

Labour
Heritage



Labour Heritage

Bulletin Autumn 2017

Contents:

Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society / Mary Miller

Walter Ayles MP / Barbara Humphries

1907 in Chiswick/ John Grigg

Report of Essex Labour History Conference

**Book Reviews – Citizen Clem /Mike Watts;
Morgan Phillips/Linda Shampan**

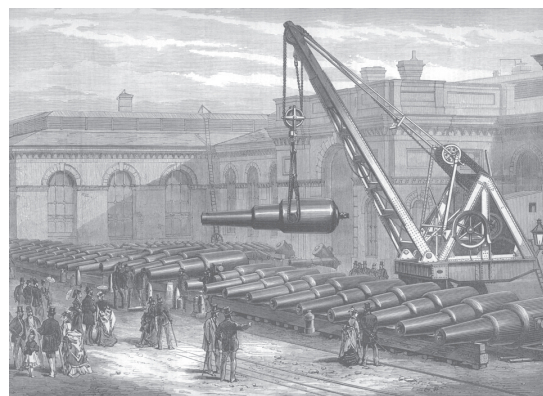
Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society

By Mary Miller

For some time now I have been reading histories on early labour movement activity in Labour Heritage and elsewhere. I see little mention of Woolwich and early activity in trade union, co-operative and Labour Party history there. There have been a number of studies of aspects of Woolwich's Labour history and I have also attended many talks using material which was never written up by the speaker. I am

grateful for the recent *Survey of London* volume on Woolwich, edited by Peter Guillery, which has put into print material which, at least, gives me something respectable to quote here.

Woolwich: an Industrial Town



Woolwich Arsenal

It is important to put Woolwich into context. It is an early industrial town where at least two very large establishments employed many men. Henry VIII commissioned his 'Great Harry' in 1512 – a ship of 'unparalleled size', to be built here and the dockyard subsequently was developed on neighbouring sites. A hundred years later, to quote the *Survey of London: Woolwich*, it was 'for size and quantity of its vessels, among the most important shipyards of

17th century Europe'. The adjacent ropeyard dated from the 1570s and closed around 1800. These were huge workplaces employing "large waged workforces, without parallel at the time" and certainly long before anything which is now described as the 'industrial revolution'. To this we have to add the Arsenal which from the late 17th century expanded into a workplace of a staggering size. It is said that 80,000 people were employed there in the Great War – although that may not have included the staff on its several internal railways, or indeed the 'Woolwich Navy'. To these we have to add a local quarrying industry, the normal activities of a town and of course the busy river. The point I am making is that in Woolwich there were some very large workplaces very much earlier than is normally supposed - and what we would understand as trade union and labour related activity went along with that.

By the late 18th century 'labour relations in the dockyards had become institutionally fractious' with a 'well organised' workforce. There were many issues including the long running dispute over 'chips' - pieces of spare wood which workers were allowed to take home as a 'perk'. This system went on for many, many years and the history is not without amusement at the ruses deployed by workers to exploit it – it has been suggested that whole houses in Woolwich were constructed of 'chips'. There were strikes and other actions. I remember being told by a long dead researcher that he had traced the earliest description of picketing to Woolwich dockyard in 1777. Out of this grew a culture of workplace solidarity and mutualism

It must also be noted in terms of Woolwich history that until 1963 the Borough included what is now known as North Woolwich in the London Borough of Newham – although all traces of this South London connection appear to have been removed. This area also had a large industrial base which included the Harland and Woolf shipyard, the biggest such yard in London and extant until 1972. This area clearly made a difference in terms of labour organisation and electoral success.

Co-operative Societies in Woolwich

The earliest Woolwich co-operatives were obviously on a different model to the later consumer organisations set up at Rochdale and elsewhere, but that should not deny their existence. The *Survey of London: Woolwich* tells us that a 'retail society with its own corn mill' was established following a clash between the ship wrights society and the Navy Board in 1757. This stood in what is still called Mill Lane, and included a bakery. Despite a fire and other problems it appears to have survived into the 1840s. In addition to the mill there was a co-operative butchers' shop in 1805, a baking society in 1842 and a coal society in the 1850s. Rita Rhodes, in her book on Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, *An Arsenal for Labour*, says it has been claimed, that when the Dockyard closed in the 1860s there were suggestions that it could be run as a co-operative.

This was a progression which led to the setting up of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS) in the 1860s. This is not the place to go into detail on the mighty RACS – there are a number of histories, and alongside them the efforts of Ron Roffey to preserve what is left. As the last Company Secretary of RACS, Ron

had an enormous collection of material which filled two floors of RACS vast Powis Street department store. RACS was a huge and all encompassing organisation providing cultural activity, an education department, housing estates, a large factory on the old Dockyard site, a mine and much else along with the shopping. As an organisation it was active in promoting co-operative-supporting candidates in elections from the 1890s.

When the Co-operative Party began to grow after the Great War, to quote Rita Rhodes, 'the Co-operative Movement took one decision, the RACS another'. Out of this grew the Political Purposes Committee. Its history and development has been outlined by Rita Rhodes and indeed there are still many around who were members of it. RACS was the only co-operative society affiliated directly to the national Labour Party and a number of distinguished members of the Party's National Executive Committee originated from it, including, among others, Arthur Skeffington and John Cartwright.

In 1985 RACS ceased to exist and became part of Co-operative Wholesale Society. Although most of the smaller shops remain open, as does the funeral business, the huge Woolwich department stores have closed, including one with a statue of founder Alexander MacLeod which is now a Travelodge. The art deco store which stands opposite is now flats. There are many other relics if you know where to look – for instance there is a dramatic wall sign in Bostall Lane, Plumstead, which is surrounded by the Co-op based street names of the RACS estate. Nearby is the Abbey Wood camp site where the original reception building had originated as a

canteen for workers in the adjacent RACS mine. The mine, incidentally, has proved to be a subject of great interest to students of such underground structures.

Out of the Co-op movement in Woolwich a number of things have come. Greenwich Council has championed co-operative structures where possible. Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency is over 30 years old, now employs some 40 staff and is a leader, particularly in the field of healthy eating. I would also encourage all readers to enquire who is running their local leisure centre. You never know, it might be part of a Woolwich based social enterprise – but it would be better if you find out about this yourself.



