

NORTH EAST POPULAR POLITICS PROJECT

Newsletter 1

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PROJECT EVENTS

Thursday 6 January. 5-7pm. Informal Volunteer Social Gathering. WEA Office, 21 Portland Terrace, Newcastle - 10 minutes walk from Jesmond Metro Station.

Monday 10 -Wednesday 12 January. Archive Mapping & Research Sessions for Volunteers. Details to be circulated.

February 23. 7pm. Thomas Spence. Malcolm Chase, the leading expert on early trade unions and Chartism, will be speaking on Spence and his re-published book *The People's Farm*. Lit & Phil.

PROJECT UP AND RUNNING

The Project is now up and running. After the disruption caused by the weather and the need to rethink how to proceed things are really beginning to start moving.

- We now have c40 people who want to volunteer and that's before the big publicity drive that will start later this month.
- Peter Livsey has started to look at material across several archives about the 1826 General Election, and at the *diary of Thomas Giordani Wright, Newcastle doctor, 1826-1829*, edited with an introduction by Alastair Johnson. (Boydell & Brewer 2001).
- Patricia Hix is listing the archive resources used in some pamphlets published by her local history society.
- Judith McSwaine has started word processing Kevin Davies's transcribed listing of the contents of the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* for 1911, one of the years of the Great Unrest, syndicalism and mass strike action. She will also be transcribing an oral history tape.
- Discussions are under way to form a group that will look specifically at women.
- Rob Turnbull is looking at workers' education, taking into account the work undertaken by the WEA project last year.
- Terry Lynch is searching web catalogues re-the themes: culture, mines/mining/minerals, and

temperance/teetotalism.

- Bill Lawrence is looking at community development action in the region from the 1960s. Bill has a number of interests, including friendly societies and Catholic Emancipation, which he was looking at anyway in the archive of Upshaw College near Durham. He is also going to transcribe some recorded oral history material.
- Terry Welsh is searching the catalogue at TWA re-Tyneside Irish and Catholic issues.

POPULAR POLITICS MATERIAL

Thomas Spence Trust: <http://thomas-spence-society.co.uk>

South Shields 1832 Reform Act petition:
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/politics/g6/source/g6s1.hhhhtm

Slave trade/slavery Abolition, Political Reform and Radicalism. Because the links were very obvious during the 2007 Tyne & Wear Remembering Slavery Project Sean has re-edited a piece he wrote in 2008 from the original material looked at by that Project's volunteers. It is available from him on request; sean.creighton@btinternet.com.

Northern Tribune 1854-5. A listing of the contents of the radical newspaper *The Northern Tribune* published by Joseph Cowen (Jnr) and colleagues in 1854 and 1855 is available on request from Sean.

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATORS

John Charlton writes:

Sean Creighton: Archive Mapping & Research Co-ordinator. While some of you have either met or emailed Sean, you probably don't know about the background knowledge and skills that he brings to his archival mapping and research co-ordinator's role. He has been involved for the last decade in aspects of North East community development and history at the British Association of Settlements & Social Action Centres, with the five Tyne & Wear Community Empowerment Networks' economic development Pentagon Partnership, as Archival Mapping & Research Officer for the 2007 Tyne & Wear Remembering Slavery Project, and as co-ordinator of the North East Slavery & Abolition Group. He brings perspectives from political and community/voluntary organisation involvements since the 1960s. His research interests inc. many of the components of Popular Politics. He has had essays and book chapters published on Battersea, British Black and Asian History and North East slavery and abolition. He is Secretary of two community development organisations in Kennington and Vauxhall in Lambeth. He runs a blog commenting on history and political matters, and compiles and edits a number of specialist newsletters. For further information see: Blog: <http://historyandsocialaction.blogspot.com> . Publications website: www.historysocialaction.co.uk. General website: www.seancreighton.com. Tel Nos: 020 8640 2014; 07725045550.

