

NORTH EAST POPULAR POLITICS PROJECT

Newsletter 8

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Contents: Editorial - The Politics of Culture; NEPPP & NELH events; Project News; Collecting Oral Histories; Short Notes (Local Parks and Work for the Unemployed; Charles Dickens in Sunderland; Football; Carlyle against Hudson; Industrial History of Newcastle and North East; Cleveland Iron Trade 1871); ; Reading; 1850S-1889s - some key dates; Researching Chartism in the Ouseburn.

EDITORIAL - THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

A number of things have been surfacing which suggest that a sub-theme within the Project relates to the Politics of Culture. This includes art, music, literature, dance, song and sport. Terry Welsh's topic of representations of working-class life links in with this. Sue Hedworth is very interested in the composer Charles Avison. His life in Newcastle raises a number of issues about the role of music and its class aspects. There's two items from Peter Skevington below. And linking present day culture with history there is Elizabeth Burns' play on North East suffragettes (see below) and the revival of *Close the Coalhouse Door* by Alan Plater & Alex

Glasgow mentioned in Newsletter 6. There was my introductory framework to the political use of song in Newsletters 1-3, along with the 'sport as politics' item in Newsletter 3. Other political cultural issues relate to different genres of music, the suppression of working-class musicians in the Victorian Church and of working-class sports, the control of cultural activities through the development of parks, the use of cultural activities in the collective lives of working-class and lower middle-class organisations, the role of adult education (e.g. Rod Turnbull's work on the Plebs League and Labour Colleges), the North East WEA's historical work, aspects of the co-

operative movement, the socialist theory of culture (see the Music and Socialism piece in Newsletter 4) and cultural activities in protest and patriotism. The list goes on and on. Even Parliament's decision not to give Middlesbrough the power to ban roller skating in the street in the Edwardian boom is an example. There is a reference in an article in the *New Reasoner* of Autumn 1958 to the Durham Miners saving the Bowes-Lyon Museum from closure.

www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/collections/nr/index_frame.htm. *Newcastle's Musical Heritage. An Introduction* by Joseph W. Pegg on

www.newcastle.gov.uk/wwwfileroot/legacy/educationlibraries/tbp/historyofmusic.pdf is well worth a read. The new exhibition (21 July - 14 Jan 2013) at the Discovery Museum will celebrate the history of sport in the North East. Drawing on a range of objects and images, the exhibition will include sports played and followed in the region over the last 200. The publicity highlights the existence of the Morpeth Olympics, which are turning out to one of many held throughout the country including in the 18thC. The continuing exhibition running until 16 September *In The Limelight: Newcastle's Theatrical History* will also throw light on the theme. Is it worth having a NEPPP group visit to see these exhibitions followed by a discussion?

Newcastle Trades Council supports the link between culture and action through its annual Joe Scurfield Award given to an individual or group of people who have made a meritorious contribution to linking cultural activity - particularly music - to trade unionism or community politics (www.newcastle-tuc.org.uk/joe-scurfield.php). Your thoughts on developing this theme would be appreciated.

- To hear the details about the Middlesbrough issue please have a listen to the podcast of my 21 June talk at National Archives about the Edwardian Roller Skating boom: <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/edwardian-rollerskating>.)

James Ancrum's Photographs. Trying to keep up with everything relevant to the history of the left is very difficult. It's purely by chance that because I went to the annual blues and folk festival on Saturday 7 July at Ruskin House, the home of the Croydon labour movement, that I caught up with the fact that my long-time acquaintance Nick Wright is editor of the Communist Party's Manifesto Press. Checking the list of its titles on the CP website led me to the fact that I had not realised that the CP had restarted the old CP's History Group *Our History*. *Our History* was the title of the pamphlet series I grew up reading in my teens. The relaunch of an *Our History Bulletin* and pamphlets runs alongside the Socialist History Society, which has many former and current CP members in it, which sees itself as a successor to the former CP Historians Group, which produced the original *Our*

History. NELH's Willie Thompson is a leading member and NELH/NEPPP member Don Watson's article *British Communists in Local Government 1933-39* is in the Society's *Socialist History* journal (40; 2012). Issue 7 of the new CP *Our History Bulletin* series includes a piece on Gateshead politician James Ancrum's photo collection held by John Corcoran, who used to live in the North East but who now lives in Ireland. See http://issuu.com/communist_party/docs/ourhistory_bulletin_7/1.

