the story of which shows just what lengths people would go to fulfill their dreams. It was resolved by a group to form a cooperative society at a public meeting held in the Blue Bell Inn, West Cramlington on 5th January 1861 when 5s 6d was collected. This was soon to be added to as in following weeks those involved collected a further £25. The sheer determination of these new cooperators can be demonstrated by the story that, "on March 21, 1861 the two (committee) men pushed a hand cart loaned to them by a local farmer, all the way from Cramlington to Newcastle, a distance of some eight miles".[18]

The importance of the mining industry was also very important, in the way that it bound people together in a common cause. In 1873 Richard Fynes wrote this about West Cramlington Co-operative: "West Cramlington has the honour of having commenced the first local cooperative store. It is customary at colliery villages for men to associate together in small groups, and as each had their different topics to discuss, cooperation was the principal subject debated in one of those small companies of men."[19] It must also be said that Fynes noted the importance of the contribution of women in making the cooperatives work and that with regards to West Cramlington wrote that, "the members' wives began to make their appearance in the shop, for the women were as anxious to get on as the men themselves."[20]

Finally we can also add the influence of Methodism, in the region as a driving force in the moral movement, which dictated that cooperation was something that working people in the region should get involved in. An

example of this can be seen in the case of Waterhouses Co-operative in the Deerness Valley, where it is noted that, "the Co-op manager was a leading Wesleyan and many of his employees were activists in the chapel also."[21] So important were Methodists in this development, particularly as time went on, that it has also been between 1890 and 1920, about 13 Methodists were officers with local cooperatives in the Deerness Valley alone.[22] It has also been noted that Co-op workers were over-represented in Methodist leadership in the Deerness Valley area.[23]

How cooperatives were successful

It has been noted that the, "shared experiences in working and social life certainly seem to have been important, thus the success of cooperatives in areas where particular industries were the main source of employment, such as the coal mines of County Durham…."[24] Furthermore, it has been argued that cooperatives succeeded because of the, "vital element of self-help, of working-class organisations doing things for themselves instead of having things done for them."[25] The cooperative explosion in the 1860's was to see cooperatives in the Northeast doing very well. So in what ways were the cooperatives successful and how, if possible, can we measure that success?

In February 1865 the Tyne Dock society reported that it was in a very satisfactory condition and that, "Influence amongst their friends to induce others to become members of the society, feeling ...that it is not only a safe and profitable ...but calculated to promote "provident and happy results."[26]

Meanwhile on 14th August 1866 it was reported in the Cooperator that Hebburn was requesting more copies of the Cooperator,[27] while in the following month, on 15th September 1866 it was reported by The Cooperator about Chester-le-Street Society that, "another welcome balance sheet, full of good news, has reached us from the managers of this enterprising society."[28]

In May 1867 there was further good news from Northumberland as Choppington – Society reported an improving and sound position and that

the "the butchering and millinery departments, lately opened, are doing well".[29] In August 1867 it was reported from Wallsend that members and friends had an annual soiree with 1000 present and a selection of music performed. The profits were dispersed in a number of ways, including a dividend of £4 1/2d in the pound.[30] Also in Northumberland the good news came from Bedlington Co-operative in September 1867 that Bedlington Co-operative had just held their 24th quarterly meeting and that members were able to have a dividend of 1/6 in the pound and a there was a grand total of 566 members on the books.[31]

The success of cooperatives in the region continued into 1868 as the West Hartlepool society continued to prosper despite a depression of trade.[32] As 1868 went on so the success of Northeast cooperatives continued. It was reported at the beginning of February that at Birtley 50 new members had enrolled as compared to only 3 leaving.[33] In March 1868 it was also reported from nearby Chester-le-Street that there was good talk of progress of the society and that it was well managed, but it still needed quicker and cheaper mode of recording purchases.[34] Surely another sign of success.

The success continued through the second half of 1868 with it being reported in mid-August that the cooperative at Newbottle had been able to publish a second quarterly report which showed the progress of the store.[35] Then in the autumn Stockton produced their 14th quarterly report, which talked of another successful quarter, with business still increasing and that, "the committee expect in a very short time, to get possession of the new premises in Wellington Street, in which the accommodation for transacting business and facilitating the service of members, will be greatly increased."[36]

On 21st August 1869, Jarrow Co-operative was able to report that they were now in a very satisfactory position and that in the last two years membership had increased from 80 to 100 and that profits had also increased. They were described as being in a very satisfactory position.[37] On the same day Newcastle-upon-Tyne Co-operative reported a

satisfactory increase of business with gross profits of £1667 12s. 7d., the building of a branch in Shieldfield and many members trading at Newgate Street stores making their purchases on Thursdays and Fridays which relieved the pressure on the store.[38]

The success of Northeast cooperatives continued into the new decade with it being said in January 1870 that, "if further proof was wanting of the success of the Co-operative movement in the North and of its exceeding popularity among the poorer classes of the people, it might certainly have been afforded by the large and pleasant gathering at Chester-le-Street on Saturday, to celebrate the opening of a magnificent new store. From the very smallest beginning, the energetic promoters of the Chester-le-Street Co-operative and Industrial Society have accomplished the greatest and most beneficial results."[39] Cooperation was here to stay in the Northeast.

As 1870 progressed so the good news from Chester-le-Street continued. In March it was reported that the 29th quarter had been their most successful quarter to date with a dividend of 2/-. It was said that members would receive benefits in terms of cheaper clothing etc., "besides the dividend; and this arrangement will ensure the stability of the society and give greater confidence and encouragement to those who have to follow."[40] The following month, Chester-le-Street were able to report 116 new members with only 23 withdrawn and that members would receive benefit of cheap clothing etc. besides the dividend and that the arrangement would give greater confidence and encouragement to those who have to follow. It was also reported that the cooperative had settled all the accounts with the contractors for their new buildings and fixtures and have abundance of capital for the operations of the society. It was further argued that the bright prospect that was before them needed the same support and Co-operative spirit which had been hitherto displayed by the members.[41]

In June there was yet more good news from Chester-le-Street, with the new store being reported about in the Durham Chronicle and the Durham Liberal that if further proof had been wanting of the success of

the cooperative movement in the North, and of its exceeding popularity amongst the poorer classes of the people, it could have been afforded by the large and pleasant gathering at Chester-le-Street one Saturday to celebrate the opening of a magnificent new store. It was said that from the very smallest beginning, the energetic promoters of the Chester-le-Street Co-operative and Industrial Society had accomplished the greatest and most beneficial results.[42]

Cooperatives were also doing well in the south of the region. It has been noted that cooperation arrived in Bishop Auckland in 1860, Barnard Castle 1862 and in Willington in 1872. It has also been said that, "Darlington Co-op started trading in 1868, although there had been three earlier unsuccessful attempts at forming a Society". Indeed Darlington coop, initially known as the Priestgate Co-operative Industrial and Provident Society was developing as, "premises were rented from a Mr. Kay in Priestgate, Darlington in April and after alterations, the appointment of a shopman and the purchase of stocks, the first store was opened for business on May 28th 1868. Sales for the period to September 30 were 990 16s 5d on which a trading surplus of £35 18s 8d was made."[43]

How cooperatives expanded their services and premises

One of the ways by which the early cooperatives were able to show that they were doing well was the way that they often quite early in their existence had to expand their premises or were able to expand their services. This kind of expansion was clearly important to the new cooperatives, as is understandable, as it is mentioned from time to time in reports sent to The Cooperator. Holyoake put it this way: "... co-operators can make better partnerships for themselves by establishing workshops of their own. To supplicate for them would simply give employers the idea that some charity was sought at their hands. They can be obtained by combination. Trade unions are the available means for this purpose."[44]

In February 1868 Gateshead Co-operative were able to report that property adjoining their store had been bought with the intention of

extending the premises. This was deemed to be necessary because of the growth of the society as it had 896 members on register, 132 having registered in the last quarter alone.[45] In May 1869 it was similarly reported that Chester-le-Street Co-operative had stated in a report into their 26th quarterly meeting that after another prosperous quarter, with a dividend of 2/- in every pound, "we are building a beautiful new store and in connection with it a large Co-operative hall. I trust you will have the pleasure of coming to see us when we are ready to open".[46]

New buildings were also going up in Newcastle. In November 1869 the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Co-operative was able to report that, "since the last report was issued, two new shops have been opened, viz – a greengrocery department at No. 41 Gallowgate and a butcher's shop at Bulman's Village. The building for a new branch store in Shieldfield is progressing satisfactorily; and the committee hope to announce its opening before the issue of the next report."[47] Cooperation was clearly progressing well in Newcastle.

Expansion was also taking place at Blaydon, the oldest of those societies in the North Eastern Society, which had been "formed following a reading by Joseph Cowen Junior from the book 'The History of the Rochdale Pioneers or Self Help by the People' by G. J. Holyoake, in the Mechanics Institute in Blaydon" It is noted that weekly meetings were held and by December 1858 a committee of 12 was formed, with a capital of £90 raised and a two roomed house in Cuthbert Street in east Blaydon was obtained and the store opened.

Again things went well as sales for the first 6 months to mid-June were £375 6s 9 1/2d and for the full year they were £2068 5s 3d. Consequently in 1860 the Cuthbert Street premises became too small and two houses were purchased in Church Street and the operation was transferred there. This was not to be the only expansion as later in 1860's it was reported that the Society had built new premises in Church Street and had opened a branch in the village of Burnopfield (later to become an independent Society in 1889).[48]

More new premises were built down by the River Tees as in 1870 a new store opened in Wellington Street, Stockton and 600 people attended the opening event for 'motivation and enjoyment'. The Chairman for the opening was the town's Liberal MP Joseph Dodds , while the walls of the were hall decorated with mottoes such as 'Education', 'God Save the Queen' 'Truth Will Prevail', Union is Strength' and 'Home Sweet Home'. New shops opened shortly afterwards in Stockton and "outlying districts of Norton, Thornaby and Stillington". The range of departments soon extended with a flour mill purchased and a slaughterhouse replaced by rented premises, while the society also branched out into house building as they began the building of cottages.[49]

Development of new facilities – corn mill, libraries etc.
Alongside the building of new shop premises, the development of new facilities was another way, by which cooperatives were able to show the success they were having. They were branching out and becoming more self-sufficient throughout the 1860's and becoming stronger as a result.

In March 1867 it was reported that there would be a cooperative corn mill built on Tyneside with the objectives of such corn mills, "first, to obtain pure and unadulterated flour; and, second, to break up the combination or monopoly held by the millers in keeping up the prices of flour without reference to the alteration in the price of grain.[50] In May 1867 at Birtley sales were such that they allowed a dividend of 2/- or nearly 10% and it was said that they could do with three times as many members as trade revived and they were reported as saying that they wanted to see the proposed Co-operative Corn Mill get under way.[51]

Education and the establishment of a library was a major priority for Sunderland Co-operative. Indeed it has been noted that ,"at the Sunderland Society the funds for education purposes became 2 1/2 percent of the net surplus and this was written into the rules. A library was established in 1865 and a stock of over 2 000 books was rapidly built up. By the 1890's members had access to over 8000 volumes in the library

and the Society also had a reading room where members could digest the news of the day. On the reading room's tables were 26 daily newspapers, 36 weeklies and 31 monthlies".[52]

Trade problems and other issues and overcoming them

It has been said of the Northeast in the 1860's that, "this rapid spread of Co-operation in an area which was growing very fast in population and industrial importance carried with problems of its own. In the 'sixties and early' seventies the coalfields of Durham and Northumberland were very rapidly developing their export trade." This in turn led to huge advances in steel making and shipbuilding, which in turn led to greater militancy among the workforce, with the region at the forefront of the growing trade union movement and in 1871 engineers' and shipbuilders' strikes as workers won the nine-hour working day.[53]

In May 1869 it was reported from Cramlington that there had recently been a slight decrease in the receipts, which was blamed on the "dull state of trade". The point was made that, "many of the colliers in the district have scarcely wrought a quarter of their time and this has made things very hard for them. Had it not been for the store, I am of opinion that a good amount of destitution would have prevailed throughout the district; in fact I have the testimony of some of our members to that effect; for they have said that it had not been for the money in the store to fall back on they would either have been destitute, or got deeply in debt." It was indeed reported that while some people took all their money out of store, it passed through the ordeal and emerged in a better position than ever.[54]

In November 1869 Newcastle-upon-Tyne Co-operative reported a slight decrease in the amount of sales in comparison with the previous quarter, although it was also noted that the new building in Shieldfield was progressing well. It was also announced that two new shops had been opened; a greengrocery department at 41, Gallowgate and a butcher's shop at Bulman's Village.[55]

Cooperatives also had to overcome other problems during the early days of their development, but overcome them it did. Writing in 1873, about mining communities in Northumberland and Durham, Richard Fynes had this to say about cooperatives in those communities: "starting with strong and deeply-rooted prejudices to fight against and with almost insurmountable difficulties to contend with in want of funds, they have gone on increasing in numbers till there is hardly a village of any pretension in the two counties that does not either possess a store, or is connected with one. Cowpen Store commenced on the same principle in one of the workmen's houses in Cowpen Square. Bebside, Bedlington, Choppington, Newbiggin, Cambois, Backworth, Seaton Delaval, Newsham and other places followed their example and have now thousands of pounds at their command, which they would not have had had it not been for this great principle, which has been so well managed by the Northumberland miners. The fame of success which had attended the trading speculations of the Northumberland miners soon spread to the County of Durham and the men in that county were not long in following the good example set them. Stores sprung into existence with remarkable rapidity, from small beginnings they passed to large dealings, and from conducting their business in low, wretched-looking buildings, the co-operators of the two counties passed into magnificent palaces of commerce built by themselves out of their own hard earnings, augmented by wisely uniting their strength."[56]

The Leadership of Joseph Cowen

It is generally recognised that the catalyst for the development of cooperatives in the Northeast was a speech by Joseph Cowen in Blaydon in 1858, when he read from Holyoake. There were moves in some areas before this moment, including the development of the Sunderland Co-op. with early work towards developing a cooperative undertaken by George Binns, a supporter of the Moral Force Chartists and his associate James Williams. However, the evidence clearly shows that the real establishment of the cooperative movement in the region took place after Cowen's speech.

Blaydon Co-operative become the oldest of the societies in the North Eastern Society –and it is noted that it was "formed following a reading by Joseph Cowen Junior from the book 'The History of the Rochdale Pioneers or Self Help by the People' by G. J. Holyoake, in the Mechanics Institute in Blaydon". Following that talk, weekly meetings were held and by December 1858 a committee of 12 had been formed with capital of £90 raised and a two roomed house in Cuthbert Street in east Blaydon obtained where the store opened.[57]

The sales for the first 6 months to mid-June amounted to £375 6s 9 1/2d and for the first full year were £2068 5s 3d. By 1860 -Cuthbert Street had become too small, so two houses were purchased in Church Street and the operation transferred there. Then later in 1860's, it was noted that the Society had built new premises in Church Street and had opened a branch in the village of Burnopfield (later to become an independent Society in 1889).[58]

It has also been noted that, "in 1862, while the Lancashire Co-operators were still only meditating the establishment of the C.W.S., a conference of Co-operative Societies in Newcastle-on-Tyne with the well-known Radical, Joseph Cowen in the chair, decided to take steps to form a Northern Union of Co-operative Stores for purposes of wholesale trade".[59] In 1872, the Newcastle branch of the C.W.S. opened and helped to lead to what have been described as 'remarkable occurrences' in the field of North-Eastern Co-operation.[60] It was Cowen who led the efforts, beginning in 1871, which would lead to the establishment of the C.W.S. the following year.[61]

Workers' coops as well as retail

Cooperatives in the Northeast were not just limited to being retail cooperatives. Workers were also starting to organise themselves into cooperatives in the region during the 1860's.