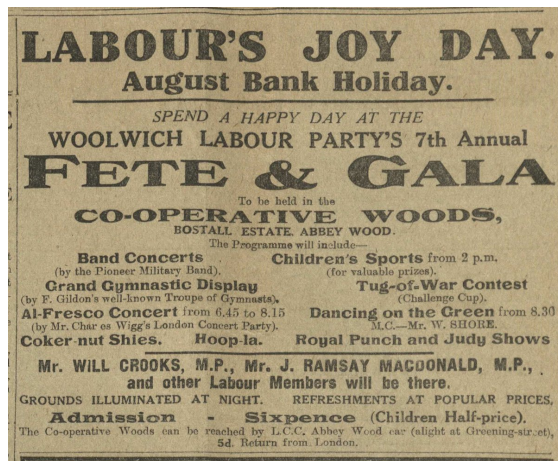
Co-operative Store in Woolwich

With the end of RACS, the Political Purposes Committee had to go and a Co-operative Party branch was set up. That wasn't particularly difficult to do and we were quickly one of the biggest branches in terms of membership, and certainly one of the most active.

Woolwich Labour Party

In early 20th century Woolwich, close behind the Co-op came the Labour Party. A Labour Representation Committee had been set up in 1900 and contested elections to Woolwich Borough Council under the

aegis of the Woolwich and Plumstead Progressive Association. Woolwich Trades Council was active, as was the Independent Labour Party. From 1902 a series of by elections were won by candidates described as 'Labour'. In November 1902 Will Crooks was selected as Labour Parliamentary candidate, winning with a 3,229 majority. It was immediately decided to set up the Woolwich Labour Representation Association, later known as Woolwich Labour Party.



This was followed by more electoral success and Labour took control of Woolwich Borough Council 1903, and took the two county council seats in 1904. The history of Will Crooks' role in Woolwich has been written by Paul Tyler and that should be read for all the details. Woolwich Council has evolved into the Royal Borough of Greenwich and Labour councillors for its Woolwich seats continue to be returned with massive majorities. It is however only fair to point out that over the past 116 years our vote has sometimes fallen and in a couple of occasions the Tories have reigned briefly in Woolwich Town Hall!

Offices were set up at 3 Woolwich New Road which also functioned as a printer's office and from 1904 Woolwich Labour Party produced a weekly paper, *The Pioneer*, which continued until after the Great War. Most importantly and uniquely, the early Woolwich Labour Party had an individual membership from its inception. I was told by a researcher of its tight organisation, with 'street captains' to oversee the individual membership locally. Like the vote the membership has had its ups and downs - in 1953 it was 9,761.

In a history of Woolwich Labour Party, written in the 1950s, (*Fifty Years of the Woolwich Labour Party 1903-1953*, edited by R.B. Stucke), there is very little mention of events around the setting up of the national party or indeed of early electoral successes outside of Woolwich. It does however note the setting up of the national party in 1918 and comments 'the principle of individual membership was accepted by the national party and embodied in its new constitution drawn up in 1918'.

Woolwich Borough Council became part of the London Borough of Greenwich in the 1960s – not without some angst on the part of both Woolwich and Greenwich. Greenwich's new Town Hall was sold off while Woolwich had to rename theirs' as 'Greenwich Town Hall' – a subject which still, after over fifty years, provokes some angst on Greenwich doorsteps.

Woolwich Labour Party is technically no longer with us. In 1993 changes in constituency boundaries joined a substantial part of Woolwich to Greenwich and it is now part of Greenwich and Woolwich Labour Party. It no longer has

an office in Woolwich, but what was the Woolwich West Constituency is covered by an office in Eltham for the Eltham Constituency. The Greenwich and Woolwich Party is based at the old Greenwich Party Office in the Woolwich Road, their home since 1926. The site of the old Woolwich office is now in a redevelopment area but it is hoped a commemorative plaque can go on whatever finally is built there.

There is little now to remind us of Woolwich's labour heritage. I have outlined some of the RACS relics but we need to look hard for some memorial to the labour movement in a town which pioneered so much. Perhaps we should find a memorial in some of the earlier and very popular cottage housing estates, at Pleasaunce Park, the huge areas of woodland, at the early electricity-from-rubbish generator and the many other things which Woolwich's Labour Council established for the people of Woolwich, and some of which, like their power station, they had to reluctantly relinquish. But keep in mind that even in these hard times the Royal Borough has opened libraries rather than close them and perhaps another memorial is our still very substantial Party membership.

None of the above is original – it is based on the following – and please read them for more and better information

Andrew Saint and Peter Guillery, *Survey of London : Woolwich*, (2012)
Paul Tyler, *Labour's Lost Leader*, (2007)
R.B. Stucke, (ed), *Fifty Years History of the Woolwich Labour Party 1903-1953*
John Keys, *A Journey with the Labour Movement*, (2003)

John Laxton, *The Making of a Labour Victory: Woolwich in the Years up to 1903*, (1975)

Rita Rhodes. *An Arsenal for Labour*, (1998)

Ron Roffey, *The Co-operative Way: The Origins and Progress of the Royal Arsenal and South Suburban Co-operative Societies*, (1999)

E.F.E.Jefferson, *The Woolwich Story: 1890-1965*, (1970)

Websites – there are a number of websites covering Woolwich and Plumstead history – <http://www.plumstead-stories.com/>
For the Mine see www.kurg.org.uk and <http://www.subbrit.org.uk/>, for GCD A <https://gcd.a.coop/>



Will Crooks, elected as MP for Woolwich in 1903

Walter Ayles : the First Labour MP for Southall and Hayes

By Barbara Humphries

Walter Ayles was elected as the first Labour MP for Southall and Hayes in 1945. When the Hayes and Harlington constituency was created, ahead of the 1950 General Election, he was elected MP for Hayes and Harlington.

Walter Ayles was a member of the Amalgamated Union of Engineers (AEU). He was born and grew up in Lambeth where he served his engineering apprenticeship with the London and South-Western Railway. However, during an industrial dispute, where he was unwilling to strike break, he left this company, and after six months of being unemployed he moved to Birmingham to resume his engineering trade. During his time in Birmingham he became district secretary of the local AEU. In 1904 he joined the local Independent Labour Party (ILP), and was elected to the Birmingham Board of Guardians.