The CP and History. The new series of *Our History* pamphlets look interesting. Although they do not cover the North East they contain lots of useful contextual material. You can access them at <http://communist-party.org.uk>. On the Manifesto book front the CP is not being sectarian. It has published the autobiography of London and then Essex Labour activist John Kotz, who organises the annual Labour Heritage Essex Labour History Conference. www.labour-heritage.com. A bibliography of CP publications can be seen on Dave Cope's bibliography on www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/trustinfo/conference_s.htm. This can be searched for writings about the North East. The Amiel and Meldrum Trust has also digitised *Marxism Today* from 1980 to 1991 on its site with a search engine which allows for all material relating e.g. to Newcastle, to be easily accessed. This was the period of the editorship of Martin Jacques. In his editorial introduction he talks about editorial weaknesses. The one he does not mention is ending the publication of historical articles, which had made earlier *Marxism Today* issues invaluable. My letter at the time arguing why he should reinstate them had no influence! The site also contains digitised copies of some of the original *Our History* pamphlets including R. Page Arnot's *The General Strike in the North East* and Ray Watkinson's excellent one on Thomas Bewick. There is an occasional reference to the North East in pamphlets like *The Second Reform Bill* which states: 'At the outset these "associations" were very small, their membership being composed of the few surviving Chartists; it was some time before they gained a mass basis in the trade unions. One of the most successful was the Northern Reform Union led by Joseph Cowen, a Radical brick manufacturer who was afterwards M.P. for Newcastle. One of the leading members of the Northern Reform Union was the former Chartist John Kane of Alwicks, secretary to the new union of Malleable Ironworkers which later affiliated to the First International and it soon gained the support of the Northumberland Miners' Mutual Confident Association.' Ray Challinor's *Alexander Macdonald and the Miners* contains comments such as 'the Northumberland and Durham Permanent Benefit Society also started in 1862, its officials boycotted Lord Raynham's meetings.'

NEPPP & NELH EVENTS

Saturday 14 July. NEPPP at Durham Miners Gala. Peter Brabban will be promoting the Project and recording memories of the Big Meeting - sharing the WEA stall in the marquee on the Racecourse. The Co-op group hope to repeat their display from 8 July. If you want to help - that would be great. Please contact Kath Connolly. kathleenhconnolly@hotmail.co.uk

Saturday 11 August 11. From 1 p.m. Project Social Event. John & Sally's. Hopefully in the garden (Ha! Ha!). Please reply to John (johncharlton@blueyonder.co.uk). Further details will go out soon.

19 September. 7.15pm. James Walvin. Now and then. The rise and rise of history over the past 40 years. NELH talk at Lit & Phil. Professor Jim Walvin (York University) is one of Britain's best known social historians. He has published more than 20 books on a wide range of subjects including, British radicalism, children in history, Victorian values, professional football and his trademark pioneering work on colonial slavery. If you want to come please contact John: johncharlton@blueyonder.co.uk.

PROJECT NEWS

NEPPP at Beamish Day 8 July. Kath Connolly writes: Entering into the Edwardian theme of Beamish the PPP volunteers Kath, Elizabeth and Olga as members of the Women's Co-operative Guild. This was a Co-operative membership event celebrating the International Year of Co-operatives. The team Pat, Olga, Elizabeth and Kath promoted the project and talked about our research into the Sunderland Poor Store a joint project of the Women's Guild and Sunderland Society. Visitors to the event shared in their memories of the Co-op with us - and we have 23 short oral histories; a picture of our past featuring the store order man, deliveries by horse and cart, the dividend office and the Queen's Coronation party in the Co-op dairy- to name but a few.