In March 1868, it was reported that, "an attempt is being made to form a 'Tyne Co-operative Cabinet Making Society', the prospectus of which

states that the profits shall be divided equally between labour and capital. The promoters took an active part in the formation of the flourishing store in Newgate Street. We conclude therefore, that they are trustworthy, as well as practical and persevering mechanics. We understand that there are….members with capital of 50 and that it is intended to prepare rules, and get to work as soon as possible".[62] In the same month it was reported from Newcastle-upon-Tyne Co-operative that, the prospectus of this Tyne Co-operative Cabinet Making Society was that the profits, after 5 per cent, for interest, would be divided equally between labour and capital.[63]

How coops worked together

In the early days of cooperation, in the 1850's before the Northeast development of cooperatives, there were attempts to develop a cooperative wholesale society further south, but they had been unproductive.[64] However the importance of cooperatives working together to find cheaper supplies of goods wasn't diminished by this and when the Northeast development of cooperatives got into full swing in the 1860's, the region would lead the way in developing cooperation between cooperatives. Outside of Manchester, Newcastle was to become one of the two other big centres of the CWS in England.[65]

Conclusion

It is clear that although the great explosion in cooperatives in the Northeast took place as long ago as the 1860's, there are still a number of lessons to be learned from what happened then, for the Cooperative Movement today. Firstly there was the beneficial influence of the 1852 Provident Societies Act, which was very important in helping to encourage working people that the risk of setting up their own cooperative businesses was worth it. Supportive legislation today can similarly be important in the development of cooperatives in the third decade of the 21st century.

It was felt by enough people in the region at the time that cooperatives were a morally appropriate form of business and at a time of such poverty

and such huge inequalities between rich and poor, surely the same argument pertains today. Going alongside the moral argument, we can also see that cooperatives were set up because they were a very practical answer to problems people had, a response which remains the same today. One of the main reasons why so many cooperatives were set up in the Northeast in such a short time was because of the unfair business practices of some retailers in the region at the time. Again, it is not unreasonable to suggest that business practices are not always fair today.

As for how cooperatives were set up and how they began to prosper, again a few trends are clear and we can learn from them today. The enthusiasm of the early cooperators was key to their development, as social occasions related to the cooperatives demonstrates, while the ways that cooperatives worked together was also fundamental in their growth and development.

Another key to their popularity and development was their flexibility and ability to adapt to circumstances, finding new premises when needed and branching out in new ways. The additions of cultural facilities such as libraries and educational facilities was also important and has lessons for us today. They responded to what people needed, because they came out of the people and were a major plank of community self-help at the time, which could again be useful today as public services are constantly cut and civil society attacked.

Two other points need to be made. Firstly, the leadership of Joseph Cowen was crucial in the huge growth of cooperatives in the region in the 1860's and political leadership is also important in their development today. We can also look back and see that a culture of cooperation was developed around publications such as *The Cooperator* and the many people who were prepared to speak up for the benefits of cooperation.

Peter Sagar

Notes:

[1] F. Hall, *Co-operation; A Survey of the History, Principles and Organisation of the Co-operative Movement in Great Britain and Ireland*, (British Co-operative Union, Manchester, 1934) p. 11

[2] Percy Redfern; *The New History of the C.W.S.*, (J M Dent and Sons, 1938)p. 5

[3] ibid. p. 7

[4] https://www.newlanark.org/about-new-lanark/timeline [Accessed 1 July 2023]

[5] G. J. Holyoake, *History of Cooperation, Vol II*, (Fisher Unwin, 1908) p. 409

[6] https://cloyne.org/rochdale-principles/ [Accessed 1 July 2023]

[7] John F. Wilson, Anthony Webster, and Rachel Vorberg-Rugh, *Building Cooperation, A Business History of The Co-operative Group 1863-2013*, (OUP 2013) p.42

[8] Arnold Bonner, *British Co-operation,* (Co-operative Union, Manchester, 1961) p.83

[9] Wilson et al (2013) p 43

[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wikiIndustrial_and_Provident_Societies_Partnership_Act_1852
Industrial and Provident Societies Partnership Act 1852 [Accessed 1 July 2023]

[11] *The Cooperator*, 13th November 1869

[12] J. Lamb and S. Warren; *The People's Store: a Guide to the North Eastern Co-Op's Family Tree*, (North East Co-operative 1990) p.50

[13] *Ibid* p.101

[14] *Ibid* p.7

[15] *Ibid* p.11

[16] *Ibid* p 17

[17] *Ibid* pp. 21 - 22

[18] *Ibid* p. 41

[19] R. Fynes, The Miners of Northumberland and Durham, 1873, p. 187

[20] *Ibid* p. 189

[21] R. Moore, Pit-men, Preachers and Politics, page 74

[22] *Ibid* p. 155

[23] *Ibid* p.73

[24] Wilson et al p. 55

[25] Bonner p. 86

[26] *Cooperator* February 1865

[27] *Cooperator* 14th August 1866

[28] *Cooperator* 15th September 1866

[29] *Cooperator* 13th May 1867

[30] *Cooperator* 15th August 1867

[31] *Cooperator* 16th September 1867

[32] *Cooperator* 11th January 1868

[33] *Cooperator* 1st February 1868

[34] *Cooperator* 15th March 1868

[35] *Cooperator* 15th August 1868

[36] *Cooperator* 9th October 1869
[37] *Cooperator* 21st August 1869
[38] *Cooperator* 21st August 1869
[39] *Cooperator* January 15th 1870
[40] *Cooperator* March 12th 1870
[41] *Cooperator* March 19th 1870
[42] *Cooperator* June 15th 1870
[43] Lamb & Warren, p 17
[44] Holyoake p. 416
[45] *Cooperator* 1st February 1868
[46] *Cooperator* 29th May 1868
[47] *Cooperator* November 6th 1869
[48] Lamb & Warren p.28
[49] Ibid p. 95
[50] *Cooperator* 15th March 1867
[51] *Cooperator* 13th May 1867
[52] Lamb & Warren p. 75
[53] G.D.H. Cole, *A Century of Co-operation*, (-operative Union, 1945) p. 153
[54] Ibid
[55] *Cooperator* 15th May 1869
[56] *Cooperator* 6th November 1869
[57] R. Fynes. The Miners of Northumberland and Durham, (J Robinson 1873) p.p.190-1
[58] Lamb & Warren p.28
[59] *Ibid*
[60] Cole p. 154
[61] *Ibid*
[62] Redfern p.31
[63] *Cooperator* 7th March 1868
[64] Hall & Watkins p. 116
[65] Wilson, Webster & Vorberg-Rugh p. 54

Shields' First Socialists

Stuart Barlow

Despite being able to find examples of radical political activity[1] in both North and South Shields from the end of the Eighteenth century, and through the first fifty years of the nineteenth, it has been said that in both towns by the second half of the century:

> [...] new forms of organization were developed by the expanding class of skilled industrial workers which went hand-in-hand with the increasing tendency towards collaborationist politics. Non-conformism, adult education, anti-drinking Temperance Associations and the Cooperative Movement all reflected the aspirations of this skilled working class – self-improvement, self-organisation, independence and sobriety.[2]

This article aims to show how revolutionary socialism briefly disrupted this social conformity during the late 1880s, using material taken from political journals (the Socialist League' Commonweal and Social Democratic Federation's *Justice*), local newspapers *(The Shields Daily News and Shields Daily Gazette)*, as well as letters and documents held in the *Socialist League (UK) Archives (SL-Archive)*.[3]

Socialism arrives in Shields

During the early 1880s both local newspapers only linked Socialists with events in continental Europe or Russia. But in April 1884 *The Shields Daily News (SDNews)* reported on the debate about the benefits of Socialism

between Henry Meyers Hyndman, the Social Democratic Federation's (SDF) leader, and Liberal MP, and Secularist, Charles Bradlaugh. Then nine months later it reported, rather disparagingly, on William Morris and others leaving the SDF to form the Socialist League (League). Then, during 1885 and 1886, both local newspapers reported on the League's, and SDF's, campaign for the right to hold public open air meetings without police harassment. The *Shields Daily Gazette (SDGazette)* even considered the arrest of London socialists, while disagreeing with their views, to be a public scandal.[4]

William Morris had spoken at Newcastle's Tyne Theatre in 1884 and subsequently a Democratic Federation branch had failed. But after the League was launched, in December 1884, a number of people from the north east contacted it to subscribe to *Commonweal*. None, however, were from either North or South Shields. It appears the first advocate of socialism in either town was the Fabian Annie Besant. Who spoke at a South Shields' Secular Society meeting, in September 1886, held in Thornton's Theatre of Variety on 'Why Workers Should Be Socialists'. The lecture may not have been a success as Besant subsequently told fellow Fabian Edward R Pease, who had recently moved to Newcastle, that he would find socialist propaganda work hard. Despite this warning, Pease successfully launched the Newcastle Socialist Debating Society only a month later, initially recruiting 30 members. While the *Newcastle Chronicle's* report on the launch included Pease's socialist views without criticism, the *SDGazette* was more dismissive of his views.[5] Because he had previously cooperated with the League in London Pease promoted the Society's launch in *Commonweal* and was willing to have League speakers at the Society so long as they moderated their language, believing:

> any advocacy of revolutionary methods and even violent denunciation of the capitalist would only meet with but little success but would seriously interfere with the success of the small movement which I have started'[6]

The League's first foray into the area, including a meeting in North Shields, came when Bloomsbury member W A Chambers came to Tyneside in December 1886. Chambers reported that a Labour Federation had been formed to campaign for an eight hour working day and the area was 'peculiarly adapted for Socialistic agitation'[7]. Then reports about the Northumbrian Miners' campaign, and subsequent strike, against their wage reduction started appearing in *Commonweal* and the League sent a full time propagandist, H Parker, to the area. Then at the start of 1887 John Lincoln Mahon announced, in *Commonweal, 'A Provincial Propagandist Tour'* of the north of England during which he wanted to include a meeting in 'Shields'. Mahon was an Edinburgh socialist who had formed the Scottish Land and Labour League with Andreas Scheu, which affiliated to the SDF in 1884, before following Morris into the League. He became one of the League's most effective propagandists, touring the country and creating new branches.[8]

Socialist Activity in Shields

Cambers' meeting in North Shields was held at the Gladstone Hall, near the bottom of Bedford Street, where, he said, he collected sufficient names to form a branch. The secretary of the local Irish Nationalist League, Michael Lydon, agreed to act as the League's branch secretary. The Irish National League, established in 1882 to promote Irish Home Rule, had had a North Shields presence almost from its beginning. Chambers felt the area's strong support for Irish Republicanism, which looked to Gladstone to provide Home Rule, and the influence of the National Secular Society in South Shields would make the League's work challenging. Another challenge was the existing Liberal radical establishment, which was evident at a meeting, in January 1887, protesting against the reduction of Tynemouth Corporation workers' wages, whilst leaving salaries of well-paid officials untouched. The resolution condemning this reduction was proposed by Thomas Thompson, a local Liberal Association and United Temperance Methodist League member.[9] The meeting's Chair, Henry Sanderson, also warned that:

> A great many objected to the propagation of the principles of the Socialists, [.... and that] he knew of nothing that was more calculated to encourage the spread of Socialistic principles than the recent action of the Town Council in regard to the workmen's wages. (Hear, hear)[10]

This Liberal radical influence was evident again a few months later at a National Labour Federation's (NLF) meeting in North Shields' Oddfellows' Hall on Saville Street, at which, Pease, the Fabian, spoke. The meeting's Chair Leslie Johnson, honorary secretary of the Liberal Association, didn't want their Federation '[to] be confused [....] with other Federations [such as] the Democratic Federation, which were purely socialistic'[11]. He suggested the NLF should raise sufficient 'capital as a means of preventing strikes, and planting labour on a footing with capital'. It is hardly surprising that the *SDGazette* referred to them as 'earnest reformers'[12].

After speaking to Pease's Society and to miners across Northumberland, who 'received Socialism very well indeed, and were anxious to hear more about it'[13], Mahon held a 'very good meeting'[14] in South Shields on Sunday 13 March, at which SDF's John Williams also spoke. This was followed by a large meeting on The New Quay, North Shields, where Williams spoke about 'the sufferings of under-paid toilers and unemployed [.... and advocated] the nationalisation of the land and the taking over by the state of mines, works etc [....] for the benefit of the whole nation'[15], which drew frequent applause. Williams, an unskilled worker before helping to establish the SDF, continued organising meetings for the movement for the next thirty years. Mahon told the League that things were going splendidly in the area and would like to stay longer.[16] At this time it seems the League and SDF, despite their differences nationally, were cooperating in promoting socialism. This may have extended to where each organisation set up branches, as the SDF formed branches in Newcastle, Byker and Sunderland but there is no evidence they attempted to form one in either North or South Shields. This appears to have been left to the League.

While Mahon felt confident about the future of Socialism in the north east, he warned that the divisions between the League and SDF could dampen enthusiasm towards them.[17]

Present day New Quay in North Shields where the Socialist League held their open air meetings. The buildings at the back of the space, the Northumberland Arms and the Sailors Home, were present during the 1880s.

Branches Established

While Chambers had talked up the prospects of a branch in North Shields there is no evidence of a functioning branch existing until May, 1887. This was when a note appeared in *Commonweal* confirming the payment of 'Shields' branch membership subscriptions up to 31 March. This seems to have happened after the League's Alexander Karley Donald, who became one of the leaders of the League's parliamentary faction, and 'a well known

labour speaker' called Stevens, spoke at a series of meetings in North and South Shields during May.[18] After one, John Hearne, from North Shields, informed Donald that he intended to revive the branch because since Chambers' visit 'Socialism has been the main topic of discussion'[19] in the town. Hearn was a fifty year old mariner who lived at 111 Bedford Street North Shields with his wife and large family.[20]

These meetings were followed by the League's Wallace and local Liberal Leslie Johnson debating 'Is Socialism Sound' on the New Quay, on Sunday 29 May.[21] The *SDNews* reported both sides received a 'fair and patient hearing'[22] with the League's socialist motion being carried. In contrast the *SDGazette* was rather dismissive, describing the meeting as another example of 'Socialists from the South [who] continue their attacks on the North'[23]. Subsequently the meeting's Chair, the Liberal, Thompson, wrote to the *SDNews* complaining that 'out of a meeting of about 600 people the Socialists had a majority of about 12, though a goodly number did not vote'[24].