Jo Bath: Oral History Co-ordinator. Jo Bath, our Oral History Co-ordinator, brings a wealth of experience especially in the North East. For several years she has worked on oral history projects at Beamish Museum. It is a great pity that the funding for that work is coming to an end. She is active in the North East Oral History group. Jo is finalising guidance on Oral History work for inclusion in a pack for volunteers containing other sections John and Sean have been working on. Jo is also designing training sessions, the details of which will be notified to all volunteers.

THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS

In November a meeting was held to discuss the development of Independent Working Class Education. Project volunteer Robert Turnbull has drawn attention to a follow-up meeting being held on Saturday 22 January. Dave Harker will lead a discussion about Robert Tressell's book a century after his death: 'RTP: Are The Issues Still The Same Today?' 2-4.30pm, The Red Deer Pub, 18 Pitt St (off West St), Sheffield, S1. Further information from Keith Venables: venablesk@yahoo.co.uk. One of the things it is hoped to look at through the Project is the influence of Tressell's book. Dave Harker will be coming to Tyneside in June to do an event on the book for the Project.

USHAW COLLEGE TO CLOSE

The commercial operations of the Catholic Seminary Ushaw College ceased on 31 December and the staff became redundant. North East Labour History Society member Tony Jeffs discovered that this was going to happen when he was trying to sort out arrangements for the Community and Youth Work History Conference due to be held there in early March. The Conference is now being re-scheduled to another date. The College itself will finally close in June. See: [www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/8762611.Closure of Catholic college has started](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/8762611.Closure_of_Catholic_college_has_started). Local MP Pat Glass has raised the matter in Parliament through an Early Day Motion; see [www.durhamtimes.co.uk/news/8744587.MP joins fight to save college](http://www.durhamtimes.co.uk/news/8744587.MP_joins_fight_to_save_college). The Seminary has a rich archive and library and there are concerns about what will happen to them. It is understood that Durham University has been in discussions but the outcome is not yet known. As soon as he heard from Tony Jeffs Sean raised the matter with a number of people concerned about the dangers to archives from cuts and closures. Having attended the British Record Association Annual Conference meeting on 7 December he has written a short paper on what might be done on the threat to archives which a Committee of the BRA will discuss later this month. He has also posted it on his blog site: <http://historyandsocialaction.blogspot.com>.

Project volunteer Bill Lawrence adds: I have been using Ushaw for the past 18 months for my research on the Birtley Belgians and to write up the history of the parish of St Columba's at Wallsend for its 125th anniversary. The Library has magnificent collections, but it is very poorly catalogued, stored, etc.

CALL MR ROBESON

25 January. 8pm. Darlington Arts Centre

Tayo Aluko is bringing his *Call Mr Robeson* show to Darlington.
[http://cmr.tayoalukoandfriends.com/Full details on:](http://cmr.tayoalukoandfriends.com/Full%20details%20on%3A)

[www.darlington.gov.uk/Culture/Event%2BInformation.htm?EventID=159370,](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Culture/Event%2BInformation.htm?EventID=159370)

PAUL ROBESON IN THE NORTH EAST

Sean Creighton writes:

The American singer, actor, film star Paul Robeson supported many popular political causes in Britain during the years living here in the 1930s, and visiting in the late 1940s and from 1958: inc. South Wales miners, the Spanish Civil War, anti-fascism, nuclear

disarmament and peace.

Paul Robeson made at least three visits to Newcastle in the 1930s: 1930, 1935 and 1939. In 1935 he was trapped in his hotel 'lift for sometime when it stuck between two floors.'

'When he was finally released he told' local journalist Richard Martin: "Civilisation at last."

In 1948 he gave a concert at the City Hall. followed by two free concerts at Gateshead. 'Introducing him at Gateshead, the Gateshead M.P. Mr. Konni Zilliacus said Robeson was "tired of singing to people who can afford to pay ten or twelve shillings for posh tickets."

1958 Concert

After the US authorities were forced to return his passport he visited Britain in 1958 coming to Stockton's Globe Theatre on 10 October and to Newcastle for a concert on 13 November.

