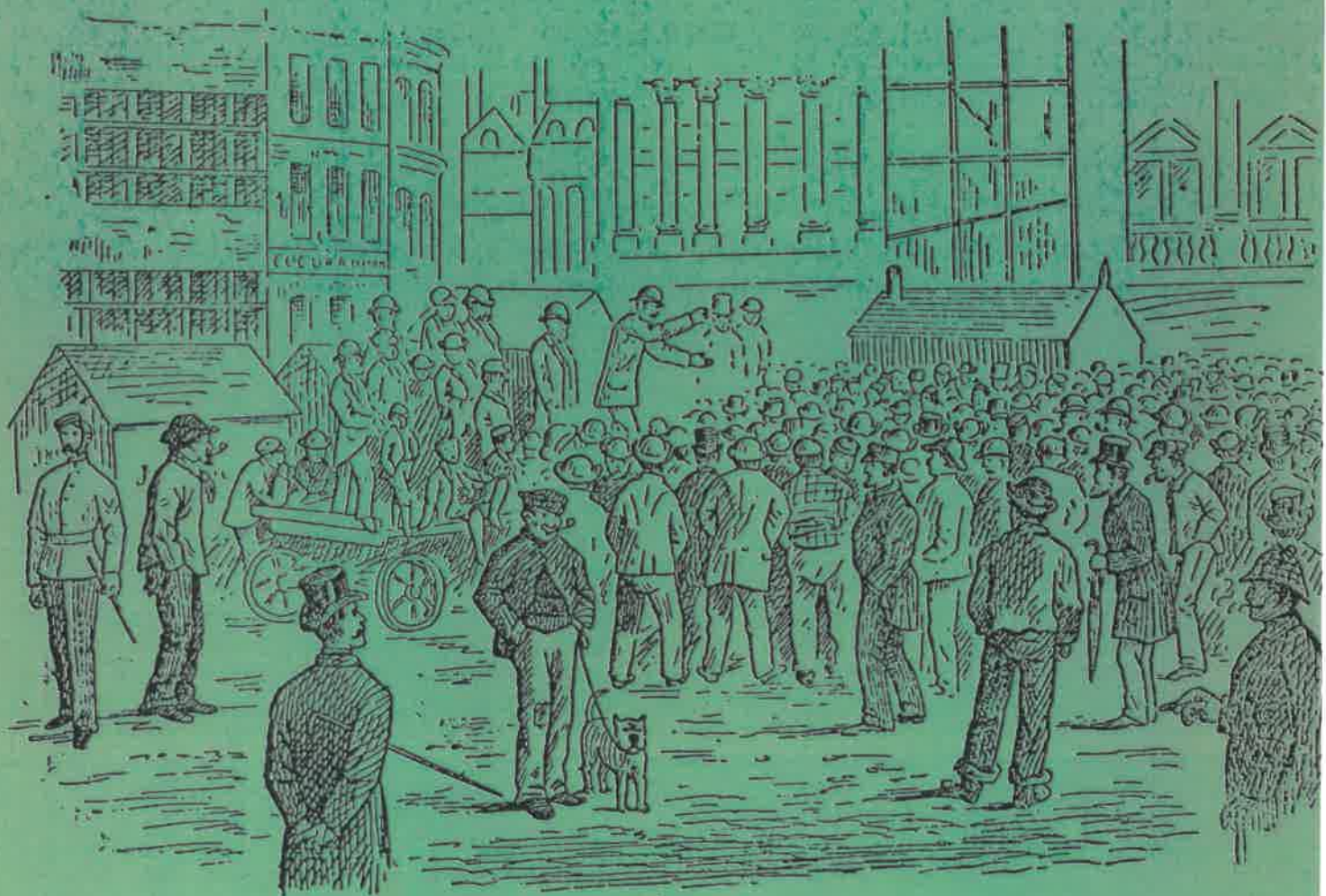


North East Group for the Study of Labour History

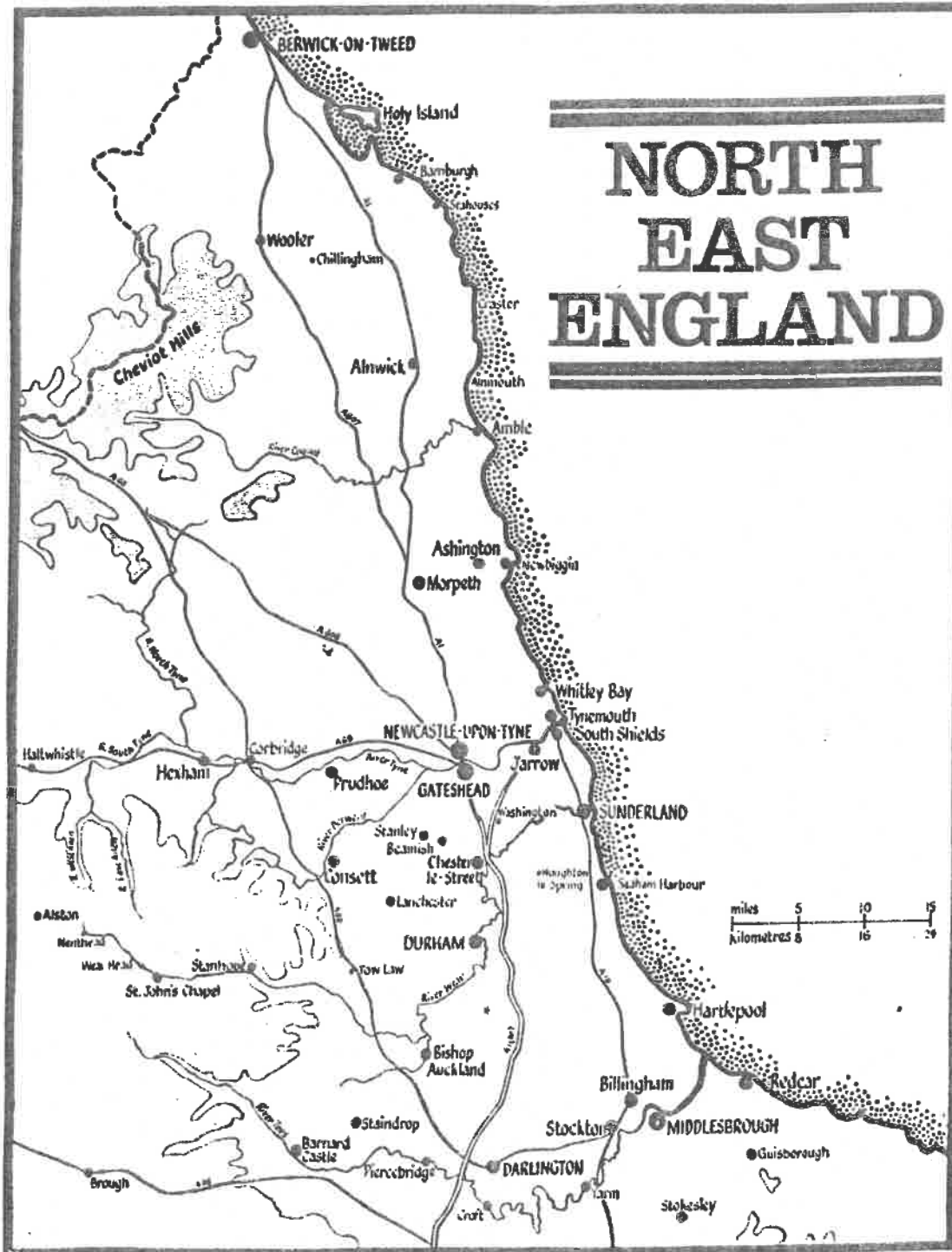
BULLETIN 13 1979



THE SANDHILL ORATORS

A NEWCASTLE SCENE OF THE 1880s

NORTH EAST ENGLAND



NORTH EAST GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF LABOUR HISTORY
BULLETIN NO 13 OCTOBER 1979

Editorial Board : E Allen, R Challinor, A Potts

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THE NORTH EAST GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF LABOUR HISTORY

- Name: The name of the group shall be The North East Group for the Study of Labour History.
- Objects:
- (a) To bring together those interested in research into labour history in the North East.
 - (b) To encourage and help organise such research.
 - (c) To assist in the preservation of existing records.
 - (d) To organise support for these aims by such means as seminars, lectures, bibliographical guides, etc.
- Membership: Membership shall be open to all those actively interested in the aims of the Group.
- Subscriptions: The annual subscription shall be £1.50 per individual or institution, student members 25p. This shall fall due on 1st October each year.
- Officers and Committee: The business of the Group shall be conducted by a committee composed of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, two Secretaries, and two ordinary members. The committee shall have the power to co-opt additional members. The committee and officers shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting.
- Finance: All money raised by or on behalf of the Group shall be applied to further the above objects. An audited account shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting.



POACHING AND PROPERTY RIGHTS ON ALSTON MOOR

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: POACHING AS A CRIME

The historical study of crime and the criminal is comparatively new. Only very recently have historians begun serious study of what is an enormous topic in the history of Man. Approaches have been made through studies of crime in general or of one crime in particular; and all seek to discover a feasible explanation of crime by such efforts.

The crime of poaching is one which, as yet, has not received a great deal of attention from historians. The three most recent and substantial studies have been made by Douglas Hay, on an area of Staffordshire,¹ P B Munsche, on Wiltshire² and E P Thompson, on the origins of the Black Act³.

¹'Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase' by D Hay, in Albion's Fatal Tree, edited by Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh and E P Thompson. Published by Allen Lane/Penguin Books, London, 1975.

²'The Game Laws in Wiltshire 1750-1800' by P B Munsche, in Crime in England 1550-1800, edited by J S Cockburn. Published by Methuen, London, 1977.

³Whigs and Hunters: the Origin of the Black Act by E P Thompson. Published by Allen Lane/Penguin Books, London, 1975.

In Staffordshire, Douglas Hay based his study on Cannock Chase, an area of some thirty square miles and almost totally the property of the Paget family. During the period of study, the second half of the eighteenth century, Cannock Chase was largely the property of the Earl of Uxbridge and, after his demise, his nephew, Lord Paget. At this time, the Chase abounded with game; there were four hundred deer in the park, as well as copious quantities of grouse, partridge, pheasant, hare and rabbit.¹ Naturally, this was an enormous attraction to poaching on the Chase and Hay based his study on records of what appears to have been a small war, waged between the Cannock Chase poachers and the game-keepers of the Pagets.

From the mass of evidence surrounding Cannock Chase, Hay selected several factors and incidents which he considered to be of great significance to his study. Records revealed a vigorous 'poaching community' amongst the cottagers living on or near the Chase. Poachers gave alibis for one another, took measures against anyone who provided the game-keepers with information concerning their activities and practised several co-operative ways to evade the law. For example, 'game-keepers met with a wall of silence (from villagers) when they tried to make enquiries but found that word spread like lightning when they obtained a search warrant and that the suspects had escaped with "the apparatus" just before they arrived'.