The payment of members' subscriptions meant the North Shields branch was represented at the League's third annual conference in May 1887 by Stevens. This was probably the same Stevens who had been assisting Donald, although he lived in Byker rather than North Shields. Stevens presented the North Shields' Branch Report, written by the secretary John Hearne, which confirmed they had forty members, had been holding regular propaganda meetings and debates, selling literature (presumably *Commonweal*) and were preparing to undertake propaganda work with miners. While North Shields was primarily a fishing and trading port there were a number of mines in and around the town. Unfortunately there is no record of this work actually taking place. The greatest difficulty facing the branch, it appears, was the lack of regular speakers, suggesting local members did not have the confidence or skills to speak in public.[25] The Conference Report shows Stevens proposing and seconding a number of motions, as well as intervening in the discussion on the Strike Committee's report where he:

> called attention [of the Conference] to the visits of members of the League to Northumberland, and to the establishment in the North of the National Labour Federation, which then numbered about 15,000 [members][26]

Stevens also voted against Morris's motion endorsing the League's policy of abstention from Parliamentary action along with Mahon and Donald. Whether Stevens voted out of personal conviction or as instructed by the branch is not known. Had Mahon's support for parliamentarianism and engagement in municipal elections influenced attitudes in North Shields?[27] Mahon certainly felt that:

> [t]here has been too much sneering and gibing between Reformers and Revolutionists, and too little useful discussion' and called on Socialists to embrace all Labour movements with the aim of combining them 'into one solid array with a clearly defined aim[28]

After the Conference, *Commonweal* described the branch as *Shields (North and South)* suggesting a single branch covered members in both towns. While John Hearne, the branch secretary, lived in North Shields, on Clive Street, branch meetings were held in South Shields, on Thursday evenings, at the 'General Gordon' public house, close to the St Hilda Colliery and South Shields Public Baths and Wash Houses. It was on the edge of a large area of workers' housing in High Shields, but was demolished in the late 1950s. Meetings continued both at North Shields' New Quay and South Shields' Market Place, but from the beginning of July *Commonweal* asked 'friends' in South Shields to contact J Wood, 105 Bath Street, suggesting South Shields had started to operate as a separate branch. Despite some disappointments, such as Mahon's not turning up for a planned meeting of the North Shields' Irish National League, it was felt that the promotion of socialism was progressing well in both towns.[29]

July saw Donald holding more, what *Commonweal* described as, 'successful meetings' in both North and South Shields selling large quantities of the paper and enrolling new members. There were lively discussions in North Shields with speakers replying to points and objections by the crowd. While in South Shields Donald was supported by an 'advanced local Radical' called Derby. The League seemed to be having an impact within both towns and had arranged for *Commonweal* to be sold locally from Fosters' hairdressing shop, on Clive Street North Shields, and the Market Place news-stall, on Alfred Street South Shields. Donald also felt that the NLF was 'profiting by the vigorous example of the Socialist [League] party here'[30] and proposed holding meetings with them. During this period even a local pharmaceutical chemist, Walter S Corder from Tyne Street, North Shields, contacted the League for copies of Morris's "Chants for Socialists", "Art and Socialism", "Aims of Art" and "The Woman Question" by Edward Aveling & Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Despite this interest in Morris and socialism Corder later became a gelatine and glue manufacturer who employed household servants.[31]

North of England Socialist Federation

In April 1887 a new socialist grouping was formed in the north-east, the North of England Socialist Federation (NESF). This came about, in Mahon's opinion, as a direct result of the League's agitation within the mining communities. From the middle of June the NESF started to hold meetings in both North and South Shields and *Commonweal* printed contact names for them in both towns. These were J[ohn] Isbister, c/o Foster's hairdresser on Clive Street where *Commonweal* was being sold, and J Wood in South Shields, who was also the League's contact. This suggests some blurring or confusion over the allegiance of the branches in both towns at a time when Mahon was warning the League against setting itself up as a rival to the NESF.[32]

Present day Market Square in South Shields where the Socialist League held their open air meetings. The Old Town Hall, in the foreground, and St Hilda's Church, at the back of the square, were present during the 1880s.

At the end of July, 1887, references to the Shields (North and South) branch in *Commonweal* ceased. Subsequently meetings in both towns came under the NESF banner, suggesting the League's members had transferred wholesale to the new organisation. This may have been the reason why *Commonweal* published no reports from either town during August. Isbister wrote, 'on behalf of the North Shields Branch of the North of England Socialist Federation'[33], asking why their reports weren't being printed and to clarify their relationship with the League. He said the branch, which was still sending money for *Commonweal* sales, had twenty-three members, still wanted League speakers and wanted 'to be properly connected with the Central Socialist League under Mr. Morris'[34],

suggesting they still supported the League's revolutionary position. Reports from North and South Shields' re-appeared in Commonweal from the beginning of September. Including one where the crowd listened closely to the Fabian, Pease, and John Comb from Seghill Colliery. Was the use of speakers from the wider socialist movement a demonstration of the branch's inclusiveness or fluidity, or just another example of being unable to get speakers from the League?[35]

In September, Hearne informed the League that Isbister was no longer Secretary of 'the North Shields branch of the Socialist League'[36] and that he would be dealing with *Commonweal* sales from now on. Hearne's use of the term 'branch of the Socialists League' again suggests fluidity over the branch's identity or a division of loyalties between members. Unfortunately none of the correspondence clarifies the reason for Isbister stepping down. Whether it was due to political difference or just burn out is not clear. Although Isbister did sign this resignation letter 'I remain yours fraternally'[37] suggesting he still believed in the socialist cause. By the end of the month North Shields had arranged a 'business meeting […] for appointment of secretary and re-organisation'[38], indicating perhaps that there were problems within the branch. Although it has not been possible to definitively find John Isbister in the Census at the addresses given in his letters, one candidate in the 1881 Census was a twenty-nine year old shipwright.[39]

At the end of September, *Commonweal* reported on, what it described as, one of North Shields most successful Sunday morning meetings, when MacDonald spoke about "Workers and their Representatives". In October Stevens received warm applause when he attacked 'Liberal Hack Labour Representatives' and MacDonald spoke about 'Socialism, Its Progress and Principles' at the North Shields branch meeting. *Commonweal* was now printing a full list of NESF branches, along with details of their secretaries. J T Harrison was shown as the North Shields branch secretary and F Dick, 139 Marsden Street West, the South Shields secretary. Harrison was a house carpenter living at 24 Queen Street with his wife and children. It

seems any confusion over whether the North and South Shields branches were part of the NESF or the Socialist League had been resolved.[40]

Problems Surface

Despite the previous optimism Harrison wrote to the League in November apologising for outstanding *Commonweal* payments. Apparently the branch was very short of cash and had been passing their unsold copies to a South Shields' news vendor for disposal. Harrison also reported that there had been 'an awckward [sic] severance of some of members but we are recovering '[41]. Whether this concerned differences between those who supported parliamentary action and those who supported Morris's anti-parliamentary stance was not made clear. Harrison also said it had been decided to shut down branch activities over the winter, because of the economic conditions in the town, but he hoped that:

> in the spring we will be able to commence again in better and continuous order by having speakers regularly [….] The feeling towards us seems temperate and that it is possible that with better employment we will add to our numbers I hope[42]

Despite these problems the NESF organised the final lecture of Christian Socialist, Reverend John Glass's tour of the north east at North Shields' Oddfellows Hall, on Friday 11 November. *Commonweal* reported Glass received a friendly reception and that North Shields seemed 'a promising place for our work. … [and that] members of this branch are distinctly enthusiastic, but complain about a want of speakers'[43]. It thought the branches' fortunes could be revived following a protracted period of propaganda work. Despite this optimism no further meetings were held in either North or South Shields and the NESF Branch List appeared in *Commonweal* for the last time on 7 January 1888. This signalled the end of the League's active involvement in the towns, and the north east in general.

It would be another three years before the League again held meetings in Newcastle after an anarchist-communist group had been formed. By this time Morris had left the League and the anarchist faction had taken control.[44]

What happened next?

The demise of the League in North and South Shields, in January 1888, coincided with, and can surely not be unrelated to, Mahon's decision to re-join the SDF because he felt the League had not supported his work in the provinces sufficiently. The NESF branches also seemed to have transferred on bloc to the SDF's North of England District at this time. Within a month of Mahon joining the SDF he had held meetings in both South Shields and North Shields, including one on 'Socialism and Home Rule' clearly directed at their Irish population. While initial meetings were reported as being successful no contact details for either the North or South Shields' branches were published in *Justice*. From the beginning of July both branches were omitted all together, suggesting neither town ever had fully functioning SDF branches during this period. This failure was highlighted in the Secretary's Annual Report, that year, which admitted that the SDF's progress in the north east had not been up to expectations.[45]

It would be another four or five years before socialists returned to either town. This time it was the reformist Fabian Society who set up a branch in South Shields in 1892, followed a few months later by the Independent Labour Party (ILP). It seems the Newcastle Labour Party, formed in March 1889, never established a branch in either North or South Shields. It appears interest in socialism was still present as David Clark's *History of the South Shields Labour Party* describes how, after only being formed a few days, the ILP branch attracted over 4000 people to a meeting in South Shields' Market Place and soon had almost 100 paid-up members. The development of the ILP and the eventual founding of the Labour Party in South Shields are covered in Clark's book.[46]

The situation in North Shields was more confusing. In August 1895 *The Labour Leader*, edited by Kier Hardy, claimed the 'North Shields National Socialist Society' had decided to become an ILP branch. Whether this 'Society' was a group of old League or NESF members is not explained. In September *The Labour Leader* reported North Shields was one of the ILP's North-Eastern Federation branches. In October the *SDNews* had also reported on a North Shields ILP branch meeting, but carried no further reports of local ILP activity until 1903. Similarly, *The Labour Leader* carried no further reports of a North Shields ILP branch until October and November 1903. It is clear that this was a new branch and not a continuation of the one formed eight years earlier. Names of the branch officials were published and it was reported weekly branch meetings were being held at the Free Gardiners Hall on Prudhoe Street.[47]

Justice continued to carry occasional news of events and socialist sympathisers in the area during the 1890s, suggesting the presence of some SDF members or sympathisers. There was even a proposal, in 1899 by T W Graham Thompson of Whitley [Bay], to establish a SDF branch in North Shields, which came to nothing. Then in 1904 Joseph Rogers successfully established a SDF branch in South Shields, after speaking in both South Shields and North Shields, and became its first secretary.[48] *Justice* reported Rogers held a number of 'good meetings', with audiences asking him to return, and while this optimism might appear similar to that previously shown by *Commonweal*, this time the South Shields SDF branch survived and remained active for many years. In the following year they held a meeting, in what Justice described as 'this northern stronghold of reaction'[49], to support the 1905 Russian Revolution. A member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, with the nom de plume N Marxson, spoke at this meeting.

The branch also continued to hold meetings in North Shields. One of which, *Justice* claimed, was the largest meeting ever held by the SDF in the town attracting about 350 people. The veteran socialist John Williams even returned, in 1910, to speak at a large meeting in North

Shields. Yet the SDF weren't able to establish a separate branch in North Shields. Meanwhile the South Shields branch started to put forward SDF candidates in local municipal elections. Initially they performed badly but eventually James Dunlop, who had joined the SDF from the ILP, was elected as a councillor for the Tyne Dock Ward in 1906. Dunlop remained a SDF councillor right up to the start of World War I. Although after the 1913 elections *Justice* reported that the branch hadn't been able to canvas or provided transport for voters, suggesting the branch was struggling for members and funds.[50]

Conclusion

This article has tried to show that the often perceived view of North and South Shields being dominated by collaborationist political action during second half of the 19th Century is not wholly correct. At the very birth of modern socialism its revolutionary form came to both towns and briefly seemed to have had an impact. A striking feature of this initial period is the fluidity between socialist organisations. Locally it seems the League and SDF avoided the differences experienced nationally and actively cooperated with each other in promoting socialism in the towns. This is evident by the fact that the SDF provided speakers for League meetings and both organisation avoided setting up separate braches in the same area. Even when the whole of the North and South Shield League branches joined the NESF they still wanted to be connected to the League and wanted their speakers for meetings.

The presence of League, and subsequently NESF, branches in both North and South Shields was all too brief. The end of League activity coincided with the split emerging in the League between those for and against fighting elections and Mahon decision to join the SDF at the beginning of 1888. The failure of the SDF to re-activate the old League branches may have been due the economic downturn in the towns, suggested in correspondence, and the inevitable burn-out of a limited number of members from trying to organise meetings, collect subs and

selling *Commonweal*. Despite this failure this period of socialist activity may have laid the foundation for the later development of reformist socialist organisations, leading eventually to the growth of the Labour Party in both North and South Shields. Indeed the spark of revolutionary socialism did not die out entirely either, as the re-emergence of the SDF in South Shields testifies, although attempts in North Shields were less successful.

End Notes:

1 Examples can be seen in:
'The Greenlanders at Shields 1760-1830: A Labour Elite' by Tony Barrow, *North East Labour History Bulletin,* No.24 1990, pp.4-11: Peter Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle* (Consett, Sagittarius Press Ltd, 1975), p.30: John Charlton, *The Wind from Peterloo, 1819 – Newcastle's great reform demonstration*, (London, History & Social Action Publications, 2018), p.8: *The Northern Liberator*, 'Great Public Demonstration, June 28 – Order of Procession', 23 June 1838, p.1 and 'Tremendous Popular Demonstration in Newcastle', 30 June 1838, p.4, available on line [paywall] The British Newspaper Archive - https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/ (afterwards *BNA*) [last accessed on 16 February 2023]

2 North Tyneside Community Development Project, *North Shields: Working Class Politics and Housing 1900-1977*, (Nottingham: The Russell Press Ltd, 1978), p8.

3 *Commonweal* is available at the University of Michigan Digital General Collection at https://quod.lib.umich.edu/g/genpub?cginame=text-idx;id=navbarbrowselink;key=title;page=browse;value=co [all references from *Commonweal* last accessed on 16 February 2023]
Newcastle Chronicle, Justice, The Shields Daily News and Shields Daily Gazette are available on line [paywall] at the *BNA*. [all references from these newspapers last accessed on 16 February 2023]
Documents from the *Socialist League (UK) Archives (SL-Archives)* are available on line at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, at - https://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH01344 [all references from *SL-Archives* last accessed on 16 February 2023]

4 *Shields Daily News (SDNews)*, 'Opening of German Parliament', 13 February 1880, p.3; 'The Russian Nihilist Trial', 24 May 1880, p.4; 'Serious Charge Against a German', 17 May 1882; 'Messrs Bradlaugh and Hyndman on Socialism', 18 April 1884, p.3; 'Socialists Squabbling', 17 January 1885, p.2; 'The London Socialists and the Police', 29 September 1885 p.4: *Shields Daily Gazette (SDGazette)* 'Our London Letter', 15 September 1885, pp.2-3: E P Thompson, *William Morris Romantic to Revolutionary*, (London: Merlin Press, 1976), pp.393-403.