A big thanks to Peter Nicklin. The Project is indebted to Peter Nicklin for the role he has undertaken supporting members working at Northumberland Archives and the detailed work he carried out himself. A computer expert Peter has just started a new job in the NHS which takes him to Leeds. Best wishes to him. As part of winding down his involvement in the Project Peter sent the following note: 'The Woodhorn-based NEPPP volunteers have been busy with a number of things: co-op history, Blyth elections, indentures, Josephine Butler, Windmill Hills, enclosures, the poor law, Rothbury quarrymen, 1820s elections in Northumberland and quite a lot more. The group undertook a review on Saturday 30 June to find out how members feel about what we are doing: share information and thoughts, identify problems, areas where people need help and new areas for investigation.'

Tyneside Keelmen. John Charlton's talk at the NELH First Tuesday meeting on the Keelmen of the Tyne was well attended by 25 NELH and Project members. There was a very good discussion raising lots of issues including early trade unionism, women keel workers, differences between Tyne and Wear, ownership of keel boats, links with politics, and religious affiliations. John estimates there were 500 boats, each with 4 crew, making 2,000 keelmen, and a keelmen's community of about 5,000 out of a population of c30,000 in 1801. John hopes to repeat the talk at a later date.

18850s-1880s. John Charlton is preparing a talk on the period 1850s to 1880s, including the Second Reform Act of 1967, Joseph Cowen, Fenians, radicalism and trade union developments. He would appreciate any material or ideas you may have on these topics. johncharlton@blueyonder.co.uk. See below for some key dates in the national labour movement in the period.

COLLECTING ORAL HISTORIES

Elizabeth Burns writes:

Since retiring back home to the North East of England, I have enjoyed listening to people telling me about their lives, often whilst waiting for a bus! So I jumped at the opportunity to collect some oral histories for the Popular Politics Project to archive. My first interview was with a councillor, who had been a young mother living on the Meadowell Estate in North Shields when the riots occurred in 1991. She described how: 'there was already an 'us and them' kind of thing with the police anyway and I think that was just the catalyst for the riot to

begin'. I then interviewed another mother from the estate, who had also become a community activist after the riots and who has now been given an MBE for her achievements.

My next two interviewees were women from the west end of Newcastle who are still active in the Co-operative Women's Guild and the National Guild of Co-operators. I then recorded Margaret, who still remembers how as a child in the 1930s, her dad made sure she knew that the Co-op was 'set up by

working-people to help working people'. Leah, from County Durham, described to me how she set up a return to work course for women, who were lacking in confidence. Mary's description of campaigning against racism in 2010 evidenced her long commitment to challenging injustices, which had started during the Miners' Strike.

Asking the simple question: 'do you know anyone who has been involved in local community campaigns?' has already allowed me to meet and interview 7 North Eastern women. It is very rewarding to listen to their accounts of community activism and to know that their stories are being recorded and archived. There have also been some very funny moments! For instance, the time I arrived to interview a woman at work and one of my lenses fell out of my reading glasses. In order to see and explain the consent form, I resorted to stuffing a tissue into the empty lens- looking very much like a one-eyed pirate! This certainly broke the ice as the interviewee and I were both doubled over with laughter. Or when I misheard 'the Ministry of Savings' and renamed it 'the Ministry of Servants' in the interview transcript. My spelling of some local place names has also caused some great hilarity.

Another unexpected consequence is that I now find a 'theme' has emerged from the oral history interviews I have carried out. The interviewees are all white, working-class women, aged between 40-83 years of age; who, alongside family responsibilities, childcare and paid work, have and are 'making a difference' in our North East communities. I have therefore decided to focus on collecting oral histories from Campaigning Northern Working-Class Women- a very under-researched group in history journals.

I have another interview lined up with a woman about her campaigning in Durham. If you are interested in learning more about 'our-stories', an essential part of our North East Social History, you can contact Liz O'Donnell to become involved in interviewing or transcribing oral histories. There are no time pressures; you can arrange an interview to suit your availability and full training is also provided. As well as hearing some fascinating stories, you will be helping to ensure that ordinary people's extraordinary lives are archived for future generations.