He was invited to Tyneside invited by the Trades Council. It was arranged by the Secretary, Don Edwards, and his daughter Irene met Robeson. Pat and Kathleen Marley were taken to his dressing room. Their father's company Rediffusion provided the PA system for the Hall. Pat remembers asking Robeson why he needed loudspeakers and he replied, 'I have to keep my voice under control. Performing nearly every night, if I let it go I'd lose it.' She remembered him as very warm and friendly.'

A capacity audience filled the City Hall at 10/- per seat. A local newspaper reported it was a triumph before an 'enthralled' audience.' 'Neither his voice nor his personality seem to have changed during the ten years since he last performed in this country. His deep, resonant voice is intense and compelling whether he speaks or sings, and his smile is infectious. He dominates the evening with artistry and sincerity as few others could. His audience was completely captivated - he even managed to get them to talk Chinese. He sang in English, German, Russian, Yiddish and African.'

'His repertoire varied from a transcription of the theme from the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to "Old Man River," plantations song chants and religious songs. He recited an extract from Othello, joked and told of his pleasure of being back on Tyneside."

Often his performance was very moving, as when he sang "Just a-wearying' for you", where the combination of simplicity of melody and his magnificent voice brought his listeners to applause before the song had finished."

Scores of people had to be turned away because the hall was full. Let us hope that he will be back again swoons so that others too, can hear that voice which since 1922, has thrilled British audiences. He was brilliantly accompanied by Lawrence Brown.. - T.E.B.'

One of those in the audience wrote on their programme 'Thanks to God for sight and hearing. Grateful for return of so talented an artist. 7.30pm, 13th Nov. 1958'

Irene remembered it being a great moment for the Trades Council and her father, who had also engineered to bring Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop to the town in 1957.

While being entertained at the Mansion House Robeson told local journalist Richard Martin: "I don't consider that I sing. Singing to me is just an extension of speaking."

The 1958 visit was recalled 28 years later by George Woodhouse. 'Paul Robeson was one of the most charming men I ever met. On the first occasion we talked in a Preston hotel for more than two hours on a wide range of subjects including soccer and the English First Division, the stage, politics and music. He gave me a private music lesson in that he sat beside me and traced out in detail the link between the tribal music of West Africa and the spirituals on the American deep south. He was courtesy itself and, although holding deep convictions on the subject of political philosophies, he refused to attack his native America for withholding his passport, although obviously distressed by the experience.'

Sources:

Evening Chronicle, 24 January 1976)

John Charlton. *Don't you hear the H-Bomb's thunder?* 2009.p. 90

Undated, unattributed news cutting in Newcastle City Library's Local History Archive.) Copy of programme in Newcastle City Library: Local History Archive).

THE 1826 GENERAL ELECTION

Peter Livesey writes:

The election was held in the knowledge that a general Election was imminent, six years since the last one.

Yet, although Lord Howick, son of the Whig leader Earl Grey, withdrew early on, an expensive election was fought between two Tory candidates. The increasingly bitter contest was traditional in that it revolved around Liddell's being the son of a Lord Ravensworth, a major coal owner and being more a Durham man; and around Bell's inadequacies as a speaker and his expecting to be given the seat as the respected former member's nephew. The political issue on which they seemed to differ was Catholic Emancipation, Bell taking a hard Protestant line, Liddell a more moderate approach like George Canning, which his supporters said was closer to the late C.J. Brandling's stance. Each camp accused the other of bad faith, and the Whigs were accused of favouring the more ultra Tory on family grounds.