5 *Newcastle Chronicle* (henceforth Chronicle) 'Art and Labour: Lecture by Mr. William Morris', 22 November 1884, p.8; 'English Socialism, The Fabian Society, The Movement in the North', 14 October 1886, p.5 and 'Socialism in Newcastle', 15 October 1886, p.7: Letters from 'Pease Edward R, London, Newcastle-on-Tyne to to Sparling and to Secr. Socialist League 1885-1886', p.10, document 2428, [*SL-ArchivesDoc2428*]; letters from 'Grant, W.W., Newcastle-on-Tyne to (Mahon) secr. Socialist League 1885' and to 'Man. Co, 1885', documents 1584-1585; letters from Holtijer, Geo. Edw., Tarrow-on-Tyne [sic] to Mahon 1885' and to '(Morris?) 1885', documents 1742-1743; letters from 'Daniels, H.H., Gateshead to (Man.Com.) 1885' and to 'Sparling 1886', pp.4-5, documents 1196-1197. All *SL-Archives: SDNews*, 'Secularism', 17 September 1886 p.1 and 18 September 1886.
Edward R Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, (London, A C Fifield, 1916), p.59: *SDGazette*, 'A Small Beginning in Socialism', 15 October 1886, p.3: *Commonweal*, 'Socialism in Newcastle, 30 October 1886, p.248

6 *SL-ArchivesDoc2428*, p.10. Pease position is set out on pp.9-14.

7 *Commonweal*, 'A Visit to the Tyneside', 18 December 1886, pp.297-298
Bloomsbury [branch] List of members. [Feb.1886], p.2, document 525a, *SL-Archives*.

8 *Commonweal*, 'The Labour Struggle', 12 February 1887, p.55 and 26 February 1887, p.70; 'A Provincial Propagandist Tour', 12 February 1887, p.55: 'Report of the Third Annual Conference of the Socialist League. May 29, 1887', pp.4, 8-9, document 20a, *SL-Archives* [*SL-ArchivesDoc20a*]: Thompson (1976), pp. 350-52 and 359.

9 *Commonweal*, 'A Visit to the Tyneside', 18 December 1886, pp.297-298 *SDNews*, 'New Irish National League' 16 October 1882 p.4, 'Correspondence – Irish Distress' 12 May 1883 p.3 and 14 June 1883 p.3; 'The Tynemouth Corporation Workmen's Wages', 27 January 1887, p.3;'The United Temperance Methodist League', 6 January 1886 p.3 and 'Election News', 29 June 1886 p.3.

10 *SDGazette*, 'Tynemouth Corporation and the Wages Question', 27 January 1887, p.4.

11 *SDNews*, 'National Labour Federation', 11 May 1887 p.3 and 'Election News', 29 June 1886 p.3.

12 *SDGazette*, 'North Side Notes', 28 March 1887, p.3.

13 *Commonweal*, 'Socialist Campaign in the North', 12 March 1887, pp.85.

14 *Commonweal*, 'With the Northumberland Miners', 19 March 1887, p.95.

15 *SDGazette*, 'Socialism in No. Shields', 21 March 1887, p.3.

16 Letters from 'Mahon, J.L., London and other places to Barker and Socialist League 1887-1888', p.18, documents 2137-2144, *SL-Archives:* Florence S Boos, *William Morris's Socialist Diary*, (Nottingham, Five Leaves Publications, 2018), pp175-176.

17 *Justice,* 'Lecture Diary', 2 July 1887, p.4: *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', 9 April 1887, p.120 and 'Northumbrian Notes', 7 May 1887, p.151.

18 *Commonweal*, 'Branch Subscriptions Paid', 28 May 1887, p.176; 'Northumbrian Notes', 14 May 1887, p.159: Boos (2018), pp.131-132.

19 As 'Northumbrian Notes' above.

20 Hearne's occupation taken from 1881 Census entry in 'Northumberland, Tynemouth

District 2', p.14.

21 *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', *Commonweal*, 21 May 1887, p.168.

22 *SDNews*, 'Is Socialism Sound?', 21 May 1887 and p.2, 23 May 1887, p.3.

23 *SDGazette*, 'North-Side Notes', 23 May 1887, p.3.

24 *SDNews*, 'Correspondence: Is Socialism Sound?', 24 may 1887, p.3.

25 Socialist League Third Annual Conference1887: 'Minutes, notes of', p.2, document 19; 'Reports of London and Provincial Branches - North Shields by J Hearne, document 26 and letter from 'Stevens, J.H., Newcastle to Socialist League 1887', p.3, document 2860, all *SL-Archives*.

26 *SL-ArchivesDoc20a*, p.10.

27 As above, p.13: Thompson (1976), pp.451 and 509.

28 *Commonweal*, 'A Labour Policy', 27 August 1887, p.273-274

29 *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', 28 May 1887 p.176, 18 June 1887 p.200, 23 July 1887 p.240, 30 July 1887 p.248 and 'Reports', 2 July 1887 p.215; 'North England Socialist Federation', 11 June 1887, p.192: *SDNews*, 'North Shields Branch of the Irish National league', 4 June 1887, p.2 and 7 June 1887, p.4.
South Shields Pubs, the Definitive List by Les Snaith Facebook page at [last accessed on13 May 2023]: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1893488350813434&set=oa.1435385653323285&locale=en_GB

30 *Commonweal*, 'Reports', 16 July 1887, p.232 and 'North of England Socialist Federation' 30 July 1887, p.248.

31 *Commonweal*, 'Reports' and 'Agents for 'Commonweal' in the North of England',2 July 1887, pp.215 and 216, and 'Reports' 23 July 1887, p.240
'Kelly's Directory of North Shields and Tynemouth' (London, Kelly & Co., 1886), p.142: Letter from 'Corder, Walter S., North Shields to Socialist League 1887', document 1121 *SL-Archives*. Corder's occupation taken from 1901 and 1911 Census entries in 'Northumberland, Preston Tynemouth District 17', p.72 and 'Northumberland, Preston Tynemouth District 22', p.349.

32 *Commonweal*, 'Lecture Diary', 28 May 1887, p.176, "Lecture Diary' and 'North of England Socialist Federation: Meetings', 18 June 1887, p.200, 23 July 1887, p.240 and 30 July 1887, p.248 and quote from 'The North of England Socialist Federation', 25 June 1887, p.205: Letters from 'Mahon, J.L., London and other places to Council Socialist League 1885-1887', p.22, documents 2147-2148, *SL-Archives*.

33 Letters from 'Isbuster [sic] John North Shields to unknown 1887', pp.2-3, document 1822, *SL-Archives*.

34 As Above, p.4.

35 *Commonweal*, 'Reports', vol.03 no.86, 3 September 1887, p.287

36 Letters from 'Hearn [sic], John, North Shields to (Morris) Edit. Com. 1887', document 1681, *SL-Archives*.

37 Letter from 'Isbuster [sic] John North Shields to Barker, 1887', document 1821, *SL-Archives*.

38 *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation', *Commonweal*, 24 September

1887, p.312.

39 John Isbister's occupation taken from 1881 Census entry in 'Northumberland, Tynemouth District 6', p.24.

40 *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation' and 'North of England Socialist Federation – Branches and Secretaries', 1 October p.320 1887, 8 October 1887 p.328, 15 October p.336 1887: Harrison's occupation taken from 1881 Census entry in 'Northumberland, Tynemouth District 6', p.93.

41 Letter from 'Harrison, J.J.[sic], North Shields to Barker 1887', p.3, document 1660, *SL-Archives*.

42 As Above, p.2.

43 *Commonweal*, 'North of England Socialist Federation', 19 November 1887, p.376 and 5 November 1887, p.360.

44 Commonweal, 'North of England Socialist Federation – Branches and Secretaries', 7 January, p.8; 'The Labour Struggle' 26 June 1888 p.198 and 15 March 1890 p.86, 'The Northumberland and Durham Miners' 29 June 1889 p.206, 'Newcastle' January 1891 p.3 and 'Notices – Provinces' 5 December 1891 p.160.

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Chronicle, 'Newcastle Labour Party', 5 February 1889, p.5, 11 March 1889 p.5 and 11 May 1889 p.5: *SDGazette*, 'The Fabian Society in South Shields', 26 May 1892 p.3, 'News in a Nutshell', 12 August 1892 p.3, 'Local & District News', 23 November 1892 p.3 and 'An Independent Labour Party in South Shields' 1 September 1892 p.3.

47 North Tyneside CDP (1978), pp.8-9: *The Labour Leader,* 'North East Federation', 10 August 1895, p.8, 'The Movement' 26 September 1903,p.7 and 3 October p.7: *SDNews,* 'Local News', 19 October 1895 p.2 and 24 September 1903 p.3.

48 *Justice,* 26 February 1898 p.3; 'SDF Notes', 4 March 1899 p.1, 23 April 1904 p.5, 14 May 1904 p.4, 30 July 1904 p.5; The Movement', 13 August 1904 p.3; 'Special Notices' 17 September 1904 p.8.

49 *Justice*, 'State Maintenance', 3 September 1904 p.8.

50 *Justice*, 'The Movement', 25 March 1905 p.8, 23 September 1905 p.7, 21 October 1905 p.6, 8 November 1913 and 1 January 1914 p.7; 'South Shields', 5 November 1904 p.5 and 11 November 1905 p.6, 'Echos of the Fight – South Shields', 17 November 1906 p.3, 'Municipal Elections – South Shields', 9 November 1907 p.3 and 12 November 1910 p.2; 'The Lock-Out' 15 October 1910 p.7: *SDGazette*, 'South Shield Notes', 23 October 1901 p.2 and 'Municipal Elections', 2 November 1903 p.3: Clarke (1992), p.26:

North East Labour History Society

Appreciations

Appreciation of Sam Lee 1931-2023

John Charlton

Sam Lee died this spring, aged 91. He had been an attending member of NELHS for well over twenty years. He and his late wife Ray had participated in WEA Classes from their retirements in the mid-1990s. Sam said he loved the 'intelligent discussion' offered by the WEA, remembering the current affairs classes run by Nigel Todd. He said it beat by a mile the rubbish on TV. It was probably Nigel who suggested the similar atmosphere of the NELH Society. When *First Tuesday* was introduced in 2005 Sam and Ray became regular attenders.

Sam Lee was very much a Newcastle man. He was a Freeman, and a member of the Butcher's Company, a guild running right back to 14th Century Newcastle. I don't know if Sam's family went back in town so far as that but he did tell me that the records showed they were in the meat trade in the early nineteenth century and his freeman membership was a least several generations old. Tradition was not everything to Sam though. He had joined the campaign to open membership to women and Ray, his daughters and grandchildren all became Freemen of the city. He also made the point that as working men they had the right to vote before the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 which included all males over 21 years of age.

Sam had a great sense of history, national and local which extended into trade union history. He started his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at North Eastern Marine on D Day, 1945. He really like the joke that his very first day at work was actually a holiday! He stayed with NEM for forty

years becoming Works Convenor and certainly a precise and persistent negotiator. The final years were the years of shipbuilding decline when his responsibility was the stressful business of obtaining the best possible redundancy packages. From 1952 to 1955 he did his National Service in the RAF ground crew largely in Egypt narrowly avoiding the Suez Crisis.

Away from work he had three pursuits: helping to rear four children, tending his allotment and walking and climbing in the Lake District. Both Sam and Ray are missed by the NELHS. It has been a pleasure and education to know them.

John Mapplebeck, Bewick Films

'A memoir by John Mapplebeck edited by John Charlton'

John Mapplebeck (1935 – 2022) was an independent television producer who was formerly Features Editor for the BBC in the North East and Cumbria. Before joining the BBC he was a reporter and feature writer for The Guardian in Manchester. He was a valued and active member of NELHS. John Charlton has drawn together this commemorative article based on a memoir written by Mapplebeck together with a filmography.

"My father went down the pit at Dean & Chapter at the age of 13. He was a very tall man and quickly realised that hewing coal-seams wasn't the life for him and he got a job on the L.N.E.R. In order to get any sort of promotion, you had to move from shed to shed and so l spent most of my childhood in a sort of circuit of the L.N.E.R. When I was born, my father was at Newport shed, Middlesbrough, then when the War broke out he moved to Dairycoats at Hull so my childhood memories are of the Blitz at Hull.

At the end of the War, we moved to Leeds where my father got a job at Neville Hill shed. But all of this time most of our relatives were in the North East and as a child I bad this sentimental regard for the region -Teesside more than Tyneside, because that's where I was born and the first football I ever watched was at Ayresome Park and the first football hero fever I ever had was Wilf Mannion.

Then I worked up through weekly newspapers and morning newspapers until, in my late twenties, I got a job on *The Guardian* in Manchester as a feature writer and reporter. In a sense, it had always been my ambition

to work for *The Guardian* and it wasn't a disappointment; it was the equivalent for me of going to university, because I was a secondary modern school boy who'd failed the 11-plus and what education I managed to acquire was after I'd left school.

When I got to *The Guardian*, I had the curious feeling that we were talking to the converted, that *The Guardian* readership was easily identifiable, limited, and l wanted to broadcast to as wide a field as possible. The *Guardian* used to have a feature page and one of my colleagues did a piece about a radio programme called 'Voice of the People' which Dick Kelly founded in Newcastle. About a week later the B.B.C. advertised for a producer on 'Voice of the People'. I thought that what they were doing was the sort of work that I felt I wanted to do in the media and that's how l came to arrive in Newcastle in the sixties.

My politics have always been Left, independent Left, and I suppose to some extent this was never very good for a B.B.C. career. It was only recently that I discovered through the former Director-General of the B.B.C. that I had qualified for what they call these 'Xmas trees' which MI6 used to put on the file of those people who were thought to be possibly subversive. Anyway, Alisdair Milne told a mutual friend asking after me that he couldn't understand why I had so many 'Xmas trees' on my file. I'm not sure about that, perhaps, in some way, I'd have been rather disappointed if I hadn't had them on my file. In a very real way I think it probably saved me from becoming some sort of bureaucrat where I wouldn't have been very satisfied. As it was, in the end, I got so fed up with the B.B.C. ten years ago, through being removed from programme-making, that I decided to leave and set up as an independent. l've made very few wise decisions in my life but that was one of them.

'Bewick Films' is, of course, named after Thomas Bewick. I particularly like Bewick's work because it seems to be so deeply rooted in the social life of its time and, to some extent, in most of the films I've tried to rather similarly explore the canvas of contemporary life of the region and also of the recent past. Television has never been very good at the past and

it's even less good now. They regard it as a foreign country, They've got 'Timewatch', a ghetto-slot for it, but the actual exploration of how we come to be where we are is not something that the media as a whole, obsessed as it is by the here and now, seems particularly interested in. Again, that puts me slightly out on a limb. It's certainly true of this region that it's had the most amazingly rich past. I remember going to my first Durham Miner's Gala-very much a major event. I'd never seen a sight like it before. It was the most amazing scene I'd ever witnessed, with the mass of banners, the closeness together, the confidence in their culture, the celebration - it absolutely knocked me out.

To some extent, I've always felt that it was that working-class culture which created the best of the region. It's a curious combination, really. I do also have a foot in the camp of the 19th century bourgeoisie who created such a beautiful city as Newcastle. 1 think it's a curious anomaly which the leaders of the Left have never been quite able to come to terms with, hence the way in which T. Dan Smith was so keen on pulling it all down. But I felt I had a foot in both camps. l'm now in my early sixties and the work I enjoy doing best is a slightly old-fashioned, recent past operation. Of all the programmes I've made over the last forty years, the one I'd be most proud of would be the one about the pit disaster in Whitehaven, getting on record before they died exactly what people went through and the way things were at that time.