The solidarity of the Cannock Chase villagers was virtually complete. Obviously, they did not regard poaching as a crime and Hay asserts that the basis of their conspiracy was opposition to the eighteenth century game laws in general and to the Paget's interpretation of them in particular. Such game laws ruled that a man had to be lord of a manor or have a substantial income from landed property, even to kill a hare on his own land and those who were unqualified to kill game were further prevented from purchasing it.

In addition to ordinary villagers, Hay found evidence that other members of the community, both on Cannock Chase and further afield, similarly considered the restrictions of the game laws to be unjust. Many wealthy, although not landed, people, whilst not wishing to poach game themselves, nonetheless wanted to purchase and enjoy game at their own dinner table. This meant that a market was available for game killed by ordinary cottagers and Douglas Hay uncovered evidence of men, residing in the villages on Cannock Chase, who practised poaching as a trade.

Cannock Chase records also revealed a resentment of the game laws expressed by lesser gentlemen, such as yeoman farmers. They owned land but their annual income was usually insufficient to enable them to kill game; yet they were forced to suffer other, qualified gentlemen crossing their land in pursuit of game, often destroying crops in the process. Hay found evidence of their

¹ Douglas Hay et seq

resentment being expressed in activities such as jury service. Whilst serving thus, they lent support to common poachers and infuriated major landlords by passing verdicts of 'not guilty', when evidence quite obviously pointed towards the opposite.

Clearly, a theme is beginning to emerge from the evidence which Hay presents and he develops this further by a detailed description of one major event which occurred on Cannock Chase during the lifetime of Lord Paget. This one event, together with the evidence already discussed, led Douglas Hay to draw a conclusion of great significance regarding the explanation of poaching as a crime.

What in fact happened during the lifetime of Lord Paget, was a major demonstration on the part of the villagers of the Chase against the unjust activities of their landlord, which eroded both their rights and their diets. Events leading up to this began shortly after the Earl of Uxbridge inherited the Chase. The Paget family laid claim to the full rights of free chase and free warren on Cannock Chase, a privilege granted by Royal Franchise, which effectively gave the Pagets more absolute rights over game than any other gentleman could claim. Ordinarily, the qualified were free to shoot game anywhere (risking trespass) but game within chases, warrens, parks or free fisheries belonged to the owner alone - even if it strayed outside the boundaries. Additionally, franchises of chase or warren were not tied to ownership of land, thus giving the Pagets exclusive game rights over many acres of land which were the property of other qualified men.

The Earl of Uxbridge began to extend his claims over Cannock Chase during the 1750s, through the construction of rabbit warrens and this was carried further by Lord Paget. Rabbit breeding in warrens at the time could be a very profitable investment and Paget introduced giant warrens to Cannock Chase in order to make large profits. This action led directly to the violent outcry of the local villagers because the warrens were constructed on sandy and rocky wastes which were very frequently ancient commons, where tenants and cottagers had the right to graze cattle and sheep.

Inevitably, villagers began to suffer serious losses since the numbers of sheep which they could retain were forcibly reduced as the new warrens occupied the best grazing land. Foreseeing the gradual extinction of all their rights, the commoners rose to action. Over two weeks, between two and three hundred men worked diligently, filling in all rabbit warrens and killing all rabbits on the Chase, in open defiance of the Paget's game-keepers, who were too afraid for personal

safety to try and intervene. Such drastic action was largely favoured throughout the neighbourhood of Cannock Chase except, of course, with Lord Paget. Many of the lesser gentry, who had been personally offended by Paget's extension of game rights, went as far as to hinder legal retaliation from Paget on the local level in their capacities as Justices of the Peace.

An extraordinary event which, coupled with the other evidence of poaching on Cannock Chase, gave Douglas Hay a firm foundation for the explanation of poaching which he produced. Throughout all the groups of information which he examines, is an underlying theme of tension and conflict based upon resentment of the game laws and their injustice: a community who regarded poaching as far from criminal, wealthy members of society who were legally barred from killing or buying game yet were still prepared to procure some, farmers who were not qualified to shoot game which might thrive on their own land but who were prepared to aid and abet villagers indicted for poaching. Ultimately, the entire community prepared to fight together to prevent the loss of what rights they had by the unjust extension of his rights by their landlord.

The underlying theme is one of a conflict between the classes based upon vested property interests and this is the theory which Douglas Hay suggests is the explanation of poaching as a crime. Certainly, the evidence surrounding Cannock Chase appears to point clearly in this direction, yet other studies of poaching have produced very different theses. P B Munsche, in his study of Wiltshire, came to more varied conclusions.

Unlike Douglas Hay, Munsche based his study on a whole county but covered the same period in history, the second half of the eighteenth century. Wiltshire at this time was a county of contrasts, mainly agricultural in the north and south but in the west industrial - a centre for the cloth industry.¹ In rural areas game was abundant as the county was well provided with places where game could breed, such as remnants of the ancient royal forests of Selwood and Chippenham. Similarly, open land where game could be pursued was also plentiful. As a result, the Wiltshire game law enforcers found poaching to be a great problem; and Munsche based his study upon records of the various ways in which Wiltshire landlords attempted to cope with it.

Game-keepers were the first and most obvious tactic which landowners adopted. They were employed both to protect the game from natural predators and, of course, poachers. However, the Wiltshire records revealed that game-keepers were very often suspected to poaching themselves. Many apparently had strong financial incentive to do this, as landlords generally paid little and expected keepers to provide their own gunpowder and shot. More importantly, however, was the way in which keepers were suspected of disposing of their poached game; this was through sale on the black market.

Black market trade in game was flourishing in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its success stemmed directly from the fact that game laws, whilst forbidding the unqualified to hunt game, also forbade them to purchase or sell it in any way. Yet wealthy, non-landowning city and town dwellers felt this was extremely unreasonable. To have

¹P B Munsche et seq

game served at their dinner table they were perfectly prepared to procure it illegally. Country landowners, meanwhile, saw this illegal trade as a serious danger both to their rights and their game and took every step to bring it to a halt.

In Wiltshire, game preservers sought solutions amongst the cottagers and villagers who lived adjacent to their game reserves. Informers were encouraged by rewards and as an alternative to punishment for poachers who were caught. As Douglas Hay encountered on Cannock Chase, village communities were extremely hostile towards informers, making them suffer worse punishment than perhaps a fine or period of imprisonment would have been.

In addition to encouraging informers, Wiltshire landowners adopted other methods to counter poaching, namely the formation amongst their ranks of game associations. For example, 'The Society of Noblemen and Gentlemen for the Preservation of Game'. The deliberate intention of such organisations was to stop the black market trade and to prosecute poachers. Wiltshire was affected by several such organisations in the second half of the eighteenth century and their existence in itself, Munsche regards as significant. However, in fulfilling their function, they were largely ineffectual, making few prosecutions.

Almost all prosecutions were carried out by Justices of the Peace, who tried poachers summarily in their own homes, usually neglecting to keep records. In Wiltshire, however, some records have survived which reveal some important facts. Of those convictions which are recorded, over sixty per cent were identified as labourers and, as such, must have been earning less than two shillings a day. Yet the majority were able to pay fines usually of not less than five pounds and sometimes twenty pounds. This astonishing fact Munsche again attributes to the black market in game which, he suggests, must have been their alternative source of income.

As with Cannock Chase, a theme is obviously emerging from the Wiltshire records and it is one of poaching as a commercial enterprise, to supply the black market trade, widely practised in major towns and cities. However, Munsche's explanation of poaching is not quite this simple. Behind the evidence for commercialised poaching, he argues the case that, often, what resulted in commercial interest may have begun with a simple economic need; for example, the case of the game-keepers. Additionally, general records for Wiltshire of the period reveal several factors which point towards the acute distress of labourers. For instance, mechanisation of industry in the seventeen eighties led to a rapid decline in the cottage industry, by which labourers often supplemented their income. There are also records which indicate rampant inflation. Grain prices apparently doubled, accompanied by a sharp increase in rents but wages at the same time were kept very low.

The explanation of poaching as a crime which P B Munsche suggests is thus two-fold. Mainly, that it was a commercial enterprise supplying the illegal trade in game but also that it was an economic phenomenon stimulated by poverty and distress.

The third and final study of poaching, by E P Thompson, adopts a very different approach from either of the studies above. His primary intention was not directly to explain poaching as a crime but more to examine all the implications surrounding the passage of the Black Act. Consequently, a substantial part of his study is concerned with the poaching which gave rise to the Act; and this in itself strongly asserts an explanation of the crime.

The Black Act was enacted in the four weeks of May 1723 and it created fifty new capital offences for the Statute Book.¹ Originally, the Act deemed it a capital offence for anyone armed with swords, fire-arms or other offensive weapons and having their faces blacked, to be found in any forest, chase, park or enclosed ground wherein deer were kept; or any common, warren, high road, heath or down. Soon after the Act was passed, it was modified to read that simply arming or blacking might constitute, in themselves, capital offences. Parliament obviously took the Act very seriously; the House was hardly divided in debate during its reading and this seriousness was the factor which Thompson found so interesting and which prompted his study. He began investigations chiefly to discover what initially occasioned the Act and why Parliament treated it with such gravity; investigations which led, first of all, to the forests of Windsor and Hampshire.

Windsor forest, at the time of the Act, was an area of approximately one hundred thousand acres, comprising partly parkland or enclosed arable and meadow. For centuries, the forest had been the scene of many property claims on the part of its inhabitants and owners. The local gentry and nobility were interested in establishing such things as deer parks and fish ponds; manorial tenants laid claims to grazing rights and squatters merely wanted land on which to build a cottage home.

In order to regulate property rights and property claims, a substantial forest law had evolved, administered by special officers and two courts to try offenders. However, during the reign of Queen Anne, the forest laws had apparently fallen into disuse and forest conditions, such as fences, had fallen into disrepair. When George I ascended to the throne, the situation was considered to be serious. Records have survived which contain reports of common people shooting deer which escaped from the royal park; abusing the common rights for sheep; felling and carrying off woods, coppices and hedgerows; even building very high fences in order to force deer out of deer parks and into areas where they became easy spoil for hunters.

During George I's reign, serious attempts were made to tighten up

¹ E P Thompson et seq

forest laws and their administration, while the forests themselves were restocked with red deer. Initial results of this action could be seen in a sharp increase in the numbers of presentments for such things as turf cutting, unlicensed cottages, unlawful sheep-grazing, building fences too high, keeping dogs and poaching. The forest officialdom were essentially furthering claims for the priority of the deer's economy over that of the forest inhabitants and in doing so were furthering their own interests.