One detailed Newcastle handbill by "A Free Born Britain" urges a vote for Liddell since he had come out for abolition of slavery, although not at first and he had been accompanied by a West Indian slave owner on his initial canvas of Newcastle. Bell had favoured mitigating severity, but "he was afraid it could not be abolished altogether." The handbill notes that Lord Morpeth, son of the Earl of Carlisle, had spoken in favour of abolition, and the sitting member, T.W. Beaumont was strongly for abolition. It points out that in the vote on Brougham's motion on the death of the Baptist missionary Smith in Demerara six north-eastern MPs had voted with him, and only two against; and that the present Duke of Northumberland, when in the Commons, had proposed abolition

of slavery itself, as well as the trade, in 1807. This handbill is included at the end of the Lit and Phil compilation "Slave-Trade Blue Books," where it is bound with resolutions on the Smith trial from local non-conformist and missionary societies presented by Dr. J. Fenwick.

The Whigs T.W. Beaumont and Lord Howick took the opportunity to start their general Election campaigns, both declaring in favour of Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation and the abolition of slavery. Beaumont was a controversial figure having been elected in 1818, in succession to his father, as a Tory, but having then turned against the government. But he had also quarrelled with Grey and the Whigs. His supporters accused the latter of preferring to have Howick and a Tory win at the upcoming general election in an aristocratic stitch up to exclude a true independent. Beaumont would fight a duel with John 'Radical Jack' Lambton, during the campaign.

In the event, Bell won 1186 to 1150. Both candidates were welcomed back to Newcastle by large crowds of supporters. A handbill claims that at Bell's celebration, a keelman, in a speech on Pilgrim Street, denounced his treatment of his workers compared to the Liddells' and pointed out that workers such as he could be pressed for the navy or forced into the militia, but could not vote. (The newspapers only recorded such dense crowds that their reporters had problems moving and hearing). One song printed during the campaign said the supporters of both were deluded, since neither candidate would do anything for ordinary people.

Peter Livsey's 's Tyne Bridge Publishing Ebooks

- ***Napoleonic Encounters - The Waldies of Forth House, Newcastle***, includes an important summary of the Quaker Waldies family and business interconnections. Plotting such interconnections and networks are becoming a key aspect of the Project.
- ***William Fifield - A Different Drummer***. This is the story of the free born black West Indian who lived and worked in Newcastle for 40 years until his death in 1834.

To download go to: www.tynebridgepublishing.co.uk/core.nsf/a/tbpebooks.

RESEARCHING THE POOR LAW

Patricia Hix writes:

In 2007 I researched and wrote an article on implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 and the building of the Newcastle upon Tyne Union Workhouse. I was also a volunteer on the National Archives 'Living the Poor Life Project' in 2009. I catalogued correspondence relating to Tynemouth Union. The following key words were common to both projects.

Guardians	elections	Poor Law unions	union districts	outdoor relief
overseers	master	matron	relieving officers	church wardens
workhouse	poor house	parish	poor rates	Poor Law Commissioners
paupers	townships	collectors (<i>of rates</i>)	medical relief	Poor Law Commission
handbills (communication to paupers)	workhouse contracts (<i>farming the poor</i>)	supply contracts - bread , flour, meat, milk etc, clothing, coal etc.	Select Vestry	removals - paupers to Scotland, Ireland by sea
pauper funerals	punishment	visiting committee	indoor labour	dietary table
diseases, e.g. typhus	bastardy laws/policy	Relieving and Settlement Unions (<i>affected miners,</i>	lunatics	rate payer protests
education of pauper children	local staff protest re: Poor Law regulations	Seamen's widows		

Sean adds: The project will be concentrating on the 'popular politics' aspects of the Poor Law, so the main key words which seem most relevant are those in bold.

RESEARCHING 1830S NORTHUMBERLAND RIOTS

Patricia Hix writes:

In 2008 I was a volunteer doing some cataloguing for the mini project the National Archives ran on riots in Northumberland in the 1830s. The content of the correspondence from Northumberland to the Home Office about the miners strikes and machinery breaking that is in the National Archives is very relevant to the Popular Politics project. Unfortunately both Sean and I have had problems searching the National Archives web catalogue for the material I worked on from the Home Office (paper series HO52/14. The information I catalogued is set out below to give an idea of the kind of material in National Archives. There was also work done by other volunteers which may hold important information to guide our searches of North East archives. I have therefore liaised with Paul Carter, who co-ordinated the work at National Archives. Paul has explained that some of the HO 52 material was uploaded straight away. Other material was not when the Poor Law project started, but is scheduled to be added. Paul also points out that there are some other key series which will be of use - some with an online catalogue and some without. He has kindly undertaken a preliminary search for Northumberland OR Durham (AND strike OR disturbance OR riot OR combin*) for the period 1782 to 1850 - within HO (Home Office). He used combin* for combination or combining as in a combination (or trade union of workers).