Like Bewick, I'm a journeyman and I can turn my hand to whatever commission's around. I've just finished a film with footballer Pat Nevin and the film before that was about the folk-singer Dick Gaughan. All my work has been broadcast work. I've never done any sort of private/corporate work. One of those things about age/experience is that it tends to come reasonably easy but you've always got to stop yourself repeating the cliches of past programs. It's curious, I don't know why it is, but something in me now knows what will take 24 minutes 30 seconds! I much prefer editing to shooting. I'm very impatient on location. I have a story in my head and if it doesn't come quickly enough then I get rather impatient. I suppose this

is because, unlike an awful lot of my contemporaries, my main priority is the word. I always think of St John's gospel: 'In the beginning was the word'; I believe in words. I enjoy editing and I enjoy writing to film and I find that, after so many programmes, that becomes quite an easy process. Before I start and edit, 1 write the programme. It's a bit like writing an article. If you've got the first paragraph right, then you know it's right and everything else will follow from there. It's pretty unfashionable but basically I believe in words. I suppose I'm the sort of last kicks in a tradition. I think there's probably enough of that tradition left to keep me going until either I kick the bucket or get tired of working. It's a terrible thing to· say but I watch very little television but when I do I'm struck by how absolutely out-of-date I am. When I see 'Rough Guide', 'The Neighbours From Hell', or docu-soaps, I find that all of that goes so much against what I believe in in television terms that I say to myself, 'If that's the future, it's a good job I'm 63 because I don't want to be part of that. I think it's important that you keep technique, style, and content together and just as I find the style and content of film-making for television as it is now grubby and shabby and ill-thought-out. Equally it seems to me that what it is saying is also grubby and shabby and ill-thought-out. I believe passionately in the B.B.C. idea that you introduce themes which people get a shock of recognition from, they say, 'I didn't think I'd be interested in that, but I am'. Where in fact now just as you've got the politics of the focus group, you've got the politics of television which says, 'What do the 'punters' want? We will give them that'. I find that attitude poor. One of the reasons that I left the B.B.C. to go independent was that regional television became obsessed with a news agenda. I've no problem with news, it's just that it seems to be a very limited concept. I'd find it very odd if I was confronted by a newspaper with just a front page. News is a safe agenda. You're not really analysing; you're not bringing any sympathy or engagement to bear on the region.

I find the people who hold jobs on regional news programmes abysmal. They have no concept of the traditions or the strengths, or, even more

importantly, the weaknesses of the region which they're trying to serve. There's a sort of 3-bedroomed, semi-detached view of life which I find pretty depressing. What inspires me about Bewick, and why we chose him for the name of our company, is the wholeness of the man, his radical belief and commitment, his artistic skill and integrity, and also, a very modern thing, his 'greenery', in terms of environment and caring for the environment, in which he was light years ahead of his time. He obviously was very argumentative and created as many enemies as well as deep and loyal friends. I admire that robust style of his life.

Going back into my own experience, when I arrived on Tyneside after I'd left *The Guardian* in Manchester 1 was attracted by two things: first of all, there was a programme called 'Voice of the People which Dick Kelly edited. I very much liked the way it was exploring the culture of working class lives. And then because my own father had worked at the Dean & Chapter pit, I was also attracted by the thought of rediscovering the culture of my own roots and to that extent it was the most marvellous time. I really found myself very much in love with a working class culture that was changing like everywhere else in the country but at a much slower rate. To bring it up to date, Thatcherism destroyed those industries that underpinned that culture and people like (Sir John) Hall have put in its place a culture of fast food and football with which I have no sympathy. I like football but I don't think there's much to be said in the way of culture. That process which was happening in the rest of the country when I first came here some thirty years ago has now very much caught up with the North East. The working class culture isn't what it was. The school of very sharp Geordie wit which springs from a tradition of hard times is nowhere near as pervasive as when I first came here. When I worked at the B.B.C. I used to get a tremendous sort of pressure from people who wanted to get rid of what they called 'the Andy Capp image' of the North East. To some extent, a lot of my programmes were exploring the traditional history of working-class life which had not been explored very much before and I think I was a particular anathema to these people. I find it difficult to

enthuse about their vision of a new North East. I think it is important to look forward, as somebody once said, 'you can't drive a car by looking in the rear mirror all the time, but you've got to keep your eye on the rear mirror to find out where you've come from'. To some extent I think that's true, I'm not totally against all of the development in the North East. For example, I think that Erskine's Byker Wall is one of the most important housing and social developments in Britain since the War. It's interesting that Erskine fought for that vision very much against a lot of entrenched attitudes before he finally achieved what he did. There's a sort of 'middlebrow' culture which is inextricably linked to middle class/upper working class experience: the Sinfonia and so forth. To that extent, l think it's inevitable that an arts organisation is going to have that sort of class basis. You can then say to yourself, 'What would it be like if there wasn't Northern Arts?' It was one of the first regional arts organisations and it involved a great deal of ideas and influence from the likes of Sid Chaplin when it was first set up. I think that reveals that 'middle class' is too easy a description for it. I think it's a mistake to equate a nation and a region, so I don't think we're going to get quite the renaissance that's happened in Scotland. I think there would be something like that but it wouldn't be anything on the same scale simply because we aren't a nation.

It does seem to me that one of the problems of English cultural life is that it's dominated by an orthodoxy of media London. It does seem to me that one of the reasons why one praises these voices from outside London is that they do offer an alternative. I'm particularly interested in terms of writing. In various ways, most of what's written in London now, certainly if one compares it to American writing like Saul Bellow, seems incredibly parochial, far more parochial than their view of regional writing. To that extent I think that it's important that we bear in mind that these voices that we try and celebrate - the Cecil Taylors, the Sid Chaplins, the Jack Commons - are in fact offering a distinctive alternative to the prevailing orthodoxies and I think you should value them as much for that as for their achievements within the small scale of regional writing.

I have always had a fundamental disagreement with Amber about their style of programme making but, on the other hand, who's going to decide whether their approach or what I've tried to do is right? The most important thing is to let the flowers bloom and to that extent I'm glad that Amber have continued to operate against all the odds. I find most of their work incredibly soft-centred really. Until the arrival of Channel 4, they always said they didn't like to do television. I remain terribly excited by television. It does seem to me that it offers a way of appealing to a tremendous number of people. Amber have this vague democracy where they don't have any credits. I think that's fake. There's very little evidence on the screen from what I've seen that they're anywhere near any closer a relationship (with local communities) than any other program maker around. I've just got from Tyne Tees a prospectus and they're wanting a Further Education series. I'm putting up an idea called 'From Marx to Metro Centre'. It seems to me that the North East has been a sort of cockpit for the great divides of our century really; if you like, the divide between Marxism/Socialism on the one hand and free enterprise and market forces on the other. Because the North East is such a tight region you can see how spectacular the battle has been."

Key Films by John Mapplebeck

Poetry on Tyne. Mordern Tower, New Release Arts Magazine, 1966, BBC 2.
The first film I made after switching from radio's Voice of the People to television. A tribute to the unique creative friendship which sprang up between the young Tom Pickard and the forgotten Basil Bunting. Notable for the first scene I ever directed being "Shot under Protest" by a film cameraman who couldn't accept that Tyneside in November was never going to get any brighter.

Nairn's Britain - Nairn's Europe. 1969, BBC I.
I have always, unfashionably, believed in the primacy of the word in television documentary. Ian Nairn, whose architectural journalism I had long admired, was the first of a number of writers whose work I have tried to translate into film. (Others include Arnold Wesker, Wilfred Owen, Cecil Taylor, Jack Common and, more recently, Bill Bryson.)

Art for Whose Sake? The WPA. Second House, I 976, BBC 2.
One of my few forays into "foreign parts". A reminder of the time in American history, during the New Deal, when writers and artists were put on the federal pay roll. Contributions from the black novelist Ralph Ellison, the comedian Zero Mostel, Studs Terkel and various aged painters and sculptors.

The Golden Boy. Wilf Mannion, 1978, BBC 2.
Wilf was my boyhood hero (I was born in Middlesbrough). The film was a debt of gratitude for introducing me to a game that, at the time, seemed incredibly beautiful, although I freely confess that it has lost some of its lustre these days. It remains one of the few films I've made which bas had any practical effect in that it shamed Middlesbrough A.F.C. into at last giving their most gifted footballer a proper testimonial match.

Connie -A Rebel Remembers. 1978, BBC 2
I had always felt that the seams of working class history in the North East had been neglected by programme makers. Connie Lewcock's life - from militant suffragette to right wing Labour councillor, said a lot about the Labour movement's traditions. She was also a quite lovely woman whose presence lit up the screen.

Carmen Comes to St Aidan's. 1979, BBC 2.
A piece of unashamed indulgence; an early fly-on-the-wall documentary which delightfully eavesdropped on the visit by English Opera North to a Sunderland comprehensive school.

Operation Elvis. I 980.
A unique co-operative venture between the regional BBC and Live Theatre, beautifully directed by the late Phillip Pride. Cecil Taylor went on record as regarding this non-naturalistic studio production as the most effective television of any of his plays.

The Big Meeting. 1983, BBC 2.
The I00th Durham Miners Gala. My first Big Meeting was in the sixties when there were still more than one hundred pits in the county. It remains one of the most memorable experiences of my life and this film was an attempt to recapture it.

Common's Luck. 1984, BBC 2.
Not just another neglected writer, but the most important Tyneside writer of this century. I like to think that the film provoked a new interest in his life and work- alas, too late for his own lifetime.

Red Ellen. 1986, BBC 2.
My mother, who throughout her life was orthodox Labour, used to tell me about Ellen. Wilkinson, who was her MP when she lived in Middlesbrough. This was a tribute to both of them.

T. Dan Smith. 1986, BBC 2.
A belated attempt to lay the ghost of T.Dan. Quite different from Amber Films' version in the same year, but notable for a brilliant studio interrogation by Mike Nally. The problem, in retrospect, is whether we would have been quite so scathing when Dan was at the height of his powers.

His Majesty's Most Loyal Enemy A liens. 1991, Border and Tyne Tees.
This was my first production as an independent, the start of what proved to be a fruitful partnership with Border Television. It recorded the experience of the Jewish artists and musicians interned on the Isle of Man at the start of the Second World War. -Best Regional Feature, Royal Television Society (RTS), NE Centre.

Haig - A Scottish Soldier. I 993, Border and STY.
A fresh look at Haig's reputation, together with first-hand accounts of life in the trenches from the men he commanded.
- Best Regional Feature, RTS, NE Centre.

Whatever Happened to the People's Beer? 1994, Border TV.
Travelling on a publicly owned railway down the Tyne Valley, to drink publicly owned beer in Carlisle, was once one of the delights of my life. This film attempted to recapture lost joys!

Adi Roche. Blessed Are They, 1996, ITV Network.
Blessed was an oddity for the ITV network - eight documentaries linked to the Beatitudes of the New Testament- safely hidden away in the God slot on a Sunday morning. Adi, founder of lrish CND, used the format for a

passionate indictment of nuclear power, illustrated by the Chernobyl children she had rescued.
- Best Documentary Feature, RTS, NE Centre.

The Cost of Coal. 1997, Border.
A memorial to the 150 men who lost their lives in 1947 in the William Pit disaster in Whitehaven. My own father began his working life at the age of 13, hewing coal in the Dean and Chapter pit, near Ferryhill. This and most of the other mining programmes I've made was a belated tribute to him.

Earth to Earth. Close Up North, 1999, BBC 2, Regional.
Another problem programme - in this case rural suicide. But, like the Mannion film, a tangible, practical outcome with over fifty calls to the BBC Helpline.

My Native Land. Dick Gaughan, 1999, Border.
A rather envious look at the renaissance in Scottish culture which both inspired and accompanied the moves towards devolution and independence. A reminder of how much our own regional culture would be transformed by devolved governance.

Solway Harvest. 2000, Border.
A tribute to the Isle of Whithom fishermen who lost their lives when their boat sunk off the Isle of Man.
- Commended, RTS, NE Centre.

The Valley. 2001, Border.
A record of the lives and history of the people of the Mallerstang [the valley, near Kirkby Stephen where John and

his late wife Patricia lived for two years].
- *Best factual Programme, RTS, NE Centre.*

North East Labour History Society

Commemorations

Clean Air

Gianfranco Rosolia

The following extract from his book, 'Clean Air' was provided by Gianfranco Rosolia who made it the subject of one of our First Tuesday meetings in 2023. The book is the story of Jennie Shearan, and her decades-long fight for environmental justice in her town.

> "Jennie was a remarkable woman who was rooted in – and utterly devoted to – her local community, the people she felt honoured to represent as a member of Tyne and Wear County Council and their first and only woman chair. For my part, I remember Jennie fondly and with huge respect from the time that I was elected member of the European Parliament for Tyne and Wear in 1979 and first made her acquaintance. I admired her courage and persistence in standing up for the people she represented and for being undaunted in pursuing her goal of tackling the unacceptable levels of pollution to which her neighbourhood was being exposed.
>
> Pursuing a goal single-mindedly is not always popular and I know that persistence in pursuit of a cause can sometimes be unfairly characterised as obsessiveness, but after a long career in politics I have come to rate both persistence and commitment as essential qualities to achievement. In politics it is all too easy to get sidetracked and even to get overwhelmed by the sheer range of issues and causes to

consider. It takes courage and staying power to pursue a cause through rebuffs and setbacks, and Jennie showed both of these qualities throughout to a remarkable degree.

Jennie's story is part of Tyneside's history and heritage. Furthermore, at a time when tackling climate change and environmental pollution is vital to secure the future of our planet, it is a fascinating case study of some of the challenges environmental campaigners find themselves confronting. Finally, at a time too when we celebrate the undoubted progress women have made in politics, this book is a timely reminder of the importance of honouring women such as Jennie who, although no longer with us, can still inspire others to follow her example of pursuing worthwhile causes and of giving selfless public service."

Baroness Joyce Quin, former MEP, MP and Europe Minister

Imagine if you couldn't breathe clean air.

Imagine if every time you stepped out of your home, you were confronted with appalling levels of pollution, horrendous smells, and incessant noise.

This was the daily reality for a community in Hebburn in South Tyneside, in the North East of England, for decades. On their doorstep was Monkton Coke Works which was a coking plant that converted coal into coke, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Monkton Coke Works was built in south Hebburn in 1936, in response to the Jarrow March. At the time, South Tyneside was struggling so much with unemployment that the government authorised the construction of the facility to help grant work opportunities to the area.

The part of Hebburn where the coking facility was situated was largely rural land, far away from any residential housing. However, a few years after Monkton Coke Works started operations, World War II began.

By the end of the war, millions were killed and houses were destroyed. The government vowed to get things back on track, and one of the areas selected for social housing construction was south Hebburn.

Jennie Shearan

This is where Jennie Shearan comes into the story. In 1953, she was living with her young family in cramped conditions in the quayside area of Hebburn, and when the council invited them to move into the newly built Monkton Lane Estate, Jennie was delighted. Like all the incoming residents, she was concerned about living so close to Monkton Coke Works, but they were all assured that the facility would soon be closing down.