In 1910 Ayles moved to Bristol to become a full time general secretary for the Bristol ILP. Within years its membership trebled to 670. He was elected to Bristol Council in 1912. During his time on Bristol Council, which lasted until 1922 he wrote two pamphlets entitled *Bristol's Next Step* and in 1923 *What a Socialist Town Council* would do. In these he argued that services such as health, transport and the public utilities should be run by the community, not by private companies for profit. When it became clear that everyone would benefit, they would gladly pay their rates. He also advocated municipal banking. He became chairman of Bristol

Labour Party, and was to be elected as MP for Bristol North 1929-1931.

Ayles was also a member of the ILP's National Administrative Committee. During World War I he had been a conscientious objector, and had gone to prison for his political beliefs. Like many other members of the ILP, he was still in prison at the time of the 1918 Election, so was unable to stand for Parliament, although he had been selected as a Labour candidate for the Bristol East parliamentary division. During the War he spent two and a half years in prison, having faced court trials and military tribunals five times. He held office in the No Conscription Fellowship, and in 1920 helped to found the No More War Movement. For a time he was a Methodist preacher, but after the War he joined the Quakers. In his pamphlet *Why I Worked for Peace during the Great War*, he said that he opposed all war as a socialist and a Christian. He concluded that 'I love my country too much to see it plunged into the crime of war.'

Ayles had stood for Parliament seven times in Bristol. When he failed to win in the 1935 General Election, he moved to London, where he was elected to the Orpington Urban District Council. He was also selected as Labour candidate for the Uxbridge Parliamentary Division, which at that time, included Hayes and Harlington. He was familiar with the area, as he had visited Hayes in 1913, to advise local councillors on getting elected to the Hayes Urban District Council. There was not to be another general election until 1945. Ahead of the 1945 General Election, boundary changes had led to the break-up of the Uxbridge parliamentary division,

and the creation of new divisions, including Southall, which included Hayes and Harlington.

Hayes: Growth of an Industrial Town

At the beginning of the 20th century Hayes was a collection of five villages. One of these, known as Botwell, alongside the Great Western Railway was to become the centre of Hayes as we know it today. It was part of West Middlesex, an area dedicated to orchards and brick-making for the London market. Between 1901 and 1931 the population of Hayes grew by 144%, and that of Botwell alone, from 2,651 to 10,000. By 1946 the total population of Hayes was estimated at 66,000 and growing. Workers were attracted to Hayes by the growing number of factories which opened, particularly alongside the railway. Some of these, like EMI, known locally as the Gram, had relocated from central London. By 1929 it was employing 14-15,000 workers. During World War 1 a local munitions factory was opened south of the railway line, employing thousands of workers, who travelled into Hayes every day on workmen's trains. After the war it was converted to peacetime production, and became Nestles. During World War 2 Hayes was to be a centre for the aircraft engineering industry, with factories such as Fairey Aviation.

Hayes Council

Workers streaming into Hayes everyday could not find accommodation locally. This was a challenge to Hayes Urban District Council (UDC), which was run by the local Labour Party during most of the interwar years. With government funds from the Wheatley Housing Act, (John

Wheatley was Minister for Health in the first Labour Government) Hayes UDC built what was described as a 'new city', the Townfield Housing Estate, one of the best housing schemes in London at the time. By 1929 6,500 new homes had been built in Hayes, for rent or for sale. As well as housing, schools, shops and a whole new community had to be built, on land which had previously been occupied by fruit trees. Did Walter Ayles inspire the Hayes UDC with his pamphlet on what a socialist council should do? It was praised in an article in the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) journal, the *Railway Review*, which ran a series on Labour councils, 'Can Labour Rule?' in 1928. It described Hayes council's achievements in house-building, public health and rates collection. Some NUR members were councillors in Hayes, including Edward Hartley, born in Swindon, who in 1932 became the youngest chairman of a UDC in the country, at the time.

Hayes Labour Party

Hayes in 1918 was part of the Uxbridge parliamentary division, which included most of the current borough of Hillingdon, and parts of Ealing, such as Southall and Northolt. Much of it was still rural in 1918, but Southall, as a railway town was its working class centre. In 1918 the Labour Party ran a candidate for the first time. The Representation of the People Act of 1918 increased the electorate threefold, giving all men over 21, and women over 30 the vote. The electorate of Uxbridge increased by 60%, from 1910, up to 29,442. Labour had hopes of winning the seat and ran a high profile candidate, called Harry Gosling. Gosling was a leader of the Transport Workers, and also led the

Labour Group on the London County Council. He did not win the seat but trailed the Conservatives by 6,251 votes to 9,812, much to the consternation of the Conservative candidate, Colonel Peel. With solid support amongst railway workers in Southall and a growing working class population in Hayes, the Labour Party had Uxbridge in its sights. However the closest it came to winning the seat was in 1929, when it doubled its vote to 38%, losing to the Conservative by 16,422 to 17,770. Reginald Bridgeman was the Labour candidate. By 1929 women over 21 had won the vote, and the electorate of Uxbridge increased from 29,442 in 1918 to 59,603, a majority of whom were women.

Hayes Labour Party and Trades Council was part of the Uxbridge Divisional Labour (DLP), created as a result of the 1918 Constitution, which allowed for individual membership of the Party. Previously one could only be an affiliated member from a trades union or socialist society. Uxbridge DLP was run by a delegate body, which met on a monthly basis. At its formation in 1919, it had 8 delegates from Hayes, 5 from Uxbridge, 2 from West Drayton, and 13 from Southall. Many delegates were trades unionists particularly from the NUR and the AEU, which provided much of the funding for elections. By the late 1930s the Uxbridge DLP had one of the largest memberships in the country, 2,594. It was acknowledged by Labour Party HQ that the fastest growing parties, were in areas of high population growth, such as Greater London. On new housing estates, organisations like the Labour Party Women's Sections, and the Women's Co-operative Guild took root in new housing