SHORT NOTES

Local Parks and Work for the Unemployed. Peter Shevington reports that David Bell, a much respected local social and industrial historian, has written and published an excellent history of the South Marine Park in South Shields; this history of a local park could be unique. David credits local Council minutes as a source of information. David's book makes reference to, and includes a photograph of, the unemployed being used to clear and level the land appropriated for the park during the 1880s, then creating rockery in 1931 (photograph). Could this creation of employment opportunities, albeit temporary ones, by local Councils, be a theme/topic for further research? **Editorial comment.** While there are many histories around the country of local parks, having a good model for others to stimulate is always very useful. With regard to work for the unemployed this was a common feature of local government activity into the 1930s, and local socialist activists lobbied for such work to be provided from the 1880s. Between the Wars there were campaigns against work for the unemployed that was either unpaid or in 'labour camps'.

Charles Dickens in Sunderland. Peter Skevington writes: The Sunderland Yearbook 1906 (pp23-25) describes this visit, when Dickens appeared at the large hall of the Lyceum Theatre on Saturday evening August 28th 1852; the article includes an illustration of the poster advertising the event. The performance of 3 playlets included the author Wilkie Collins in the cast. The poster includes details of THE AMATUER COMPANY GUILD OF LITERATURE AND ART " To encourage the Life

Assurance and other Provident habits amongst authors and artists to render such assistance to both as shall never compromise their independence and to found a new institute where honourable rest from arduous labour shall be associated with the discharge of congenial duties". Performance commenced at 7pm, carriages to be waiting at 11 o'clock. Ticket prices Dress Circle 10s Orchestra Stalls 3s 6d Body of the Hall 5s Gallery 2s 6d. The ACGOLAA was founded by Dickens along with Sir Edward Bulmer Lytton and Augustus Leopold Egg in 1850 with the intention of providing welfare payments to struggling artists and writers. By 1865 sufficient money had been accumulated to open 3 retirement houses, but no occupants could be found, nor purchasers for life assurance, so, eventually in 1897, many years after Dickens death, The Guild was disbanded. Daniel Hack wrote an essay entitled *Literary paupers and professional authors: the Guild of Literature and Art* which is available to read on the internet.

Football. Peter Skevington writes about the pamphlet by Robert Campbell, *Football, Physical, social and moral aspects* (Ernest A Longstaff, printer & lithographer, 18 Nile Street. 1897). Campbell was the Secretary of the Sunderland Association Football Club). Given the preoccupation with the sport, players and associated personalities, it is fascinating to compare RC's opinions and ideas with those of current sportswriters, pundits and commentators. eg "Ladies have even ventured to become exponents of the dribbling code, but their attempts were so ridiculous and so much out of place that it must

have been pleasing to all who admire the game and respect decency to notice how properly they were dismissed from favour" "...football creates a circulation of money, but also provides employment for a great number of people" "In my opinion there are few young men who have a better or easier opportunity to improve their social position than have football professionals"

Carlyle against Hudson. Peter Skevington writes about Thomas Carlyle's *Thomas Hudson's worth and worship* (1857 Second Edition Price Two Pence Printed and published by Wm Henry Hills). A satirical, hard hitting critique and attack upon George Hudson, the Sunderland MP and speculative railway entrepreneur eg "this big gambler, swollen to the edge of bursting, he is not great and honourable, he is huge and abominable..." "...in his insatiable greed and bottomless atrocity had long, hoodwinking the poor world, gone himself and led multitudes to go in ways of gilded human baseness, seeking temporary profit (scrip first class claret, social honour and the like small ware) where only

eternal loss was possible, and now stripped of all his gildings and cunningly devised speciosities, swing there an ignominious detected scoundrel..."

Industrial History of Newcastle and North East. Grace's Guide - British Industrial History is a very useful website. You can read about North East engineers and companies, there is a special section on Newcastle, and selected copies of *The Engineer* for the period 1862 -1926 can be looked at for North East material. www.gracesguide.co.uk/Main_Page.