Unfortunately, this promise was untrue. The facility quickly doubled in size and became a monster, manufacturing 600,000 tonnes a year. What's more, a second estate was then constructed. The houses could not have been closer to the facility. The residents' miserable daily reality was a combination of hazardous and acrid sulphur dioxide emissions, all-pervading soot, clamorous tannoys and the enduring smell of rotten eggs. The people of Monkton Lane Estate had been betrayed. Jennie saw a massive injustice and was deeply concerned about the health impacts that were jeopardizing the quality of life of the residents.

Jennie felt that by entering into politics she could do something about the issue. She was elected as a Hebburn Councilor, and was quickly able to secure rent rebates for residents living close to the coke works. In an interview with the local newspaper, Jennie said, "Being a councillor is one of the greatest honours anyone can bestow on you. People make you a councillor because they have faith in you and you haven't to let that faith down. You are the public's servant."

Jennie proved to be so popular and represented her town so well, that within a decade, she was elected to be the only ever female Chair of Tyne and Wear County Council. But, the matter that meant the most to her was the pollution in her neighbourhood. When she retired from politics she threw herself into giving her oppressed town a voice.

The Hebburn Residents' Action Group

In 1987, British Coal requested permission to build a power station at the site of Monkton Coke Works. Jennie realised that unless she took the initiative and stood up to British Coal, the facility would continue to expand and make this hell hole even worse for the residents. It was at this moment that Jennie decided enough was enough, and formed the Hebburn Residents Action Group.

They were Hebburn women to be proud of. They had a lot against them in their battle to take on as immense an institution as British Coal. They were not scholars. They had no access to finances or even office equipment. They were middle-aged Geordie housewives trying to confront a male-dominated industry that was managed hundreds of miles from their home. They were going to need to be irrepressible and innovative if they even had a chance of being heard.

Their first move was to organise a petition containing signatures of over 1,000 residents to present to South Tyneside Council, underlining their resistance to the proposed construction of a power plant.

The communication and media landscape was very different to now. All their research had to be done in the library. There was no Google. Their petitions and letters had to be printed and posted. There was no email. The only way to call was to incur costly phone bills. There was no Whatsapp. And the regional press would need to play a key role in spreading their message. Because there was no Twitter or Facebook.

In many respects, Jennie was ahead of her time. Today, we can all acknowledge that the environment is one of our biggest issues. Back in the '80s, the environment, pollution and its effects on people's health was not a mainstream topic of discussion.

In their bid to get this matter urgently addressed, the group wrote to influential members of society, from the Prime Minister to the Queen, asking for support.

A particularly bold move was their demonstration around Monkton Coke Works. Jennie would often say you can move mountains with people power.

When British Coal refused to back down from its plans to build a power station, the government called for a public inquiry which they only do for the most high-profile cases in the country. It's thanks to the tireless work of the grassroots activists in building awareness of the issue that this was granted. The group had hardly any money but managed to find a local solicitor willing to offer his services pro bono.

The inquiry lasted two weeks & the report was taken to the Secretary of State of the Environment, and the action group won! Planning permission for the power plant was dismissed. This was a huge victory for the residents. But of course, the issue of pollution remained.

One thing that is striking about their campaign was how they were able to ignite a regional, and subsequently a national, dialogue across the 80s and 90s about the health risks from the pollution from Monkton Coke Works.

The group also started to regularly feature on television news segments. A turning point for their campaign was securing coverage on one of the biggest television shows of the day, the BBC show, Watchdog, highlighting the issue to millions.

Jennie struggled for years to get an official study commissioned to understand the health impacts of living next to the coke works. No official body would do it, so the action group did it themselves. The huge undertaking to print, deliver, collect and analyse the responses to their survey was another example of the redoubtable efforts of the action group.

The stories were horrifying and substantiated everything that Jennie had suspected about the terrible impact that the coke works were having on people's lives.

The action group would organise community events to raise money for their campaign. These events helped bring the community even closer together, and also empowered the residents to speak out. Jennie was uniting and empowering the underrepresented residents of Monkton Lane Estate, giving them a voice.

It was clear the residents had a strong case to get the pollution levels addressed, and in 1989, they took their case all the way to the European Parliament.

It was Jennie, adamant, never giving up, leaving no stone unturned, refusing to be silent, who led the way. To her, breathing clean air was "Everybody's God-given right." She was pictured digging soil near her home and the coke works, to be analysed in laboratories to understand the dangerous toxins that her community was exposed to.

It was Tony Benn who once said that:

> "Progress is made because there are two flames in the human heart. The flame of anger against injustice. And the flame of hope that you can build a better world."

Jennie embodied both the anger and the hope, fearlessly championing her community and channelling all that energy into getting salvation for her town.

Slaying the Dragon

Of course, British Coal would not give up on the power station and secured a second public inquiry.

Their limitless funds were used to hire the most expensive lawyers in the land. Their fancy office overlooking the River Thames, was in stark contrast to the action group, operating out of Jennies' sitting room, with no money, and only a few weeks to put together a case. It really was David against Goliath.

And this is where Dr Wendy Le Las came in. She was an expert on town planning and public inquiries and wanted to help. She found barrister Charles Pugh to represent the group for free. He made a powerful case, combining Jennie's evidence with a knowledge of EU legislation.

Once again, the inspector sided with the action group. Costly air filtration equipment was commissioned, as was an official health survey.

There'd be a few more twists and turns but the fate of the coke works was sealed, and by 1992, Monkton Coke Works was demolished.

In the years that followed, a question mark remained about the contaminated land and Jennie was involved in the planning about how the space would be deployed.

In 2000, Monkton Community Woodlands and Business Park was officially opened.

Today the site is a green space that also employs more people than Monkton Coke Works ever did.

Jennie's legacy

The case was a landmark in many ways: It catalysed the creation of The Environmental Law Foundation which helps communities get access to legal support in their fight for environmental justice.

The use of European environmental law was the first of its kind to bring EU policy on the environment into a UK case.

The community-led health surveys that Jennie led became the blueprint for future epidemiology studies, and Newcastle University's official health study on the correlation between a coke works and the health of the community was also the first of its kind.

In the mid-90s, the Evening Chronicle, ran a retrospective on the campaign,

> "Jennie and the other campaigners deserve an award for their tenacious decades-long struggle against the fumes. But you don't generally get prizes for taking on the establishment."

Well, I hope that my telling of this story helps in a small way to get them some of the recognition that they deserve.

You may be wondering what my connection to Jennie is. Well, Jennie was my grandma, and shortly before she passed away, 18 years ago, she asked me to write a book about the coke works. Being just a little boy when all these events happened, I had very little knowledge of the lengths she had gone to in her mission to get environmental justice for her community.

In my research, through a treasure trove of archives containing letters, clippings, reports, photos, and hours of amazing footage, I discovered a completely different side to my grandma.

Jennie was one of the region's most courageous environmental campaigners.

For all of the challenges that she faced, I hope this story serves as a commemoration of what can happen when a group of people get together with the aim of leaving behind a better world for future generations.

While the events in the book took place in the North East of England over thirty years ago, there is a timeless and universal resonance to the challenges that Jennie Shearan had to overcome during her extraordinary

campaign for environmental justice. She heroically took on all levels of the establishment, battling a negligent big energy firm that prioritised profit over people and governmental bodies that lacked accountability.

Jennie's fearless perseverance, her countless sacrifices, and the way she brought together the community that she loved, showed what can be achieved, no matter your age or what obstacles you face, or how monumental the task. She really did put it all on the line, and her remarkable actions led to a deeply transformative and long-lasting legacy of clean air and clean employment, liberating her town from such a dire situation and giving thousands of people hope for a greener and healthier future.

The story lives on

Since publishing the book in November 2022, to coincide with what would have been Jennie's 100th birthday, the story has taken on a life of its own. When creating the book, I felt that it was my responsibility as author and grandson to treat this as a product that should reach as many people as possible. The book covers many themes, and so there were many decisions to be made in the marketing of the book. As Dr Wendy Le-Las wrote in her contribution to the Foreword,

> "It is an inspiring story about an exceptional woman, and it is also an economic and political history of Britain from the Jarrow Hunger Marchers in the 1930s to the legal implications of Brexit."

I took great encouragement from Jennie's innovative efforts to spread her message, and felt it my duty to get the story out into the world to as many readers as possible. After all, this was a landmark case for community activism, with a universal and timeless message for future generations to be inspired by.

I contacted Sir Jonathon Porritt CBE, whose name I had come across in my research, as he had commented on the valiant work that Jennie and the Action Group were doing. At the time of Jennie's campaign, he was director of Friends of the Earth, and is today more commonly known as the advisor to King Charles on environmental matters. He kindly lent his name to the book and was one of three contributors to the Foreword:

> "CLEAN AIR provides a wonderful record of an extraordinary campaign, and of the vision, courage, and staying power of Jennie and her close colleagues in the Hebburn Residents' Action Group. The notion of 'environmental justice' has always resonated very powerfully with me: there can be no justice for the Earth without justice for its people – and vice versa. But words about environmental justice are easy: the practice is so, so much harder. Jennie Shearanembodied that concept in every regard, providing inspiration and hope for countless people – including grizzled old campaigners such as myself! As a Patron of the Environmental Law Foundation, it was so moving to be reminded of the crucial importance of the campaign against Monkton Coke Works in the establishment of the Foundation. These legacies need to be honoured – with the deepest respect and love."

Jonathan had written a book a few years earlier, and I noticed that Geordie rockstar Sting had been one of the supporters of his work. I asked Jonathon if possibly Sting would support the book launch of CLEAN AIR, given that the story was based so close to his birthplace. Sting kindly said yes, and so in November 2022 across his social media accounts, with millions of followers, he promoted Jennie's story of female empowerment, grassroots activism and environmental justice. The book has since been purchased by readers all over the world, with 5 star reviews. I struggle to articulate just how rewarding it feels to have my grandma's story reach

people globally and for those readers to write how inspired they have been by her fight. To accompany the book launch last year, I gave a series of talks across the North East, at venues such as The Word in South Shields, Hebburn Library, and the Methodist Church in Newcastle. The talks were very well attended and it was deeply touching to get such a positive reception from the audiences, night after night. South Tyneside council is currently looking into ways to commemorate Jennie and the Action Group.

CLEAN AIR is available to purchase in paperback, hardcover, ebook and audiobook.

Jennie Shearan and the Hebburn Residents' Action Group deeply loved their community. They put their heart and spirit into improving the lives of ordinary people. Their redoubtable efforts left a deeply positive and long-lasting legacy, giving thousands of people hope for a stronger and healthier future and transforming their quality of life. To continue their good work, all proceeds from CLEAN AIR will go directly to three charities that represent what Jennie was fighting for:

Friends of the Earth: https://friendsoftheearth.uk
The Environmental Law Foundation: https://elflaw.org
Hebburn Helps: https://hebburnhelps.co.uk
You can watch original footage from CLEAN AIR here:
YouTube: https://bit.ly/youtube_clean_air_book
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/clean_air_book/
Twitter: https://twitter.com/clean_air_book

The book can be purchased directly from the author:

https://clean-air-book.square.site/

or on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/CLEAN-AIR-Gianfranco-Rosolia/dp/1739102401

History Workshop 21, Newcastle: A point of view

We asked NELHS members to share their recollections of the 1987 History Workshop session held in Newcastle. John Charlton and Stuart Howard have responded with some very interesting takes on the event.

A Point of View

It's a commonplace today that the study of history should include the lives of working people whose experiences are every bit as important as those of kings and queens, gentry and generals. It was not always so. History as taught to generations of schoolchildren was usually the story of dynasties, their palaces and property, their battles and ceremonies. The industrial revolution was told mainly through the genius of great inventors, though child labour might be noted, perhaps to show how lucky we were today. The empire was the work of Generals, Christian missionaries and gentlemen governors and administrators taking civilization to backward natives whose stories were not worthy of telling.

This was my experience of history at grammar school in the 1950s. History teachers themselves were educated a generation or two earlier. Though very uneven there was some shift in the early 1960s as a new generation of historians brought a fresh eye to the story. At first there was the work of a few pioneers like A L Morton's A Peoples History of England, Christopher Hill's, The English Revolution, Eric Hobsbawm's, The Age of Revolution and EP Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class. By the mid-1960s a whole new way of seeing the past filtered through the higher education system and slowly into school curriculums. History from below was born. The break in the Communist Party after Kruschev's revelations of Stalin's brutal behaviour was followed by the Kremlin's

assault on the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Several left the CP and its productive History Group to pursue new avenues in historical scholarship. The History Workshop Movement was the brainchild of Raphael (Raph) Samuel, a communist from his youth. From London's East End's Jewish community he won a scholarship to Oxford University but did not then slip into a comfortable university post of formal lectures and tutorials. He was a co-founder of the Partisan Coffee House, a meeting place for radicals in Soho, central London and he was involved with Joan Littlewood at the Theatre Workshop in East London. In 1962 he went to work at Ruskin College, Oxford (founded in 1900)where working men and women could study free of charge, supported by trade unions. It was there that he could practice his method of encouraging "producers not consumers of their own history." In an echo of the Theatre Workshop's name the History Workshop was born in the late 1960s. Over two decades path-breaking workshops were held on themes new to historians: the history of women, childhood, empire and patriotism, nations and cultural diversity.

The numbers attending grew rapidly and in the mid-1980s it was decided to leave the Oxford location for London, Brighton, Leicester, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and, in 1987 and 1992, Newcastle. It was a radical change with more than one intention. For nearly twenty years the organising group was located in Ruskin College and assembled largely from past and current students. In a sense there was no call on a historically radical local community but when it moved out of Oxford some former Ruskin students could be very helpful in putting together local information, locating accommodation, finding local speakers, and selecting topics. There might even be a possibility of developing a local research group, or workshop, to give HW a national and ongoing presence.

History Workshop 21 Newcastle, November 1987.

It might be thought 1987 was a difficult time to mount such a conference. Mrs Thatcher was in her pomp. In June the Tories had won a third General Election in a row and the defeat of the miners was still traumatic

for socialists and trade unionists. Nevertheless HW21 must be considered a great success. The number attending was very large, perhaps 2000, with a big local contingent. The local organising group did a superb job in welcoming people to Newcastle. The timetable-brochure entitled, Speaking for ourselves? "What a luxury!" carried four pages of details of catering and drinking facilities and suggestions. There was a remarkable list of restaurants: vegetarian, Chinese, French, Italian, Mexican and Indian making Newcastle appear a gourmet paradise! And of course being Newcastle, eight listed pubs, four specially recommended, with unique facilities. Five exhibitions were staged including, photographer Jimmy Forsyth, 'one of this century's greatest proletarian artists', Border Women on the Land, 'a photo documentary history of women's work in Northumbrian agriculture,' and at Newcastle Trades Council in the Cloth Market, Wills Factory: Smoking is bad for you!' The programme added, 'But giving up has led to the closure of the North East's finest Art Deco factory, adding to the region's considerable unemployment problem and thrown open a debate on the future of this architectural gem.'

HW21 also offered a film show, Amber Film's 'A funny thing happened on the way to Utopia' Starring T Dan Smith (who appeared in the flesh), a showing at the Tyneside Cinema of the 1930s classic film 'Love on the Dole,' Other activities included a Three Hour Boat trip on the Tyne surveying the wreckage of the shipyards (with commentary), a coach tour, 'The Brazilia of the North' with critical commentary by Dave Byrne and a 'A social history walk of Suffragette Newcastle.'