The reaction of the forest inhabitants to the tighter laws was very strong. In opposition, they wished to continue enforcing the definition of rights to which they had grown accustomed; and the direct result of this was armed conflict between the country people and the forest officialdom from 1717 to 1723, when the Black Act was introduced. Foresters hunted deer regularly and openly but were usually disguised or blacked in order to avoid being recognised by keepers. If game-keepers challenged poachers, violent encounters often occurred in which men were assaulted and, on one occasion, even killed. The poachers were in open defiance of forest law.

Thompson discovered many records of violent gangs of deer poachers and the explanation of their activities, supported by other evidence, leads directly to conclusions of a complicated conflict of property rights. Thompson states that 'blacking arose in response to the attempted reactivation of a relaxed forest authority The resort of deer poachers to more highly organised force may be seen as retributive in character and concerned less with venison as such than with deer as symbols (and as agents) of an authority which threatened their economy, their crops and their customary agrarian rights'.

E P Thompson's explanation lends support to that of Douglas Hay and these, together with the explanations forwarded by P B Munsche, provided a total of three major explanations of poaching as a crime, which have been advanced to date. In brief, they are as follows:

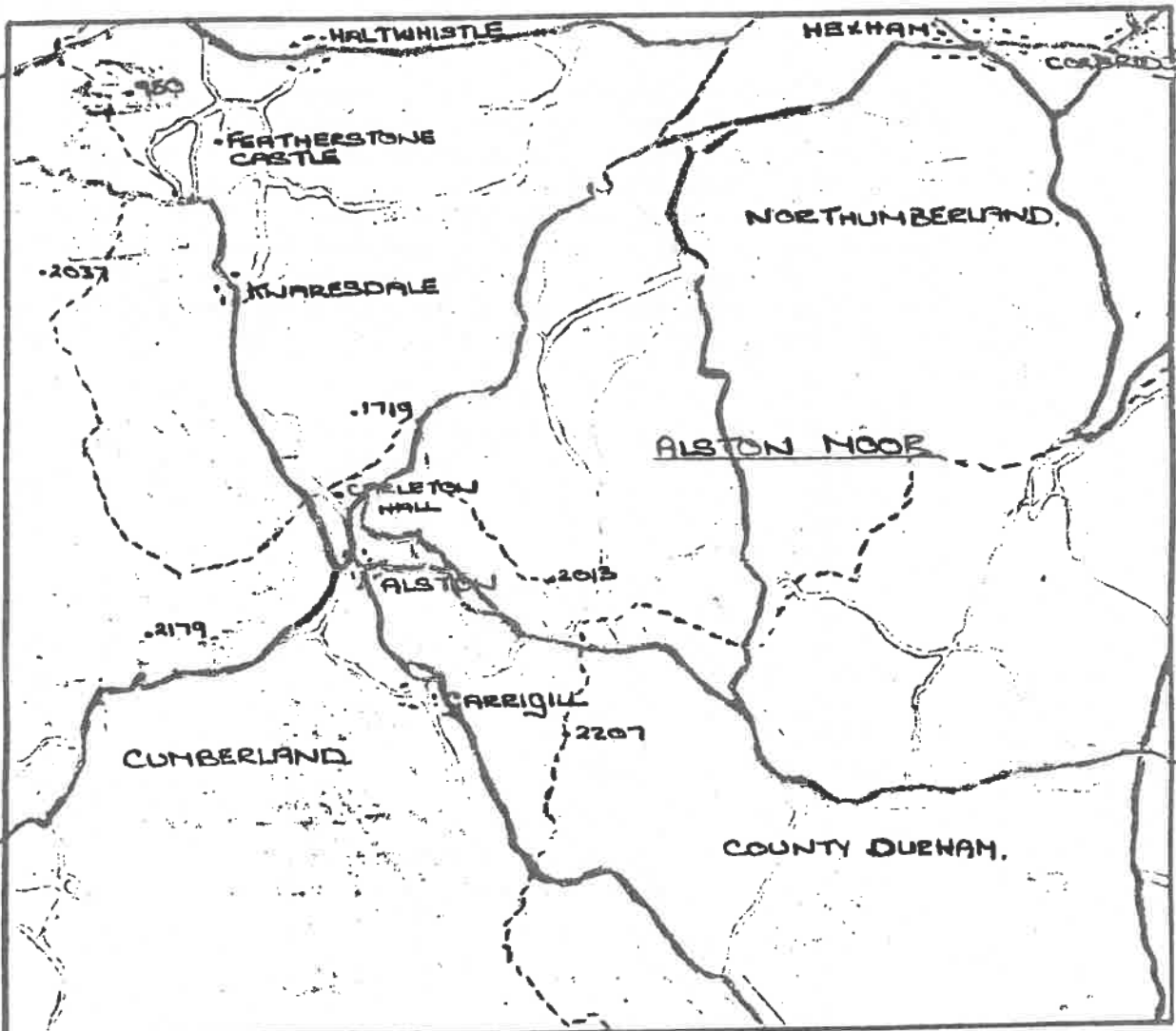
- (i) A class conflict of vested property interests.
- (ii) A commercial enterprise.
- (iii) An economic phenomenon, occasioned by distress.

These three explanations, however, are obviously related, as P B Munsche discovered in his study.

Throughout the rest of this article it is intended to make another study of poaching by examining records of poaching activities

which occurred in the early nineteenth century, on the borders of Northumberland and Cumberland, at Alston Moor.

SKETCH MAP OF ALSTON MOOR.



SCALE = 1 : 250 000 OR ABOUT ONE INCH TO FOUR MILES.

- KEY:
- = A CLASS MAIN ROAD.
 - = B CLASS MAIN ROAD.
 - = MINOR ROAD.
 - = SPOT HEIGHT.
 - = COUNTY BOUNDARY.
 - = SETTLEMENT.
 - = LAND ABOVE 500 FEET.

Chapter Two

ALSTON MOOR: THE EVENTS

Alston Moor is an area of bleak moorland, rising to impressive heights in places and intersected by narrow dales. Its appearance today has changed little from the early nineteenth century, being scattered with small settlements on more sheltered hillsides, with larger settlements, such as the market town of Alston, limited to the valley floors.

During the nineteenth century, the Moor's economy was based upon agriculture and lead mining. The lead mines were the main source of employment for the people of the region, numerous mines being worked on the Moor; and, in the main part, the early decades of the century saw lead mining at the peak of its prosperity.¹ As many as forty companies were active at Alston, the main concerns being the London Lead Company and T W Beaumont, Esquire.²

The majority of mines were operated by a system known as the 'bargain system'.³ This allowed miners sufficient free time for employment in agriculture as well as in the mining of lead. Consequently, most miners leased tiny hill farms, usually consisting of about three acres of meadow and three or four acres of upland pasture. Cattle and sheep were the main produce, bringing a welcome supplement to the family budget. In the flatter, more fertile, dale areas arable farming was more common. Land here was divided into much larger units, generally belonging to the country estates of the wealthy.

By far the largest area of Alston Moor was agriculturally unproductive, except for sheep grazing, but it was still greatly sought after for its one merit, the game population. The game which thrived here was of the smaller variety, usually game birds such as grouse, partridge, pheasant and moor game, and also some hare. Deer had once roamed the moors but by the mid-eighteenth century they were almost extinct.⁴ Gentlemen, qualified to hunt game, owned areas of moorland specifically for that purpose and employed game-keepers to protect their stocks:

In the early nineteenth century the gentry of Alston Moor were not alone in their desire to hunt game. Many unqualified men hunted the moors and their intrusion upon the rights of the landed classes was greatly resented. The poachers themselves have left no known records of their activities but, within the estate papers of the gentry, records have survived which recount the activities of extraordinary bands of poachers, operating on the Moor certainly between 1818 and 1820 and probably beyond that.

¹ J A Reynolds - Alston Moor: the Official Guide, 1972. Published by Alston with Garry Gill Rural District Council, Penrith, 1972. p. 13.

² C J Hunt - The Lead Miners of the Northern Pennines in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Published by Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1970. p.5.

³ C J Hunt op cit, p.34

⁴ W Wallace - Alston Moor: its Pastoral People, its Mines and Miners. Published by Mawson, Swan and Morgan, Newcastle upon Tyne 1890, p.41

The poachers all appear to have been lead miners, mainly resident in the village of Garrigill to the south-east of Alston. Little detail is known of the poachers and their actual activities whilst, on the Moor, the records have been mainly concerned with attempts to stop them but it seems that, almost daily, during the shooting seasons of 1818, 1819 and 1820, large numbers of men sallied forth on to Alston Moor in search of game. Poaching was never carried out by one man alone but usually large numbers were involved, as many as eighteen together on one occasion.

The whole moor seems to have been scoured for game; certainly the immediate vicinity of Garrigill would be well hunted and, some days, the poachers moved as far north as Knaresdale and the moors surrounding Featherstone Castle. Mainly game birds were sought, especially grouse, the methods employed for their capture being shotguns and dogs.

Over the three years in which their activities were recorded the Garrigill men poached with zeal and determination, so much so that landowners seriously feared the destruction of all their game. Strenuous attempts were made to bring an end to their activities and the poachers answered them all with complete defiance, managing to outwit the law at every turn.

The records which furnished this information were letters from the estate papers of the Right Honourable Thomas Wallace, Baron Knaresdale of Featherstone Castle and Carelton Hall; and Mr B I Brandling of Gosforth House.

The Wallace letters¹ were written mainly by Wallace's steward, Mr William Hutton, and other servants; and were addressed to their master when he was absent from the area. The letters themselves are plentiful in number and, in addition to accounts of the poachers' activities, they also provide much background information concerning the day-to-day running and condition of the Wallace estates. They are limited, however, initially because they can be brief and lacking in detail; but mainly in that they were written to report to an absentee landlord, which means that their composition ceased when the master returned.

In contrast, the Brandling letters² were written by a firm of solicitors, Messrs Grave and Blaymire of Penrith in Cumberland, and addressed to Mr Brandling at his home: They are very detailed regarding the poachers but few in number. The main limitations of these letters lie again in their purpose: written by a solicitor assigned to deal with legal action against poachers, they provide no background information regarding the Brandling estates. Indeed, no information of this kind could be traced, with the result that the extent and boundaries of Brandling's property on Alston Moor, for example, are unknown and can only be estimated. Despite all limitations, however, a reasonably clear and interesting picture of what was happening on Alston Moor can be built up.

¹The Wallace Letters - mainly from Mr William Hutton, steward, and part of the Wallace Collection. Filed amongst the Middleton estate papers in the Northumberland Record Office.

²The Brandling Letters - from Messrs Grave and Blaymire, solicitors. Filed amongst the collection of estate papers of the Ridley family of Blagdon Hall, in the Northumberland County Record Office.