Cleveland Iron Trade 1871. *The Engineer* contains summaries of the state of industries in different parts of the country. The 7 July 1871 issue for example has notes on the strike of blast furnace men at Middlesbrough at Thomas Vaughan's pig iron works, the nine hour movement, and the formation of a 'co-operative engine works at Newcastle'. The latter relates to a company set up to purchase the engine works of the late R. Morrison and Co, at Ouseburn. (p.16)

READING

Fight to the finish. Gordon Macpherson. (1928-1999). The life, poems and stories of an East Durham Miner. 'This is a moving and passionate account of one man's extraordinary battle against adversity to raise a family in an East Durham pit village. Gordon MacPherson's poetry and writing sums up the arduous working conditions that miners struggle under and his own personal battle with emphysema in later life. Gordon was an ordinary miner who did great things. This book glows with love and human decency against all the odds. It shows us the power of community and serves as an example for the future of this area of North East England and beyond.' In the publicity for the book Grahame Morris, MP for Easington says: 'It was an honour to know Gordon MacPherson. He is an inspiration; a man committed to his community, family and with a deep love of the area where he was brought up. I am proud to have known Gordon and he was a friend and an inspiration. This very personal, moving and evocative account of one man's extraordinary battle against adversity to raise a family in an East Durham pit village in many ways typifies past working class struggles.' Order from: Northern Voices Community Projects, 93 Woodburn Square, Whitley Lodge, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE26 3JD tel. 0191 2529531 or: Heather Wood, 8 Comet Drive, Easington, County Durham SR8 3EP tel. 0191 5270371. ISBN 978-1-871536-15-4 Price £5 (add £2.50 postage).

Still the Sea Rolls on the Hartley Pit Calamity of 1862: a commemoration in words and images to mark its 150th anniversary. 'The Hartley Pit Calamity of 1862 was the first large scale mining

disaster of Victorian times. The extent of the Calamity, together with the spreading of news by rail and telegraph, brought this tragic event in rural Northumberland into the homes of families throughout the land on a daily basis. The reaction from the public, together with the interest shown by Queen Victoria, kept the story in the press for more than a month. Just as evidenced in 2010 in the Chilean mine rescue, the public were gripped by the horror of men trapped underground and the heroic efforts made to rescue them.

This new book from Northern Voices Community Projects, compiled and edited by Dr Keith Armstrong and Peter Dixon and commissioned by North Tyneside Council, has been published to mark the 150th anniversary of the Calamity. With historical documents and images, alongside poems, songs, stories, photographs and drawings by local people, it forms part of a series of events and activities intended to ensure that the story of Hartley is not forgotten. Copies can be obtained from: Northern Voices Community Projects, 93 Woodburn Square, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, NE26 3JD. 0191 2529531.

k.armstrong643@btinternet.com. Price £7.99 (add £2 postage). ISBN 978-1-871536-20-1

Other Items

- Peter Skevington recommends: John Benson. *The Working Class in Britain 1850-1939* Tauris Press. Peter adds: Benson of Wolverhampton Uni has done a lot of work on mining and mining union history resources and sources.

- Dave Atkinson, 1915-2007. Biographical sketch on the Newcastle Trades Council

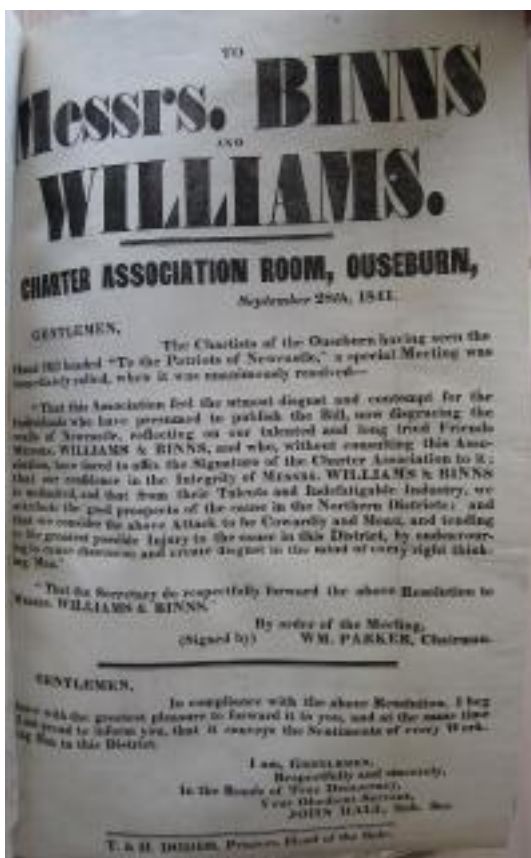
website: www.newcastle-tuc.org.uk/dave-atkinson-1915-2007.php.