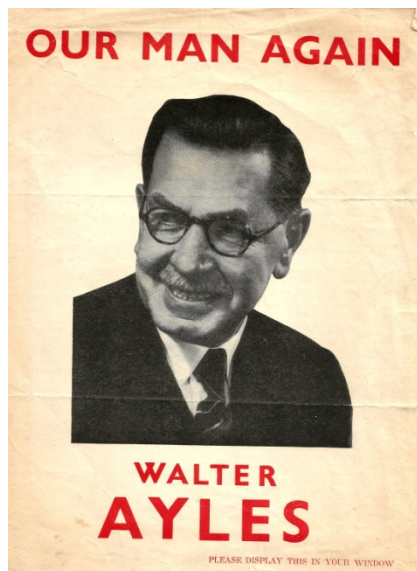
estates, where many families had relocated from older industrial areas to work in the factories across west London. In Hayes and Southall many came from the 'distressed areas' in the 1930s, such as South Wales. During the interwar years the Co-op had more members than the trades unions. Locally there had been a co-operative society in Yiewsley since 1893 and this amalgamated with the London Co-operative Society in 1931. International Co-operators Day was celebrated in Hayes each year with a large fete, which included speeches from politicians but also a pageant, sports day and fireworks exhibition. It was described as 'a continuous programme of events lasting for eight hours, such as had rarely been equalled in Hayes.'

The 1945 General Election in Hayes

In 1945 Hayes was part of a newly created Southall constituency with 78,652 voters. Walter Ayles was the Labour candidate. Days before the election the local Conservatives were still claiming that they had a 50/50 chance of winning the seat. In fact the result was Walter Ayles 37,404, Colonel Barker (Conservative) 13,347, and a Liberal candidate won 7,598. It turned out to be a stormy campaign, where Colonel Barker was regularly heckled at public meetings. The Labour candidate had to call for restraint on the part of his supporters! Even Winston Churchill faced problems in Uxbridge when campaigners held up posters for Frank Beswick, the Labour candidate, at a rally in the town centre. Beswick narrowly won in Uxbridge, and in neighbouring Ealing West, James Hudson, friend of Ayles from his ILP days, comfortably won a majority.

Much has been said of the importance of the Services vote in the 1945 General Election, and these were young first time voters, but they only comprised 10% of the electorate in Southall. More significant was what happened on the home front, with massive support for the Labour candidate from engineering workers in local factories. The AEU organised dinner time political meetings to discuss Labour's manifesto *Let Us Face the Future*, and the *Beveridge Report*, which was to be the foundation of Britain's welfare state. No less than 40 factory gate meetings were held across the Southall District of the AEU, to 'counter the Tory menace', and on election day, shop stewards called on their members to stop work at lunch time, in order to report to the local Labour Party agent for canvassing duties. As one trades union official said, 'we have waited ten years for this'.

Walter Ayles as MP



(poster from the 1950s)

By the 1950 General Election there had been boundary changes. Hayes and Harlington was now a separate constituency for the first time and Walter

Ayles was its candidate. He stood again in 1951, winning Hayes decisively with 23,823 to 12,949 votes for the Conservative candidate. He was replaced in the Southall constituency, now including Hanwell, with George Pargiter, also a member of the AEU. He also won, with a majority of over 8,000. In 1953 Ayles stood down due to ill health, and was replaced by Arthur Skeffington, in a by-election. Ayles died soon afterwards.

Ayles retained the loyalty of electors in Hayes. In the 1950 General Election he won with an 85% poll, 92% on the Townfield Estate. He robustly defended the government's record on home policy, saying that productivity had increased by 38%, price controls had meant that there had been no starvation as in the 1930s, and the welfare state had been set up. On foreign policy however he was more critical, disliking British foreign policy on Greece, which he said, had imposed a reactionary government on the Greek people, and he opposed the National Service Bill, along with 70 other Labour MPs. This had maintained compulsory conscription. So Ayles' long term commitment to oppose militarism had remained. In 1950 Labour won 100% control of Hayes council, a position which it was to maintain for over a decade. In some wards the only opposition came from the Communist Party which had a strong base in factories such as EMI and Fairey Aviation.

Sources – *ILP archive (LSE)*, *Hayes Gazette*, *Middlesex County Times*, *Hayes Peoples History*, (<http://ourhistory-hayes.blogspot.co.uk/>), *Southall and Uxbridge Labour Party archives (London Metropolitan Archives)*.

Essex Conference on Labour History

The 16th Essex Conference on Labour History was held at the Labour Hall, Witham, on Saturday 28th October. It was attended by around 70 people, some of them regular attendees and some newcomers, which was very welcome. It was sponsored by Labour Heritage, Essex Labour Campaign Forum and the SW Essex Co-operative Party Council.

After opening remarks from Charles Cochran of the Essex Labour Campaign Forum, the conference heard contributions from four speakers.

Labour's Traditional Objectives

The first of these was Francis Beckett, author of many books about Labour politicians. His subject was *The Labour Party's Traditional Objectives*. He began by quoting Clement Attlee, who said that political definition was to be resisted. Attlee was a pragmatist, whose conversion to socialism came from his experience of the poverty that he had witnessed whilst working in the East End of London. At the beginning of the 20th century, life expectancy in the East End was 36, and 1 in 3 children died before reaching adulthood. Another Labour politician, Herbert Morrison had once said that socialism was 'what Labour governments did.' In 1906, when the Labour Party was born, it did not have an explicitly socialist programme, but its 29 MPs were backing a Liberal Government, committed to social reforms such as a minimum wage. Such social legislation was to survive throughout the 20th century, until the Thatcher government of the 1980s.

In 1918 the Labour Party adopted a new constitution, which included a socialist clause, committing to public ownership. (Clause 4, Part 4). In his book *The Labour Party in Perspective* Attlee was uncompromising about this, arguing that any attempts to drop its commitment to nationalisation and public ownership would be fatal for the Party. He also warned about the dangers of internal divisions and conflict. In 1959 after three election defeats, Hugh Gaitskell tried unsuccessfully to get rid of Clause 4, Part 4. It took a leader, Tony Blair, without much in the way of socialist political beliefs, to achieve that aim.