The earliest record of the Alston Moor poachers is contained in the Wallace letters; specifically, a letter written by William Hutton and dated September 12, 1818.¹ Of the whole letter, only one paragraph relates to the poachers but its content introduces attitudes and activities prominent at the time.

'The poachers have been very troublesom of late. There has been on Knaresdale, one set of eighteen, another of ten and another of five, all disguised in women's clothes, or their faces blacked, not one of them were known, they shoot almost everyday on Mr Ellison's liberty and the watchers dare not go near them.'

The first point of significance is that although Wallace was used to poachers on his lands, an increase had occurred in the weeks preceding the letter's composition which was more annoying than usual. It is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that in the early weeks of the 1818 hunting season, Alston Moor poaching took on a new dimension which the Wallace and Brandling letters describe - especially since no other records have survived of a date previous to this.

The numbers of men involved in the Knaresdale poaching are also significant in that they are large; so large in fact, even allowing for exaggeration, that they could hardly have intended to hunt game by stealth and, therefore, may have been defiant of capture. Defiance is certainly an appropriate word to attach to their method of disguise. To be disguised was an effective way for a poacher to escape conviction if he were witnessed; yet, still in 1818, the penalty for hunting game whilst disguised, was death.

The emerging picture of the Alston Moor poachers shows often large bands of men hunting on the moor, according to steward Hutton, almost every day, desperate enough to place their lives at risk and forbidding enough to the game-watchers that they 'dare not go near them'.

At the time that this incident occurred, Mr Brandling was also suffering regular reductions in his game stocks.² However, perhaps not hampered by the use of disguise, one of Brandling's game-keepers, Thomas Hetherington, succeeded in identifying several of the poachers.³ They were all lead miners from the village of Garrigill.⁴ Immediately, Grave and Blaymire, solicitors in Penrith, were instructed to prepare a prosecution, laying information and issuing summonses against the culprits.⁵

¹The Wallace letters - NRO number ZM1/S/76/46, letter No 1 Featherstone Castle, September 12, 1818.

²The Brandling letters - NRO number ZR1/39/4, letter No 1 Penrith, September 17, 1818.

³The Brandling letters - Letter No 1, Penrith, September 17, 1818.

⁴The Brandling letters - Letter No 2, Penrith, October 1, 1818.

⁵The Brandling Letters - No 1, Penrith, September 17, 1818.

It was proposed that proceedings should be carried out under the statute of Queen Anne, which meant that a penalty of five pounds could be levied against each man for hunting without a game qualification; plus an added penalty of twenty pounds for using guns without certificates. However, since the accused were all miners, the probability of their being able to meet the fine, either with money or property, was considered to be small, especially since they would not be householders but would live in cottages belonging to the mining company for which they worked.¹

Curiously, Brandling's solicitors were very concerned about the prospects of apprehending the Garrigill poachers. Any approaches made by the local constables, it was felt, would be useless as the poachers were so defiant of the civil powers on Alston Moor, that they would be aware when the constables were in search of them and immediately seek refuge in the lead mines. Grave and Blaymire felt seriously that all attempts would be useless, unless conducted by a large force of men.²

Despite all fears, however, proceedings went ahead and the Garrigill poachers were duly convicted on September 29, 1818, before Major Thomas Brougham, a Penrith magistrate.

None of the poachers answered his summonses or appeared at his conviction. Instead, they were said to have gone out poaching on Mr Brandling's manors.³ On hearing of their conviction, the poachers openly stated that they would shoot the first person who tried to arrest them and, in the meantime, continued to poach game whenever they pleased.⁴

The difficulties in apprehending such men became clear to the whole community of Alston and no-one would agree to be sworn in as a special constable, for fear of the consequences. Brandling's solicitors encountered the same apprehension even in the town of Penrith, until one James Anderson came forward with an offer of help. After being sworn in, Anderson set off for Garrigill where he successfully arrested two of the convicted men, Thomas and Joseph Vipond. However, these two were immediately released when Anderson found himself confronted by four more poachers whom he could not identify and who threatened him with bodily harm if he did not release his prisoners. Naturally, Anderson hurriedly withdrew from the scene and carried back to Alston no poachers but, instead, their threats of murder and destruction if anyone attempted arrest.⁵

For the law enforcing bodies, the situation was completely out of hand, with the result that a great deal of apprehension and confusion was present in the decision about how next to proceed. Since all the poachers were lead miners, it was suggested initially that their

¹The Brandling Letters - No 1, Penrith, September 17, 1818.

²The Brandling letters - No 1, Penrith, September 17, 1818.

³The Brandling Letters - letter No 4, addressed to the Right Honourable Earl of Lonsdale, KG, from Major Thomas Brougham, October 10, 1818.

⁴The Brandling letters - No 2, Penrith, October 1, 1818.

⁵The Brandling letters - A certificate of a special constable's failure to apprehend, contained in letter No 4, October 10, 1818.

employers should be approached for assistance. All the men convicted were in the employ of the London Lead Company who might, on request, threaten to terminate employment if the poachers did not immediately surrender themselves to the authorities.¹ Whether or not Mr Brandling followed up this course of action is unknown: if he did, it was certainly an unprofitable exercise, as Mr Wallace's steward discovered in 1820 when considering similar action.

'I am told that applying to the company will be of no use and that some of the poachers are employed to shoot game for them.'²

Grace and Blaymire were still in favour of raising a large force of special constables in order to overcome the poachers. Estimations reached a figure of at least forty or fifty men in order to be effective.³ The employment of a Bow Street officer, who would live incognito in the village of Garrigill and investigate a means by which to assist the constables, was also considered.⁴ Yet, neither proposal was actually adopted by Brandling, apparently because of the expense involved - especially in the case of the special constables, who would have been brought in from another area. Application was made to the London Tax Office for financial assistance in the affair but the request was denied.⁵

The only course of action proposed and actually employed to deal with this incredible situation, was to seek the services of the military. Major Brougham, the Penrith magistrate, personally sought the assistance of the Earl of Lonsdale,⁶ who showed great concern in the matter and agreed to do what he could in order that the poachers 'should be made a proper example of'.⁷ Accordingly, a group of Hussars were stationed at Alston in January 1819 and it was hoped that the poachers would very soon be arrested.

Unhappily for Mr Brandling, within a month the Hussars had returned to their headquarters in Carlisle, without having arrested one single poacher. Every attempt to capture the poachers was thwarted by their seeking refuge in the lead mines. An element of surprise would have considerably aided the Hussars but this was impossible to achieve because of the attitude of the Alston Moor community. Whether in support of the poachers or in objection to the presence of the army, (an attitude of frequent occurrence), many worked

¹The Brandling letters - No 2, Penrith, October 1, 1818.

²The Wallace letters - NRO number ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 41. Featherstone Castle, September 23, 1820.

³The Brandling letters - No 3, Penrith, October 11, 1818.

⁴The Brandling letters - No 5, Penrith, November 13, 1818.

⁵The Brandling letters - No 6, A copy of a letter addressed to E Grave, esquire, clerk to commissioners, from the office for Taxes, London.

⁶The Brandling letters - No 3, Penrith, October 11, 1818.

⁷The Brandling letters - No 5, Penrith, November 13, 1818.

together to ensure that the poachers knew of any danger almost before the Hussars stepped on to Alston Moor.¹

When the Hussars returned to Carlisle, however, the affairs on the Moor were not the same as before their arrival and their stay had not been entirely fruitless. The poachers, if not arrested, were certainly alarmed by the presence of the army because they forwarded a petition to Mr Brandling, via his gamekeepers. The petition begged that he might pardon them of their offences in return for an assurance of future good behaviour. If Mr Brandling did not agree, it was rumoured in Alston that the poachers intended to leave the area.²

The petition was initially rejected by Mr Brandling, who would agree to no terms other than an unconditional surrender.³ However, he was finally obliged to concede or face the destruction of all his game, as arresting the poachers was impossible. The terms eventually agreed were a free pardon in return for the surrender of all guns and an assurance of no further destruction of game on Brandling's manors.⁴ The poachers gladly agreed to the terms, purchasing old, dilapidated guns to surrender⁵ and foregoing their activities on Brandling's manors in favour of those belonging to Mr Wallace.⁶

In February of 1819, the Brandling letters cease but the activities of the Garrigill poachers apparently do not. In the season of 1820 their exploits are again recorded,⁷ on Mr Wallace's property. Groups of poachers regularly raided the moors yet the forces of law and order were still unable to arrest and prosecute them. Attempts were made to serve summonses on some of the poachers in Garrigill but none were successful. One constable was driven from the village when about forty poachers assembled in front of him.⁸

Quite incredibly, many of the poachers active in 1820 were the same men who had vexed Mr Brandling in the 1818 - 1819 season⁹ and their attitude was equally desperate and defiant. One report survives of the attempt of a large body of men (it is suggested upwards of one hundred but this is likely to be exaggerated) to arrest twelve poachers. The twelve placed themselves back to back and pointed their guns at their assailants, daring that if any man should try to arrest

¹The Brandling letters - No 11 addressed to Messrs Grave and Blaymire from a Robert Hodgson, criticising the mismanagement of the poaching affair. Alston, January 29, 1819; the Wallace letters, ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 32, September 7, 1820.

²The Brandling letters - No 10, Penrith, January 27, 1819.

³The Wallace letters - NRO number ZM1/5/76/47, letter No 8, Featherstone Castle, February 6, 1819.

⁴The Wallace letters - NRO number ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 32, Carelton Hall, September 7, 1820.

⁵W Wallace op cit p.55

⁶The Brandling letters - No 8, Penrith, December 27, 1818.

⁷The Wallace letters - ZM1/S/76/48 numbers 1-65.

⁸The Wallace letters - ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 43, Featherstone Castle September 25, 1820.

⁹The Wallace letters - ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 35, Featherstone Castle, September 15, 1820.

them, he would be shot dead. Consequently, the poachers were allowed to escape.¹

A possible solution to the problem was discovered by Wallace's game-keeper. On a few occasions, he and his men had succeeded in saving some game by either driving poachers from the moors or by anticipating their route and raising the game before the poachers could reach it. However, the use of these methods had to be discontinued when few men would agree to help, as they said they would be afraid to go into Alston afterwards.²

Legal action seemed to be useless as it could not properly be implemented but it may have eventually succeeded in alarming the poachers who petitioned Mr Wallace in the same way as they had Mr Brandling, in November of 1820.³ Unfortunately, the outcome of the petition is unknown as all records cease in November and indeed the final outcome of the whole affair is not recorded. However, finding a solution is not the purpose of this study; rather, an explanation of the extraordinary events which occupied the people of Alston Moor, for at least three years, must be attempted.