The workshops

There were sixteen workshops over two days each with a convenor, nine of whom were from the North East and remarkably, almost 100 named people leading off topics, a quarter of whom were from the area. Many of the workshops had a strongly North Eastern flavour indicating local voices in the preparation stage. HWs intention was to root itself in the regions. The Newcastle programme certainly sought to do that. 'Local Radio:

Voice of the People' echoed the name of a BBC programme produced in Newcastle and two of its founders, Richard Kelly and John Mapplebeck with sound recordist Virtue Jones, led sessions. 'Film, Photography and the Working Classes' was also strongly local in content involving media not normally associated with historical studies. This might also be said of workshops on documentary drama and regional writing: fiction, poetry and plays and one on Co-operation. There were academic studies of the history of co-operation but here again the local dimension emphasising the impact on working people's lives gave it something different.

HW21 was innovative in other ways too like a Sunday session entitled 'Putting a stop to charity: the history and politics of self advocacy by people with disabilities or difficulties in learning.' Then considering the point that this was still the 1980s, 'Melting Pot or Rainbow' was pioneering. Here participants considered the importance of self-history of people from black, Asian, African and Irish communities. As in several other strands the importance of Oral History was stressed taking up another of Raph Samuel's initiatives. A decade earlier he had helped to found the Oral History Society and journal, Oral History. It is largely forgotten today that oral history was often denigrated by professional historians as relying on memory and lacking the scholarly tests of referencing.

Of the sixteen workshops only two focussed on industry and labour. 'Technology and Industry, was convened by Joe Clarke, author of the compendious History of the North East Ship-building industry and 'Class and Conflict' convened by Raymond Challinor included a presentation by one of the north east's leading trade union organisers, the engineer, Len Edmundson. The only contemporary labour struggle discussed was the Parsons' Occupation of 1973 which was enlivened by contributions from shop steward participants, Dave Neville and Terry Rodgers. It seems at least slightly odd that at HW21there was apparently no mention of the recent miners' strike of 1984-85, given that one of most notorious assaults by police took place at Easington Lane, County Durham. Then there was the sterling work of the Womens' Miners Support Groups in the region.

This latter point may throw light on what was to be the decline and end of the History Workshop on the ground events six years later, which included one further visit to Newcastle in 1992. The northern region had taken one of the biggest UK hits in industrial decline of which the miner's defeat and pit closures was the most dramatic and destructive of local communities. Engineering, shipbuilding, iron and steel manufacture and chemicals were all closing down. It is hard to imagine a History Workshop on Tyneside in the early 1970s, had there been one, not throbbing with all aspects of workers' struggle and trades unionism. By the 1980s the story was one of rapid decline. It was an experience then which awaited description and analysis of its impact.

In fact the HW's late programmes reflected a shift from the story of class struggle to the terrain of community and culture. The balance of the very successful HW21 emphasises this though it was perhaps not discussed at the time. It is also true that the project itself which in its origins and peak had focussed strongly on moving from academe to community history was sliding inexorably back there. This shift was affected by changes in the higher education sector. In short, university teachers were bound into heavily structured curriculums with increased teaching hours, regular publishing and ongoing assessment of their work. There was little time available for unstructured innovation. For HW the outcome was a good decent academic journal, History Workshop. On Tyneside, ironically the industrial area that once had some of the best parts of HW the movement in 'history from below' survived, in the NELHS and its Bulletin, North East History. The story of HW21 feels just a little bit like a very worthwhile monument.

John Charlton

Speaking For Ourselves

The morning I met Raphael Samuel at Newcastle Central Railway Station, he carried a giant holdall, had on boots with no laces and wore no socks.

It was 20th November 1987 and we were preparing for History Workshop 21. Raph was the main speaker on the strand I was convening, 'The Pen and the People'. We had started planning the event about a year before, our inspiration, source of energy and navigator was Bill Lancaster, lecturer in Labour History at Newcastle Polytechnic. Bill put together the collective which organised the event. I guess there were twenty people involved with this at different moments. We met perhaps once a month, often at the Trade Union Offices in the Big Market in Newcastle (on one occasion I seem to recall there was a protest by far right activists outside). I was offered a strand because I was researching working class literature for a doctoral thesis, as a result of this I was in contact with others in the field, not least Raph, John Field, James Welsh and Mike Pickering to mention a few. All contributed to the Strand.

The event was to be held in the Ellison Building of the then Newcastle Poly. There was to be nineteen strands: The Pen and the People, Putting a Stop to Charity: the History of Disability, Anarchism, Melting Pot or Rainbow?, Local Radio: The Voice of the People, Beyond Nostalgia: Film, Photography and the Working Classes, Technology and Labour, Radical Perspectives of Science and Medicine, Co-operation- Theory and Practice, Approaches to History Teaching in Schools, Feminism and Novels Between the Wars, Regional Writing, Housing and Planning:The Working Class Experience of Modernisation, Class and Conflict, Women's Voices.

Among the contributors were some well known names, Roy Porter, Bill Wiliamson, Stephen and Eileen Yeo, Paul Thompson, Kath Price, Tom Pickard, Rob Colls and Malcolm Chase were just a few of the notables.

Before we got started there was a social event at the Civic Centre with socialist cabaret (Druridge Bay Mammers and Strong Women) and licenced bar. Nick Tiratsoo's amazing disco supported by Steve and the Mysterions entertained us on Saturday night and delegates could wander among exhibitions and fascinating bookstalls between events. On Sunday afternoon there was a riverboat trip (commentary by Rob Colls), a guided coach tour ('The Brazilia of the North' with Dave Byrne) and Suffragette

Walk led by Dave Neville. Appropriately for those years, a screening of ‘Love on the Dole ‘closed proceedings.

My overall impression of the event and that era of Labour History is one of excitement, a kind of headiness, a socialist electricity, a camaraderie, a bohemianness that is now passed, as have some of the contributors to History Workshop 21 and the Movement itself. That is a shame because working class people speak less for themselves now, at least where it matters, than they did then, for, despite the rhetoric of devolution, power is now more concentrated in the middle class and the centre than it was even in the nineteen eighties.

Finally, as a footnote, I should warn readers that my memories are addled by time, as a student of autobiography I know about the omissions and distortions of memoir and indeed I have relied on contemporaneous notes and publicity material in preparing this sketch.

Stuart Howard
June, 2023

HISTORY WORKSHOP 21
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
Friday 20 – Sunday 22 November 1987
Speaking for ourselves?
"What a luxury!"
Photograph courtesy of Jimmy Forsyth
and Elswick Local Studies Centre

North East Labour History Society

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

Reviews

Adrian Osler, ***The Tyne Coal Keel. A Unique British Watercraft, 1400-1890*** (UK Book Publishing, 2022), 280pp. £16.99 monochrome edition (via Amazon) or £24.00 + £3 postage colour edition from the author (7, The Coppice, Lesbury, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 3NP). Paperback, illustrated. ISBN 978-1-915338-39-6.

This book is a scholarly piece of historical recreation and labour history based on over thirty years familiarity with the subject, and benefitting from an insight derived from personal hands-on experience of handling sailing craft in coastal and river environments.

I say `recreation', because as the author makes clear from the start, not a single example of the Tyne coal keel has survived, either wholly or partially. Despite being an icon of Tyneside folklore and popular history, bringing the keel alive as a physical working entity requires a detailed analysis of contemporary drawings and paintings, wooden models, and a critical interrogation of the limited surviving archival and contemporary literature.

Like many ubiquitous transport vehicles, the keel was the `white van' of its day and locality, taken for granted and only lamented towards the latter part of the 19th century, by which time any working keels had been reduced to the role of a dumb barge, reliant on steam powered paddle steamers for propulsion. As a river craft the keel falls into the category of a lighter but unlike similar craft in other north east England rivers, the Tyne keel had its uniqueness defined as early as the 1420s through statutory legislation that fixed its taxable load as eight chauldrons of coal, or 21.2 tons. This fixed load (coal) also permanently fixed the size of the keel which, unlike its later contemporary and successor, the Tyne wherry, meant that it was unable to develop or increase in capacity to meet changing market demands.

Despite this fixed size, contemporary descriptions of the keel's dimensions vary, and Osler uses these alongside the proportions found in the four existing

models held by Tyne and Wear Museums to determine that the Tyne keel was typically about 38 feet long, 15 feet wide, and had an internal space 6 feet deep; including the rudder the overall length was probably a little over 40 feet. It is in his chapter on form and construction that Osler's many years of field-research into vernacular boats enables him to include a number of his own technical line drawings to illustrate the detailed layout, shape and construction of the Tyne keel. Sometimes referred to by contemporaries as an unattractive looking craft, the keel's shallow bowl-shaped hull with its rounded bottom made for less friction and better propulsion when navigating the currents and shoals of the Tyne and its tributaries. Its other distinctive physical character was the height of its deck cargo, resulting from its limited hold below deck, making a fully laden keel one of the most recognisable craft on the Tyne for over 500 years.

Having brought the keel back to life as a physical entity, Osler then describes its working environment and the skills required of its operators – a skipper, two `shovel men', and a `pee-dee' (boy). Because keelmen were remunerated per `tide' (a notional round trip from loading staith to a ship downriver and then back again to the staith), they had to have a thorough knowledge of the Tyne's tidal regime; not just the ebb and flow of the tide but its seasonal variations and the influence of factors such as heavy rains, projecting staiths, and poorly maintained ballast shores. Using the tide to drive the keel meant that oars were rarely required, though passing under the Newcastle Bridge certainly required the use of an oar. The popular image celebrated in song (the Keel Row) is thus rather misleading, though the unusual method of using long oars fore and aft to both propel and steer the keel was undoubtedly one of the most memorable sights associated with these craft. Once again, Osler uses detailed drawings and diagrams to illustrate the various techniques involved, the position and actions of the crew, and how the oars physically connected to the keel.

Poling and hauling were other methods of propulsion, though limited to shallow water or in tidal tributaries. Both techniques were developed to address particular circumstances but hauling (by a man pulling a rope

attached to the keel) became increasingly impossible the more the Tyne riverside became lined with staiths, wharves and other constructions.

Osler's chapter on the keel's famous square sail and associated rigging is once again informed by his thorough understanding of sail craft and their operation, illuminated through technical drawings, contemporary descriptions, and comparison with other contemporary and earlier watercraft such as the Humber Keel, the Fair Isle Yoal, and the Kollerup Cog, the latter dating to c1150. By the 1860s, steam towage was increasingly dominant on the Tyne, with strings of keels towed by a tug rather than individuals propelled by the tide or the wind. Osler uses the example of a surviving model to illustrate how the layout of the keel deck became modified for towing, the mast dispensed with altogether.

The chapter on coal handling and the risks involved in loading and discharging features numerous contemporary images and descriptions that go some way to convey the hard physical labour that operating a keel required. A labourious task in all weather conditions made even more challenging if casting coal into an unloaded ship sitting high above the water, often in crowded conditions if several colliers were at Shields at the same time. Accidents, injuries, and deaths were a common occurrence, frequently reported in local newspapers, and Osler uses these alongside accounts of rescues to convey the human cost of the keelman's trade.

Adrian Osler has produced the definitive history of the Tyne coal keel, and in doing so has provided an invaluable insight into the skills and expertise of the men and boys who sailed and worked them. The text is very readable, and not at all technical, with details of the vessel and its form being conveyed through superb drawings and illustrations throughout. Anyone interested in river craft or working life on our region's rivers should read this book. Highly recommended.

Mike Greatbatch

Craig Campbell, ***Line Drawings*** (Mudfog 2018) ISBN: 978-1-899503-46-9 pbk. 70pp. £6

There are at least three reasons why a journal mostly concerned with working class history might review this collection of contemporary short stories by Craig Campbell. Firstly, because of the importance of small presses in giving a home to local authors of which one such is Mudfog. Such imprints have never found it easy to find funding and have always relied on the resourcefulness of largely volunteer group of enthusiasts. Cuts to regional art funding make it even harder these days, so supporting them and their authors by buying their books has never been more important -or indeed, worthwhile.

Secondly, because working class history, like all history, is made day-by-day and in the lives of 'ordinary' people just as much as by our celebrity culture, our politicians or faceless corporate CEOs. Craig Campbell's short stories are of just such people living out their lives in the deprived communities of places such as Hartlepool – the setting for a number of the stories. Their days are recorded though dances and song titles; skinhead youths and elderly men remembering the football, or romances in the grim industrial wastelands.

This brings us to our third, and, most important reason to seek out this book. It is very good indeed. Campbell stories may often be stark and unlovely but they capture their time and place in vivid detail. As he tells of the people in one of his stories (Nightshift): 'if you weren't too pushy and had a good ear, they would eventually reveal their story'. Campbell has just such a good ear and gives their stories a voice for us to listen to.

The stories may not be pretty ones but there are occasional shards of sunlight through the rusting factories on the beach. Even in Hartlepool; 'a place where even the four horsemen of the apocalypse dared to tread', there were young men with dreams and plans (Club Foot). Campbell's pictures of violence, drugs and factory life, 'all too often leading to death are bleak, but then so is the life generated by years of austerity, unemployment and

precarious minimum wage jobs. The politics doesn't need to be drawn out but our future historians of working-class life will be grateful to writers like Campbell who capture it so evocatively.

www. Mudfog.co.uk is the place to track this book down and see what else one of our North East presses is doing.

John Stirling

John Charlton. ***A Distant World: Growing up on Tyneside in the Nineteen Fifties*** 2022 North East History & History & Social Action pp187
ISBN 978-0-9927299-5-0 £10.00 + £3.00p&p

This is as much a piece of North East social history as it is a memoir of a very different era. So important to record what is indeed a distant world to anyone born in recent decades. I found myself constantly recalling my own childhood, and drawing comparisons, agreeing with many aspects of those years but finding significant differences for a girl born in the 50's, not from a family background working in service but of Durham mining heritage.

John, born in November 1938, sets his arrival in the political and international context of Munich and the Spanish Civil War. He recalls the war years and a bombing raid on Tyneside and the subsequent evacuation to his Grandparent's home in Pigdon, Northumberland.

Each chapter records aspects of his early life, moving from rural Northumberland into Newcastle, school days and Heaton Grammar, his growing interest in history, teacher training in Dudley, his first job at Bolam Street Secondary Modern and his entry into politics.

From the outset he makes the point that memory is so often distorted by family retelling of events, the historical record and your own developing political perspective over time. Nevertheless, it is rich in detail of friends and family, events and place and in this respect it is a definitely a historian's work in his well researched source material in addition to the wealth of family photographs and memorabilia.

Unsurprisingly, to those of us who know him, John makes frequent reference to class throughout this memoir. We read of the attitudes of the aspiring middle classes, and the geographical as well as social separation in all aspects of his childhood whether it be rural/urban, inner city/suburbs, the street where you lived, the schools attended or the friends he mixed with. Keeping up with the Jones's, even to the clubs his mother attended: Townswomen's Guild and not the Co-operative Women's Guild - definitely too working class! His family, mainly working class Tories had spent their lives in service, deferential to their patronising employers who they truly believed to be 'their betters'. Different to my own where we were always taught, 'you are as good as anyone else'.