Francis explained that throughout the last century there had been moments when there was a mood for political change. These had included 1906, 1918, 1931, and 1945. They had resulted in political events which had led to a decisive turn to the left or right in British politics. The 1945 General Election had seen a turn to the left which had led to the implementation of the welfare state and free health care. James Callaghan had identified 1979, as another year of a sea-change in politics, as it ushered in the Thatcher era of free market economics. These were opportunities when the political super-tanker could be changed to a different political direction. Another opportunity had come in 1997, with a landslide Labour majority. On this occasion however, prime minister, Tony Blair had not used this opportunity to change the political landscape, and had left the super-tanker facing the same direction. Now this opportunity for political change has arisen again.

So what next? What should we make of Jeremy Corbyn as compared to other

Labour leaders? He is not Clement Attlee, and would probably have supported the ILP, Stafford Cripps and the Bevanites, had he lived at the time. However Francis thought that Jeremy has some of the same characteristics as Attlee. A quietly spoken, older politician, who knows what he wants to deliver in politics, and can see that there is at present the mood for a sea-change in British politics.

Reflections on the 1917 Russian Revolution

The second speaker was Francis King, of the University of East Anglia, School of History, who gave his reflections on the 1917 Russian Revolution. He said that the 1917 Revolution had global significance. Socialists looked to Russia for hope. This had led to myth and reality, an imagined revolution versus an actual revolution, and the search for an explanation for what had gone wrong, like why had it happened in a backward country.

We should look at it through the eyes of those who made the Revolution in 1917. What were their options and what did they hope to achieve. We should see it in the context of Europe at the beginning of the 20th century.

Russia was an autocracy run by the Romanov dynasty. As in Europe throughout the 19th century, revolution against autocracy had freedom for the people as its main aim. Political parties in Russia – Liberals, Socialists, Social Democrats, had survived an underground existence under the reign of the Tsars. Many others had faced prison and death for their political views.

The first revolution came in 1905, after Russia was defeated in a war with Japan. The hardship in the aftermath led to strikes, mutinies, seizure of land in protest. On Bloody Sunday a demonstrators led by a priest had been gunned down by state forces. The regime made concessions with the setting up of a Duma (parliament), but this did not meet the demands of its opponents for freedom. A Soviet (workers council) was set up in St Petersburg. Leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky came to the fore. The scene for 1917 was set at that time.



Petrograd Soviet

In 1914 Russia entered World War 1 on the side of Britain and France. As in the rest of Europe, the result of the war would depend on where the home front cracked first. This happened in February in 1917 in Russia with demonstrations, which began on International Women's Day, in protest against food shortages. Revolution was back on the agenda. Events moved very quickly when the government moved to close down the Duma. This led to further protest, including mutinies in the Russian army. The St Petersburg Soviet came back to life. When the government resigned and the Tsar abdicated, it was already too late to stem further discontent. Russia became a republic in March 1917. But there were continuing fears of a restoration of the

Tsar with the course of the revolution taking twists and turns throughout the year and there was growing support for the Soviets, which deepened the revolution. In April Lenin and the Bolsheviks began their campaign against the Provisional Government, in support of the Soviets.

When the Soviets took power in October 1917, the Russian state was falling to pieces. The Bolsheviks had no state machine. They were ruling by decrees, for example, bread, peace and land, with no means of implementing these. In elections to the Constituent Assembly, the peasants' party, the Social Revolutionaries won a majority. This led to civil war between them and the Bolsheviks. Declaring for peace and appealing to the world working class, the Bolsheviks were faced with a humiliating peace imposed upon them by the German Kaiser, under the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. They then had to construct organs of internal defence (the Chekha) and external defence, in the form of the Red Army. In the meantime the economy was collapsing. A war command economy was created, in order to win the Civil War and external wars. By the time Stalin assumed power, world revolution was on the wane, and the idea of socialism in one country, seemed to many of the Bolsheviks, to be the only practical way forward. This controversial outcome has been endlessly debated by socialists over the decades.

100 Years of the Co-operative Party

In the afternoon Stan Newens gave a talk on the centenary of the Co-operative Party. The full text of this speech, also given at the Labour Heritage AGM earlier in the year was reproduced in an article for the *Labour Heritage Summer 2017 bulletin*.

Stan urged everyone to join their local Co-op, and the Co-operative Party, which had branches throughout the country. He made the point that now re-nationalisation is back on the agenda for the Labour Party, the aims of the Co-op, that of democratic control and ownership, should also be to the forefront.

James Keir Hardie

Barbara Humphries gave a talk on Keir Hardie, the founder of the Labour Party. The centenary of the death of Keir Hardie was in September 2015. It was marked by the Keir Hardie Society with an exhibition, in Cumnock, the town in Lanarkshire where he was born. It also brought out a book entitled *What Would Keir Hardie Say?* This included contributions from Jeremy Corbyn and Owen Smith.

Keir Hardie is a legend, our first MP and leader. One member of the Shadow Cabinet, Keir Starmer, has been named after him. In his time however, he was very controversial. One quotation from him 'I am an agitator – my work has consisted in trying to stir up divine discontent', indicated that he was not one for compromise.

His main political achievement was the creation of a political party of labour, independent of all other political parties. As he said, the working class should not be divided between the Liberals and the Tories. A Liberal boss is no better than a Tory boss. Initially a Liberal himself, he came to this conclusion, after a bitter industrial dispute in the Lanarkshire coal field in 1886, when he was secretary of the Scottish Miners Association. He was also aggrieved that the local Liberals in

Lanarkshire had not given him a free run against the local Tory candidate in the 1888 General Election. In 1892, however he was elected as an independent Labour MP for West Ham, in a campaign which attracted widespread working class support, and broke decisively with any Liberal traditions. In Parliament he made his mark as an MP who stood up for working people, and campaigned on behalf of the unemployed. Like some of the new Labour MPs today, he provoked the wrath of the Tories for not playing the parliamentary game. He was asked if he had come to 'work on the roof,' and he replied, 'no, the floor,' We are reminded of the current Labour MP who was told by a Tory, that a lift in the House of Commons, could not be used by the cleaners. How little has changed in over 100 years.

The problems of poverty and inequality are still with us. Hardie successfully pressed the Liberal Government 1906-1914 to introduce free school meals, because a hungry child could not learn. Hardie died in despair at the outbreak of World War 1, which saw the Labour Party, like the other parties of the Socialist International, join a wartime coalition government. This was to divide the labour movement. After the war however it united around a programme which included a minimum wage, 8 hour working day, nationalisation and progressive taxation, and it was into government within five years.