1850S-1889s - SOME KEY DATES

1851	Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Machinists, Smiths, Millwrights and Pattern-makers forms
1853	Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners forms
1854	National Charter Association disbanded Garibaldi visits Tyneside
1855	Friendly Societies Act
1858	Glasgow Trades Council set up National Miners' Association under the leadership of the Scottish leader Alexander Macdonald forms
1859	Molestation of Workmen Act
1859-60	Building workers strike
1860	Coal Mines Regulation Act Stockport spinners strike victory Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners forms London Trades Council set up Thomas Dunning's <i>Trades Unions and Strikes</i> National Social Science Association report on trade unions
1860-61	Preston spinners strike defeat
1861	Start of American Civil War
1863	Polish Uprising
1864	International Working Mens' Association set up
1865	Reform League set up Pro-trade union Radicals Joseph Cowen, Thomas Hughes and John Stuart Mill elected as MPs General Eyre suppresses revolt in Jamaica
1866	Electoral reform Sheffield Outrages Royal Commission United Kingdom Alliance of Organized Trades formed Hyde Park Riot Second Reform Act
1867	Master and Servant Act
1868	Foundation of Trades Union Congress
1869	Second TUC Collapse of Reform League
1871	Third TUC Establishment of TUC Parliamentary Committee Trade Union Act Criminal Law Amendment Act New wave of trade union organisation Agricultural workers union started in Hertfordshire Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers' Union Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants formed Paris Commune 9 Hour Day Agitation
1872	Beckton gasworkers prosecuted under the Master and Servant Act of 1867 London Gas Stokers Defence Committee General Amalgamated Labourers Union set up National Agricultural Labourers Union starts

- 1873 Prosecution of wives of agricultural workers in Chipping Norton
Newcastle Trades Council set up
- 1874 General Election
Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt elected as MPs
Conservatives win election
Royal Commission on the Labour Laws
- 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act
Employers and Workmen Act
- 1880 Henry Broadhurst elected as Liberal MP
Employers Liability Act
- 1880 Democratic Federation set up and renames itself:
- 1884 Social Democratic Federation
Fabian Society formed
- 1885 General Election. 11 trade unionists elected as MPs
- 1886 Federation of Labour created
Tom Mann's pamphlet on the Eight Hour Day
TUC sets up Labour Electoral Committee/Association
- 1887 Keir Hardie attacks Broadhurst at TUC
Bloody Sunday
- 1888 Matchgirls Strike – start of New Unionism

RESEARCHING CHARTISM IN THE OUSEBURN



Mike's photos of handbills at Newcastle Central Library

Mike Greatbatch's work on Chartism in the Ouseburn will be published in 2013. Here he provides an account of how he researched this topic, and what questions he sought to answer through this research.

Some years ago I was given a photocopy of a manuscript now preserved in the National Archives at Kew, entitled 'To The Queens Most Excellent Majesty'. This hand-written document is dated 5th October 1841 and is signed by Isaac Bruce on behalf

of 'the Working Classes living in the Vicinity of the Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne'.

At the time, I didn't place much significance on this document, especially as it is filed at the NRO under the heading 'Corn Laws'. Much of my work on the

industrial community of the lower Ouseburn has been undertaken to explain how and why the area developed physically - its streets, yards, tenements and factories - and to try and gain some insight into what it might have been like to live there during the 150 years from c1800. This approach had been reinforced by a long working relationship with Age Concern and the Elders Council that emphasized the value of shared memories, as a means of recording the courage, resilience and strength of many older people.

Thus, it was only when I joined the Popular Politics Project in 2011 that I began to seriously consider the *political* character of the Ouseburn, and in April of this year I looked again at that manuscript from Kew.