Table of the Names of the Garrigill Poachers Prosecuted
by Mr B I Brandling with the Total of Penalties Facing
them on Capture

<u>Name</u>	<u>Penalties</u>
Richard Heatherington	8
William Dobson	7
Henry Dobson	8
Thomas Winskell	12
William Hindham	3
John Archer	7
Joseph Spark	10
Thomas Spark	12
John Stout	1
Joseph Tomlinson	14
Thomas Vipond	7
Joseph Vipond	7
Joseph Richardson	<u>1</u>
Total number	97

The above table is taken from the Brandling Letters, number 9, dated December 30, 1818.

¹The Wallace letters - ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 35, Featherstone Castle, September 15, 1820.

²The Wallace letters - ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 32, Carelton Hall, September 7, 1820, and letter No 35, Featherstone Castle, September 15, 1820.

³The Wallace letters - ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 61, Featherstone Castle, November 19, 1820.

Chapter Three

ALSTON MOOR: THE REASONS

Of the many letters, from both the Wallace and Brandling collections, which describe the activities of the Alston Moor poachers, none contain any direct reference or statement which might explain the extraordinary circumstances. However, many questions arise out of the information they contain which point out directions for further enquiry.

First, if the assumption is correct that poaching on the scale described began in 1818, what caused the sudden increase at that time? Possibly linked with this question, there arises another: Is it significant that the poachers were lead miners? Perhaps there may have been some distinctive factor within the lead mining industry during these particular years which could account for this. A third question is posed by the frequency of the game raids. According to the records, poachers hunted Alston Moor almost every day, therefore what was the fate of their spoils? It seems unlikely that it was for their consumption alone. Finally, why are the poachers so defiant? They place their employment, freedom and even lives at risk, apparently for the sake of a bag of game, but it seems feasible that there was something much more at stake.

Each question demands enquiry into the background history of nineteenth century Alston Moor. Both of the first two questions demand a close examination of the state of the lead mining industry at the time. Possibly, the significance of all the poachers being employed as lead miners may be mere coincidence, since the lead mines were almost the only source of employment on Alston Moor; but, even so, what stirred them into activity in 1818?

According to general histories of Alston Moor and related Pennine districts, the early decades of the nineteenth century saw lead mining at the height of its prosperity. More lead mines were in operation than at any other period. However, more detailed histories give a different account. In fact, the years of the poachers coincide with an acute depression in the lead trade. The market price for lead began to fall towards the end of the Napoleonic wars, tumbling disastrously in the period 1814 to 1817.¹ In Alston, the fall in market price was probably felt keenly through a parallel drop in wages.

Lead miners were usually paid on a piece work basis, being paid according to the number of bings of ore (a bing was equivalent to eight hundredweight of lead ore) or tons of lead they mined, or the number of fathoms driven in the mine shaft. Records were kept of the progress of each individual miner and he was paid accordingly at annual

¹C J Hunt op cit p.82

or biennial 'pays'. Periodically, between pay days, each miner received a substantial allowance which was later deducted from his final wages.¹

During the slump, the mining company belonging to T W Beaumont, Esquire, reduced the top price which they paid for a bing of ore to thirty shillings, the same price they had paid in 1770. Similarly, the amount of subsistence money paid per month was cut from thirty shillings to twenty shillings and subsidised supplies of rye were cut.² The effect on the miners and their families was very hard. In Weardale, a lead mining area to the south-east of Alston Moor, in County Durham, and largely mined by Beaumont's mining company, the miners were driven by extreme poverty to call a strike in 1818.³ In order to explain the reasons for their action, the Weardale miners forwarded a petition to Mr Martin Hodgson, Esquire, the agent for T W Beaumont.

'The humble petition of the miners in Weardale.'

'... sheweth that your petitioners are suffering and have long suffered the greatest distress owing to the pressure of the times and the low price being given for ore Our spirits are gone, numbers of us nearly without food and raiment, suffering extreme poverty.'⁴

The petition failed, however, and the miners returned to work after striking for two weeks. Beaumont's own attitude towards the miners offered no hope.

'I told them, under the present depressed state of the lead trade, they could not be doing their employers a greater service than desisting to raise ore for three months.'⁵

On Alston Moor, the economic condition of the lead miners would undoubtedly be similar to that in Weardale. Smallholdings would have helped the situation but they were usually not enough by which to live and therefore, throughout the poaching years, the miners were likely to be in economic distress.⁶ In consequence, it is very probable that the miners turned to the wildlife population of the moors in order to supplement their diets. Indeed it is very interesting that the month of the Weardale strike

¹ C J Hunt op cit p.58

² Ibid p.82

³ The Newcastle Chronicle, October 10, 1818.

⁴ Petition from the Weardale Miners, September 1818, in C J Hunt op cit p.260

⁵ Reply of T W Beaumont to the Weardale strikers, in C J Hunt, p.127

⁶ C J Hunt op cit p.4

coincides with the apparent upsurge in poaching on Alston Moor.

The events described above bear certain similarities to evidence encountered by P B Munsche in his study of Wiltshire.¹ In Wiltshire inflation of rents and prices, coupled with wage fixing, occasioned economic distress amongst the county's poorer inhabitants and from this factor, Munsche drew conclusions which led him to explain poaching as an economic phenomenon, occasioned by distress. It seems highly probable that poaching on Alston Moor can partly be explained in the same way.

Yet, what of the quantities of game killed? Gangs of poachers, sometimes eighteen in number, hunted game on the manors of Alston Moor; at times, almost every day. Whatever their economic distress, they must surely have been destroying more game than they could reasonably consume. The possibility that hunting out of distress led to hunting for monetary profit seems likely here but, if that were the case, a substantial market for the game would be needed.

The sketch map shows that Alston Moor is surrounded by the five small towns of Alston, Penrith, Haltwhistle, Hexham and Corbridge. All five could have had a small market for game but more probable markets would have been in the three cities of Carlisle, Newcastle and Durham, each of which is within forty miles of Alston Moor - Carlisle being especially close. Markets for game were thus available and reasonably near; however, communications at this date were bad.

The map also shows the route of present day roads through Alston Moor; they follow roughly the routes of roads in existence in the nineteenth century, which were reasonably plentiful. Yet, at the time of the Alston Moor poachers, the roads were in a very bad condition. In the decade between 1820 and 1830, the lead mining companies spent large amounts of money on improvements² but, in 1823, little had been achieved. McAdam, in a report to the Greenwich Hospital written in that year, said of the roads through Alston Moor, that they were

'altogether the worst that have yet come to my knowledge they are so washed out as to present the appearance of a bed of rocks than an artificial road.'³

The easiest and safest form of transport was by pack horse.

Poaching as a profitable, commercial enterprise on Alston Moor was by no means impossible. Confirmation that poaching for gain was indeed practised, was discovered quite by chance in a book written in 1890⁴ some seventy years after the Wallace and Brandling letters were compiled. The author writes:

¹ P B Munsche op cit

² C J Hunt op cit, p.2

³ McAdam report to the Greenwich Hospital, in C J Hunt op cit. p.2

⁴ W Wallace op cit p.55

'Since I can recollect, very large quantities of grouse were brought, during the season, to the Fox Inn, in Garrigill and sold to the dealers on Saturday evenings, notwithstanding game, before 1832, was not unlawfully saleable. The law was evidently evaded or not enforced, for the dealers had no difficulty in disposing of the game in large towns.'

One man's opinion or account is undoubtedly very shaky evidence on which to base an argument and, alone, it could not stand. Yet, coupled with evidence for the regularity of poaching and, therefore, the quantities of game taken and the reasonably close proximity of Alston Moor to prospective markets, it seems very likely that commercial enterprise is also partly involved in the explanation of poaching on the Moor.

Similarities can again be seen between P B Munsche's study of Wiltshire and Alston, in that the explanations of poaching as an economic phenomenon and a commercial enterprise are both present and both, probably, linked. On Alston Moor, depression in the lead trade may have caused an increase in poaching for food which, in turn, led to its practice for monetary gain. However, these factors alone are not sufficient to explain the situation on Alston Moor.

One question remains unanswered: Why were the poachers so defiant, placing themselves so much at risk for the sake of game? Neither economic distress nor commercial enterprise are likely explanations of their often dangerously challenging behaviour. It would not have been wise to publicise an involvement in the commercial game trade: until 1832, any kind of trade in game was illegal and greatly resented by those qualified to shoot game. They would have been delighted to discover a distribution network and prevent its further continuance; a network in which others than poachers would be involved.

Economic distress may seem a more likely reason for their behaviour, which could have been an attempt to force both recognition of their poverty and action to end it. Yet, Mr Wallace and Mr Brandling were not the cause of their poverty. The mining companies would have been a more obvious target.

The rebelliousness of blacking¹ intimidating officers of the law² and cheating, in their settlement with Mr Brandling,³ is somewhat reminiscent of the men of Cannock Chase in Staffordshire who marched in defiance past their landlord's home, en route to his rabbit warrens and their copious population⁴. On Cannock Chase, such

¹The Wallace letters - NRO number ZM1/S/76/48, letter No 1, Featherstone Castle, September 1818.

²Copy of a certificate of failure to apprehend - in the Brandling letters, No 4, Penrith, October 10, 1818.

³W Wallace op cit p.55

⁴Douglas Hay op cit p.229

behaviour constituted a direct protest against the landlord's extension of his rights; on Alston Moor, it seems certain that a protest was also involved.

The background history of nineteenth century Alston Moor contains one factor which may have caused such a protest; division and enclosure of the commons. A private Enclosure Act was passed on Alston Moor in 1803.¹ The Enclosure Movement as a whole has a very stormy history, having prompted much hardship and resultant insubordination amongst the poorer classes who, used for centuries to one set of rules and common rights regarding the countryside, suddenly found everything altered by the rich and powerful, usually against their interests. Possibly this situation occurred on Alston Moor when the full effects of the Enclosure Act, passed in 1803, may have been felt.

The effects of enclosure on agriculture do not appear to have been adverse. The Act itself, although the result of pressure from the greater landlords, in their desire to improve their estates, and not wishes of the smallholders, does not seem to have been entirely contrary to smallholders' interests.

The Act stipulated that, in each parish, land 'best situated and most capable of cultivation and improvement' was to be set out and allocated to those already possessing rights on common, in proportion to the amount of land they owned². Additionally, certain parts of the commons were to be left undivided, for fuel and grazing rights of inhabitants.³ Apparently, the lead miners did not have all their rights wrenched from them. Indeed the overall effect of enclosure on agriculture was an improvement in farming efficiency.⁴

The effects of enclosure on the condition of individual smallholders, however, is a subject which has occasioned some argument. In 1811, the London Lead Company's chief agent wrote of Alston Moor

'the division of the commons has brought the country into a state of the most abject poverty.'

but C J Hunt could find little other evidence or contemporary opinion to support this.