The winter 2015 Labour Heritage Bulletin carried two articles on Keir Hardie, including the legacy of his internationalism. <http://www.labour-heritage.com/lhbulletinwinter2015.pdf>

Local Labour History, 1907: A Complimentary Dinner in Chiswick

By John Grigg

To celebrate the proud progress made in the local elections for Chiswick and Acton, a complimentary dinner was given at the Roebuck Hotel, Chiswick High Rd, on Monday 27 May 1907. The four successful candidates were present – Tom O'Brien and William McConnell of Chiswick and Robert Dunsmore and Joe Shillaker of Acton. Representatives of several local trade unions and the Acton, Chiswick & Ealing Independent Labour Party branches were present. Mr E.J. Neville proposed the toast of 'The Labour Party in Parliament'.

Will Thorne, MP for West Ham South, in responding, wondered if the thirty Labour MPs had been forcible enough in the House, but not all were socialists, and the socialist members had to present a united front with the others. The Liberal government had disappointed many members. Old age pensions could not be had without taxing the rich and the majority of the government were rich men. Certainly Mr Asquith would not tax himself with others to return to the workers in their old age some portion of the wealth that they alone had created.

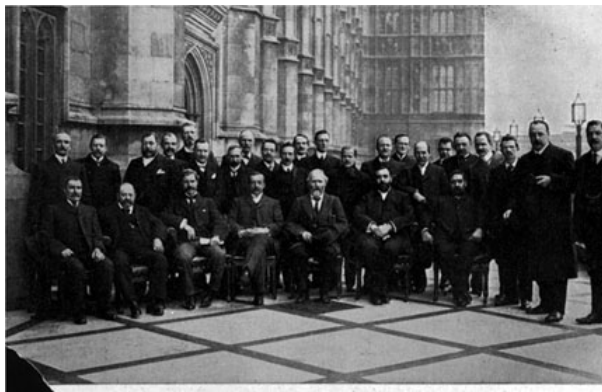
Two measures stand to the credit of the Labour members. The Trades Disputes Bill was passed as a result of pressure from organised labour and The Workmen's Compensation Act was advantageously amended largely by the action of Thomas Summerbell, Labour MP for Sunderland.

The Liberal ship owner and the Tory colliery proprietor both vote in the same lobby in defence of the capitalist and against the workman. He hoped those present would work to increase the number of Labour MPs and they would soon have

a socialist and Labour member for this part of Middlesex. (cheers).

George Belt, Labour candidate for Hammersmith at the 1906 general election, proposed the toast of the 'Labour Candidates' and the four Labour councillors responded.

Miss F.Hunt played the piano and there were songs and a ventriloquist and sleight of hand entertainment. The company separated at 12 o'clock after singing the Red Flag.



Labour MPs elected in 1906

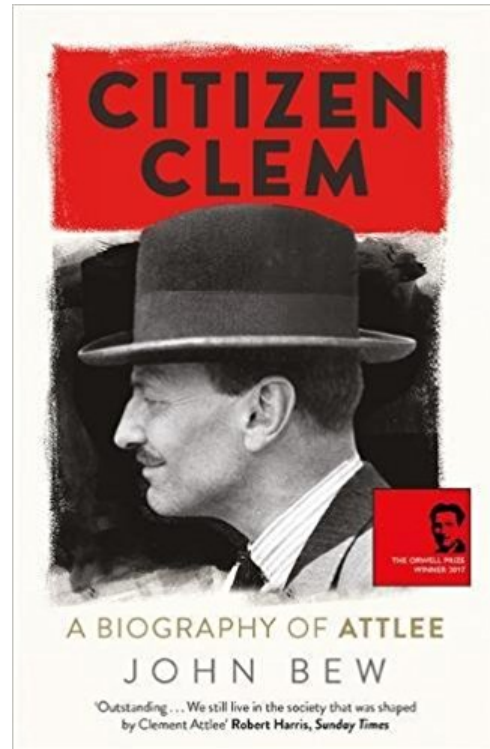


Blue plaque for Thomas Summerbell

Book Reviews

Citizen Clem: A Biography by John Bew, (London, Quercus, 2017)

Reviewed by Mike Watts



Few thought he was even a starter

There were those who thought themselves smarter

But he ended PM

CH & OM

An Earl and a knight of the Garter

C.R Attlee (a short poem by Clement Attlee)

When historians are polled on who was the greatest Prime Minister of the 20th Century, it is not unusual to find Clem Attlee, either top or second. Certainly, there is little argument that he was one of the greatest of our modern PMs and

certainly the most effective leader the Labour Party has produced so far. Yet if anybody had voiced this opinion when Attlee was Prime Minister they would probably have been laughed at.

It is in retrospect that we see more clearly Attlee's incredible achievement in guiding the beginnings of the transformation of our society from an Edwardian colonial power to a modern 20th century nation with the beginnings of the welfare state, public control of the basic industries, the dismantling of the old Empire and its transition into the Commonwealth.

John Bew's book is the latest in a series of biographies that have helped bring about this reappraisal. In particular, the rich detail of Attlee's early life gives us a much clearer view of how this modest, quintessentially middle class public schoolboy came to lead probably the greatest social revolution in our history. It tells how the lifelong influence of his pacifist brother combined with his experience of the trenches in World War 1 and his work in the poverty of the East End of London led Attlee to the realisation that democratic socialism was the only answer for Britain's future. This, combined with the simple patriotism learned from family and the deeply colonial Haileybury School, helped give him a perspective that enabled him to understand the views and aspirations of both the middle classes and the working classes, the people who gave him an overwhelming mandate in 1945.

The book gives us both a deeper and wider insight into Attlee the loving and loved family man, the lover and writer of poetry and limericks.

We learn of Attlee's progress into politics, first as Mayor of Stepney working closely with the Mayor of Poplar, George Lansbury, and other London Labour Mayors, to fight against the deep rooted poverty of the East End. His involvement with many of the organisations of the East End as well as its people brought about a mutual and lasting affection. Later in the book, Bew records how during World War 2, Deputy Prime Minister Attlee visited Stepney every morning following an air raid.