Ignorance about sex, certainly a taboo subject in most families, the shame of pregnancy outside of marriage, a short childhood, selection at 11 and the limited curriculum for most children. We see the narrow scope of the teenage world, limited employment opportunity for a married woman, strict religious adherence and employment in private service….. all explored and all very different from today.

A young person's interest in the opposite sex and the preoccupation with sport, especially cricket and football, Newcastle United in particular, would most certainly strike a chord with his 2020's readers.

This is an immensely readable memoir, well recorded, frank, rich in detail and painting a vivid picture of a different time, a wonderful social history drawing on his own remarkable memory of 1950's Newcastle.

Kath Connolly

Peter Sagar, ***History of the National Union of Teachers in Northeast England 1870-2018*** (Designed and produced by DesignBARB.co.uk 2020) ISBN 978-I-5272-5771-9

The NUT has become the largest and arguably most influential trade union organising in the education sector. This book chronicles the development of the union from its inception in 1870 through to the period during and between the wars to Thatcherism and ultimately to the present day. The story is related in the context of a century and a half of political and social change.

A recurring theme throughout the history of the NUT has been the question of whether the organisation should be primarily a professional body for teachers concerned with standards and status or a part of the trade union movement defending rights and living standards of teachers as workers. The author explains how it was not until 1970 that the NUT finally affiliated to the Trades Union Congress; quite surprising given the very significant leadership role the union has played within the TUC in recent years.

The focus of the book is on events in the Northeast of England and especially upon union branches or 'local associations' such as those in Durham, Gateshead and Newcastle. Whilst neither the NUT or its successor union the NEU have ever affiliated to the Labour Party, the union has nevertheless consistently engaged in political lobbying and has always recognised that the education service is a hot political battleground. As early as the turn of the 20th century local branches of the NUT were actively engaged politically over issues such as the 1902 Education Act.

In 1919 there was a breakaway by a group of male teachers from the NUT leading to the creation of the National Association of Schoolmasters (NAS). The split was caused by objections to a referendum result supporting equal pay for teachers. Perhaps this helps to account for the bitter hostility often seen between the NUT and NAS (now NAS-UWT).

The author provides insights into key events and challenges for the NUT such as the introduction of league tables and OFSTED . Also, the Labour Government under Tony Blair introducing 'back door privatisation'

via academisation. Events such as these, together with the NUT's responses are portrayed using extensive and illuminating quotes from a range of NUT officers and activists. The author notes that Michael Gove was so disliked as Education Secretary that he managed what no other person had ever achieved; to get the NUT and NAS/UWT working together, including in joint strike action.

The book refers to the merger in 2017 between the NUT and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). The ATL had hitherto often acted as less militant organisation than the NUT but crucially the ATL had successfully organised significant numbers of classroom assistants; a group that the NUT had not generally accepted into membership. This merger resulted in the creation of National Education Union (NEU).

Peter Sagar is a respected local labour historian and a teacher and long serving NUT activist giving him powerful insights into issues facing the union and its members. Readers of this book may be inspired to follow up on some of the author's many footnotes such as 'Centenary of Newcastle Teachers' Association 1873-1973' by R. W. Dargavel. Others might be prompted to further study into related issues such as the history of the NAS/UWT. This book will be of interest to all students of labour history as well as teachers and others engaged in the education service.

Steve Grinter

Jon Gower Davies (ed), Jeremy Beecham. ***A Quiet Altruist*** (Hexham, Ergo Press 2022)

This is not a biography; rather, a *festschrift*, a volume of personal tributes to and reminiscences of Jeremy Beecham from friends, political colleagues, and others involved in public life in Newcastle in recent decades, during which Beecham was the dominant figure in the local Labour Party. He served as councillor for Benwell ward from 1967 to 2022, and was leader of the Labour

group on Newcastle City Council (and Leader of the Council) from 1977 to 1994, an unprecedented seventeen-year reign. He was knighted in 1994 and raised to the House of Lords as Baron Beecham of Benwell and Newcastle upon Tyne in 2010, serving as a Labour peer until his retirement in 2021. He served also as chair of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities from 1991, and of its successor body the Local Government Association from its foundation in 1997 until 2004, cementing his reputation as one of the most important local government figures in England and Wales.

The tributes show the warm affection in which Beecham is held by friends and colleagues, and the respect he gained from those who worked with him, including political adversaries, on a variety of projects and undertakings. A cumulative reading can be rather like the experience of the priest taking confession at his local nunnery, who complained that it was "like being bombarded with marshmallows."

But there is grit here as well. Peter Morris – local government correspondent for the Evening Chronicle from 1972 to 1983 – gives a coolly balanced account of Beecham's style of council leadership. Descriptions of the relationship between Beecham and the council and non-council undertakings – whether bottom-up like the Community Development Project, described by Judith Green, or top-down, as with the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation, narrated by its chair, Alastair Balls – give interesting insights into contrasting styles of local governance. Many articles highlight the priority that Beecham gave to social service provision over the enthusiasm for major infrastructure projects that motivated some of his predecessors. The volume is closed by extracts from two interviews given by Beecham to Judith Green, in 1995 and 2020 – but more of this, his own views on leadership and the problems and opportunities facing Newcastle, and local government in general, would have been welcome.

Beecham dominated Newcastle politics in interesting times. He came to lead the council just three years after it had been shorn of many strategic functions by the establishment of the Tyne & Wear Metropolitan County, then had to oversee the restoration of the city as a 'unitary' authority after

TWMCC was abolished in 1986. The period coincided with the controversy over the role of the Militant group in Labour Party politics. The election of the Thatcher government in 1979 saw the start of an attack on local government powers and finances that has persisted for most of the ensuing four decades. Conservative governments are not necessarily antipathetic to the aims of Labour-run authorities – Dan Smith's six years in charge of Newcastle, 1959-1965, included just one and a half years of Labour government – but the Conservative party of Macmillan and Douglas Hulme was a very different beast to that of Thatcher. Beecham would have been on the defensive for almost all of his period of influence and control of the council. That he was able to achieve so much during those years, and to stay so long at the helm, says a lot about his abilities and perseverance. *Fortiter defendit triumphans*, perhaps?

This work makes reference, albeit briefly, to these factors and constraints, leaving the reader (this reader, at any rate) wanting more. As a historical source it has its limitations, no doubt because of the purpose of the work; but it is to be hoped that it will stimulate historical interest in the Beecham era and lead in due course to a full scale biography.

John Griffiths

Eddie Little and Stuart Beckett ***The Girl Pat Affair*** (self published2021) 83pp. Illus. ISBN 978-1-83801184-0-5 pbk . price £6.50 plus £2.15 p&p available from tmonk52@ hotmail.com

I'm more accustomed to reviewing sea songs and ballads but this little book has all the attributes of an anthology of tales .. each of which would make a song in its own right.

The main plot line is the tale of the Grimsby trawler "Girl Pat", her crew and their adventures. Behind that there is the backdrop of a declining fishing industry and the advent of the Spanish Civil War and World War two.

There is a phrase which used to be common in the North Shields fishing fleet "All GY". If someone or something wasn't quite right it was "all GY". Some say it came from the habit of Grimsby men wearing clogs instead of sea boots and being unsteady at times. GY being the identification letters of Grimsby boats.

There is a lot of GY about this trip…was it an attempt at insurance fraud on behalf of the owners? Was it a madcap escape from bad times in the trawling trade? Was it in some way connected with national security in the run up to conflict? Whatever the reason in the depression stricken 1930s Capt. "Dod" Orsborne took a small trawler from Grimsby to Spain and Africa, eventually crossing the Atlantic ocean and finishing up in Georgetown, British Guyana. The voyage and subsequent events were followed all over the world in the newspapers. The crew were celebrities despite criminal charges. Girl Pat herself became a tourist attraction on her return to British Waters. And this was not the end of Capt. Dod's escapades

The authors have done some serious research and granted their academic backgrounds might have turned this into a much bigger book reflecting on the social, economic and political situations of the times not to mention the degree of media interest. But that might have been to go beyond the factual material that they had uncovered and into the realm of press speculation As it is readers can treat themselves to a glimpse into a world without modern navigational equipment and marvel at the events as they unfold in the Girl Pat Affair without striving too hard to understand why.

Benny Graham

Roger Hawkins, ***Victorian Dispensary Health Care for the Poor in the 19th and 20th Centuries*** (Morpathia press 2022) ISBN 9781 902385 21 1 265pp. illus, pbk Available from Amazon £30

The nature of the material on which this well researched book is based means that there is very little specific information about the individual poor that the Dispensary was set up to serve. The author's interest was triggered initially by the discovery of an 1840's prescription book in Northumberland archives and subsequently revived by an invitation in 2017 from the then Hon. Secretary (a local solicitor) to the still extant organisation, to write a bicentenary celebratory article based on papers held in the solicitor's office. Essentially this means that the poor rarely appear as individuals but rather as statistics categorised by their ailments and the types of remedies offered to them.

Predictably there is much administrative detail which casts an interesting light on Morpeth society particularly in the first century of the Dispensary's existence. Founded, as the author is at pains to stress, by a group of local landed gentry rather than townsfolk in 1817, it was the third such institution to be set up in Northumberland in three years (Alnwick and Hexham had preceded it) It was a time of postwar depression with unemployed and maimed survivors of land and sea battles posing a threat to public order, their plight exacerbated by failed harvests and an out dated system of poor relief.

There is little of this in the surviving early documents which relate mainly to the sources of donations and acquisition of premises. What does emerge (and becomes more apparent as the account progresses) is that whatever the major sources of finance for the initial set up, much of the motivation, if only a modest subscription, came from a Dr William Trotter - the doctor son of a long serving Presbyterian minister in the town which historically had a strong Scottish Presbyterian presence among its tradesfolk.

Detailed information is sparse for the first two decades of the dispensary's existence nor is it clear exactly how the system worked on the receiving end. There was some sort of referral process which allowed those in need to hold

a ticket that entitled them to the Dispensary's services. These services were provided mainly by an apothecary or house physician appointed and paid for by the Committee from income derived from subscriptions and charity events. Initially these appointees were usually young unmarried men with some sort of medical training who were provided with spartan living quarters and expected to move on after about three years or if they married. They dispensed medication made up on the premises. Surgery was not part of their remit although clearly there were times when they had to perform surgical intervention or call in outside help. Because the author has concentrated on finding out as much as possible about these individuals, future researchers of medical practice over the period will find much of interest (including two 'lady doctors' in the early 20th century) There is also some interesting incidental information about the Dispensary's response to the new Poor Law, the Public Health Act, the introduction of National Insurance and of course the NHS. The book is copiously annotated (556 end notes and 11 appendices) but has no index

Note The same author's 5th and revised edition of his 2003 Life of Robert Blakey,1795-1878 (now re-titled The Chartist Philosopher') arrived too late to be sent out for review in this issue of North East History but will be considered in the next one

Win Stokes

Secretary's Report

The Society has 173 members with another 143 people receiving our regular mailings.

Unless indicated otherwise the following meetings have been held on-line:

19 July – *The Work of the Decolonise Durham Network*, Nkechi Managwu

26 July - *Elswick's Shipyard and its Colonial Legacy 1885 – 1918*, Celina Hart

16 August – *Forbidden Kinder: The 1932 Kinder Scout Mass Trespass Re-examined*, Keith Warrender

13 September – *Using Trade Union Banners for Education: The Case of the 1938 'Red' Follonsby Miners' Banner*, Lucy Grimshaw and Lewis Mates (the Annual General Meeting held at the Lit & Phil, Newcastle)

11 October - *African Lives in the North of England*, Donna Chambers

1 November – *Derwentside in the Winter of 1962-63*, Peter Brabban

13 December - The Annual Christmas Quiz with Peter Brabban

17 January - *Five Russians in the North East of England*, Andy McSmith (unable to complete due to technical problems)

21 February – *Routes of Social Change, a WEA Project*, Jude Murphy

21 March – *The 1980 Steel Strike on Teesside,* Charlie McGuire

11 April – *Clean Air: the long community struggle against the environmental damage caused by the Monkton Coke Works*, Gianfranco Rosolia

24 May – *Mutual Aid in the North East Past and Present*, Silvie Fisch and Rosie Serdiville (at the Irish Centre, Newcastle)

18 July – *Disruption and control: Contesting mobility regimes through the picket line in 1970s Britain*, Diarmaid Kelliher

This issue of *North East History* has been produced by the Editorial Board who are: Rosie Serdiville (Editor), Brian Bennison, John Charlton, Mike Greatbatch, Steve Grinter, Win Stokes and Don Watson. The Society wishes to record its thanks for their work.

The Society owes a great debt to Sue Ward who stood down from her role as sub-editor last year having made an invaluable contribution to the Journal over many years.

We are grateful to Peter Nicklin for his work on the Society's website where a Paypal facility has been added to make it easier for people to join the Society.

We also thank Brian Bennison and Liz O'Donnell for their work in developing and promoting the North East Labour History Facebook page which now has over 1400 followers.

In memory of our late President, Archie Potts the committee is to create a Founder's Award which will be made annually to an organisation or group within the region which has through engagement with its community, enhanced our understanding of some aspect of the history of working people.

Lucy Jameson (Durham University) was awarded the Sid Chaplin Prize for her essay, *Pneumoconiosis and Social Class in Twentieth Century County Durham Mining Communities.*

Officers:

President:	Maureen Callcott
Vice President:	John Creaby
Chair:	Liz O'Donnell
Vice Chair:	Kath Connolly
Treasurer:	Judith McSwaine
Secretary:	David Connolly
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Patrick Candon (Tynemouth)
John Charlton (Newcastle)
Mike Greatbatch (Newcastle)
Steve Grinter (Wylam)
Peter Nicklin (Newcastle)
Wendy Palace (Stanley)
Rosie Serdiville (Newcastle)
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	2022	Lucy Jameson

This year's prize will be awarded to Lucy Jameson (Durham University) for her essay, Pneumoconiosis and Social Class in Twentieth-Century County Durham Mining Communities

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.

You can join via paypal on our website https://nelh.Net/joinus/

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

Please note that the subscription may change in September 2023 following a review of journal production costs."

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 ……………………………….

Supporting Working Class Education

The North East Labour History Society

TUC Northern supports our affiliated unions and trades councils to ensure the relationship between learning and organising is present in our daily work.

Union learning is about empowering workers.

To find out more about our learning project in partnership with the North of Tyne Combined Authority and opportunities for free/low cost learning in workplaces, contact Karen Lockney at:
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North East History Volume 54

- Raggamuffins and Sons of Liberty; The 1774 General Election in Morpeth and Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Clerical Exactions from the Poor William Parker, Ballast Hills, and Affordable Burials for the Working Poor, 1800-1857
- Five Russians in the North East of England.
- Socialists and Speculators: the Walker Estate as a Battleground of Housing Ideologies 1902-1919.
- Northeastern England and America's Bloodiest War.
- Shields' First Socialists.
- Pneumoconiosis and Social Class in Twentieth-Century County Durham Mining Communities
- The Growth of the Co-operative Movement in North East England.

Cover: Jennie Shearan, courtesy of Giancarlo Rosario

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/