Due to enclosure, the economy of the poorer inhabitants may have suffered two losses occasioned, first, by the expense of the operation and, secondly, by the loss of land encroached upon before 1803. All land allotments had to be fenced or enclosed within a year of the Act's enforcement, the operation to be financed by the individual involved.⁵

¹George III Regis - 'An Act for Dividing, allotting and inclosing and otherwise improving several commons, moors or wastes, within the manor of Alston, otherwise Alston Moor and Garrigill, within the Parish of Alston and County of Cumberland.', June 11, 1803.

²The 1803 Enclosure Act - Section No I

³The 1803 Enclosure Act - Section LXII

⁴C J Hunt op cit pp 153 and 154

⁵The 1803 Enclosure Act - Section No XXIV

This expense, it is suggested, caused some hardship to the poorer inhabitants.¹ Secondly, the Act stipulated that if land had been encroached upon in the past, it was to be regarded as the encroacher's property, if he had held it for thirty years without legal challenge.² Many objections to smallholders' encroachments were raised at the time, however, and many probably suffered because of this. Certainly, much resentment would be occasioned.

It is possible that the effects of enclosure on poorer smallholders created some hardship, which would doubtless be greatly resented and protested against, since it had been occasioned by the powerful, extending their rights. More significantly, great resentment would be stimulated by the loss of encroachments, possibly leading to protest by poaching, although the effect of their loss would probably have been felt before 1818.

A still more important result of enclosure, was its effect on the enforcement of game laws on Alston Moor. During the eighteenth century, game laws were not rigidly enforced on the Moor but the situation changed with enclosure. In the Act itself, the Greenwich Hospital, largest landowners on Alston Moor, stipulated that much of their newly enclosed land should be sold at public auction.³ It is feasible that men like B I Brandling became involved in the area by purchasing such plots of land, perhaps specifically for sport. (To have known something of the background to Mr Brandling's estate would have helped in making this point clear.) If such was the case, Mr Brandling would, understandably, attempt to enforce the game laws on his property but to do so would be to deprive the Alston Moor folk of activities to which they had been used all their lives. Equally understandably, the people would be unlikely to submit readily. Why should they end tradition at the wish of a man from the Newcastle district?

It is reasonable to argue that the answer to the defiance of the Alston poachers, is a conflict of property rights: the explanation of W Wallace, writing in 1890, provides collaboration for this argument.

'Certain it is that some sixty or seventy years ago, the inhabitants of Garrigill considered the claims of the landlords of the manor to the grouse, as an unjust interference with their rights.⁴

The conflict may have been intensified by the effects of enclosure on encroachments but would largely be generated by enclosure and the resultant, stricter, game law enforcement.

The entire evidence, although often thin and occasionally based on one man's opinion, points to a very complex explanation of the

¹ C J Hunt op cit p.155

² W Wallace op cit p.56

³ The 1803 Enclosure Act - Section No XX

⁴ W Wallace op cit p.55

singular poaching seen on Alston Moor between 1818 and 1820. Factors from all the major explanations discussed in chapter one are certainly involved.

Enclosure was the probable instigator of the whole affair, bringing some hardship to the population and depriving them of the rights and traditions to which they had been used. The acute distress of the lead trade slump would have intensified the situation, especially in the years of the poaching records. Meanwhile, the poachers discovered how profitable their activities could be, occasioning a growth of substantial commercial enterprise in game. The explanation is, therefore, an elaborate combination of economic distress, commercial enterprise and class conflict based upon vested property interests.

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UNIONISATION AND THE BUILDING TRADES: NORTH EAST ENGLAND 1875-1894

For most unions a critical period existed in the years following their formation as they fought to establish a role and an identity. Their financial viability and membership were closely linked and resources often sufficiently modest as to circumscribe union activities, even if they had sought otherwise. Thus for a union involved in the building industry with its susceptibility to violent fluctuations and prolonged periods of inactivity, the prospect must have often appeared bleak. Thus data recently obtained¹ on the activities of the Associated Carpenters and Joiners' branches on Tyneside² may offer interesting insights into the years immediately preceding the era of 'New Unionism' when the building industry completed a full cycle, moving from its Tyneside peak in 1875 to a trough in 1879 and then to an upturn in the late 1880s, eventually culminating in a further peak in 1898.³ Three points are considered. First, how did the size of the membership vary during the course of the building cycle? Second, were the wage levels prevalent amongst Tyneside carpenters on a par with comparable industrial centres, and finally, were the wage levels on Tyneside influenced by union strength as reflected in membership numbers?

Union membership amongst the carpenters and joiners of north-east England did not display an unequivocal relationship to the volume of building activity in the Tyneside region. That is to say the fluctuations in

¹The documentary data employed were the records of the Associated Carpenters and Joiners of Scotland, 1862-1910, in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, and the Minute Books and Accounts held by the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Head Office, Edinburgh. The Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, provided further material from their MSS 78 Collection.

²The branches in question were Newcastle, Hexham, Hebburn, Walker, Jarrow and South Shields. Other data is available for Sunderland, Middlesbrough and Morpeth, though these are excluded from this study.

³The series for Tyneside building are drawn from J P Lewis, Building Cycles and Britain's Growth (London 1965), Appendix 4. The index compiled by A G Kenwood, 'Residential Building Activity in North-Eastern England, 1853-1913', Manchester School 1963, combines Teesside and Tyneside data as was therefore adjudged less suitable for present purposes.

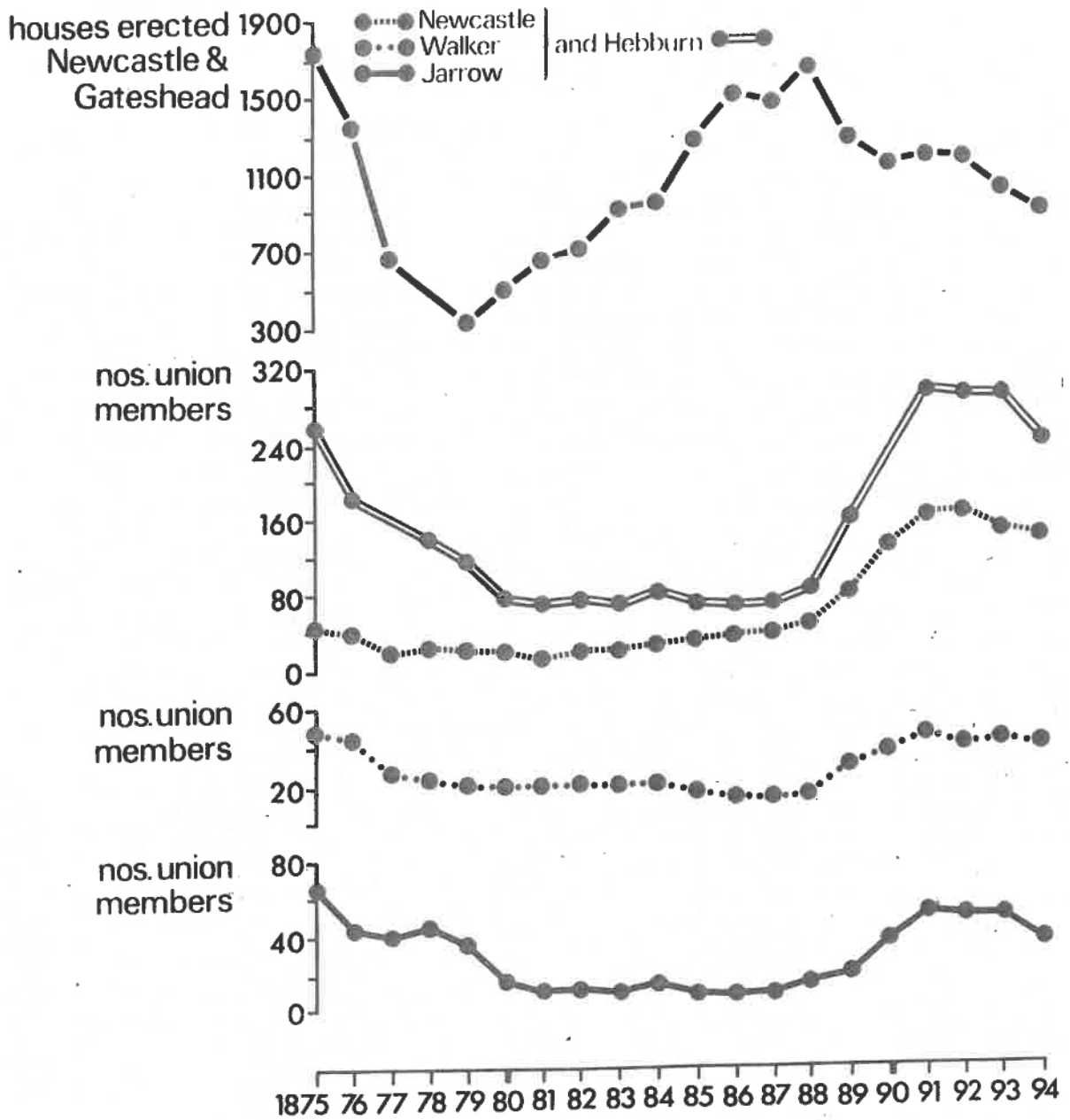


Fig.1 Trends in Union Membership and Housebuilding 1875-1894

the paid-up membership did not always correspond to the fluctuations in housebuilding. The contraction in the membership numbers of the Newcastle, Jarrow and Walker-on-Tyne branches (see fig 1) as well as those of Hexham and Hebburn coincided with the downturn in the building cycle which occurred in 1876 as a result of excessive speculative building and increasingly expensive credit terms. The severity of the ensuing depression in which after four successive years of rapidly declining building the industry was operating at only 30% of its 1875 level, was matched by a similar crisis in union affairs. Membership figures fell dramatically. For example, the 65 paid-up Jarrow members of 1875 had been reduced to 17 in 1880 and to only 9 in 1886, and the Walker branch which had boasted 47 registered members in 1875 suffered similarly, being thinned down to 18 members in 1880 and a mere 13 in each of the years 1886-88. The Newcastle branch, too, had lost over 70% of its members during the same period. Perhaps predictably, it was the apprentice section of the membership which suffered most acutely in the building trade recession. Compared to the master craftsmen whose entries in the roll-book declined during the 1880s by 11.6% on their average numbers of the 1870s, apprentice members of the Carpenters' and Joiners' Union fell by 25.4%. Their position within the union was correspondingly weakened as a consequence, for they formed only 20.8% of the total membership at the end of the 1880s, fully 3% below their average representation during the 1870s, and a position which was only reversed once the more buoyant conditions of the 1890s brought a renewed wave of prosperity and union recruitment.