Over 200 items came up. In the project guidance John and Sean prepared, it is pointed out that not all material is listed in web catalogues and that even those which are do not necessarily have sub-lists. Paul explains how this works out in the Home Office series at National Archives: HO 33 (Post Office): small fully catalogued series.

HO 40 mostly not catalogued (so only a small amount of the material can be seen on the online catalogue).

HO 42 - this has only been catalogued for 3-4 years in the mid 1790s and further work on cataloguing is underway

HO 45 is complete but places/counties are not always mentioned.

HO 52 is not complete but is being worked on. Paul will send us the Project Northumberland and maybe Durham draft versions in Word documents.

Paul also suggests that HO 50 (Military Correspondence) from the Commander in Chief, the Secretary at War, the Board of Ordnance and other military departments relating to the conduct of the French War, 1793 to 1794, and matters of internal defence, militia and volunteer forces, 1782 to 1840 so maybe useful.

Sean adds: I will list for the NEPP Project all the relevant items that Paul identifies. It may indicate a whole series of new key words, and the names of individuals we will need to keep an eye on in our searches with the catalogues within the Region. It will help with the analysis stage later on. It is also hoped that we can find North Easterners living in London who will be interested in looking at all the items in the catalogue and as importantly all the items not listed.

Correspondence to the Home Office from Northumberland Magistrates

1831: April 19th - William Clark, magistrate, Benton House, Newcastle described rioting of coal miners from six principal collieries, intimidation and physical attacks on other coal miners. Machinery was destroyed, mass meetings took place. No protection for those willing to work and inadequate civilian force. Constables unwilling to act as locally connected to miners. Rioters likely to enlist support of seamen, keelmen and factory workers if strong military force not provided. 11,800 coal miners idle on the Tyne and Wear. Peace of Northumberland threatened.

1831: April 20th - Copy of a letter from A. Reed, Mayor of Newcastle to Duke of Northumberland. Refers to coal miners destroying a locomotive machine and wasting coal from wagons at West Moor Rail Road. Men at [Pontop Colliery] laid off, shortage of coal in Newcastle. Request for military force at Heburn denied by [Colonel Power] as no Durham magistrate available. Mass meeting at Jarrow. Reed proposed to take two steam packets of special and regular constables armed with quarterstaves by river. Issuing handbills. Coal miners refuse to work.

1831: April 20 Poster headed 'Caution to Pitmen and Others'. Northumberland magistrates informed coal miners of the law, Act 7th and 8th George IV, Cap. 30 Section 8, listing riotous acts which constituted a felony and carried the death penalty. Include destruction of buildings (types listed) manufacturing and mining machinery, bridges and wagon ways. Issued by Newcastle Clerk of the Peace Office, Newcastle.

1831: April 21 - Letter from Charles William Bigge, C J Clavering, Mr Lawson, R H Brandling and Charles Bigge, magistrate at Northumberland County Court, Newcastle upon Tyne. Alarm at coal miners rioting, fears risks to property while dispute with employers unsettled. Military force inadequate to assist civil force. Yeomanry force assisting at mass meetings of coal miners on both rivers Tyne and Wear. All collieries idle on both rivers and 'in the interior for Lansdale'; factories idle for want of coal. Great distress for lack of coal. Additional military force requested.