Isaac Bruce

My first line of enquiry was the one person whose name is recorded, the man whose signature appears at the foot of the manuscript. I am a regular user of the British Library newspaper database, accessed on-line from my home computer, so I did a search for 'Isaac Bruce' in the one Newcastle newspaper that I knew really well, the *Newcastle Courant*. And I found.....nothing. Not one 'hit' for any of the dates I searched.

I already knew that the *Courant* tended to adopt a rather patronizing editorial towards Ouseburn residents, so it struck me that a working man might not feature in their columns, unless he was arrested for drunkenness, violence, or some other disreputable behavior. So, I repeated the search but this time left the 'Newspaper Title' blank, and immediately achieved some 'hits', specifically for the radical newspapers of the 1840s, the *Northern Liberator* (published in Newcastle) and the *Northern Star* (published in Leeds).

These news reports confirmed that Isaac Bruce had been active in agitation for universal franchise, and in particular for Chartism. This immediately created a problem that I hadn't anticipated. I was aware of Chartism as an historical event, but knew nothing of its character on Tyneside. Furthermore, the last time I read anything on Chartism, let alone the 1832 Reform Act and its legacy, was way back in the 1980s when I was a student at Lancaster University, and this had only been cursory because my chosen specialism was urban history, not politics. Thus, I now not only needed to understand Chartism in Newcastle, I needed to understand Chartism nationally, and how these national events impinged on Ouseburn. This soon became obvious the more I looked at the newspaper database because the Ouseburn Chartists attracted Chartist lecturers from throughout the country, people like P M Brophy (one-time Secretary of the Chartist Association in Dublin) and Peter Murray McDouall, who lectured on Chartist activities in Scotland.

Newspaper Records

I spent much of April and May searching the British Library on-line newspaper archive, widening my search to include any additional named persons associated with Chartism in Ouseburn, and of course 'Ouseburn' itself. As of today (July), I have on file, no less than 147 news reports for 'Chartism in Newcastle and Ouseburn', eight for 'Isaac Bruce', nine for 'Martin Jude', 12 for Thomas Doubleday, 29 for 'John Hall', 20 for the 'Miners Association, 1840s', and another 18 from the *Newcastle Journal* in the year 1840 - this is not available on-line so has to be viewed page by page at Newcastle Local Studies, a time consuming process but very useful by way of providing a counter-balance to the two radical newspapers (the *Journal* was even more Tory than the *Courant*).

Through this research I acquired a huge amount of empirical information, including a large amount of detail relating to the development of Chartism in Newcastle and Ouseburn (they were organized separately), names of individual Chartist activists, Police records of arrests for political agitation, descriptions of marches and demonstrations, and details of where and when the Chartists held their meetings.

However, the very volume of this data left me somewhat overwhelmed. It is all very well collecting empirical evidence, but how much of this stuff was actually significant? Indeed, what was it that this material told me about popular politics at that time, and in particular what did it tell me about the Ouseburn?

Organising Data

The most useful exercise I decided to undertake was undoubtedly my decision to organize all these newspaper reports into thematic topics, each reference being recorded with their original date and newspaper source; the original reports were downloaded and filed in date order.

I started by asking the question: WHO were the Ouseburn Chartists, and WHERE did they meet?

This narrowed much of the Chartist activities down to Lime Street and Byker Buildings (1840 onwards), both parts of Ouseburn that I was very familiar with. This familiarity with the historical geography of the Ouseburn was invaluable when I developed these two lines of investigation further by looking at the 1841 Census and additional newspaper sources for Byker Buildings. Through this investigation I was able to identify where these Chartists lived, their occupation recorded in the 1841 census, and their age and household dependents. The Ouseburn Chartists were by and large family men, drawn from a variety of occupations, including

labourers, tradesmen, pitmen and flax-dressers. The latter were especially important, providing the Secretary and Treasurer in the person of Isaac Bruce (flax-dresser), John Hall (Flax-dresser), and Martin Jude (pitman and publican).

To date, I have identified the occupation/age/dependents/residence of no less than seventeen members of the Ouseburn Chartist Association, and fourteen members of the Byker Hill Chartist Association, just by cross-referencing newspaper reports and census records. In addition, I have identified the occupation/trades of the Council Members of the Northern Political Union, Newcastle's alliance of tradesmen and working men who launched the agitation for the Charter in 1838, using news reports and trade directories to illustrate the 'shopocrat' nature of the NPU membership, a growing source of friction for Ouseburn's more proletariat Chartists.