Whereas in the peak of 1875 and its immediate aftermath union membership was closely synchronised with housebuilding activity, the building recovery which got under way slowly but progressively in the 1880s was not matched by a resumption of recruitment to the Carpenters' and Joiners' Union. Indeed for fifteen years following the spectacular rise and fall of housebuilding on Tyneside, that is from the nadir of 1879 to the upturn of 1895, union membership bore little relation to the trends in building employment opportunities. In fact, throughout the 1880s the level of union membership remained stubbornly static in all the Tyneside branches, no doubt in part affected by problems in the shipyards where a number of carpenters sought work. It was only in 1888-91 that union numbers rallied, though again this ran counter to the trend of housebuilding where a short-lived recession was in progress and which eventually had some effect in stabilising the membership in the early 1890s. Only with the pronounced cyclical upswing in housebuilding after 1895 did union recruitment resume its upward path. No doubt the resurgence of recruitment to the Carpenters' Union during 1888-91 and after 1895 was in part a reflection of the renewed interest in unions following the more spectacular strike successes of the dockers and match-girls and which heralded a period of growth amongst unskilled unions and of consolidation amongst longer established craft unions. But the central point remains that unionisation amongst carpenters and joiners was only effective during periods of substantial and sustained building activity, as in the mid-1870s and after 1895, and that in intervening years the state of the shipyard order books might

well militate against what would otherwise be favourable conditions for recruitment, as in the years 1885-88 on Tyneside. Two further pointers worth noting. First, the absolute level of Tyneside woodworkers' wages did not compare unfavourably with other parts of the country. Roughly on a par with those rates operating in Manchester, Liverpool and other major towns,¹ they were, however consistently $\frac{1}{2}$ d-1d per hour above the prevailing rates on Clydeside. While Glasgow joiners in 1875 were able to obtain the $8\frac{1}{2}$ d per hour which was common on Tyneside in the mid-1870s peak years of housebuilding, during the ensuing contraction they suffered more severe wage reductions, the summer rate of $6\frac{1}{2}$ d in 1879 being fully $1\frac{1}{2}$ d below the hourly wage in Newcastle. Furthermore, the hourly rate during the years 1883-88 was unchanged in both cities, though in Glasgow it was $7\frac{1}{2}$ d compared to 8d in Newcastle.

Finally, the relationship between the size of the union membership and the course of wage rate changes is of interest. In fact the changing wage level in the Newcastle and Walker branches of the union bore little relation to the trend of the membership numbers. For example, the membership numbers in Walker on Tyne in the four years 1879-82 were respectively 20, 18, 19 and 20, but in the summer of each year joiners could obtain employment at 7d, $7\frac{1}{4}$ d, $7\frac{3}{4}$ d and $8\frac{1}{4}$ d per hour, increases which were hardly commensurate with their almost static bargaining position. Simultaneously, in Newcastle declining wage rates in 1879 and 1881 were registered with virtually stable membership numbers. In the rapidly expanding recruitment years of 1888-91 Newcastle wages were increased only in 1891, and then by a meagre $\frac{1}{2}$ d per hour. Nor was there a change in the hours worked; throughout Tyneside a fifty hour week had been operative since the early 1870s. Thus it would appear that the employers' position was the major determinant of carpenters' wages in the late-Victorian period, and that the ability or inclination of the union to force changes in working conditions, terms and wages was not actively prosecuted at this stage. In fact, union payments for strike purposes represented only 17.5% of total union disbursements between 1862 and 1894, and so in the changing climate of social and political thought during the 1880s, this segment of the unionised labour market adhered very strictly to the functions traditionally ascribed to new model unions.

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¹ A L Bowley, 'The Statistics of Wages in the United Kingdom during the last Hundred Years - Wages in the Building Trades, English Towns', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 63, 1900.

BOOK REVIEWS

Essays in Tyneside Labour History edited for the North East Group for the Study of Labour History by Norman McCord. Published by the Department of Humanities, Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic, 1977, pp iv + 197, £2.25.

These nine essays deal with aspects of the social history of Tyneside mainly in the nineteenth century. After an all-too-short introduction by Norman McCord (it would have been rewarding to see some of his comments on the nature of labour history expanded), the collection begins with D J Rowe's 'The Population of Nineteenth Century Tyneside'. His discussion provides the demographic background to many of the themes developed by the other essayists. In his second contribution to the volume, 'Tyneside Chartism', D J Rowe draws on another of his specialisms to produce a balanced survey of that great radical movement. It usefully adds to the growing number of local histories of Chartism. The remaining essays tend to concentrate on the 1850-1914 period. John Smith uses a wide range of sources to illuminate the problems of 'Public Health on Tyneside 1850-80' and complements R Grace's essay, 'Tyneside Housing in the Nineteenth Century'. In Newcastle the Liberal town council had little inclination to answer calls for improvements to be made in public health and working-class dwellings. When in 1867 a plan to provide a block of apartments came before the council it was mocked into oblivion: 'Mr Morrison asked if there was to be a smoking room (laughter). Mr Hammond: And a coffee room? (renewed laughter)' (p.187). If these two interesting studies are open to criticism it is on the grounds of their appropriateness to this volume. Among the working class public health and housing reform created surprisingly little interest; as Smith notes, even working-class spokesmen and organisations seemed to pay little attention to the problem (p.40). Pamela Thomson considers another aspect of public administration, namely 'The South Shields Poor Law Union in the Nineteenth Century'. From a discussion which necessarily in the space available is not a very deep one, it appears that the workhouse authorities acted conscientiously and showed some progressive tendencies. Again, however, the voice of the working class is scarcely audible, nor might it be expected otherwise given the official sources upon which the essay is largely based.

Three other contributions deal with more traditional aspects of labour history, and because some trade union organisation was evident closer contact has been made with the beliefs and actions of working men. Two of these essays are by J F Clarke - 'Engineering Workers on Tyneside' and 'Workers in the Tyneside Shipyards'. Both are based on a good collection of material concerning the industrial relations of the area (though the citation of this material in footnotes is not as clear as it might be). Without attempting to summarise all the author's findings, it is fascinating to note some examples of late nineteenth century labourism: the devotion of the men's leaders to conciliation and arbitration and the class consciousness that could, in some circumstances,

be evinced by the labour aristocrats. Objecting to two officious managers, workmen at Armstrongs petitioned on 11 August 1885 "we ... with all due respect ask the employers to take into consideration the removal of these officials from authority." On 2 September the employers, having rejected the petition, a strike began and a statement of the works committee took a very different tone: "... The struggle between slavery and despotism is eternal, and ever and anon it emerges into the light of day" (pp.95-6). Rank-and-file stubbornness and conciliatory leadership are features of W R Garside's 'Wage Determination and the Miners' Lock-out of 1892', a polished study of the ten week dispute in Durham and its consequences. The remaining essay is by T P McDermott, 'Irish Workers on Tyneside in the Nineteenth Century'. This is a well-written survey which concludes that the Irish, while preserving much of their own culture, integrated with relative ease into the host community.

In general, then, there is much of interest in this collection. The essayists remain rather more detached from their subject than is often the case with labour historians, and yet it may be that this is not always a virtue: paradoxically, perhaps, a dispassionate approach seldom seems to go with imaginative insights into the workings of former societies. Again, pace the editor who regards deep political and ideological commitment as a difficulty in the writing of labour history (9p.i), had there been a greater willingness to argue a point of view, whether mounted from the left or from the right, a deeper understanding of working-class behaviour might have emerged. Such criticism, however, should not be taken as discouragement of the enterprise of the North East Group in producing this volume. On the contrary, it is to be hoped that a further collection of essays - perhaps on the twentieth century (and with an index and fewer typing errors) - will be forthcoming in which some of these authors examine the more recent history of their subjects.

D E MARTIN

University of Sheffield

Essays in Scottish Labour History edited by Ian MacDougall.
(John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979) pp.265. £10.00.

An exciting renaissance is taking place in Scottish labour history. The quality and regularity of their national bulletin has improved. More interest is being shown. More meetings held. At the centre of this revival stands the indefatigable Ian MacDougall. As well as acting as secretary of the Scottish Labour History Society, he has recently compiled a catalogue of the whereabouts of the records of

working-class organisations north of the Border, which should prove a valuable vade-mecum to researchers for many years to come. Now he has edited the collection of essays under review, a tribute to W H Marwick, and has contributed a detailed study to it on the General Strike in Scotland.

Contributions generally are of a high standard. Hamish Fraser looks at the functions of Scottish trades councils. He finds that, because unions in Scotland have a more federal structure and little attempt is made to impose a national minimum wage, the strength of organisation in the localities became more important. As a consequence, trade councils, co-ordinating and campaigning, played a bigger role than elsewhere in Britain. Hence, when the TUC resolved to exclude trade councils from its annual conference, it was one of the reasons for the formation of a separate Scottish TUC. But, also, of course, there were many separate problems, problems that were different from those of their English brothers, that demanded detailed consideration at a separate congress. Hamish Fraser quotes Beatrice Webb as saying "The working-men leaders (in Scotland) are an uninteresting lot; without enthusiasm or much intelligence", and he shows her condemnation arise because she could not find there the type of union leader, an able administrator and a moderate, who she appraised so highly in England. This happened because they had a different function to perform.

Gordon Wilson's essay gives a large part of the explanation. It deals with the prevalence of industrial conflict the West of Scotland coal industry from 1842 to 1874. He shows strikes and lock-outs were a common occurrence. Casting aside established Victorian economic doctrines, miners frequently resorted to militant action. Sometimes their leaders counselled caution, largely on grounds of prudence, not from any fundamental disagreement with the miners' aims or methods. Of particular interest to me in Gordon Wilson's paper are his references to Alexander MacDonald: clearly in his younger years, before his close association with Lord Elcho, the big Scottish coalowner, had begun, MacDonald was anything but a moderate.

One powerful influence colouring Scottish politics, creating various brands of extremism, was Ireland. With John Bull's Other Island - or should it be Hell? - only a short boat trip away, immigrants from the emerald isle flocked into cities like Glasgow, exacerbating social problems. Ian Wood traces the impact this had on the development of Scottish radicalism from 1880 to 1906. Before the end of that period, though he does not mention it, a new generation of men who had links with Ireland - James Connolly, Willie Gallacher, Arthur MacManus, James Wheatley and so on - were fashioning their shilleiagh in order to give the class enemy a clout.

In spite of speaking with a very broad Scottish accent, that gloriously eccentric character Guy Aldred, who strutted about in his knickerbockers, denouncing the capitalist devil and all his works, was actually an English immigrant. He was born at Clerkenwell Green in 1886, the illegitimate son of a parasol-maker. I refer to his illegitimacy because

Guy Aldred appears to have been so proud of being a bastard: in his autobiography, published and republished under various titles on at least four occasions, he reproduces his birth certificate to prove the fact. There also, if you are at all interested, you will find entire chapters devoted to such fascinating topics as 'my free love mating with Rose Witcop' and typographical corrections like "Henderson's bookshop should, of course, read Henderson's bombshop".