1831: April 21 - Letter from the Duke of Northumberland, Northumberland House. Refers to A

Reed, mayor of Newcastle's letter describing riots of coal miners in Newcastle and Morpeth area. Destruction of steam engine. Men from Bedlington Iron Works laid off for lack of coal. Ask for military force to be sent to support Yeomanry and civil force. Ironworkers likely to join force with coal miners in property destruction. Miners sent to Shilbottle Colliery which supplied Alnwick and to then to Berwick to preserve the supplies of coal. Reed's letter refers to miners not returning to work and rioting at Netherton Collieries, near Morpeth and Mr Burdon Sanderson's Colliery at Jesmond. Damage to machinery, ropes and corves thrown into the shaft. Meetings took place at Ballast Hills, Heburn. Special constables sworn in.

1831: April 23rd - Letter from Duke of Northumberland, North House. Requested advice from Crown Officers on extent of magistrates' powers to swear in special constables in a county where organised and continuous rioting taking place. Refers to Shilbottle Colliery, Alnwick.

RADICAL SONGS - Part 1

Sean Creighton writes:

Radical songs go back to at least 1770 when a book was published in London called *The Patriots' Jubilee*, to celebrate the release of John Wilkes from prison on 18 April that year. It contained songs with titles such as *The Enlargement*, and *Middlesex set to tunes like Rule Britannia*. (1) Songs were an important part of radical movement meeting dinners. When the 1688 Revolution was commemorated on 5 November 1792 at the London Tavern, a broadsheet of the songs was published. A key element for the Project is to find evidence of the use of radical songs in the North East.

The song *God Save Great Thomas Paine* was written by Joseph Mather in 1792 to the tune of *God Save Our King*. Mather was born in 1737 and died in 1804. He was a journeyman and then self-employed file maker. He became a popular tavern singer and entertainer. His songs remained popular into the second half of the 19th century, an edition being published in 1862.

The Berry Bush written by J. Field was sung on 8 July 1793 at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand, at the first general meeting of the London Corresponding Society.

In 1794 Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall of the London Corresponding Society were acquitted for High Treason. The second anniversary was celebrated, and two songs written especially for it with words and music for flute, and published in *The Moral and Political Magazine* of the Society. One of the songs was *The Birthday of Our Liberties*.

According to radical song historian John Miller many 'leading members in the movement wrote songs for it, e.g. the poet James Montgomery, Thomas Spence, and John Thelwall, but many other authors were anonymous. The subjects dealt with covered a wide field: the Rights of Man, Tom Paine, the London Corresponding Society, the Revolution of 1688, Benjamin Franklin, the French Revolution. There were many satirical songs about Pitt, Burke (the 'Swinish Multitude'), sinecures, informers, unjust taxes, and so on. The latter were clearly directed against a particular evil, whereas the former, which attempt to define the reformers' aims, although expressed in noble and lofty terms, give no clear indication of how these aims are to be achieved.'

Miller looked at 33 songs. 15 used the tunes of *Rule Britannia*, *Hearts of Oak*, *Vicar of Bray*, and *Lass of Richmond Hill*, others were set to folk tunes such as *Derry Down* and *Chevvy Chase*, and ten songs were from English operas.

When the Navy revolted at Spithead and Nore in 1797, several seamen were hanged including Richard Parker one of the leaders. A song ballad *The Death of Parker* was published. How many North East seamen took part in the revolt?

Early Union Songs

Miller argues that 'The general impression given by the Radical songs is that they are literary productions of educated men, and it is not till the Luddite Risings (1811-12) that examples of the 'workers folk song' appear.' He cites *Cropper Lads*. Many were to come from the mining and

weaving industries, and examples of the latter were to be included in A.L.Lloyd's collection *Come all ye bold miners*. However, there is one from 1805 *The Grinders' Hardships* written by members of the Grinders Misfortune Society in the Crooks district of Sheffield. It was sung for years at the Society's annual festivals.

Songs continued to be used by the radical movement after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Among the processions to Peter's Field on 16 August 1819 were female societies preceded by female bands. The resultant Peterloo Massacre is commemorated in *With Henry Hunt we'll go* (to the tune *The Battle of Waterloo*). It was apparently sung for many years in the Manchester area. There is also *The Union Hymn* by Samuel Bamford and songs on the Reform Bill, and Corn Law Repeal.