We can see from this phase of his political career the seeds of the Prime Minister he was to become. "He had procedure to his finger-tips", his speaking style was "intensely concentrated, firm –almost curt-precise, and unmistakable sentences". In charring meetings he was always "neutral". Bew later contrasts Deputy Prime Minister Attlee and Prime Minister Churchill's contrasting styles of charring the cabinet.

We are then taken on to Attlee's early parliamentary career and how his early interest in India moulded his views about the desirability of Indian independence.

Bew describes how Attlee was in the right place at the right time when, following unseating of his old friend George Lansbury as party leader he virtually inherited the leadership. He leaves little room for doubt that this only occurred because all of the big beasts including Herbert Morrison had been defeated in the massacre of the 1931 General Election following the MacDonald betrayal. Nor was there much doubt that he was only keeping the leader's seat warm for Herbert Morrison whose return to the House was

confidently expected following the next General Election.

To everyone's surprise, following Morrison's return, Attlee soundly defeated him in the ensuing leadership contest.

As the thirties progressed, the Parliamentary Labour Party grew in size and the big beasts returned, Attlee had to learn to lead a parliamentary party blessed with many talented members but many large egos. This group of politicians, Cripps, Dalton, Morrison, Bevan etc. were with the addition of Ernie Bevin, to form the nucleus of the 1945 Labour Government. The explanation of how Attlee cajoled the Labour Party into supporting rearmament is skilfully explained.

Bew is particularly informative about Attlee's relationship with Churchill in the war cabinet and the extent to which Attlee was able to influence the Prime Minister at vital stages of the war.

The 1945 victory and the two subsequent Labour Governments are dealt with in great detail. The skills Attlee showed in giving the disparate personalities Bevin, Bevan, Morrison and Cripps their head yet reining them in as necessary is analysed. A couple of delicious Attlee moments are revealed. First the pithy advice to new Labour members: "do not talk in the lobby of the Commons; do not loiter or dine in West End restaurants; do not converse with Lord Beaverbrook." Second, following a lengthy monologue on post war West Germany from Bevanite intellectual backbench MP Richard Crossman, Attlee's dismissive response was "I saw your mother last week. She is looking very well."

Following the 1951 defeat Bew relates the deep divisions between the Bevanite and Gaitskellite wings of the Party and Attlee's role in ensuring that the leadership was denied to Herbert Morrison.

This book is a weighty one, 668 pages to be precise, yet it is immensely readable and succeeds in giving us a much deeper appreciation of the human side of this modest, principled and determined man who, despite errors and acts of misjudgement along the way, succeeded in transforming our country from the ruin and poverty of 1945 to the welfare state and National Health Service of which we are rightly proud despite subsequent and indeed current attempts to dismantle them.

It is a vital read for those who want to understand Clem Attlee and the contribution he made to bringing the Labour Party from the brink of annihilation to triumph, as well as those of us who want to better understand way the Labour Party has evolved.

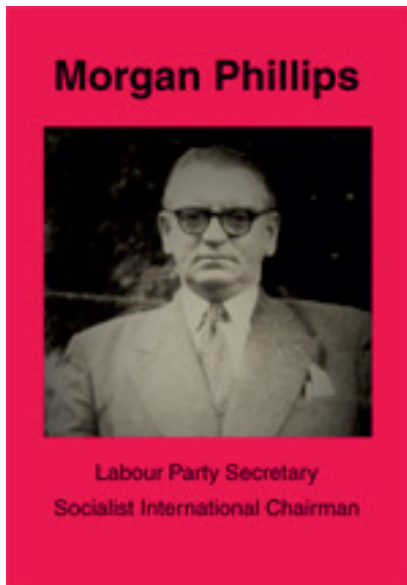
The author of *Citizen Clem*, Professor John Bew gave the annual memorial lecture of the Aneurin Bevan Society on Tuesday 17th October at Portcullis House.
<http://www.nyebevan.org.uk/>



Aneurin Bevan

Morgan Phillips – Labour Party Secretary, Socialist International Chairman, Published by Spokesman for Labour Heritage. 2017

Reviewed by Linda Shampian



We are delighted to announce the arrival of this publication – the first time in print of Morgan Phillips’ memoirs of his time as Labour Party Secretary (1944-1962) and his work in the international Labour movement, including towards re-establishing the Socialist International and serving as its Chair 1952-57. The book is generously illustrated with wide selection of photographs, which brings the period to life.

Stan Newens, in his foreword, points out that Phillips gives an *‘inside account of the dispute which became a major feature of Labour politics in the 1950s. Although regarded by most rank and file left-wingers at the time as a committed right-winger, for carrying out the decisions of the right-wing majority on the NEC, he not only kept in touch with Aneurin Bevan as a friend, but also held him in high esteem’* –

a reflection of the socialist beliefs which underpinned his life’s work.

The book is in two sections. The first section includes his early life and his route into the Labour Party. He was born in 1902 in Aberdare, South Wales – James Keir Hardie was then their MP. His family moved to a small mining village, Bargoed in the Rhymney Valley, where he grew up. He left school and began work aged 12, first as an errand boy for the Home & Colonial Stores (working 73 hours per week for 8 shillings) and then, at 14, as a miner. Like so many of those who built the early Labour Party, his learning came both from an early involvement in the ILP and trade unionism, and the desire to study through the various avenues of adult education. Phillips took courses in mining and economics in evening classes and in 1926 gained a scholarship to study full-time at the Labour College in London. This was an idealistic time *‘to us the revolution seemed round the corner. All we had to do was to reach for it.’*

His work for the Labour Party continued in London, including being elected a councillor on Fulham Borough Council 1934-37 and, at the same time, working unpaid as the local agent in Whitechapel. This was an optimistic time to work in local government, which he describes as affording *‘the greatest satisfaction to anyone interested in public work. You move a resolution in favour of a new housing estate. You see the houses being built. You feel a sense of achievement.’*

In 1937, he applied for the job of Labour Party Propaganda Officer, and this marked his move from local to national politics. September 1939, the declaration of war, *‘brought campaigning to an end.’*

Interestingly, the Government invited the three main parties to each choose someone to join the Ministry of Information as political consultants. Phillips was chosen but *'although the Civil Service was paying me far more.... I was pleased to leave Bloomsbury and return to Transport House'*. In 1941, he was appointed as Secretary of Labour's Research Department – which had a wide remit, including helping local authorities understand and put into practice the various war-time regulations, planning for reconstruction after the war and, addressing international issues including building links with the Soviet Union. In 1944, with Jim Middleton's approaching retirement, Phillips applied for his post as Labour Party Secretary. The appointment was decided shortly before Phillips was due to start a fire-watching duty *'so I celebrated my appointment protecting Transport House, the building over which I was to preside.'* His account of 18 years as Secretary forms the main part of the first section in these memoirs.