John T Caldwell acted as Sancho Pancho to this Don Quixote of British anarchism. His article recounts Guy Aldred's stormy life, not only its trials and tribulations but also its prison sentences. As one who knew Aldred slightly, I enjoyed his piece immensely, though it perhaps could have been enlivened had Caldwell occasionally relied upon his own reminiscences.

Sadly, things ain't what they used to be: William Thompson's article on The New Left in Scotland shows that no Guy Aldreds survive. Instead, as he states, people who were relatively sane and ordinary, affected by the invasions of Suez and Hungary, re-appraised their political positions and fresh political forces emerged. Thompson deals at length with the evolution of Lawrence Daly, now NUM general secretary, who left the Communist Party, started his own independent Fife Socialist League and then, when this collapsed, drifted into the Labour Party. It would be wrong to think this article is the last word on the subject. Many other primary sources could have been consulted. It fails to place the events of 1956-60 in historical perspective. Nevertheless, Thompson has made a valuable contribution; in future researchers will find his work helpful.

The same goes for the other essays in this collection. Dealing with subjects like the market for unskilled labour, Glasgow's housing and the conditions of rural workers, they contain a mass of interesting knowledge. Let us hope this book is simply the first of a series.

RAYMOND CHALLINOR

Picking up the Linen Threads. A Study in Industrial Folklore by Betty Messenger (University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1978) pp.265, £10.

Over the past decade or so, the scope of labour history has outgrown the narrow confines of trade-unionism, radical politics, and the epic battles of the class-war, to become a comprehensive analysis of every aspect of the diverse lives and mentalities of wage-earners in a capitalist world. Thus it is now generally accepted that the 'political' veneer of old-style labour history only makes sense

when viewed in a broader and deeper context. In reorienting their subject in this way, scholars have not hesitated to draw upon the techniques and perspectives of other academic disciplines; and in Picking up the Linen Threads, Betty Messenger, whose research gained her an American PhD, uses in particular the methods and approach of a specialised branch of anthropology - folklore studies - in an effort to illuminate the working lives of factory employees in the Ulster industry during the first thirty-five years of the present century.

Her principal source of data was a series of extensive interviews with some eighty retired workers whose experience covered all the industry's major branches and who worked both in the urban factories of Belfast and the rural mills of the province's smaller towns and villages: and her special interest was in the verses and rhymes which were sung and chanted, and tales and legends which were handed on, and the rituals which were kept up, in the workplace. Most of her respondents (like most of the industry's labour force, in fact) were women who had gone unquestioningly into the industry as second - or even third - generation factory children; and their underlying collective memory - in spite of long hours, unpleasant conditions, and low pay - was of the stoical acceptance of their lot and of a determination to do the best they could to enjoy themselves in the cheerful, if somewhat mindless, cameraderie of the factory work-group.

"Poor but happy", then, is the keynote: and references to class-consciousness and conflict are rare. But as Messenger's frequent mention of the sectarian problem reminds us, social relationships and perceptions take peculiar forms in Ulster, and it must be doubted how far the experiences and attitudes of even female wage-earners in Northern Ireland can be made the basis for generalisations elsewhere. Furthermore, in a society where involvement in the all-embracing network of one's own particular 'community' is so important to the formation of consciousness and conduct, it is perhaps dangerous to concentrate simply on matters relating to work. Finally, the impression purveyed by this book is of a static world, whereas the historian contemplating a period which straddled the First World War and the political partition of Ireland into North and South would ideally want to know how far, and why, workers' experiences and values changed in the face of these momentous events. Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties, Betty Messenger has produced a refreshingly different study of a world only recently, but nonetheless effectively, vanished: and it should be read with interest, enjoyment, and enlightenment by all students who interpret labour history in its broadest sense.

DUNCAN BLYTHELL

C P Trevelyan 1870-1958: Portrait of a Radical by A J A Morris
(Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1977) pp.209, £7.50.

This biography of C P Trevelyan, the squire of Wallington Hall for many years and Labour MP for the Newcastle upon Tyne Central Division from 1922 to 1931, is sure to be received with interest in the North East, and given Trevelyan's place in national politics should be welcomed ~~father~~ afield.

Sir Charles was the eldest son of Sir George Otto Trevelyan and he entered the Commons in 1899 as the Liberal Member for Elland. Professor Morris sub-titles his book "Portrait of a Radical" and he is right to emphasise the Radical period of Trevelyan's early political life which has tended to be overshadowed by the Socialist years that followed. For Trevelyan was a Liberal MP for 19 years, from 1899 to 1918, and a Labour MP for only 10 years from 1921 to 1931. It is true that he achieved Cabinet rank as a Labour MP in Ramsay MacDonald's two minority Labour governments, but in Professor Morris's view the most important years of his political life were from 1914 to 1918. During this period Trevelyan was a leading figure among the few who opposed the war from its outbreak to the Armistice. According to Professor Morris, Trevelyan was not only a founder member of the Union of Democratic Control, but perhaps its most important member: his courage, drive and financial support being essential to its survival. It was foreign policy issues rather than a conversion to Socialist economic policies which made Trevelyan make the move from Liberalism to Labour, although once he joined the Labour Party he was usually numbered on its left-wing. Trevelyan greeted the Russian Revolution with enthusiasm and remained a firm friend of the Soviet Union for the rest of his political life. He was an early critic of MacDonald's leadership and in the 1930s supported the Socialist League and the demand for a Popular Front.

Professor Morris claims to have written "a simple narrative account of C P Trevelyan's parliamentary political life" based primarily on the Trevelyan Papers held at Newcastle upon Tyne University. Professor Morris, however, is too modest, for in addition to containing much new material on Trevelyan his book throws fresh light on several important themes, not least the decline of the Liberal Party and its replacement by the Labour Party in the 1920s. Indeed Morris is at his best in describing how middle-class Liberal MPs, such as Trevelyan and Morel, who opposed the war, were brought into close contact with ILP members who also opposed the war. The new Labour Party constitution of 1918 and the defeat of almost all the Liberal MPs who did not hold the "coupon" in the general election held the same year accelerated the movement of Liberals into the Labour fold.

This, then, is a scholarly biography of an interesting political figure whose career spanned a period of fundamental change in British politics. Professor Morris has an economical style, but this has the merit of making the outline of Trevelyan's political career stand out sharp and clear.

Chopwell's Story by Les Turnbull (Gateshead Borough Council, 1978)
pp.65, £1.20

From the title one is justified in expecting a history of Chopwell, fortunately the author, in a foreword, explains that the book consists of three essays.

The first essay is a potted history of Chopwell Manor covering the period from the Middle Ages to the present time. In half-a-dozen closely printed pages of text we are given a strictly chronological survey, showing that extensive woodlands around Chopwell were used for a wide variety of purposes; bark for tanning, timber for castle repairs and early shipbuilding, and charcoal for iron smelting. Corn-milling, sword-making, paper and ink production were all carried on in the area at various times, but it was the investment of the Consett Iron Company in coal-mines in 1891 which created the township of Chopwell as we know it today. This essay reads like the synopsis for a much longer history of Chopwell, being so brief it contains little in the form of analysis.

The second essay on 'Chopwell from 1895-1918' is written in the words of a group of senior citizens who lived in the village during that time. This is a less satisfying effort than essay number one. The old stories of the social life and the living conditions in a mining community in the North East coalfield are trotted out for yet another airing, and Chopwell's Story reads, at least in this period, very much like the stories common to other colliery villages. The only useful purpose these anecdotal surveys achieve is to satisfy the nostalgic yearnings of a rapidly decreasing group of ex-miners - and there's not many of us left now. It is doubtful if anyone unconnected with the mining industry will follow the paragraphs on union organisation and mining operations. Because of the method of presentation it is impossible to verify the many sweeping statements made on a wide variety of topics. Recording and editing reminiscences is currently enjoying a vogue, but it is no substitute for documentary evidence. For example, the district Medical Officer's reports will give a much more accurate assessment of how healthy Chopwell was, rather than reliance on the memory of a senior citizen stating that, "Chopwell was a healthy place to be brought up in compared to the cities." The expressive language in the essay, has the ring of authenticity and one can virtually hear the Lawther brothers putting in their two pennyworth for the Cause.

The third essay, entitled "Little Moscow" is a study in depth of the great strike at Chopwell Colliery during 1925 and 1926 and here we are given much better material than in the other two essays. It is evident that the Chopwell miners were better placed to stand the lock-out than were the miners in other localities, because of the inflated relief payments made by the local Guardians, who were dominated by miners' representatives. One gathers the impression that there are similarities

between the Clay Cross activists of today and the Chopwell leaders of the 1920s. Both groups, incidentally, representing policies and adopting methods rejected by the Labour Movement generally.

The Chopwell leaders, like many others at the time, thought the collapse of the Capitalist System was imminent, and Socialism was just around the corner, but the hardships borne by the rank and file and their families were in vain.

Les Turnbull sets out quite fairly the opposing views of the Chopwell miners' leaders and their active supporters during the Lock-out, and makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of this particular struggle. On the miners' side the participants in the conflict are dealt with in detail, unfortunately we are not given any indication of what kind of men sat on the Board of the Consett Iron Company.

Chopwell's Story is illustrated with a wealth of photographs, some maps and two reproductions of broadsheets, all of which help to make it a lively and easily digested publication.

COLIN McNIVEN

Shorter Review

Up the Ladder by Adeline Hodges (Tuesday Club Occasional Paper No 2 pp.14, 15p.

The Tuesday Club is a group of North Tyneside teachers and friends who meet every Tuesday to study various aspects of the local environment. The Club produces Occasional Papers on historical and geographical topics of which Up the Ladder is one.

In his introduction Norman McCord writes:

" 'Up the Ladder' gives us a fascinating and illuminating memoir of life in a Durham mining community in the early twentieth century. This kind of well-remembered and vivid description is of special value in relation to the immense changes which have overtaken British society in the last half-century or so, in coal-mining communities as elsewhere.. The matter of fact treatment, and the avoidance of the 'bleeding heart' approach to this kind of social description, make this paper especially useful.

Much of the fascination is derived simply from the detailed descriptions which we are given, but when Mrs Hodges occasionally moves from recollection to include her own comments on that way of life and the changes she has seen in her lifetime, these remarks are very pertinent too. We may assume that no-one would be very keen on a reversion to the conditions described here, but the reminder that social progress may not always be unmixed gain is worthy of consideration."

Copies of Up the Ladder are available from Miss Rita Joice, 22 Selwyn Avenue, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear.

The Editorial Board welcomes material for inclusion in the Bulletin. All manuscripts should be sent to:

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