Other topics that I organized data into included 'activities', 'issues & conflicts', 'speakers and lectures', 'origins/NPU', and 'affiliations'. The latter's importance became increasingly clear when it dawned on me that John Hall and Martin Bruce took their Chartist activism from the Ouseburn to the Executive of the Miners' Association of Great Britain & Ireland, the first national miners' trade union, in the mid-1840s. Needless to say, this development simply added yet another research project, on top of everything I had already done, but it is an essential part of the answer to the question: What was the LEGACY of the Ouseburn Chartists?

Secondary & Archival Source Material

As already noted, Chartism was not something that I have ever had any great knowledge of. However, within the Popular Politics Project we have volunteers with a wide variety of historical interests and specialisms, and John Charlton soon supplied me with a reading list of existing literature on Chartism in the North East. Most of these secondary sources were easily available at Newcastle Local Studies, and some of them, specifically D J Rowe's essay 'Some Aspects of Chartism on Tyneside', included some really useful footnotes.

One of the sources used by Rowe was a collection of material relating to Newcastle upon Tyne compiled by Thomas Wilson, which Rowe referred to as the 'Thomas Wilson Collection' at Newcastle Library. Thankfully, this collection still exists at Newcastle Local Studies. It is a collection of twelve volumes of handbills, pamphlets, letters, news cuttings and other documentation that Thomas Wilson collected during the period c1820-1850.

When Don Watson asked me to give a talk to the North East Labour History Society, I decided to look at this collection, to see if it contained any material that would look good in a PowerPoint presentation.

I already had so many newspaper reports but these alone aren't very visual.

To my great delight, Thomas Wilson collected some wonderful handbills and posters, including those issued by the Newcastle Town Council prohibiting public meetings, and others advertising for Special Constables 'for the Protection of Life & Property'. In the volume covering the 1840s, there is even a poster published by the 'Charter Association, Ouseburn'. This is a rich collection of primary source material which anyone interested popular politics in Newcastle at that time should look at.

Conclusion

The Ouseburn Chartists organised an independent association for political reform during the 1830s and 1840s, when east Newcastle generally was experiencing an economic upturn. For some firms it was a boom period, for others it allowed them to ride out the trade depression that characterized so much of the UK economy at that time.

So, one fundamental question that needed answering was: how did the local economy impact on popular politics at this time, and can this economic experience help us to understand the activities and membership of the Ouseburn Chartists?

Once again, newspapers, directories, the census records for both 1841 and 1851, all provided valuable empirical data for evaluating and answering this question.

In my presentation, and my written research paper, I have attempted to draw these various research investigations together, and by so doing I hope to have rescued the reputation of the Ouseburn working man (and woman - Jane Hall and Anna Bruce are recorded as active members) from the negative stereotypes so often portrayed in the news reporting of the *Newcastle Courant*.

The result is a paper much longer than I ever anticipated, with much more detail than I ever could have hoped for, and even now there are some 'loose ends' that I would dearly like to resolve; for example, why did Raymond Challinor state that John Hall was 'from South Shields' when the 1851 and 1861 census both record his birth-place as Bishop Auckland, and he lived and worked for much of his life in Newcastle?

Historical investigation constantly throws-up questions that we cannot anticipate or categorically answer, but with so many on-line sources and a network of volunteers to draw on, we can reveal an incredible amount of information that helps to reflect the courage, resilience, and achievements of working people throughout history.

Selected Reading List:

Thomas Ainge Devyr, *The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century*, 1870.

D J Rowe, *Some Aspects of Chartism on Tyneside* (Int. Review of Social History, V16, 1971)

W H Maehl, *Chartist Disturbances in Northeastern England*, (In. Review of Social History, Vol V8., 1963.)

Malcolm Chase, *Chartism, 1838-1858: Responses in Two Teesside Towns*: [Northern History](#), Volume 24, 1988 , pp. 146-171(26)

Keith Wilson, *Chartism in Sunderland*, NEH 14.