During the campaign for a Ten Hour Bill in 1832/3, there was a demonstration involving 17 bands and hundreds of banners to Campfield by the Salford and Manchester Short-Time Committee. Children sang their factory song:

*We will have the Ten Hours Bill
That we will - that we will;
Or the land shall ne'er be still;
We will have the Ten Hours Bill.*

The working-class radical newspaper *The Poor Man's Guardian* (1834) published new words to familiar tunes, like this one to the tune of *The Maid of Langollen*.

*To' humble my cot, and my cares not a few,
I'd willingly toil the long summer-day
through;
And the sun on no happier mortal would shine,
If my toils were rewarded, and Freedom were
mine.*

*But long hours of labour unsweetened by gain,
And the clank and corroding of Slavery's
chain,
And gaunt Famine at hearths where warm
Plenty should shine,
Must sadden men's spirits, and have saddened
mine.*

*Embittered, not broken, those spirits have
been;
One hope 'mid the drear waste of soul is yet
green;*

*Their fraud-purchased power Freedom's foes
shall resign -
Toil shall be rewarded, and Freedom be mine!*

Whether such songs were ever sung at meetings is not clear, but clearly there was felt to be a need.

In the campaign for the Tolpuddle Martyrs a broadside verse *The gathering of the unions* was used at the mass demonstration held on 21 April 1834. Another important anti-trade union case was the trial of Glasgow spinners leaders following the killing of a blackleg during a strike which had started in April 1837. They were tried in January 1838 and sentenced to transportation. Because of the national campaign mounted in their defence this was altered to imprisonment in the prison hulk boats at Woolwich until their pardon in 1840. A song *The Cotton Spinners' Farewell* was published as part of the campaign.

Ebenezer Elliott

Perhaps the most important provider of verses for a range of radical movements was Ebenezer Elliott, a Sheffield mechanic and poet. He is best known for the Anti-Corn Law League song *The Corn-Law Hymn*. He was known as 'the Corn Law Rhymer'. But his wider radical credentials were recognised in the *Poor Man's Guardian* in 1832 which re-printed the following item from Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine*.

'Elliott was born rather more than fifty years since, in a village near the town of Sheffield. There (we use his own strong words, and none can be found so fit) he is still "a dealer in steel, working hard every day; literally labouring with head and hands, and alas with heart too! His father, a man of education and of great humour, was a commercial clerk in an iron establishment, and also a Jacobin - the name given in those days to the friends of liberty by the artifice of its enemies, and meant to express the last degree of whatever was ruffianly and opprobrious. He was, his son writes, "a Jacobin, marked as such, and hunted, literally hunted out of society on that account. The yeomanry used to amuse themselves periodically by backing their horses through his windows! "I," says Elliott, "*I have not forgot the English Reign of Terror; there you have the source of my political*

tendencies.” This holds in thousands of instances besides that of Mr. Elliottt. The blood of the martyrs of freedom in the end of the last century has been the fruitful seed of liberty in this. The children of the persecuted, then, are amongst the most determined of the Radicals now. - Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine.’

Sources:

John Miller. Songs of the Labour Movement. In Lionel M. Munby (ed). *The Luddites and Other Essays*. Michael Katanka (Books) Ltd). 1971)
Edmund and Ruth Frow, *Radical and Red Poets and Poetry*. The Working Class Movement

Library , 1994
Eddie & Ruth Frow. Manchester and Salford Chartists. 1990.

Further Reading on the North East by Dave Harker:

Fakesong: The Manufacture of British Folk Song, 1700 to the Present Day.

[*Songs and verse of the North-East pitmen c. 1780-1844.*](#) Surtees Society.

A Warning. Dave Harker. *Folk Music Journal*. Vol. 6, No. 3 (1992), pp. 299-338 Published by [English Folk Dance & Song Society.](#)