The second section, entitled *'Socialist International'* begins with the links made during the war years with left-wing European refugees living in London, for example John Albarda who served in the Dutch Government in Exile. 1945 was a hopeful year for socialism: *'when the war ended, Britain was not the only country to elect a socialist government. In Norway and Sweden, the Social Democrats were in power, and Denmark, Austria, Belgium and France all had coalition governments in which socialists were represented.....this encouraged us to take the initiative in working towards a new Socialist International.'*

Phillips reflects on how this evolved over the next two decades, using his experience of the Socialist International and being part of the Labour Party delegations to countries in Europe and further afield. The chapter headings show the breadth of this: Russia, Warsaw, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Italy, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Holland, People's Republic of China, Israel and Latin America.

Phillips began work on his autobiography during the 1950s. In August 1960 he had a stroke. He made a slow partial recovery, but his speech remained severely affected and in February 1962 he retired from the post of General Secretary, and died in January 1963. In his last year, his son, Morgan D. Phillips, helped him to edit his earlier drafts and to complete the narrative, with a view to getting the memoir published – but despite several approaches to publishers in the 1960s, it was not accepted. One publisher put it succinctly: *'No scandal, no market!'* A fortunate error!

An anecdote from Phillips' early days in the mines gives an interesting link with how these papers eventually came to be published: *'I well remember a local election in 1920, when the Labour candidate Morgan Jones, who taught in my old school, was bitterly attacked by ex-servicemen's organisations because of his pacifist activities during the War. Our meetings were broken up, stones were thrown and the windows of the ILP rooms shattered. Jones lost, but a year later many of the same people lustily cheered his victory in a by-election. He went on to be a Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the first Labour Government in 1924'*.

My link with Morgan Phillips arose through several years of happily attending a singing class run by his daughter-in-law Veronica. In Summer 2014, Labour Heritage published an article by Wayne David MP on the life of Morgan Jones. In 2015, I remembered Veronica mentioning at one time her husband and father-in-law, both called Morgan, and brought along a copy of this Bulletin to give her, thinking she would be interested in the article about her father-in-law. The next week, she told me that in fact her father-in-law was Morgan *Phillips* not *Jones*, but that he had known Morgan Jones well – a lucky mistake on my part as things turned out.

Morgan D. Phillips then contacted us at Labour Heritage to say perhaps we *would* like to write an article about his father, and that he could forward us part of an unpublished manuscript to base this on, or maybe serialise in the Bulletin. Once this arrived, however, it was clear to us it needed to be a full publication in its own right, and after the Labour Heritage Committee enthusiastically agreed, John Grigg took on the work, seeking a publisher and liaising with Morgan D. Phillips – so we are proud to recommend this as a new title published by Labour Heritage.

Copies can be ordered direct from Labour Heritage @ £14.99

<http://www.labour-heritage.com/>

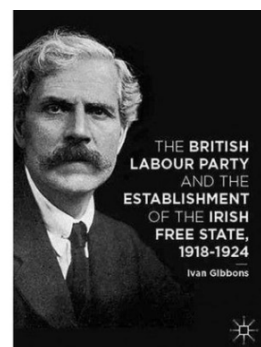
***A Tribute to Dr Ruth Ensusan-Butt, 1877-1957, early Fabian, Suffragist and much loved Cochester GP*, edited by Maurice Austin**

Reviewed in our last issue, we still have some copies available of this fascinating

account of the early days of the NHS and the work of one of the doctors who paved the way for the NHS to be established.

The booklet can be ordered from Labour Heritage at £3.

Book Launch for *The British Labour Party and the Establishment of the Irish Free State 1918-1924* by Ivan Gibbons. Now available in paperback, from Palgrave, £22.50



This was held at the Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre and introduced by Chris Ruane MP, former Chair All Party Parliamentary Group on Irish in Britain

Ivan Gibbons is a former Senior Lecturer in Irish Studies at St Mary's University, London, UK and a member of the Board of Directors of Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre in London. He was awarded the Irish Post Community Award for his contribution to education and Irish Studies in the UK. He has taught and written on the relationship between the British Labour Party and Irish nationalism and was awarded his PhD from Birkbeck, University of London, UK on this subject. He is a member of Labour Heritage, and has spoken on the subject of Ireland and the British labour movement at many Labour Heritage events.(see Labour Heritage bulletin Spring 2012).

In the period immediately after the First World War both the British Labour Party and Irish Nationalism were in a state of transition.

This book examines the rapidly evolving relationship between the British Labour Party and the emerging Irish nationalist forces from which was formed the first government of the Irish Free State as both metamorphosed from opposition towards becoming the governments of their respective states.

The book includes chapters on the evolution of the British Labour Party and Irish Nationalism 1914-1921; Labour Policy on Ireland 1918-21; Partition Established: The Government of Ireland Act 1920; the Establishment of the Irish Free State and Labour in Opposition 1921-23; Labour in Government 1924 and the Boundary Commission 1925.

It is hoped to have a review in a later issue of the bulletin.

The contents page for Labour Heritage bulletin has been updated and now contains a list of subjects covered in the bulletins from 2002 to 2017.

<http://www.labour-heritage.com/>

Grunwick Memorial Murals now Unveiled

Murals commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Grunwick strike were unveiled on 30th September, 2017. They are both near the old Grunwick factory at Chapter Road and Dudden Hill Lane.

<https://grunwick40.wordpress.com/2017/10/02/the-grunwick-40-commemorative-murals-are-unveiled/>



Mural is unveiled

